A quantitative exploration of SKT constructions

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Objective

• Diachronic account of development of SKT-construction family in nominal groups
• Insights into variation between two major varieties of English, BrE and AmE

Prior research on SKT

• **Synchronic PDE**: Bolinger (1972), Aijmer (1984) and nearly 50 more.
• **Diachronic English**: Tabor (1993), Denison (1998) and some 20 more.
• **Other languages** with similar developments in *tipo* nouns: Casillas Martínez (2001), Foolen (2002), Mihatsch (2007) and more.
• We build on a scenario most recently presented by Brems & Davidse (2002), Keyser (2001), Brems & Davidse (2010)

Constructions distinguished

• Binominal “construction”
• Quantifier
• Descriptive modifier
• Nominal qualifier
• Postdeterminer

NB. Not discussed: *I* ModE non-nominal uses such as *I kind of like them*

Basic structure

```
[sort ________________]  [clothes, flower, weather, boat, sin]
[kind of] [type] ________________
```

• Formula neglects determiner before SKT, and items (determiner, attributive noun or adjective) sometimes allowed between of and N.
• Formula also neglects manner, an important SKT noun in eModE.

Binominal

**Several kinds of kingfisher** resort to the place. (CLMET, Section 3, text 204)

• SKT-noun functions as head of the binominal phrase
• Sort of X = ‘subtype of X’

NB1. SKT-word = ‘category, class’, so cases of type = ‘symbol’ not counted.
NB2. Compositional string cannot be a construction in early CxG, though permissible in more recent CxG.
Headedness

• The lexical noun may become head of NP rather than the SKT-word.
• Determiner showing number concord not with singular SKT-word but with plural lexical noun (these kind of pressures etc.) is often treated as criterial.
• We find this a helpful revision and extend it to (rarer) quantifier examples showing number mismatch.

Number concord

• ± number concord not correlated with meaning [or other] differences
• Postdeterminer:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>speaker</th>
<th>all kinds of jobs (JJS 972)</th>
<th>this kind of newspaper (JJS 1065)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PS47D</td>
<td>sg 1sg</td>
<td>binom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tony</td>
<td>pl 2pl</td>
<td>nom</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

• Quantifier:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>speaker</th>
<th>all kinds of things (KE3 5683)</th>
<th>all sorts of things (KE3 5687)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tony</td>
<td>7pl 3sg</td>
<td>nom</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

examples from BNC (spoken)

Quantifier (universal)

There are all sorts of wonderful jobs in London … (LOB P03)
• Semantic equivalent: ‘a large and varied collection of wonderful jobs’
• Syntactic analysis: \[QUANTIFIER \text{all sorts of} \ [HEAD \ldots jobs] \]

Quantifier (negative)

… I intend to retire into the country where there will be no sort of news … (CLMET, Section 2, Text 176)
• Semantic equivalent: ‘no news at all’
• Syntactic analysis: \[QUANTIFIER \text{no sort of} \ [HEAD \text{news}] \]

Descriptive modifier (attributive)

He was an odd sort of chap. (LOB L14)
• Semantic equivalent: ‘He was an odd chap’
• Syntactic analysis: \[DET \text{an} \ [MODIFIER \text{odd + sort of} \ [HEAD \text{chap}] \]

Nominal qualifier

She hastened into one of the passages which branched in various directions from this spot, and formed a sort of labyrinth. (CLMET, Section 2, Text 218)
• Semantic analysis: ‘something like a labyrinth’
• Syntactic analysis: \[QUALIFYING \text{complex} \ [DET \text{a sort of} \ [HEAD \text{labyrinth}] \]

examples from BNC (spoken)
Postdeterminer (but problematic)

But it costs a lot of money to have a hobby. I haven’t got that kind of money. (Brown F06)

- Semantic analysis: ‘such money’
- Syntactic analysis: [DETERMINER that kind of] [HEAD money]

Postdeterminer

- First posited Denison (1998), but Keizer and Denison both expressed discomfort.
- Keizer (2007) finds postdet analysis often helpful semantically, but still problematic in some cases.
- She only includes number mismatch exx, and because this is criterial, she also has ICE-GB exx with all SKT of N2 pl.

