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# Type noun uses in the English NP

## A case of right to left layering\*

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This article addresses the relatively neglected question of identifying and characterizing the various uses of *sort*, *kind* and *type* in the English NP. It does so on the basis of close analysis of a set of data extracted from the *Times* subcorpus of the COBUILD corpus. The proposed description refers to the general functions fulfilled by elements of the NP, which, from right to left, form an objective — subjective continuum. At the same time, we characterize the specific grammatical, collocational and discoursal patterns that can be observed to shape each use in the empirical data. In this way, we distinguish, besides the generally recognized head and qualifier uses, also modifier, postdeterminer and quantifier uses. We then consider these intra-NP type noun uses as a possible case of Adamson's (2000) hypothesis, which correlates subjectification with leftward movement in the NP.

**Keywords:** English NP, type nouns, functional approach, layering, grammaticalization, subjectification

### 1. Introduction

Three nouns expressing the meaning of 'type, subclass' are very common in Present-day English: *sort*, *kind*, and *type*. These type nouns have recently enjoyed a surge of interest because they illustrate far-reaching degrees of grammaticalization and subjectification. The uses that have attracted most attention are qualifiers, i.e. hedges or downtoners, as in (1)

- (1) But the wedding dance, **a kind of courtly disco**, is a nonsense and the fight choreography carries no weight. (CB – Times)<sup>1</sup>

and discourse particles as in (2),

- (2) Uh, he's particularly in Don Juan he's **sort of** bringing out the, er, bitterness of **sort of** family life, I mean his wife, er, left him on, er...

(quoted in Martin 1982)

which contrast very clearly with the original head use illustrated in (3).

- (3) Pop is **the favourite type of recorded music**, followed by rock. (CB – Times)

In (3) *type* still has its 'subclass' sense: *the favourite type of recorded music* describes *pop* in terms of its position as a subclass within the general class of 'recorded music'. In (1), by contrast, *a kind of* does not refer to a specific subtype of 'courtly disco', but conveys the speaker's ironic (negative) evaluation of this specific piece of choreography. In (2), which was uttered by a student to a lecturer, *sort of* is sprinkled through the discourse as a marker of the student's tentativeness and awe vis-à-vis the lecturer. As observed by Traugott (forthcoming), the above examples illustrate the development from objective to subjective to intersubjective meanings which type nouns have undergone. In (3) *type* has an objective descriptive sense, in (1) *a kind of* conveys subjective speaker attitude, while in (2) *sort of* contributes to realizing the specific intersubjective tenor of the speaker-hearer relation.

Less attention has gone so far to all the various functions besides head use which type nouns can fulfil within the NP. The qualifier use, illustrated by (1) above, is the only one that has been pointed out unanimously in recent studies (e.g. Bolinger 1972; Quirk et al. 1972; Tabor 1994; Aijmer 2002; Denison 2005). In this article we will argue that type nouns function in many more constructional positions than head and qualifier within the NP. In fact, they have uses associated with all the main prenominal functions found in NP-structure from left to right, viz. quantifier (i.e. primary determiner), postdeterminer, attribute, and classifier. In this respect, type nouns constitute an interesting, and so far neglected, example of layered uses ordered from left to right in the NP.

We are using the concept of 'layering' here in Hopper and Traugott's (1993) technical sense of coexisting synchronic uses reflecting historical changes. We assume that the various non-head uses came into being through diachronic processes such as reanalysis and grammaticalization. Denison (2005) has proposed hypotheses about the diachronic processes that led from the head uses to some new intra-NP uses such as postdeterminer and qualifier. Moreover, in our synchronic data we have found transitional phenomena such as examples with two different but related readings, which suggest that all the other uses also result from — still ongoing — processes of change.

With the notion of 'right to left layering', we refer to Adamson's (2000) hypothesis that the right-left ordering from objective to subjective meaning in the English NP (e.g. Halliday 1994:190–191) also operates as a principle of semantic change

and structural reanalysis. If prenominal adjectives acquire progressively more subjective uses over time, this will be accompanied by movement to a more leftward position in the NP (Adamson 2000). For instance, *very* was first used as a qualitative adjective meaning 'true', before it developed more subjective intensifying uses, as in *that very just man* (Adamson & González-Díaz 2005). Adamson's theory has not yet been applied to type nouns, even though it is an obvious hypothesis to consider in view of their striking spread from right to left in English NP structure.

The aims of this article are twofold. Firstly, we will propose a description of all the type noun uses found in the English NP. Our characterization will refer to the general functions that prenominal elements can fulfil in the NP (Section 2), but will relate these to the more specific grammatical, collocational and discoursal patterns that can be observed in an extended data set, which will be described in Section 3. In the subsequent sections, we will typify the different type noun uses, roughly observing their right to left ordering: head (4), modifier (5), postdeterminer (6), qualifier (7) and quantifier (8). In Section 9, we will consider all these intra-NP type noun uses as a possible case of Adamson's hypothesis which correlates subjectification with leftward movement in the NP.

