

A comparative study of the grammaticalized uses of English *sort (of)* and French *genre (de)* in teenage forum data

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Abstract

This paper sets out to capture language change at its forefront by studying specific data, teenage forum posts, expected to be innovative for many reasons. These data are speech-like, informal exchanges between peers, that is, they have the situational features that most promote change. Moreover, they represent communication from the most innovative age group of language users, teenagers, on the linguistically non-prescriptive Internet. Importantly, innovation does not entail absence of functional-structural patterns. The topic that we will investigate is the grammaticalization of English *sort of* and French *genre de*, as reflected in the synchronic layering of the different constructions they occur in without their full lexical value. Within the grammaticalized constructions, a distinction is made between intra-NP uses, in which *sort of* and *genre (de)* fulfil a function in NP structure, and extra-NP uses in which they serve adverbial, particle and quotative functions. While there is striking functional equivalence between most of these uses in English and French, there are also some differences due to the distinct syntax of the source constructions.

1. Introduction¹

Nouns that lexically refer to types or subclasses seem strongly inclined to develop new, grammatical, meanings across languages. That is, they attract many changes in which their lexical meaning is lost. The source construction associated with the lexical use is reanalysed, i.e. reparsed into constructions in which the (strings with) type nouns fulfil a grammatical function. The grammaticalization of type nouns has recently enjoyed a flurry of interest. Diachronic and synchronic studies have been published about this phenomenon in English (Denison 2002, Keizer 2007, De Smedt, Brems & Davidse 2007, Traugott 2008, Brems & Davidse 2010, Margerie 2010, Brems 2011), German (Diewald 2006), Swedish (Rosenkvist & Skärlund 2011), French (Fleischman 1999, Fleischman & Yaguello 2004, Mihatsch 2007), Italian (Voghera forthc) and Spanish (Mihatsch 2007). A comparison of the phenomenon in a Germanic and Romance language imposes itself as particularly interesting as there appear to be striking differences in the historical onset, speed and spread of grammaticalization. For instance, the grammaticalization of English *kind* started as early as c1373 with the emergence of quantifier *all kind of* (Denison 2002), whereas Voghera (forthc) locates the first grammaticalized uses in Italian around 1915, e.g. *una guerra tipo "Crociate"*. There is also a specific problem with finding data that

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attest the more advanced grammaticalization layers. In its advanced grammaticalization stages, the type noun no longer fulfils a function in NP structure, but serves adverbial, discourse marker and quotative functions. In both English and French, these tend to be confined to informal spoken registers, with teenage language being a privileged locus for the promotion of innovative uses (see e.g. Golato 2000, Caubet, Billiez, Bulot, Léglise & Miller 2004, D'Arcy 2004, Macaulay 2006, Tagliamonte & D'Arcy 2004 for other instances of innovative teenage talk). However, commensurate extensive corpora of teenage language for comparative language study are not easy to come by. Internet data offer a unique opportunity to fill this gap. Teenage forums are an easily accessible source of speech-like, informal exchanges between young peers, i.e. the type of 'non-prescribed' language use where we expect to witness language change at its forefront (Halliday 1978, Dubois 2003).

In this article, we will thus study the grammaticalization of English *sort (of)* and French *genre (de)* in teenage forum posts from a comparative perspective. More specifically, we will, on the basis of quantified data analysis, characterize the synchronic layers of uses (Hopper 1991) of the type noun in each language. As we will see, there is considerable *functional-structural parallelism* between most of the constructions in English and French, but there are also some cases where the distinct syntax of the two languages has produced *purely functional equivalents*: the expression of similar meanings with different structural means.

The structure of this article will be as follows. In section 2 we will briefly discuss the findings of studies of *sort (of)* and *genre (de)* based on existing corpora, revealing the gaps that have to be filled by the teenage forum data. Section 3 will give information about the Internet data on which this comparative study is based. In Section 4, we will characterize the different functions fulfilled by *sort (of)* and *genre (de)* in the NP and in the main syntactic environments outside of the NP, paying particular attention to qualitative and quantitative differences. Section 5 will formulate conclusions and theoretical reflections.

2. Previous studies of *sort (of)* and *genre (de)*

In De Smedt, Brems & Davidse (2007), Davidse, Brems & De Smedt (2008), Brems & Davidse (2010) and Brems (2011) we developed our description of the grammaticalized uses of English type nouns *sort*, *kind* and *type*, adding some constructions to the classification proposed in Denison (2002) (see section 4). Within the grammaticalized constructions, a fundamental distinction was made between **intra-NP** constructions, in which the type noun fulfils a function in NP structure such as quantifier (1) or qualifier (2),

(1) Dr Will says this revelation in 1968 was astonishing. There were **all sorts of paradoxes**. (CB -Times)

(2) I wonder wh= oi Dan, Honey, I wonder what, I wonder what we'll be like when we get into **our sort of mid twenties?** (COLT)

and **extra-NP** constructions which serve adverbial (3), discourse marker (4) and quotative / onomatopoeic (5) functions. The latter are clearly the more recent innovations in English and are attested only marginally with *sort of* in the formal written data of the Times subcorpus from COBUILD, accounting for only 3.44%. By contrast, the extra-NP uses formed the majority, 76%, in the dataset extracted from COLT, the spoken "Bergen Corpus of London Teenage Language". However, the

relatively small COLT-corpus yielded only 127 actual tokens of *sort of / sorta, kind of / kinda* and *type of / typa* in these NP-external uses.

(3) Mr <name> has done. He's gone home, **sort of**. (COLT)

(4) I was **kind of** like in the middle <unclear> -- Well, <unclear>, an you come and talk to us when you've finished? (COLT)

(5) I've neve s\een a 'sortof# ^bottle 'after :b\ottle# . **sort of** ^pop 'pop p/opping# âll the t\ime# - - and ^everybody got :awfully dr\unk I rem/ember# (COLT, quoted in Aijmer 2002: 186)

Willemse, Brems & Davidse (2008) then carried out a contrastive study of the grammaticalization of *sort, kind, type* and *sorte, espèce, genre* on the basis of comparable formal written data: the Times subcorpus of COBUILD and random samples from *Frantext*. In the latter, formal-written data, no instances at all were found of non-nominal grammaticalized uses, even though *genre* is known to manifest them in informal spoken French (Fleischmann & Yaguello 2004).

3. Internet data for this study

Our first corpus studies on the grammaticalization of type nouns were focused mainly on English and were based on exhaustive datasets extracted from the Times – subcorpus of COBUILD, COLT, and historical corpora of English, the *Penn-Helsinki Parsed Corpus of Middle English* (PPCME), the *Penn-Helsinki Parsed Corpus of Early Modern English* (PPCEME) and the *Corpus of Late Modern English Texts* (CLMET). In a second step, we brought in the comparison with French type nouns, based on relatively smaller datasets from *Frantext* (FT). However, when it came to analysing the Internet data, we based the pilot study of *genre* on more data, and looked at *sort (of)* in a smaller follow-up study.