and there were all kind of things came out
We used to break all kind of speed limits getting out of the door
he used to except erm all sort of reports to be presented (HDM 255)
then there were all sorts of odds and ends (HDM 314)

Data

Samples of 200 words/period/SKT-noun
- Early English Books Online
  - 1470-1700
  - Periods of 50 years (and pre-1500 period)
- CLMET 3.1
  - 1750-1920
  - Periods of 70 years

Full data
- BrE
  - B-LOB 1931
  - LOB
  - F-LOB
- AmE
  - B-Brown
  - Brown
  - Frown

Diachronic development
Diachrony

- In general, all constructions seem to develop almost in parallel
- Major lag for `type` due to semantic differences
- Some lag for Postdeterminer and Nominal qualifier for `kind`
- Pmw frequencies of binominals decrease after 1700s
- Postdeterminer established with a delay; becomes very frequent afterwards

AmE vs BrE

- AmE preference for `kind` is there and increasing
- BrE preference for `sort` only in the reanalysed (non-binominal) patterns
- Overall decline of `sort/type of`
Number concord

- For sort/kind/type only about 40 examples in the whole dataset with number mismatch
- All of those labelled as postdeterminer
- Largely restricted to sort/kind:
  - sort: 13
  - kind: 25
  - type: 2

Dealing with indeterminacy

- Some examples indeterminate between particular pairs of our 5 structures
- Qualitatively: apparently only pairs that are connected diachronically
- Quantitatively: how best to deal with them statistically?

Keizer (2007: 180; 176-80) on ambiguous examples

Quantifier (manner)

- In eModE quantifier patterns, manner is by far the commonest SKT word, decreasing later
- Kind only catches up around 1550, and sort around 1600

The last dayes shall be very perilous, wherein all manner of sins, and sinners shall abound
impunity breeds blasphemy, and all manner of sin

(EEBO: A practical and polemical commentary ..., 1658)

manner (1470-1500)

Open questions

- Ambiguous (or indeterminate?) cases:
  - ...in the high strength Al-Zn-Mg-Cu alloys, stress-corrosion failure can occur when very little evidence of corrosive attack is to be detected. In developing tests for the susceptibility of this type of alloy to intercrystalline attack, Ketcham and Taylor do not mention stress-corrosion... (LOB J77)
  - Needham, however, admits its role as an intermediary, and would even have viewers believe that Bugle Boy is somewhat uninformed as to what they are doing in the company's name. This sort of tongue-in-cheek mockery of convention is as refreshing as it is creative. (Frown E30)
Hybrid pattern

the sort of ... acidy sort of alcohol smell ... it’s not a beer sort of smell (BNC KCT 9852)
• Semantic equivalent: ‘(subtype of) smell with that characteristic’
• Syntactic analysis: also unclear

ō ᾨ
 authoritative
 no-nonsense
 Oxford
 ... sort
 kind of
 type
... chap
 office
 person
 shot
 smell ...’

Hybrid pattern

It’s the authoritarian know-it-all, lots-of-rules kind of person. (Frown R01)
• longer, free-form material preceding SKT; can include proper names
• Labeled ‘semi-suffix’ by Brems & Davidse, redefining Denison’s term
• But depending on the example, not easily distinguished from binominal, attributive modifier or postdeterminer

NB. the term ‘semi-suffix’ was intended for hyphenated examples without of, as in: It is quite a hefty spade, with bicycle-type handlebars (BNC A0G 2202)

Further plans

• Further investigation of early part played by manner in SKT family
• COHA for more in-depth insight into the development in AmE
• Separate treatment of ambiguous and indeterminate cases (?)

Take-home messages

• Quantitative pattern seems crucial in early reanalysis of binominals
• True of manner, then kind, then sort (but not type)
• And manner seems to be the first member of the “SKT” set, with the others only joining in later.

Last slide

• Presentation and bibliography on DD’s download website shortly

THANK YOU
References