## 2. Left-right order and the subjective-objective cline in the English NP

It has long been recognized that the premodifiers and head of the English NP embody a continuum from subjective to objective meaning (e.g. Quirk et al. 1972; Halliday & Hasan 1976; Bache 1997). As first suggested by Bache (1997:159–162) and further elaborated by Breban (2006:29–31), this continuum can be thought of in terms of three main structural-functional zones, concerned with determination, modification and categorization respectively.

At the leftmost end of the NP there is the 'determination' zone. Its elements specify how the instances of a type referred to by the NP can be related to the information about deictically anchored referents which the hearer has already deduced from the discourse so far. Determiners give either identifying or quantifying information in a broad sense (Bache 1997; Langacker 1991; Davidse 2004). Structurally, they occur either in the core, or primary, determiner position, or as pre- or postdeterminers, as illustrated in Figure 1.

As argued by Breban (2006:104–5), determining elements are intersubjective in that they "crucially involve SP/W's [speaker/writer's] attention to AD/R [addressee/reader] as a participant in the speech event" (Traugott & Dasher 2002:22). They are "devices by which speakers take responsibility for success in communication and seek to meet the hearer's attempts to integrate new information with information that is already accessible" (Blakemore 1990:364, quoted in Traugott

	<i>those</i>		<i>problems</i>
<i>most of</i>	<i>those</i>		<i>problems</i>
	<i>the</i>	<i>whole</i>	<i>problem</i>
predeterminer	determiner	postdeterminer	categorization

Figure 1. Determination zone in the English NP (Bache 1997:171)

1995:45). By their choice of determiners, the speaker negotiates the tracking and interconnecting of discourse referents by the hearer.

To the right of the determination zone, we find the prenominal modification zone, whose general function is to attribute properties and qualities to the entities referred to by the NP. As pointed out by Quirk et al. (1972:924), attributes can describe either more objectively recognizable properties or more subjectively accessible properties, which are a matter of the speaker's opinion. At the extreme left of this zone, modifiers can occur which heighten features inherent in the nominal description to their right, as in *sheer hard work*. Sinclair et al. (1990:69) refer to these strongly subjective, stance-conveying uses as 'emphasizing' adjectives.

At the right end of NP-structure there is the head noun, which designates the type of which the referent of the NP is an instance (Langacker 1991). This general type may be further circumscribed by classifying modifiers, as in *electric train* (Halliday 1994:184–6). Head and classifier together form the 'categorization' zone of the NP, which is generally accepted to be the most objective zone of the NP.

As reflected in this survey, pre-head functions are typically realized by adjectives. However, as will be shown in Sections 4 to 8, type nouns have also come to be associated with the various prenominal functions.

### 3. Data set

In De Smedt et al. (2007) different type noun uses both internal and external to the NP were investigated in two maximally opposed registers: the professional written prose of the *Times* subcorpus of the COBUILD corpus and the informal casual conversation of teenagers of the COLT corpus.<sup>2</sup> De Smedt et al. found that the relative frequencies of the type noun functions peaked for different clusters in the two data sets. In the *Times* data, the overwhelming majority, 1671 out of 1717 tokens, or 97.5%, were internal to the NP, whereas in the COLT data, uses not tied to NP-structure were the most frequent, viz. the adverbial use, as in *I actually sort of like the constitution*, and the discourse marker use illustrated in (2) above. These figures confirm the tenet that spoken language, and particularly informal conversation, is the locus of the most radical linguistic change (Halliday 1978:92).

By the same token, we assume the position that the *Times*, with its specific informative and evaluative goals, constitutes a linguistically creative context in its own right, which also promotes the establishment of grammaticalized uses, but ones involving more subtle extensions from the original lexical uses. The question remains how representative the *Times* data are of the written register in general. No doubt, the collocational patterns and discourse schemata shaping the distinct type noun uses are at least partly embedded in cultural tropes and forms of intertextuality specific to the *Times*. At the same time, spot checks in other types of written data revealed similar collocational and textual patterns.

The present study uses mainly data from the *Times* subcorpus of the COBUILD corpus, but examples are also cited from other subcorpora of the COBUILD corpus and from the Internet<sup>3</sup> if they provided clearer illustrations of issues being discussed. The *Times* data set consists of exhaustive extractions of *kind(s)/sort(s)/type(s)/of/-a*, which were sorted by De Smedt, yielding 1717 usable tokens. They were entered into the computer programme *Abundantia Verborum*, which combines tools for classifying data and performing statistical analyses on them. *Abundantia Verborum* helped us to develop a fine-grained description, by constantly shunting between general functional classification and observation of qualitative and quantitative features of the data. We first classified all examples in terms of their general functions, such as head, postdeterminer or qualifier, and then added more specific observations such as frequent collocates or textual features such as anaphoric versus cataphoric use. In some cases this led to adjustment of the classification, as with the recognition of the quantifier use of *all sorts/kinds of*, which had eluded us (De Smedt et al. 2007) before. It was through repeated cycles of (re-)classification and subclassification of the data that we arrived at the description of the distinct prenominal functions of type nouns, and their specific grammatical, collocational and discourse features, which we present in Sections 4–8. The statistical tools of *Abundantia Verborum*, then, calculated the relative frequencies of the different constructions, which are brought into the discussion of the diachronic processes of change linking the constructional layers in Section 9.