With the study of *genre* we wanted to pinpoint the unique and distinct patterns of teenage usage in contrast to adult usage. Data were gathered by Doyen (2008) from the teenage forum *Adojeunz.com* (<http://www.adojeunz.com/forum/index.php>) and from the general forum *Discussons.org* (http://www.discutons.org/Debats_generaux_d_actuallite-Forum-3.html). *Adojeunz.com* is used by teenagers between 12 and 20 years old. *Discussons.org* may be used by a larger public but sections were chosen that were likely to be written and read by adults, viz. politics and current affairs. While the language of forum debates is inherently informal and dialogic, consisting of question-answer pairs, and statements reacting to previous statements (Martin 1992), some differences between the two forums should be noted. The teenage forum is more informal than the adult forum, which is reflected in the topics of the exchanges, e.g. posts about singers and actors versus posts about politics and current affairs. There was also a difference in the overall number of posts compiled, because adults' posts, which build up argumentations, tend to be much longer than teenagers' posts, which exchange evaluations and comments.

To arrive at datasets sufficiently large to describe the grammaticalized uses of *genre*, Emeline Doyen collected samples of 650 tokens of *genre* with the Google search engine from the teenage and adult forums. Accessing the forums on the same days, she collected 250 tokens of *genre* from *Adojeunz.com* on 6.12.2008 and from *Discussons.org* on 7.12.2008. She complemented these with 400 additional tokens from *Adojeunz.com* on 12.7.2009 and from *Discussons.org* on 13.7.2009. These samples yielded 514 relevant tokens for the teenagers and 525 relevant tokens for the

adults. Relevant tokens are the grammaticalized uses and their source construction, binominal NPs with head *genre*. Examples irrelevant to this study include lexical uses in which *genre* is not the head of a binominal construction and composite predicates such as *être son genre*. As is well-known, even reasonably extended datasets do not contain instances of all possible variants of constructions. Therefore, we also refer to examples from the literature, from other subcorpora of COBUILD and other Internet sites.

The data for *sort of* were compiled by Kiermeer & Thoelen (2009) from The Student Room (<http://www.thestudentroom.co.uk>). *The Student Room* has posts by users who are mainly between 16 and 22 years old. A sample was collected of 400 relevant tokens. Irrelevant hits were discarded manually in the compilation process.

4. A contrastive typology of constructions with *sort (of)* and *genre (de)*

In his influential typology, Denison (2002) distinguished three main **intra-NP** constructions with type nouns in Present-day English, viz. the binominal, postdeterminer and qualifier constructions, and possibly a fourth one, the semi-suffix use. By way of **extra-NP** constructions, he identified the adverbial and discourse marker constructions.

To the set of English type noun constructions, Aijmer (2002) added the quotative / onomatopoeic use while Davidse, Brems & De Smedt (2008) added the quantifier and attributive modifier constructions. Following Voghera (forthc), for French the postnominal modifier marker has to be recognized, which serves many of the functions of the attributive modifier marker and semi-suffix uses in English but in accordance with the different structural possibilities of French syntax. Table 1 contrasts Denison's typology for English with the typology proposed for English and French in this study. In the following sections we will characterize the lexical source construction and the grammaticalized constructions that have developed from them via reanalysis, referring to existing descriptions of formal and semantic differences between these constructions in the literature, supplemented with our own observations about the English and French data. The constructions are distinguished according to the different grammatical functions the type nouns (help) express in them. Purely pragmatic-semantic distinctions pointed out in the literature are viewed as different contextualizations of one functional structure.

Denison's (2002) typology for English	This study's typology for English and French
binominal construction	head of binominal
	<i>quantifier</i>
postdeterminer construction	complex determiner
nominal qualifier construction	nominal qualifier
	<i>attributive modifier marker</i>
semi-suffix construction	semi-suffix
	<i>postnominal modifier marker</i>
adverbial qualifying construction	qualifying particle
discourse marker construction	discourse marker
	<i>quotative/onomatopoeic marker</i>

Table 1. Comparison of typologies

4.1. Binominal construction with *sort* / *genre* as head

With their full lexical weight, *sort* and *genre* can be used in various types of NP - simple and, and complex and with various functions - head and postmodifier - in these NPs.

(6) J'aime toujours, mais je change **de genre** maintenant, me dirigeant plus vers du heavy. (AdoJ).

'I still like [it], but I change genre now, directing myself more to 'heavy'.

(7) Je lirais bien la suite. Je suis fan **du genre**. (AdoJ)

'I'd like to read the rest. I am a fan of the genre.'

(8) I even want to know **what sort of gum** you chew. (StR)

(9) There's **two sorts of insurance**: CDW (collision damage waiver) and LDW (liability damage waiver).

(10) **What sort of symptoms** have people experienced when they have started the pill? **What sort of side effects** are there? (StR)

(11) Ça peut paraître étrange mais mes tattoos, aussi petits soient-ils pour l'instant, m'ont fait oublier la plupart de mes défauts physiques, .. peut-être parce que ... le corps devient **un genre nouveau d'oeuvre d'art**, (AdoJ)

'This may appear strange but my tattoos, however small they may be for the moment, have made me forget most of my physical flaws, ... perhaps because the body becomes a new genre of work of art'

The core lexical sense of *sort* and *genre* is that of 'subclass', "a class of things that have particular features in common and that belong to a larger group of related things" (Sinclair et al 1987:1391), but some other lexical senses occur as well, such as 'individual', as in *a good sort, un type bien*.

It is the complex NP with type noun (TN) referring to a subclass as head and modified by *of* / *de* and a second noun (N2) designating a superordinate class that is the source of the grammaticalized uses that we focus on in this article. As both nouns have their full lexical weight, we refer to this complex NP with Denison (2002: 2)'s term "the binominal construction" whose syntactic structure is parallel in English and French, except that any modifiers present precede the nouns in English but typically follow them in French, as illustrated in (10) and (11). These structures can be represented as follows:

(12) English: determiner [(+ modifier) + *sort* / head + *of* + (+ modifier) + N2]

(13) French: determiner [+ *genre* / head (+ modifier) + *de* + N2 (+ modifier)]

Premodifiers of the type noun (TN) pertain to the subclass as such, and the TN collocates with a small set of typical adjectives such as *rare, special, nouveau* ('new') (11), and specific sets of determiners such as *what* (8, 10 and 11) / *quel* and cardinal numbers (9). These all point to implied taxonomies of subtypes. Binominal constructions inherently have generic reference and are used in discourse contexts concerned with subclassification and taxonomizing.

