The construction of SKT
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SKT

- Sort, kind and type in a number of patterns, most + of.
  1) (...) N₁ of (...) N₂
- (simplifies by ignoring D, modifiers)

Family of constructions

- Notice that (4) lacks N₂, while (6) lacks of.
- Broad outlines of history sketched in Denison (2002).
- Keizer (2007):
  1) (2) = referential construction
  2) (3) = qualifying construction
  3) (4) = adverbial use closely related to (3)
  4) (5) = ('constructions of the third kind').
- NB. construction here is not a technical CxG term.
- (5) = postdeterminer or complex determiner.

Two more patterns

- Brems & Davidse (2010) distinguish another two variants:
  7) This raises all kinds of additional problems which we can't afford to ignore (CDF 1682)
  8) Dunbar’s a jolly sort of fellow (FS1 164)
- (7) = quantifier usage
- (8) = descriptive modifier

Introduction

- Five representative examples from BNC:
  2) the Canadians had one sort of sovereign, and the British had another sort (A69 1471)
  3) There was a kind of inevitability about the whole proposal which appalled Alexei.
  4) It kind of built his confidence with each successive flask (A14 937)
  5) but she should keep those sort of remarks to herself (CDY 1447)
  6) so that us train spotter type supporters don’t get in the way of [...] (JIC 2281)
Postdeterminer SKT

- Number mismatch:
  5) ... those sort of remarks ...
- Head of NP is N₁ = sort or N₂ = remarks?
- Keizer: ‘all ... pragmatic and syntactic features’ confirm N₂ = remarks as head (2007: 184)
- sort in (5) is a Postdeterminer
- Yet (5) is a subtype of (2) pattern where sort would uncontroversially be N and head!
- Keizer’s classification predominantly form-driven.

Postdeterminer slot

- Van de Velde (2009) and Breban (2010) argue against need for postdeterminer slot.
- ‘Postdeterminers’ merely Adjectives in gradient diachronic transition to Determiners.
- Odd functional properties (position, semantics, etc.) are temporary aberration caused by incipient reclassification as a different form class.

Postdeterminer SKT

- Brems & Davidse accept postdeterminer analysis of (5) but based on semantics and discourse properties.
  9) There are certainly equally worthwhile climbs on Stennis Head, but none at this kind of standard with such ease of access. (ECH 953)
- Analysis of (9) would not be (10) but rather (11):
  10) [[determiner: this] + [head: kind (postmodifier: of + standard)]
- Or is rigid separation of two systems (as practised in structuralist Cambridge Grammar) inappropriate mindset for CxG work?

Construction Grammar

- SKT patterns frequent in everyday English, yet present problems of analysis such as
  - location of head
  - assignment of words to traditional classes
  - precise extent of multiword lexical items
- Construction Grammar (CxG) is tempting approach, because in some versions (e.g. Croft 2001) word classes are not primary but merely epiphenomena, while words and certain longer patterns are all constructions.
Redundancy

- Redundancy is widespread in real language.
- Formalists disparage redundancy in analysis (Occam’s Razor, elegance).
- CxG should be more tolerant of redundancy, if only because multiple inheritance can
  - motivate analysis of a construction (from linguist’s point of view)
  - reinforce usage of a particular construction (from speaker’s point of view)

Levels of schematicity

- Construct: an attested instance of use [...]
- Micro-construction: a type which sanctions a construct [...] 
- Meso-construction: a group of related micro-constructions [...] 
  - multiple meso levels? (Trousdale 2008: 169-70 vs. 2008b: 58)
- Macro-construction: the most schematic construction relating to part of the constructional network under discussion [...] 
  (Trousdale (2008a) following Traugott (2007, 2008a) and Fried (2008))

Emergence of kind of

Old and Middle English

- Earliest SKT noun is kind/kin (Old English)
- of-constructions rarely exist in OE, relationships often marked by genitive case.
  - all the constructions in question, and others of this type in English, depend crucially on the reanalysis in Middle English after Step I of Old English of ‘out of’ as the analytic equivalent of the genitive inflection, and eventually as the default preposition in English.” (Traugott 2008a: 28, sim. Traugott 2008b: 228 n8).
- Once of-constructions arise, we get both
  12) close encounters of that kind
  13) that kind of close encounter

OED implicitly recognises SKT

- The reduction of kin to its simple uninflected form may have been assisted by the equivalent use of manere ... from Old French, which is thus found, as three maner men = men of three kinds or sorts. In this, at an early period, we find of inserted: an manere of fisce, al maner a suet spices, the syntactical relation between the words being thus reversed, and although this appears to have rarely extended to kin itself, it affected its later representative kind, also sort, species, etc., so that we now say ‘all kinds of things’ = things of all kinds. This may have been facilitated by the fact that in the order of the words (as distinct from their syntactical relation) ‘al kins things’ is more closely represented by ‘all kinds of things’ than by ‘things of all kind’. See kind n., manner n., sort n., etc. (s.v. kin n. 6b).
Referential construction
(binominal, head)