## 4. Lexical head use

### 4.1 Semantics and grammatical features

The main lexical meaning of type nouns in Present-day English is their ‘subtype’-meaning, in which *sort*, *kind*, *type* “refer to 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). Within the NP, a lexically full type noun can function either as postmodifier, as in

- (4) As they were strolling along, with Towser ahead, they saw what they supposed was **another dog of a different kind**, come out of the brush ...  
(<http://www.threerivershms.com/bch9.htm>)

or as head, e.g.

- (5) I really can't stand **that kind of dog**. (CB – UK spoken)

The latter use, which Denison (2005:2) refers to as the 'binominal' construction is the source from which the extended uses developed. It contains two nouns used with their full lexical weight, designating subordinate and superordinate types of entities. Functionally, both the type noun and the second noun fall within the 'categorization' zone of the NP (see Section 2), which provides the type specifications for the entity referred to. This structure can be represented as:

[det] + [type noun/head [postmodifier: *of* + N2]]

The reference of the construction as a whole is determined by the head, and is thus to the subordinate subtype, e.g. the malignant variety of dog in (5).

These NPs hence always have generic reference, i.e. to the whole subclass. As we will see, this is the crucial semantic feature distinguishing the lexical head use of type nouns from all their pre-head uses. The referents of the binominal NPs are situated in what Langacker (1991:64) calls the 'type space' of interpretation, i.e. not the ordinary world containing concrete spatial entities, but a universe which consists of taxonomies of (sub)types. In (pseudo-)scientific contexts, we find binominal NPs referring to species, substances (6), social groups, etc.

- (6) The late-17th century console has an elaborate top inlaid with agate and pietra paesina, **a rare type of marble** ... (CB – UK magazines)

In economic texts and publicity contexts, reference to brands and types of product is common, e.g.

- (7) I have a brewery that produces **a special kind of beer**. (CB – UK ephemera)

Example (8), finally, illustrates a subcategorization set up by the individual speaker, which still represents a fully generic taxonomy applying to the whole class of comedians:

- (8) Funny Bones was based on the premise that there are **two sorts of comedian**, the born and the made, the physical and the verbal, the classic and the topical. (CB – Times)

If an adjective occurs in front of the type noun, it applies to that noun. In other words, such NPs have to be parsed as:

[determiner] + [adjective + type noun/head [ *of* + N2]]

Classifying modifiers actually name the subtype referred to by the binominal NP, as in (9)

- (9) ... their records started at 54.5 kilograms per tusk weight, obviously based on **the East African type of elephant**.

(<http://www.hemans.dsl.pipex.com/book/ch4a.htm>)

whereas attributive modifiers ascribe a quality to the subtype, as in *a special kind of beer* (7).

The fact that the type noun heads designate real subclasses also determines number concord: if such NPs are plural, then they have a plural type noun (Denison 2005:2). This is rather obvious with quantifiers — *\*There are two sort of comedian* is clearly ungrammatical — but binominal NPs with demonstratives also intrinsically have number concord,<sup>4</sup> e.g.

- (10) Six Kinds of United States Paper Currency. The origin and nature of **these kinds of currency** will be considered below

(<http://www.friesian.com/notes.htm>)

As we will see in Section 5, examples such as *these sort of skills* (example 21 below) instantiate another, viz. the postdeterminer, construction.

#### 4.2 Uses in discourse

A first striking feature of the head use of type nouns in actual discourse is that they collocate strongly with a small number of adjectives (Lavrysen et al. 2005:21–22). Statistically significant measures of the collocational strength between *sort*, *kind*, *type* and qualitative adjectives can only be obtained by searching the whole COBUILD corpus (56 million words), rather than just the *Times* subcorpus. Table 1 lists the combinations with the highest t-scores, i.e. the most productive collocates, and those with the highest MI-scores, i.e. the most characteristic ones<sup>5</sup> (Clear 1993).