4.2. Quantifier

In Present-day English and French, TNs are also part of quantifiers. In the most common subtype, the TN combines with *all / tout*, as in

(14) ... it takes up less room than buying **all sorts of hair appliances** (StR)

(15) Nos hôtes ont fourni **toutes sortes de bonnes idées** sur ce qu'il faut faire et où aller.

'Our hosts provided all sorts of good ideas on what to do and where to go'

([http://www.tripadvisor.fr/Hotel_Review-g181779-d1509936-Reviews-Blue Haven B B-Parksville Vancouver Island British Columbia.html](http://www.tripadvisor.fr/Hotel_Review-g181779-d1509936-Reviews-Blue_Haven_B_B-Parksville_Vancouver_Island_British_Columbia.html))

In English, this quantifier use is the earliest reanalysis of the binominal construction, appearing c1380 for *kind* (Denison 2002) and c1550 for *sort* (Brems & Davidse 2008). In this reanalysis, the TN was demoted from head function to the determiner zone, and the universal quantifier sense of *all* in the binominal construction shifted to a 'many' sense in the quantifier construction. An example such as (16) gives an idea of how this reanalysis may have come about.

(16) The viij day of August was bered the nobull kyng Edward the vj., and vij yere of ys rayne.; and at ys bereing was the grettest mone mad for hym of ys deth as ever was hard or sene, boyth of **all sorts of pepull**, wepyng and lamenting.. and furst of alle whent a grett company of chylderin in ther surples, and clarkes syngyng,, and then father's bedmen,, and then ij harolds,, and then a standard with a dragon,, and then a grett nombur of ys servants in blake,, [...] (PPCEME, Machyn 1553-1559)

In (16) *all* can be read as quantifying over all social classes of people – a reading which is supported by the summing up of all the classes and ranks represented at the funeral. At the same time, it illustrates how such NPs may pragmatically invite an inference of a great quantity in an absolute sense: the funeral was attended by 'very many people'. Examples (14)-(15) above are not primarily concerned anymore with the systematic subclassification of *hair appliances* or *idées* ('ideas'), but with referring to 'very many' *hair appliances* and *ideas*. In these 'large quantity' semantics, a notion of 'variety' may remain present to varying degrees as a semantic submotif. This makes these TN uses similar in meaning to quantifiers such as English *various* and French *divers*, which are the result of grammaticalization from adjectives describing 'difference' (cf. Breban 2008). In other words, what was an invited implicature of 'large quantity' in the head use (16) has semanticized (Traugott 2010) and has become the conventionalized meaning of the uses in (14)-(15). As the shift is from describing subtypes to expressing abstract quantificational meaning on an implied cardinality scale, this is a process of grammaticalization. Syntactically, the quantifier uses need to be parsed as:

(17) quantifier: *all sorts of / toutes sortes de* [head: *hair appliances / idées*].

The process of change can be summarized schematically as:

stage 1: relative universal quantifier *all / tout* modifying TN used as head

stage 2: pragmatic inference: 'all types of' implies 'a lot of instances'

stage 3: (hyperbolic) absolute quantifier meaning 'many'

In earlier stages of English, the TN could also be singular, e.g. *to extirpate all sort of passion or concern for anything* (PPCEME, Burnet 1680). The number incongruence between the quantifier and the TN overtly reflected the demotion of the TN from head status and its decategorialization as part of the grammaticalization process. In contemporary French, similar decategorialization reflexes are found: strings such as *tous genre de*, e.g. *tous genre de réceptions* (www.zonepac.com/cl/ct/serv10/1.html - Canada), and *tous / toutes sorte de*, e.g. *tous sorte de radars* (www.rueducommerce.fr/index/tous%20sorte%20de%20radars), *Toutes Sorte De Patentes* (<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Toutes-Sorte-De-Patentes/374360618042>) are common on the Internet.

The conventional association of quantifier meaning with fixed lexical chunks subject to different degrees of entrenchment suggests that their formation also involves lexicalization (Ramat 1992: 553-554). In Present-day English, *all sorts of* manifests the quantifier meaning more strongly than *all kinds of*, while *all types of* has not yet acquired lexicalized quantifier status. *Collins COBUILD English Language Dictionary* (1987: 1391) ascribes quantifier meaning only to *all sorts of*, glossing it as “a large number of different things or people” and listing *many* as a synonym. In French also *toutes sortes* is the most entrenched quantifier. Internet searches using Google reveal that *toutes sortes de* comes first with an impressive 28,100,000 hits, while *tous genres de* is only a very secondary runner-up with 2,850,000 hits, and *toutes espèces de* only chalks up a marginal 402,000 hits.

Quantifier constructions with TNs also emerged in negative contexts, in which the absence of any quantity is referred to, as in

(18) Then wash the curd till it be as white and cleane from **all sorts of notes** as is possible. (PPCEME, Markham 1615)

(19) He had **no sort of virtue**. (PPCEME, Burnet 1683)

(20) (...) en songeant aux générations plus jeunes pour lesquelles «cette grande lueur à l’Est» a perdu **toute espèce de signification**. (FT)

‘by thinking of the younger generations for which “this big light in the East” has lost any kind of significance’

(21) Car ils n’avaient absolument **aucune espèce de chance** ... (FT)

‘Because they had absolutely no kind of chance’

(22) Contrairement à ce qui est arrivé aux femmes paysannes, les entreprises n’ont dû supporter **aucun genre de répression** pour parvenir à leurs fins. (http://www.genreenaction.net/spip.php?page=imprimer&id_article=6489)

‘In contrast with what has happened to peasant women, enterprises have not had to undergo any sort of repression in order to arrive at their ends’

In these uses, *all* (18) and *tout* (20) retain their universal quantifier semantics, but the meaning resulting from negating the presence of ‘any’ instantiation of the abstract or concrete things (referred to by the second noun) is to indicate in an emphatic way that there is ‘zero’ quantity of them. This meaning of ‘zero’-quantity is also expressed by quantifier TN constructions with *no* in English (19) and *aucun* in French, as in (21) and (22), in which the emphatic zero-meaning receives further contextual support from *absolument*. Such negative quantifier constructions were common in Middle and Modern English, as testified to by a separate entry in the *Oxford English Dictionary* (1933), but their use has much decreased in Present-day English. In the *Frantext* data, quantifier uses with *aucun* are common with *sorte* and particularly with *espèce* (21).

An Internet search confirms that *aucune espèce d(e)* leads with 2,492,000 hits against *aucune sorte d(e)* scoring 1,622,000 hits (results obtained with Google). No uses with *genre* expressing a quantifier function in NPs were found in our *Adojeunz* data.