Binominal constructions
- Widely found in English and elsewhere.
- With decreasing schematicity, but largely compositional
  - NP with postmodified head noun (e.g. the man who came to dinner)
  - postmodifier is PP (the man in the Moon)
  - P is purely syntactic linker of (a man of peace)
  - partitives
  - small size nouns and SKT (similar)

Binominal constructions
- (More than just one simple hierarchy.)
- By the ME period there are binominal constructions of many kinds, including some involving kind and the French borrowing manner:
  14) Bi this kynde of speche (CMPURVEY, I, 47.1982)
  15) Þan wer prestys in þe same place whech knew hir maner of werkyng (CMKEMPE, 147.3417)

(Examples from Helsinki Corpus)

HTOED
- In Denison (2002) I confined discussion to kin(d), manner, sort, type but mentioned a few others.
- Systematic approach would use Historical Thesaurus
- I took lists from
  - the external world | relative properties | kind or sort | noun
  - the external world | relative properties | kind or sort | noun | a kind, sort or class

Extension to list of SKT nouns

HTOED
- i-cunde (971), manner (a1225), mould (a1225), hede (a1300), jet (c1330), colour (c1400), hair (c1587), touch (c1588), estrete (c1535), gender (c1400), stock (c1540), rate (c1509), barrel (c1542), suit (c1548), kidney (c1555), fashion (c1562), special (c1563), mould (c1566-6), stamp (c1573), garb (c1600), espece (c1602), savour (c1608), bran (c1610), formality (c1610), family (c1626), edition (c1627), kind (c1629), make (c1660), cast (c1673), tour (c1702), way (c1702), specie (c1712), tenor (c1729), ilk (c1790), genre (c1816), persuasion (c1855), stripe (c1863), monotype (c1881)
HTOED
- kin (1590), distinction (?1225), row (c1300), specie (1303), spice (1303), fashion (c1325), espicce (1386), state (c1450), sort (1523), difference (1533), predicament (1548), species (1561), vein (1568), brood (1581), rank (1585), order (1588), race (1590), breed (1598), strain (1612), batch (1616), siege (1630), category (1660), denomination (1664), genus (1666), world (1685), sortment (1718), tribe (1731), assortment (1767), description (1781), style (1794), class (1807), type (1854), age-group (1904), basket (1916)

HTOED
- Most of these synonyms will fail the test of frequency or of having a sufficiently general class meaning.
- Thus kidney occurs in OED in e.g.
  16) A man of my kidney - that am as subject to heate as butte (autoh Shakespeare Merry Wives of Windsor (1623) iii. x. 208)
  17) inside the kidney of a living person. (1566 Engineering 4 Aug. 1561)
- Perhaps make, cast, woy, ik, rank, strain, style worth pursuing, plus form (Mihatsch 2007).

Development of qualifying construction

Denison (2002)
- Binominal constructions have N as syntactic head, but the information value of the SKT-word can be relatively low, especially when unpremodified, with focus more on N2.
- With nouns of subjective or metaphorical content especially, a conversational implicature could arise that the SKT-construction as a whole is used to refer not to a normal member of the class of N2 but to a possible member, or perhaps an arguable member, or a peripheral member, or a near-member.
- That is, if the SKT-word is defocused and hence a precise listing of kinds is not at issue, then the construction is in effect about the nature of membership of the class of N2. If the implicature becomes grammaticalised, the syntax changes accordingly, and the qualifying construction is born.

Denison (2002)

Traugott (2008a, b)
- Full diagram (two stages omitted) summarises
  - size nouns (a lot of)
  - small size nouns ((not) a shred of)
  - SKT.
- Syntax: reanalysis of constituency of of
- Morphology: enclitic.
- Phonology: in effect just a realisation of e.g. a kind of.
- Pragmatics: ‘approximator’ can easily modulate into ‘hedge’.
- No discourse-functional properties given.

Denison, ‘Construction of SKT’
Traugott (2008a, b)

- Keizer fills in more detail for PDE, e.g.
  - stress typically falls on $N_1$
  - $N_1$ always singular
- Mihatsch looks at taxonomic nouns in six European languages (two Germanic, four Romance).
- Frequent use of taxonomic nouns 'with universal quantifiers, free choice and negative indefinites'
- Argues that taxonomic noun may seem redundant, since $N_1$ of $N_2$ could be replaced by $N_2$ alone without change of reference, but in fact enhances expressivity by associating taxonomic nouns with reference to marginal members.