Quality attribution to subclasses appears to cluster into a small number of entrenched tropes, the most productive of which is that of NPs introducing a subtype as *a new kind/type of* N2, which is found across diverse registers such as exposition, e.g. *a new type of drug dependant* (CB – UK books), and advertisements, e.g. *a new type of moisturizer* (CB – UK magazines). Less productive but more strongly mutually predictive collocations are formed between the three type nouns and



**Table 1.** Qualitative adjectives collocating strongly with type nouns in the COBUILD corpus: t-scores and MI-scores

	<i>sort</i>	<i>kind</i>	<i>type</i>
<i>new</i>	–	t: 7.609029 MI: 2.087857	t: 7.609631 MI: 3.276862
<i>wrong</i>	t: 4.794976 MI: 2.849236	t: 5.958343 MI: 3.847990	t: 2.874971 MI: 3.460646
<i>special</i>	t: 1.059093 MI: 0.628294	t: 6.293476 MI: 3.608554	t: 3.555527 MI: 3.609174

**Table 2.** Postdeterminer adjectives collocating strongly with type nouns in the COBUILD corpus: t-scores and MI-scores

	<i>sort</i>	<i>kind</i>	<i>type</i>
<i>same</i>	t: 16.590861 MI: 4.538585	t: 14.682351 MI: 4.794077	t: 8.320150 MI: 4.569594
<i>another</i>	t: 2.918740 MI: 2.413420	t: 5.857278 MI: 2.413420	t: 6.478682 MI: 3.946413
<i>other</i>	t: 4.734505 MI: 1.177891	t: 7.893388 MI: 2.247227	t: 5.791469 MI: 2.775304
<i>certain</i>	t: 2.293993 MI: 1.565995	t: 7.194468 MI: 4.409504	t: 6.426916 MI: 5.651321
<i>particular</i>	t: 2.773770 MI: 1.950961	t: 5.510896 MI: 3.868379	t: 6.962922 MI: 6.031486

*wrong* and *special*, with the latter typically associated with publicity contexts, as in (7) above.

We also commonly find postdeterminer adjectives (Halliday 1994:183), which “help single out or quantify the referent of the construction in relation to some context” (Bache 1997: 235; see also Section 2). Very strong collocations are formed with typical postdeterminers such as *same*, *other*, *certain*, *particular*, etc., which on the whole have even higher t-scores and MI-scores than attributes such as *new* and *wrong*, as shown by Table 2.

Of course, it has to be noted that postdeterminers are chosen from an intrinsically smaller set than attributive modifiers. Still, the generic reference realized by binominal NPs clearly often involves singling out subclasses for particular attention (e.g. *certain*, *particular*) or setting off subtypes against other subtypes, as in (11).

- (11) Like **any other kind of wave**, from ocean swells to radio waves, sound waves are a means of transferring energy from one place to another.  
(CB – UK magazines)

Secondly, because of their binominal structure, these NPs allow in principle for textual foregrounding (Hopper 1991) of either the subtype or the superordinate, which is mirrored by their two possible stress patterns, with primary stress either on the type noun (or its determiner or premodifier) or on N2 (Aijmer 2002:176f). Corresponding to this, two types of general discourse schemata can be distinguished. Firstly, these NPs can be used in contexts in which — aspects of — the subclass are presented as new. The speaker may identify the subclass as such, putting the stress (indicated by uppercase) on the classifier, as in *the EAST AFRICAN type of elephant* (9). Alternatively, s/he may present quantitative or qualitative aspects of the subclass as new, as in *the premise that there are TWO sorts of comedian* (8) and *a SPECIAL kind of beer* (7). Secondly, the superordinate category may be the salient information: it may clarify a less well known subtype by providing its better known hyponym (cf. Aijmer 2002:176), as in *pietra paesina, a rare type of MARBLE* (6). In all these cases, the binominal construction occurs in discourse contexts that are concerned with generic taxonomization over a longer stretch of text than just that NP itself.

## 5. Modifier uses

In the second construction that we distinguish the type noun has clearly been demoted from head to modifier status. More specifically, it is part of a premodifier of the head, as in

- (12) It's a **cool quirky kind of song**, ...  
 (<http://www.garageband.com/song/reviewshtml?%7Cpe1%7CS8LTM0LdsaShYVmxaw-68k>)
- (13) I think only one is a **love typa song**.  
 (<http://www.westlife.com/ubbthreads/showthreaded.php?Number=3853027-100k>)

As pointed out by Kruisinga (1932:391), the shift from head to modifier status is made possible by the special nature of the particle *of*, which “can sometimes make a preceding noun (instead of the following noun) into an adjunct” (Kruisinga 1932:391).<sup>6</sup>

Characteristic of these modifier uses is that they are themselves preceded by an element such as an adjective or noun which is “related to N rather than *sort*, both in semantics and in concord” (Quirk et al. 1972:930). Thus, both *quirky* and *love* in (12) and (13) apply to *song*, and have to be parsed as

[det] [modifier + type noun *of*] [head/N2]

This ‘transfer’ (Halliday 1994:195) of the adjective or classifying noun contrasts with the premodification of type nouns used as heads, as in *a rare sort of marble*, *the East African type of elephant*, discussed in Section 4.1. The crucial difference is that the latter refer to ‘subtypes’, while NPs such as *a quirky kind of song*, *a love type song* refer to ‘instances’, corresponding to the description given by premodifier plus N2. Within them, we will make a further distinction between attributive (Section 5.1) and semi-suffix (Section 5.2) modifier uses, which should, however, be thought of as cline-like rather than discrete, as illustrated by the parallels between examples (12) and (13) just discussed.