4.3. Complex determiner

Complex determiners consist of a primary determiner followed (e.g. *these same*) or preceded by a secondary determiner (e.g. *such a*) which “help[s] single out or quantify the referent of the construction in relation to some context” Bache (2000: 235). The postdeterminer, or complex determiner, use of TNs was first discussed by Denison (2002, 2005), who restricts it to examples with plural demonstrative pronoun, singular TN and plural N2, as in (23)

(23) I mean I don't associate you with uh you know one of **these sort of skills** like like driving (ICE-GB quoted in Denison 2005: 3)

For Denison this number incongruence is the strongest argument in favour of considering this use as a distinct construction, even though he (2005: 11) ultimately leaves open the question of whether it constitutes a separate construction or is just a variant of the head noun use. He further characterizes postdeterminer TNs as being phonologically reduced and having an anaphoric discourse function similar to predeterminer *such*.

Following Breban and Davidse (2003), De Smedt, Brems & Davidse (2007) propose a functional definition of complex determiners with TNs. Functionally, they express a distinctive phoric or deictic meaning and formally, they are characterized by specific syntactic behaviour, which fundamentally distinguishes them from head uses such as (9) above, *There's **two sorts of insurance***.

(24) By worse I mean disgusting such as what the german cannibal did. **Those sort of ppl** do these type of things (StR)

In (24), *those sort of* functions as a complex determiner and as a whole points back to properties such as ‘disgusting’ characterizing the people referred to. It is characteristic of complex determiners with TNs that they can be substituted for by complex determiners in which *such* precedes *a* or the zero-determiner: *such people* (Denison 2005: 6, Mackenzie 1997: 89). The structural parsing of constructions with complex determiner is:

(25) complex determiner: *those sort of* [head: *people*].

which is fundamentally different from that of binominal constructions, as represented in (12), in which the TN is the head. Semantically, complex determiners as in (24) mean ‘such’, signalling to the hearer that the characteristics identifying the specific type of people referred to have to be retrieved from the co-text, in (24) the preceding sentence containing ‘disgusting’ and a reference to cannibalism. They have a procedural, text grammatical value, which makes the process of their derivation one of grammaticalization. Diachronically, they can be assumed to have come about by functional reanalysis of the binominal construction. The functional motivation of this reanalysis is a shift from generic reference to well-defined subclasses that are part of

“the world’s inherent structure” (Langacker 2002: 3) (as in 9) to a local, more ad hoc generalization set up contextually in the discourse by the speaker (as in 24).

Under this definition, the complex determiner may include both singular TNs (following a plural primary determiner as in (24) or a singular one as in (26)) and even plural TNs as in (27).

(26) ... a man I can trust and believe in. It takes time to find **that sort of man**, but he is worth the wait. (www.forums.plentyoffish.com/16073117dating Postpage4.aspx/)

(27) It was once home to Ernest Hemingway, Tennessee Williams and John Audubon. **These sorts of people** are still here ... (CB - Times)

If there is number incongruence as in (24) and example (28) with *genre*, this is an overt sign of decategorialization of the TN, demoted from head function, but it is not criterial to the recognition of the postdeterminer function of the TN string. Note that the complex determiners with French TNs can be systematically substituted by *tel*, e.g. *de telles conneries* in (28).

(28) Après, on se scandalise que le créationnisme gagne du terrain, mais quand on fait passer **ces genre de conneries** pour des prédictions valables (www.comlive.net/Honte-A-Tf1-Honte-A-Mary_line)

‘Then, people are shocked that creationism is gaining ground, but when they allow that sort of stupidity to pass for valid predictions’

The instructions given by complex determiners with *sort(s) of / genre(s) de* for the contextual retrieval of defining qualities of the referent(s) can not only be anaphoric but also cataphoric (as in 29), and may even not involve an antecedent or postcedent in the strict sense at all but a more general cohesive relation. Such ‘non-phoric’ complex determiners typically have *what / quel* as a primary determiner and have the implication of referring to something or someone that is not worthy of being categorized as an instance of the type designated by N2, e.g. *quelle sorte de parents* in (30).

(29) Ou tout simplement tes cousins ou **ce genre de trucs qui essayent de t'enlever ton maillot à chaque fois**. (AdoJ)

‘Or simply your cousins or this sort of things which try to pull off your costume on every occasion’

(30) Quatre heures de retenue. Pour absence injustifiée; sans même relever votre inqualifiable impolitesse. Je me demande **quelle sorte de parents vous avez !** (FT)

‘Eight hours of detention. For unjustified absence, not to mention your unspeakable impoliteness. I wonder what sort of parents you have!’

4.4. Nominal qualifier

The qualifying use of TNs in the NP is the only one that is unanimously recognized besides the head use. Its non-head status and its hedging semantics have been pointed out by Kruisinga (1932), Bolinger (1972), Huddleston & Pullum (2002), Aijmer (2002) and Denison (2002). Qualifying uses in general have a hedging function or approximator sense in that they tone down degree of membership of some category. This may variously contextualize as a marker of lexical imprecision or humor / irony, or as a warning of a style shift (Aijmer 2002: 195-196).

- (31) The itchinness could be **some sort of reaction**, hayfever tablets usually (StR)
 (32) Got these pumps, they had them in **a sort of zebra print** too (StR)
 (33) J'étais pas un fan absolu de Michael Jackson, mais je lui reconnais un certain talent, et ça fera **un genre de vide** à tout le monde de parler de lui au passé. (AdoJ)
 'I was not an absolute fan of Michael Jackson, but I credited him with a certain talent, and it will be a sort of emptiness with everybody talking about him in the past'
 (34) **Un genre de masturbation mentale collective** "ouais Adojeunz ça pue ici ..."
 (AdoJ)
 'A sort of collective mental masturbation "yeah Adojeunz it stinks in here"'

In this use too we see cases of gender incongruence, as in examples such as

- (36) J'y vois **une genre de** belle pétition vidéo sur l'état du monde.
 (citizen.nfb.ca/node/23901&term_tid=54-76k)
 'I see a sort of nice video petition on the state of the world there'

As we are dealing with Internet data, the question might be raised whether examples such as (36) are not simply grammatically wrong. We searched the Internet with Google for random combinations of *genre* followed by a feminine noun that could be expected to trigger typical qualifying uses. We noted the number of occurrences with both feminine and masculine determiner, and found that the feminine form often predominated, e.g. *une genre de suite* / *un genre de suite*: 493 – 70; *une genre de thérapie* / *un genre de thérapie*: 208 – 142; *une genre de réplique* / *un genre de réplique*: 116 – 10. This argues for the view that we are basically dealing with a motivated pattern of change here, rather than just agreement 'mistakes'. In addition, it can be noted that gender agreement with N2 is well-established in more formal registers, with examples like *un espèce de crétin* attested in *Frantext*, in which *un* agrees with masculine *crétin*, not feminine *espèce*. The fact that the TN no longer determines the gender marking is a sign of its decategorialization.