Brems & Davidse (2010)
- In their diagram, ‘R indicates relationships involving reanalysis and E indicates entrenchment relationships’.
- Levels? All meso-cxns.
- These meso-cxns almost limited to micro-cxns involving sort of, kind of.
- ‘As a later addition to that set [type] developed at a different rate than sort and kind; qualifying uses with type, for instance, are only just starting to be attested.’ (2010: 182).
- There are also macro-cxns involved, including those for downtoners and hedges.

Other phases

Losses from list of SKT nouns
- Why is manner in effect only retained in the quantifier pattern? – e.g. all manner of $N$?
  - Blocking of plural manners by lexicalised use, so can't take part in number variation of other SKT?
  - Semantic interference from dynamic meaning of manner?
  - SKT constructions developing phonological shape which encourages monosyllable, hence recruitment of type?
Approximators

- From qualifying

3) There was a kind of inevitability about the whole proposal which appalled Alexei.

   to use with other categories (adverbial SKT)

4) It kind of built his confidence with each successive flap.

   to free-standing use

18) It’s a little cartoon, it’s just cheap and enj-- like Bart Simpson <-> kind of. (KPG 4168)

Indefinite article

- “When both NP1 and NP2 have indefinite articles ... the indefiniteness may trigger the inference that because the class membership is not uniquely identifiable, it is not exact.” (Traugott 2008b: 228-9)

- Keizer finds most qualifying SKT have an indefinite article at least before N1.

- But the indefinite article is not retained in adverbial or independent use.

Indefinite article

Denison (2002, 12) ... thinks it is more plausible that the adverbial construction arose via the “qualifying construction” that refers to peripheral members of a category, e.g., I suppose it’s ... a sort of holiday. The hedging semantics/pragmatics of the latter are merely extended to more syntactic contexts in the adverbial construction. He does not explain why the indefinite article disappears in this construction and not in other grammaticalized uses of the SKT-nouns. (Brems 2007: 321 n.12)

Indefinite article

- Whatever the precise internal structure of

3) ... a kind of inevitability ...

   D at left edge persists as cue for NP. Not true of a bit.

   For adjective or verb or PP, an NP cue would be inappropriate. So a is not retained in

4) ... kind of built his confidence ...

   and approximator function is carried by kind of.

   Interesting that in independent use, a bit retains a but not of, while SKT retain of but not a.

Loss of of

- Sometimes SKT allows ellipsis of entire of-phrase, but there are also variants with omission of of but presence of N.

- In PDE this only concerns type, though in older English manner, kind and kin could also appear without intervening of. (Denison 2002)

19) It’s one of those type LPs I had all ‘soul brothers’ (OED3)

20) In this type program, the pupils create a model of a situation and test it to see it reflects reality. (JXK 1309)

21) Virtually any type projector (OED)

X-type: semi-suffix?

- Dalton-Puffer & Plag discuss X-type pattern (2000: 231-6, 241-2), where X may be N, A or a phrase and the whole most frequently found as a premodifier within NP:

22) The 4ft high kangaroo-type creature was feeling a bit down-under (K97 441)

23) At an Oscar type ceremony, an award winner decides to use his international platform for political purposes (AT9 268)

   They conclude on balance that -type is not a suffix: it is forming a compound noun. If so, a full CxG account of SKT must cross from syntax into morphology.
Some remaining questions

Coming-into-being

• When does a new construction ‘count’?

The way-construction emerged gradually over the course of several centuries. There is no single moment we can point to and say, “This is where the construction entered the grammar.” Rather, a long process of local analogical extensions led a variety of idiomatic usages to gradually gain in productive strength even as they settled into a rigid syntax.


Prefabs, constructions, frequency

• How do we distinguish systematically between the entrenchment of a set phrase or ‘pre-fab’, and the entrenchment of a construction?
• For example,
  • in a manner of speaking
  • that sort of thing
• This may be related to the role of frequency and the possible significance of high-frequency exemplars and whether they make a construction easier to learn (Bybee & Cacoullos Torres 2009; cf. Brems 2007)

Value added by CxG

• Many working assumptions of CxG much more congenial (to me) than those of other frameworks:
  • Usage basis
  • Lowered priority of word and of word class
  • Multiple inheritance
  • Thoroughgoing interplay of form and function, and inclusion of semantic, pragmatic and discourse functions in characterisation of constructions
• While these are important, does CxG add any real constraints on the power of grammar?
References


Van de Velde, Freek. 2009. Do we need the category of postdeterminer in the NP? *Transactions of the Philological Society* 107, 293-321.