## 5.1 Attributive modifier use

### 5.1.1 *Semantics and grammatical features*

In attributive modifier uses, the type noun is always preceded by an element describing a quality of the instance referred to by the NP as in (12). Kruisinga (1932: 396) pointed out a formal test for recognizing the modifier status of the type noun, viz. the possibility of inserting an indefinite article in front of N2,<sup>7</sup> which is however only possible if N2 is singular and count, as in

- (14) He is **a good sort of a fellow** after all.  
*(The Last Chronicle of Barset, by Anthony Trollope (1867), quoted in Kruisinga 1932:396)*

This makes it very clear that reference is made not to a subtype of the general type ‘fellow’ but to a concrete instance of *a fellow*.

### 5.1.2 *Uses in discourse*

Attributive modifier uses contrast with premodified head uses in terms of their lexical selection restrictions. As noted in Section 4.2, the latter tend to co-occur mainly with a remarkably small set of frequent adjectives such as *new*, *special* and *rare*. By contrast, the adjectives occurring in attributive modifier uses form a large set of very infrequent collocates, which also tend to be unusual in English usage as such.

One semantic motif is particularly prominent in the data, viz. the attribution of a character trait to a person, as in *a scattered sort of person*, *an accommodating sort of bloke*, *a clubbable kind of politician*, *a liberal, open-minded kind of daughter*, *a verbal type of poet*, *a paternalistic sort of chap*, *an odd sort of bod*. Other common motifs include the modification of abstract nouns, e.g. *a peaceful sort of sorrow*, *an innocent kind of hero-worship*, *an old-fashioned kind of truthfulness*, *a bleak kind of heroism*, and the premodification by unusual expressions of way, e.g. *in a moody-broody sort of way*, *in a magical half-heard kind of way*, etc. All in all, the

attributive modifier construction has a rather limited application in Present-day English. Only diachronic research can reveal whether this was always the case or is the result of recent specialization. In any case, the construction currently seems to be acquiring a metalinguistic value. As is the case with some qualifying uses (see example (1) above and Section 7 below), it signals, while assuming the posture of indicating that the words used are only approximate, that the epithets have been chosen with great care. Phonologically, the modifier status is reflected by the fact that *sort/kind/type* + *of* are non-salient, with *of* typically reduced to /ð/, which in informal registers, may be reflected by spellings such as *typa* and *sorter*.<sup>8</sup> It is the premodifying adjective that receives the primary stress. The next stressed element in the NP is N2.

## 5.2 Semi-suffix use

### 5.2.1 *Semantics and grammatical features*

In its semi-suffix use, the type noun is also part of a premodifier, but it follows either a classifying adjective (15) or classifying noun (16), or, more commonly, a longer expression, which may be a fixed (17) or a nonce expression (18).

- (15) You sorta remind me of how I was, like with **the European sorta look**, with the soccer shirt (<http://forums.ratedesi.com/archive/index.php/t-3137.html>)
- (16) when they just pick these little scenes and you do the whole frank and provocative movie on an intellectual level or on **a morality kind of level**, doesn't it make you sad that they just pick out these ... (CB – Times)
- (17) Apparently, her mother was **a keeping-up-with-the-Joneses sort of person** ... (CB – Times)
- (18) 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)

These longer expressions may be hyphenated, as in (17), or surrounded by inverted commas, as in (18) and are not readily parsed as a premodifier subordinated to the type noun. Rather, the type noun string is felt to function as an enclitic. The hyphen that is sometimes used between the descriptive material and the type noun string, as in *a European-typa film* (<http://www.thegoonshow.co.uk/scripts/string.html>), further emphasizes its clitic-like nature. For these reasons, Denison's (2005:4) term 'semi-suffix' is particularly apt for this use and will be adopted by us.

### 5.2.2 *Uses in discourse*

The intonation of the semi-suffix use is very similar to that of the attributive modifier use. There is primary stress on the initial lexical material and secondary stress

on N2; the type noun is not salient and *of* is reduced. The spelling *sorta/kinda/typa* is fairly systematic in informal registers, particularly on the Internet, but in more formal registers like our *Times* data, the ordinary spelling continues to be used.

The core value of the semi-suffix use is its indication of the approximateness of the preceding subcategorization. A straightforward illustration of this is

- (19) It's a **bluesy type of song**...