This third reanalysis, and grammaticalization, of the binominal construction is commonly accepted to be enabled by bleaching of the lexical 'subtype' meaning into the pragmatic sense of 'peripheral membership' (Denison 2002).

4.5. Attributive modifier marker

English TN-expressions can also be part of a descriptive premodifier of the N2 functioning as head. The adjectival premodifier pertains to N2 (Quirk et al. 1972: 930, Halliday 1994: 195), while the TN seems to serve as a kind of degree modifier which typically emphasizes the quality in question. It is phonetically reduced and backgrounded vis-à-vis the prosodically prominent attributive adjective.

- (37) This is but **a scandalous sort of an Office**. (PPCEME, Farquhar 1707)
 (38) Being **an accommodating sort of bloke**, he let me take the car around the paddock at Silverstone. (CB - UK magazines)
 (39) It's **a cool quirky kind of song** (<http://www.garageband.com/song/reviewshtml?%7Cpe1%7CS8LTM0LdsaS·hYVmxaw-68k>)

As stressed by Bolinger (1972: 32), reference is not to generic subtypes of e.g. ‘office’, ‘bloke’ or ‘song’, as in the binominal construction, but to instances or qualitative variants with these type specifications. This instantial reference can be tested for by the possibility of inserting an indefinite article in front of N2. In older examples like (40) an article is often present in front of N2 (Kruisinga 1932: 396). The structural parsing of attributive modifier uses is as follows:

(40) determiner: *an* [modifier: *accommodating* + *sort of* [head/N2: *bloke*]]

By contrast, head noun uses in which the TN is premodified by a qualitative adjective, e.g. *un genre nouveau d'oeuvre d'art* (9), are parsed as determiner + *genre* / head + modifier + *de* + N2.

This construction was popular in Early and Late Modern English, but in Present-day English it has collocationally narrowed down to some typical patterns like the attribution of a character trait to a person, as in (19).

In French, the attributive modifier use appears to be close to non-existent. At most a few uses can be found in which the head status and generic reference of the TN appear to be attenuated, as in (41)

(41) *la charade incite à un genre très subtil de commutation.* (FT)
‘the charade elicits a very subtle sort of commutation ‘

We believe that this is due to the fact that adjectives tend to follow rather than precede the head noun in French NPs. This blocks the possibility of reanalysing the TN as a marker suffixed to the adjective. However, as we will see in 4.7, French has compensated for this by developing specialized patterns in which the TN is in postnominal position.

4.6. Semi-suffix use

Like the attributive modifier marker, the semi-suffix use attaches to descriptive premodifiers and the whole NP describes an instance, not a type. However, the premodifiers can not only be adjectives (42), but also nouns (43-44) or nonce expressions that can be rather elaborate (45). The TN-string functions as a subjectified marker indicating that the preceding (nonce) expression has to be interpreted as a subjective classification by the speaker of the instance referred to. It also indicates that this classification is approximative in some way because it is imprecise, ironic or an unusual creative description. In this respect it resembles the qualifying use.

(42) **Medium-long blondney brownny sorta hair** (StR)

(43) A white coat from Camden ... with ... **a trapezium sort of shape.** (StR)

(44) Black skinny jeans, **Black patent jazz sorta shoes**, pastel blue tee, black card, ... (StR)

(45) This was on a terrible day and in a **“one hand for the egg sandwich, and one hand for yourself”, sort of spot.** (CB - Times)

Just like the attributive modifier use, the TN-string is phonetically non-salient, but it appears to have even stronger enclitic status, which may be marked by hyphens as in a *European-typa film* (www.hexmaster.com/goonscripts/s08e16) or by putting the nonce expression between inverted commas as in (45). It also often appears in

coalesced spelling, e.g. (42, 44), even though coalesced spelling is also found in qualifying uses, as it is typical of any routinization process (see De Smedt et al. 2007 and Joseph 2007). For all these reasons, Denison (2002) labelled this use the semi-suffix construction. It seems to be a further development of the attributive modifier marker but it also shows partial semantic analogization with the nominal qualifier.

French semi-suffix uses with *genre* did not occur at all in our data. As noted for the attributive modifier use, the sequence *genre of* + modifier + N2 cannot be re-analysed into a pattern in which *genre of* is suffixed to the modifier.

4.7. Postnominal modifier marker

As we saw in sections 4.5 and 4.6, the structure ‘descriptive modifier + TN + *of* + N2’ created the possibility for the string ‘TN + *of*’ to be reanalysed as a suffixal marker of the descriptive modifier, on which it conferred degree modification or approximative value. This is in keeping with the English NP’s potential to accommodate very extensive premodification of the head noun, exploiting all the possibilities of various pre-head modifiers, and their submodifiers, in the prenominal dependency structure. Favouring postnominal descriptive modifiers, the structure of the French NP does not offer these specific possibilities of reanalysis. It is not surprising, however, that it has exploited the postnominal position to express comparable discourse functions.

In postnominal position, we find *du/le/Ø genre* + adjective, or nominal or phrasal apposite:

(46) Je songe m'en faire une, mais très discrète, **du genre noire et marron foncée**. (AdoJ)

‘I’m thinking of making one, but a very discreet, black and dark brown sort of one’

(47) quant au père, **le genre avec des auréoles que je trouve un peu glauque** (AdoJ)

‘as for the father, the type with halos that I find a bit shady’

(48) une déco basé sur des objets lumineux **genre coupe de champagne, paille** (AdoJ)

‘a decoration based on bright champagne glass, straw sort of objects’

These are clearly routinized, entrenched patterns (Haiman 1991) in which *genre* is bleached to different degrees of its ‘subclass’ sense. They fulfil discourse functions comparable to English attributive modifier marker uses (46) and semi-suffix uses (48) with *sort of/sorta*, as brought out by the English glosses. The examples in which an expression is introduced by *genre* only seem most delexicalized and grammaticalized: *genre* marks an ad hoc typification provided by the speaker. Voghera (forthc: 10ff) has pointed out the exploitation of similar formal and functional patterns in Italian, e.g.

(49) [...] la guerra divenne una guerra di civiltà, una guerra **tipo Crociate** (A. Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere*, 1937).

‘[...] the war became a war of civilization, a Crusade-like war.’ (Voghera forthc: 9-10)

She notes that such contexts bridge towards the decategorialization of (*del*) *tipo* (*di*) and its reanalysis as a preposition meaning ‘like, such as’.