(<http://www.amazon.com/review/product/000AXWV36?showViewpoints=1-141k>)

in which the classification 'blues' is also hedged by the suffix *-y*. In most cases, the semi-suffix additionally functions as a pragmatic instruction to the hearer to provide a more precise category. For instance, the purely geographical information given by *European* in *the European sorta look* (15) is not the essence, but the hearer has to associate it, on the basis of contextual information and assumptions shared with the speaker, with a specific, recognizably non-American style of dressing. Likewise, the proper names of well-known personae, as in

- (20) Why paranoid people go on to see conspiracies at national level Bentall is not sure. 'You might find that the people who tend to follow **JFK kinds of theories** are those who are highly motivated to look for external causes to a

negative event (CB – Times)

have to be associated metonymically with typical events, products, etc. related to these cultural icons. *JFK kinds of theories* is obviously meant to be understood as 'conspiracy theories'. Note that, even though the semi-suffix use is primarily associated with the classifier function (see Section 2), it may also suggest qualities such as 'paranoid' in (20).

Lexically, the material found in front of the semi-suffix use is often unusual and characterized by linguistic creativity. The type noun string then functions as a metalinguistic marker. As we saw in Section 5.1, the attributive modifier use also tends to have unusual lexical items and the type noun strings following them a metalinguistic flavour, but both these features are pushed further in the semi-suffix use.

## 6. The postdeterminer use

### 6.1 Semantics and grammatical features

Only Denison (2005:2–3) has touched on the possibility of type nouns fulfilling the function of postdeterminer, as in

- (21) 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)

As formal properties he notes that the type noun is never focal — and hence phonologically reduced — and is always singular. In combination with plural determiners this leads to forms such as *these sort*, whose number incongruence seems to be offered as the strongest argument for viewing the postdeterminer use as a distinct construction. Its discourse function is characterized as anaphoric and analogic to *such*, but it is not explicitly elucidated in what way this differs from anaphoric binominal constructions. Denison (2005:2) leaves open the question whether the type noun is head or modifier and whether the postdeterminer use is really a distinct construction or a “reanalysis of the binominal” construction (2005:11).

It is not only the postdeterminer use of type nouns that has received little attention so far, but the postdeterminer function as such has been relatively neglected. Following up on the functional definition proposed by Halliday (1994), Breban and Davidse (2003) have argued that determiners and postdeterminers together form determiner complexes, which realize more intricate deictic meanings and phoric relations than simple determiners can express. This can be illustrated by *another* (whose functional unity is reflected in the orthography) in (22).

- (22) ... you can stuff your face with hot dogs and then follow them by a giant coke and then perhaps **another hot dog**. (CB – UK spoken)

Like the indefinite article *a*, *another* in (22) marks its nominal referent as ‘non-identifiable/new’, but in contrast with *a*, it also refers back to the previously mentioned instances of the type *hot dogs*. Likewise, in (23), *the* signals identifiability but adding *same* helps express the generalization about height covering the two instances previously talked about, *Lennon and Harrison*.

- (23) I say Lennon and Harrison were **the same height**...  
(<http://www.celebheights.com/s/George-Harrison-1708.html>)

We will argue that, with this functional approach, postdeterminer uses of type nouns can also be delineated systematically. To begin with, an explanation can be offered of the difference between a type noun used as head preceded by an anaphorical determiner (24) and a NP in which determiner and type noun together express a pointing meaning (25).

- (24) Proteroglyphs: ... Obvious examples of **this type of snake** are the cobras, ...  
(<http://venomous.com/physiology.html>)

- (25) It's a very selfish thing to do erm leaving your family and everything else to cope with everything. So mm really you know it's quite a he always came across as **that sort of man** anyway I didn't like him. (CB – UK spoken)

In (24), the NP *this type of snake* realizes generic reference; its determiner *this* points back into the discourse to identify the species *Proteroglyphs* as its antecedent. As observed in Section 4, NPs with type nouns used as head are structurally analysed as [determiner: *this*] + [head: *type* [postmodifier: *of + snake*]]. By contrast, in (25) the determiner complex *that sort of* as a whole points back to the property 'selfish' which characterizes the person referred to. The same anaphoric meaning can be expressed by other determiner complexes such as predeterminer *such + a* (Denison 2005:6; Mackenzie 1997:89); compare *he always came across as such a man*. The NP *that sort of man* thus has to be parsed as [determiner: *that sort of*] [head: *man*] and refers, in contrast with generic *this type of snake*, to a (new) instance, which is reflected, just as with the attributive modifier use, by the possibility of having *a* in front of N2, as in

- (26) ... coach K is an honorable man. He would not hold a rally to scapegoat anyone; he just isn't **that type of a man**.  
(<http://www.renewamerica.us/columns/gaynor/060912>)

A plural NP such as *these sorts of people* in (27) also points back to specific characteristics, viz. the implied colourful, bohemian and artistic nature of people like *Ernest Hemingway*, *Tennessee Williams* and *John Audubon*, and refers to new instances with these features ('such people').

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

A semantic component that is often added to the phoric relation is that of a local generalization, as in (28).

- (28) And to me Orlando Bloom is trying to be Johnny Depp, I mean they both have **the same sort of looks**.  
(<http://www.whimsical-strawberries.set/archives/00000049.html>)

Just like *the same height* in (23), *the same sort of looks* refers to a generalization over the looks of two previously mentioned individuals, but nuances the identity claim made somewhat. The generalization expressed by postdeterminer type nouns differs from the generic reference realized by type noun heads in that, firstly, the generalization is created in the phoric relation itself and, secondly, it is tied to specific instances, which gives it an ad hoc and local character. The referents of binominal constructions, by contrast, are subclasses and types that are part of "the world's inherent structure" (Langacker 2002:3). In (28) *the same sort of looks* does not

refer to a generic abstract concept of ‘(good) looks’, but to a contextual and ad hoc generalization based on the features shared in the eyes of that speaker by Orlando Bloom and Johnny Depp.

Another pragmatic-semantic component often associated with postdeterminer type nouns is size intensification,<sup>9</sup> which may be triggered if the head noun refers to a gradable entity, such as a sum of money (30–31) an emotion or disposition (29), a process or action (*this sort of protection*) or a quality (*that kind of beauty*).

- (29) She said: “I think the girls are amazing. There’s no way I could muster up **that kind of energy** during a Texas gig. (CB – Sun)
- (30) Gascoigne’s acquisition from Lazio involved a fee of £4.3m and it appears improbable that any manager ... would gladly approve **that kind of outlay** to change his address yet again. (CB – Times)
- (31) Killik said that the new low-cost dealing services would ‘squeeze’ some of the providers in the market. ‘Some may not wish to compete at **these sort of prices**. (CB – Times)

In (29), *that kind of energy* refers back to the “amazing” performance by the girls and the implied amount of energy involved. In example (30) *that kind of outlay* points back to £4.3m and contextually invites the hearer to infer (Traugott forthcoming) that this is too much. As shown by (31), in which the antecedent of *these sort of prices* is “low-cost”, the inference may also be that an amount is too small. The implicational chain leading to these uses, which account for about a third of the postdeterminer uses, seems to be: that kind of an entity > that amount of a gradable entity > a (too) large or small amount of a gradable entity.

We are now in a position to compare the description proposed by us with that of Denison (2005). We noted above that he tentatively posits a postdeterminer construction, the main formal evidence of which is the number incongruence between plural determiner and singular type noun, as illustrated in (21) and (31). We have approached the postdeterminer use of type nouns functionally and in analogy with postdeterminer adjectives, noting that they express referential meanings (such as phoric relation, contextual generalization, size implication). The expression of these referential meanings is not restricted to NPs with number incongruence in two ways. Firstly, examples (26), (29), (30) illustrate postdeterminer type noun uses in singular NPs. Secondly, even though number incongruence characterizes most plural NPs with demonstrative determiner and postdetermining type noun, thus reflecting the latter’s demotion from head status, it is not criterial to them, as illustrated by (27).



## 6.2 Uses in discourse

Most complex determiners with type noun include a phoric component, which may not only be anaphoric but also cataphoric, but a smaller portion is actually non-phoric. In this section, we will describe these three types as they could be observed in our data.

Cataphoric uses point forward to the characteristics of a postcedent which is expressed by a restrictive relative clause as in (32).

- (32) We have to develop exactly **the kind of deterrent strategy for biological weapons as has worked so well for nuclear weapons in the past.**  
(CB -Times)

Again, this referential meaning can also be expressed by *such*.

- (32') We have to develop exactly **such** a deterrent strategy for biological weapons as has worked so well for nuclear weapons in the past.

Cataphoric uses form the largest proportion of postdeterminer uses, viz. 478 out of 813, or 58.79%. The overwhelming majority of these, 465, is bound by *the*, as in example (32) above, 12 examples have *the same* and 1 *a*. Often, the postcedent described in the relative clause is a specific event, which forms the basis of the contextual generalization construed by the NP, but it may also be a more general description which as such defines the generalization expressed by the NP, as in

- (33) Ask Miss Demi Moore ... In America her latest movie, *The Scarlet Letter*, received **the kind of reviews that you could distil into pure sulphuric acid.**  
(CB - Times)

Many of the *Times* examples contain pointed comments about people and events phrased in carefully wrought wording. In these cases the postdeterminer construction functions as a marker of these stylistic effects.

Anaphoric uses account for 243 tokens, or 29.89%, of the postdeterminer class. The majority of these are bound by demonstratives, 146 proximal (*this* — *these*) and 83 remote (*that* — *those*), while 6 examples have *the same* and 8 a possessive determiner. The typical discourse contexts of anaphoric postdeterminer uses contain specific entity or event antecedents (see also Section 6.1), for which the head noun provides an appropriate categorization, e.g. *exposure* in (34).