(50) una seconda umiliazione, **tipo '66** (B. Mussolini, *Il popolo d'Italia* 1915)

‘a second humiliation like ’66’ (Voghera forthc: 11)

This development is also found with *genre* in French (cf. Mihatsch 2007: 236), as illustrated by (51) and (52).

(51) Rencontrer plein de nouveaux gens ..., ne penser a rien, danser n'importe comment sous l'emprise d'un peu trop d'alcool, partir dans des délires démentiels entre ivrognes, se faire un jeu de société **du genre burger quizz ou taboo**, se déchaîner a un concert... (AdoJ)

‘To encounter lots of new people, not to think of anything, to dance no matter how under the influence of a bit too much alcohol, to go into demented deliriums amongst drunks, to do a boardgame like burger quiz or taboo, to let go at a concert’

(52) Rêve (sic) les plus fou? J'en ai tellement, **genre devenir Astronaute**... (AdoJ)

‘Craziest dreams? I have so many, such as becoming an Astronaut’

In sum, to express discourse functions similar to the English semi-suffix use, French exploits expressions introduced by *genre* in postnominal position. The postnominal modifier pattern has produced a grammaticalization path yielding a preposition reading of *genre*, of which there is no counterpart with English TNs.

4.8. Qualifying particle

From qualifying nouns in their scope (section 4.4), TN-strings extended their approximator semantics to adjectives (53, 54), numbers (60), verbal predications (55, 56, 61, 62) and even whole sentences (57, 63). In these uses, the semantics expressed by these various categories can be qualified as approximate or imperfect in relation to the instances being depicted (Quirk et al 1972: 452; Huddleston and Pullum 2002: 623-624; Bolinger 1972: 223; Aijmer 2002: 49; Margerie 2010). In some cases, they can also be used as degree modifiers (Quirk et al 1972: 452, Margerie 2010). According to Denison (2002: 12), this shift came about by extension of the syntactic scope of the TN-string from modifying nouns to modifying other categories. As the categories involved in this scope extension can all be modified by adverbs, Denison called this new use the “adverbial construction”. To foreground the semantics shared with the nominal qualifier more, we will refer to it as the “qualifying particle”.

(53) Does it look OK or **sorta blotchy**? (StR)

(54) im almost **sort of glad** so many others are feeling how i do (StR)

(55) Yeah thinking about it as well I **sorta had a thing** a bit like a Rachel/Ross (StR)

(56) It **does.. sorta**. The last glowie in multiple objective/glowie maps does SHOW on the map..but you still need the right floor..and to have the glowie. (boards.cityofheroes.com/archive/index.php/t-293965.html)

(57) Is it a compiled language? **Well, sort of**. (StR)

(58) j'ai un percings [sic] TROOOOP bo sur la lèvre **genre bleu** pis vert (AdoJ)

‘I have a TOOOOO beaut piercing on my lip sort of blue green’

(59) elle était **genre super belle** dans mon échelle de super beauté féminine (AdoJ)

‘she was sort of super beautiful on my scale of super female beauty’

(60) Où est ce que je peux trouver des tapis de souris pas cher ? (**Genre 1€**) (AdoJ)

‘Where can I find inexpensive mouse pads? (Sort of 1€)’

(61) Au début, je voulais **genre faire des fiches sur tout** mais je suis vite redescendue sur terre! (<http://edp.ipbhost.com/lofiversion/index.php/t83358-50.html>)
'In the beginning, I wanted to kind of make files on everything, but I quickly came back to earth!'

(62) en voyant mes cheveux elle s'est **genre exclamée** : "en 30 ans de carrière, j'ai jamais vu ça". (www.madmoizelle.com/forums/forum-coiffure/13794-special-cheveux-epais.html- 53k)

'on seeing my hair she sort of exclaimed: "in a career of 30 years I've never seen this"

(63) Attends elle va revenir sousou tu vas voir! - **Oui Oui genre!** (<http://www.comlive.net/sujet-134631-2166.html>)

'Just you wait, you'll see that she'll come back all tippy! – Yeah yeah, right!'

As qualifying particles, *sort of/sorta* and *genre* are found basically modifying the same grammatical categories, as illustrated by (53 - 63) above. In its formal realization, *genre* is different in that, having broken free of nominal dependency structure, it is no longer followed by the particle *de* in contrast with *sort of/sorta*. One semantic difference is that the degree modifier uses show different tendencies. *Sort of/sorta* is typically used as a downtoner, "suggesting an incomplete or low degree" (Quirk et al 1972: 452), as in (54) and (56). *Genre*, by contrast, often invokes an assumed norm with reference to which the force of the quality or predicate is heightened, as in the 'booster' uses found in (59) and (62). As to sentential uses, *genre* often conveys sarcasm or irony in a way that *sort of/sorta* do not, as in (63).

4.9. Discourse marker

Although the definitions of discourse markers are very diverse, there is general agreement on the point that they have little to no propositional meaning. Instead their semantics are procedural, providing "instructions to the hearer about how to interpret [the utterance] rather than designating a specific concept" (Fraser & Malamud-Makowski 1996: 864-865). According to Traugott & Dasher (2002), they "signal an aspect of the speaker's rhetorical stance toward what he or she is saying, or toward the addressee's role in the discourse situation" (2002: 152). They show connections between what is being said and the wider context, thereby transcending phrase and clause boundaries.

The discourse marker use *sort of/sorta* and *genre* probably developed from their qualifying particle use by semantic bleaching and blurring of scope boundaries (Denison 2002). (Inter-)subjectification probably also played a role as they signal speaker attitude as well as speaker attention to the hearer's face (Traugott & Dasher 2002).

Both *sort of/sorta* and *genre* are used to mark elements of information structure such as the focus (Margerie 2010: 327), e.g. (64) or the framing topic (65).

(64) But then I **sorta** saw a flower. (StR)

(65) avec la pression on partait vite en live, **genre** un jour après les partiels anniversaires d'une copine ou (sic) bouffait au resto une bonne pizza, et on discutait sur le fait de pleurer devant un film (AdoJ)

'with the pressure we quickly left live, sort of a day after the partial birthday of a girl friend or ate a good pizza in the restaurant, and we discussed the fact of crying at a film'

They also convey speaker attitude (66) and speaker-hearer interaction (67), which in French often conserve elements of the heightened value expressed by the discourse particle uses from which they derive. With *sort of/sorta*, by contrast, the discourse markers often shade into hedgers conveying tentative and non-face threatening attitude, which in turn may shade into filler-like uses (Aijmer 2002: 188), as in (68).

(66) Pas de souci, en plus ce jour la j'avais eu plein de RDV client important du coup j'avais sorti le costard Armani...super classe tralala, une ptite douche tralala, le parfum...enfin **genre** la classe quoi. (AdoJ)

'No worries, on top of that I had had lots of important customer RDV I had immediately taken out the Armani suit ... super class tralala, a little shower tralala, perfume ... in short, sorta class.'

(67) Euh moi aussi je dis ce que je veux!! Et **genre** vous m'insultez pas mais c'est limite (AdoJ)

'Erm me too I say what I want!! And sorta you don't insult me but it's close'

(68) () ^well I !don't think .^it's ^((**sort of** a)) . a com:plete con:cl\usion= you're **sort of** ^left with the - - you ^**sort of** [ə:m] – it's ^**sort** [ə?] an :end to a :story in a :w\ay= . you can ^just im'agine _these_ things_ going \on# it ^sort of !winds \up# (COLT, quoted in Aijmer 2002: 189)

Unlike *sort of/sorta*, (*du*) *genre* also occurs with the value of a conjunctive adverb meaning 'like, for instance', linking clauses to the previous discourse in terms of exemplification and specification.

(69) J'ai des potes arabes. **Genre** les mec il (sic) ont 17 ans il course un arabe de 14 ans et à 5 contre deux (je suis pas arabe mais défendre un ami c'est mal vu faut croire) (AdoJ)

'I have Arab buddies. Like the blokes they are 17 and they chase an Arab of 14 and 5 against two (I am not an Arab but apparently it's not done to defend a friend - one is made to believe)'

(70) Je suis pas méga fan de bière, **genre** j'en bois uniquement s'il y a que ça ou que j'ai méga soif (AdoJ)

'I'm not a great fan of beer, like I only drink it if there's nothing else or if I'm very thirsty'

(71) Ca peut faire très mal le Kendo...**Du genre**, la pointe de l'arme (de laquelle j'ai oublié le nom) qui se glisse sous la protection de la gorge (AdoJ)

'This can really hurt Kendo... Like the point of the weapon (whose name I forget) that slips under the head armour'

This specific use of (*du*) *genre* seems to derive from multiple sources. On the one hand, it is related to the exemplifying preposition use of *genre* that developed from the postnominal markers (see section 4.7). On the other hand, it is also part of the trajectory from qualifying particle to discourse marker.

The discourse marker uses of *genre* are more common and more diverse in the *AdoJeunz* data than in the *Discutons* sample, which suggests that teenage language is the primary locus of this innovation.

4.10. Quotative/onomatopoeic marker

Finally, TN-expressions can serve to frame a stretch of discourse as being reported speech or thought or onomatopoeic in nature, a use similar to other recent quotative markers such as English *be like* (Aijmer 2002). The shifts by which quotatives developed from *be like* and TNs appear to be motivated by their ‘similarity’ semantics: the quoted is ‘like’ (but not identical to) the ‘original utterance’ it re-enacts.

(72) I’ve neve s\een a ‘sortof# ^bottle ‘after :b\ottle# . **sort of** ^pop ‘pop p/opping#
 âll the t\ime# - - and ^everybody got :awfully dr\unk I rem/ember# (COLT, quoted in Aijmer 2002: 186)

(73) im just **being kinda** hey i can hear murkin
 (www.livejournal.com/users/andyhello)

(74) He **kinda went**, 'Yeah, I think so!' (www.rockconfidential.com/Testament.html)

English TN-quotatives are much rarer than *be like* or *go* and they were not attested in our Student Room sample.

By contrast, quotatives with *genre* account for 10% of our *AdoJeunz* dataset (as opposed to only 2.5%% in the dataset from the general forum *Discutons*). In the teenage data, the quotatives appear in a variety of different structural and semantic-pragmatic environments. ‘Core’ quotatives introducing direct speech are only found in the *AdoJeunz* data, not in the *Discutons* sample. As part of direct speech in its traditional sense, *genre* can function on its own as a quotative marker (75), or it may be used together with *être* (76) and *faire* (77). It is also found in contexts where a facial expression or a bodily gesture is interpreted as conveying a message (78). Finally, the quoted material is often inserted in apposition to nouns describing spoken or written messages such as *réflexions* in (79). In addition, *genre* may introduce onomatopoeia (80).

(75) Mais ma mère AHAH. **Genre**: "Ouais, comme là maintenant quoi! Un petit verre dans le nez, et on arrête pas de parler!" (AdoJ)

‘But my mother AHAH. Sorta : “Yes, what are we getting now! A small glass in the nose, and you do not stop speaking! ’

(76) elle **était genre**, "Oh, mon dieu, c'est mes reins? (dr-house.xooit.tv/t1843-Interview-de-Alloy.htm)

‘she was sorta “Oh my god, is it my kidneys?”’

(77) jme rapelle du gars qui chantait en italien et qui **faisait genre** c'moi le chef d'orchestre (AdoJ)

‘I remember the bloke who sang in Italian and who was sort of it’s me the conductor of the orchestra’

(78) Jle regarde en me marrant et lui me sort une tête **genre** : "Bah quoi"? (AdoJ)

‘I look at him having a great time and he pulls a face at me sorta: “What “?”’

(79) J'ose même plus en écouter pour pas me taper des réflexions **genre** 'Ho, elle rend hommage à MJ'... (AdoJ)

‘I don’t even dare listen to them anymore so as not to be hit with reflections like: ' Oh, she renders homage to MJ.’

(80) A la fin, quand l'Américain sort de son char XD comment on a rit avec le bruit vraiment con ahah. **Genre** "pouh !" (AdoJ)

‘At the end, when the American gets out of his tank XD how we laughed with the really stupid noise ahah. Sort of ”pooh!”’

We can conclude that teenagers lead the way in the development and spread of innovative quotative markers with *genre*. The *genre*-quotatives used by French teenagers seem to have a sociolinguistic function comparable to English teenage quotatives such as *go, be like, be all* (e.g. Tagliamonte & D’Arcy 2004) as a shiboleth marking teenage social identity.

5. Discussion and conclusions

The aim of this study was to describe the advanced grammaticalization of French type noun *genre* and to arrive at a comparison with English *sort of/sorta*. We expected to be able to capture these changes at their forefront in teenage language. Given the non-availability of sufficiently extensive corpora of teenage language, we turned to the Internet for data collection, more particularly to teenage forums, which contain informal peer-peer dialogue with many features of spoken language.

	Total		Binominal		Post-determiner		Nominal qualifier		Postnominal marker		Qualifying particle		Discourse marker		Quotative	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
AdoJ	514	100	9	1.5	179	35	18	3.5	46	9	154	30	58	11	50	10
Disc	525	100	6	1	355	68	39	7	41	8	54	10	17	3.5	13	2.5

Table 2: Distribution of different TN uses over French teenage forum data (*AdoJeunz*) and adult forum (*Discutons*) data

If we compare the relative frequencies of each construction type and the proportions of NP-internal and NP-external grammaticalized uses of *genre* in the samples from the teenage and adult forums (Table 2), our expectation that teenage language is the most innovative is amply confirmed.

The *binominal* construction occurred in comparable small proportions in the teenage (2%) and adult (1.2%) datasets. Clearly, *genre* is rarely used to realize generic reference and the taxonomizing of subtypes in either dataset. Postnominal markers are also used in similar proportions by the teenagers (9%) and adults (8%). As we saw in section 4.7, they are not all equally delexicalized and grammaticalized, with some uses still rather close to the lexical meaning of *genre*. The *complex determiner* is by far the largest portion (68%) of the adult uses of *genre* but it accounts for only 35 % of the teenagers’ uses. This use, which creates generalizing cohesive relations, referring to an exemplificatory antecedent, is arguably the most formal of all the grammaticalized uses of *genre*. In their study comparing the relative frequencies of the different uses of English *sort, kind, type* in the Times and in London teenage language, De Smedt, Brems & Davidse (2007) found that the complex determiner use predominated by far in the newspaper data. Its usefulness to personal argumentation, and its more formal character, probably explain its predominance in *Discutons.org*. *Nominal qualifying* constructions, in which *genre de* is a premodifier of N2, are less common in both the teenage (3.5%) and adult data (7%). But in the teenage data, this small fraction of 3.5% increases exponentially with the *qualifying particle* use to 30%. The reason for this discrepancy lies, in our view, in the strong specialization in specific uses manifested by the main French type nouns with grammaticalized uses, *sorte, espèce* and *genre*. *Sorte* and *espèce* are not available as qualifying particles, but *genre* can take on this function and it does so with the high relative frequency of 30% in our teenage sample. *Discourse particles* are somewhat less frequent in the forum

data, 11% in the teenage and 3.5% in the adult data. This may be because their most typical locus is real spontaneous dialogue, which forum writing is only an approximation of. However, with both of these extra-NP uses it is clearly the teenagers who take the lead in terms of frequency and variety of uses. *Quotatives* account for a considerable portion (10%) of the teenage sample, but are marginal (2.5%) in the adult data. This is not surprising as innovative quotatives have been identified as a typical area of rapid change in the language of teenagers (see section 4.10).

The distribution of the *NP-internal* and *NP-external* grammaticalized uses is particularly revealing. With the adults the NP-internal constructions predominate with 84%, while with the teenagers the NP-external uses have a majority of 51%. Clearly, strong innovation, detachment from NP-structure and creative semantic shift, are very much associated with the teenage data. In the adult data, there is for instance a reluctance to use *genre* without determiner in the clearly decategorialized form that is found in the most innovative construction types, viz. qualifying particle, discourse marker and quotative. The adults' rather conservative trajectory on these paths of change seems to be guided by Haspelmath's (1999) maxims of Social Success and Conformity. By contrast, the teenagers' progressive trajectory is motivated by the maxims Extravagance ('be noticed') and Conformity; i.e. be (at least) as extravagant as your peers are. The highly grammaticalized and decategorialized extra-NP uses of *genre* are as such a marker of social identity of teenagers in the French-speaking world. By pursuing this path of fast change, teenagers are leading the way in making at least one type noun in French available as a qualifying particle, a development that failed to take place with *sorte* and *espèce*. They are also developing the discourse marker uses, with speaker-related, interactional and cohesive meanings. And that typical indexical feature of teenage language, the innovative quotative, is also currently mainly realized by *genre*. In the French-speaking world, *genre* thus carries an unusually high symbolic value as a marker of teenage identity, and this has resulted in remarkably fast and productive grammaticalization paths.

The unusual pace and productivity of the grammaticalization of *genre* in French comes out clearly when we compare the *AdoJeunz* data for *genre* with the *Student Room* data for *sort of/sorta* (Table 3).

	Total intra-NP		Binominal		Quantifier		Post-determiner		Nominal qualifier		Semi-suffix		Postnominal marker	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
AdoJ	252	49	9	1.5	0	0	179	35	18	3.5	0	0	46	9
StR	280	70	29	7.25	47	11.75	73	18.25	109	27.25	22	5.5	0	0

	Total extra-NP		Qualifying particle		Discourse marker		Quotative		Unclear		Grand total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
AdoJ	262	51	154	30	58	11	50	10	0	0	514	100
StR	120	30	75	18.75	45	11.25	0	0	0	0	400	100

Table 3: Distribution of lexical source construction and grammaticalized uses of TNs in teenage datasets: French (*Adojeunz*) and English (*The Student Room*)

The NP-internal versus NP-external uses are instantiated as 49% versus 51% in the *Adojeunz* sample, but as 70% versus 30% in the *Student Room* sample. The *Student*

Room results suggest that teenage forum data as such may not even be the most congenial environment for highly grammaticalized, NP-external uses. In the spontaneous dialogue data of the “Bergen Corpus of London Teenage Language” (COLT), proportions of 26.8% NP-internal versus 73.2% NP-external uses were found for *sort of/sorta*, *kind of/kinda* and *type of/typa*. In other words, it may well be that an even larger proportion of qualifying particles, discourse markers and quotatives with *genre* will be found in spontaneous French teenage talk than was the case in the *Adojeunz* forum data.

The extraordinary boom of innovative grammaticalized uses of *genre* in teen talk has had the effect of quickly filling the gap that existed between the advanced grammaticalization of English type nouns *sort* and *kind* – and to a lesser degree *type* – and the slower grammaticalization of French type nouns, which until recently had remained restricted to NP-internal uses. As we have seen, *genre* has even developed more readings and uses than its English counterparts, such as prepositions and conjunctive adverbs meaning ‘like’. In addition, the grammaticalization of *genre* in teenage language appears at present a case of strong specialization: its advanced paths of change were not followed by *espèce* and *sorte*. By contrast, English *sort*, *kind* and *type* followed basically the same grammaticalization trajectories but separated by time lapses (Denison 2002, De Smedt, Brems & Davidse 2007, Brems & Davidse 2009). In all these ways, the grammaticalization of *genre* in teenage language is shaping up as an exceptional case raising many questions. The most obvious is whether it will extend to informal spoken language at large. With the reanalyses of *genre* motivated by very similar functional principles as these of *sort of/sorta* and *kind of/kinda* there seems to be no inherent reason why it should not. On the other hand, innovations originating in teenage language tend not only to boom, but they also often display a boom-and-bust cycle and they do not always take hold in the language community at large. Whatever the future will reveal about this, we hope to have shown that, to study what will happen with the grammaticalization of *genre* in the (near) future, Internet data will continue to form one of our privileged data sources.

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