- (34) There is no doubt that Tenovus benefited from the blaze of publicity its protest brought. **'That type of exposure ... has probably made us much better-known'**, Mr Phillips says.  
(CB - Times)

Non-phoric uses form only a small portion: 92 tokens, or 11.32%, of the total number of postdeterminer uses. Of those, 59 are bound by *any* or *some*, 30 by *what*, 1 by *whatever*, 1 by *a certain*, and 1 by *an unusual*. Even though no antecedent or postcedent is referred to, these determiner complexes still invoke a relation on which the generalizing and/or intensifying effect of adding a type noun-string operates. Interrogative *what* imposes on the determiner complex its basic sense of “variable” related to the “value” by which it is to be replaced (Huddleston & Pullum 2002:902). In an example like (35), the value corresponding to *what kind of message* (a ‘what-like’ message?) is a specific message with (implied negative) qualities the speaker first rhetorically asks the hearer to fill in, and then specifies him- or herself as *a symbol of male power*.

- (35) **What kind of message** is it giving women when they are banned from footwashing as a symbol of discipleship? It is turning it into a symbol of male power. (CB – Times)

In (36) *what kind of* invokes a delimiting scale: what is the upper limit of the load your car can take?

- (36) ... you need to check very carefully just **what kind of load** your car can take. (CB – Times)

Quantifiers such as *any* and *some* are typically used, as observed by McGregor (1997: 281–2), in reaction to contextual counterclaims, which also constitute a discursual relation. For instance, *lacking in any kind of accuracy* in (37) presumably reacts to the claims to great accuracy by the columnist in question.

- (37) An enraged Logan responded to the attack ..., saying her column was ‘totally lacking in taste and full of cheap gibes’. He also says ... that her column was ‘lacking in **any kind of accuracy**’ (CB – Times)

Determiner complex *what sort of* may also have the pragmatic effect of evaluating (Bolinger 1972) the referent as a poor instance of the categorization applied to it. As observed by Bolinger (1972:92), this type noun use represents a shift from “pointing to” to “pointing up” an instance of a type.

- (38) Why doesn’t your child live with you? ... **What sort of mother** are you anyway?  
(<http://www.questia.com/PM.qst?a=refresh&docId=0899319&type=book>)
- (39) **What kinda fool** am I?  
([lyricsplayground.com/alpha/songs/w/whatkindoffoolamivarious.shtml](http://lyricsplayground.com/alpha/songs/w/whatkindoffoolamivarious.shtml))

In (38) it is implied that the addressee does not deserve the name ‘mother’ (Bolinger 1972:32). Via metaphorization, this has developed further into an intensifying use

(Bolinger 1972:32), as in (39), where *kinda* emphasizes the negative features that are inherent in the semantics of *fool*.

In conclusion to this section we can note that our quantified data analysis has revealed very strong cooccurrence patterns between function words and specific textual patterns, i.e. what Firth (1957:13) referred to as colligational relations: demonstratives with anaphoric uses, definite article with cataphoric uses, and *some/any/what* with non-phoric uses. This remarkable colligational clustering strongly defines the use in discourse of postdeterminer constructions with type nouns.

## 7. Nominal qualifier use

### 7.1 Semantics and grammatical features

As mentioned in the introduction, the qualifying use of type nouns in the NP (example 1) is the only one that is unanimously recognized besides the head use. Its non-head status and its hedging semantics have often been commented on (Kruisinga 1932; Bolinger 1972; Tabor 1994; Huddleston & Pullum 2002; Aijmer 2002; Denison 2005; Margerie 2005). The structural analysis generally suggested for an example like *a sort of pleasure* (Kruisinga 1932:396) is

[determiner: *a*] [modifier: *sort of* [head N: *pleasure*]]

However, in our view there are serious arguments to analyse these NPs, in which the head noun may take an optional article, e.g. *some kind of an artist*, as:

[qualifying complex determiner: *some sort of*] + [determiner: *an*] [head: *artist*]

Firstly, as observed by Margerie (2005) for qualifying constructions with *some*, the idea that *some* is the determiner of the whole NP and applies to an instance of the type designated by the head noun is hard to maintain for some examples, which become very awkward with the type noun-string removed, e.g.

- (40) Is it really **some kind of sex test Driven to Distraction** :: ?is it really some sex test Driven to Distraction. (CB – Times)

Secondly, in qualifying NPs with *a* and uncount head noun, viewing only *a* as determiner leads not just to questionable but to ungrammatical results, e.g.

- (41) It's **a kind of magic** (CB – Times) :: \* it's a magic.

Therefore we conclude that the determiner is part of the qualifying unit, which can be viewed as a more subjective counterpart of the determiner complexes discussed in Section 6.

## 7.2 Uses in discourse

Functionally, the qualifying unit not only realizes reference to an instance of the type designated by the head noun (which may be count or uncount), but it also expresses subjective meanings, allowing the speaker to position him- or herself with regard to how the instance relates to that categorization (Denison 2005). In this section, we will survey the most important subjective and metalinguistic values, as they could be observed in the *Times* data.

The qualifying construction may have a downtoning function and soften the categorization used, as in (42).

- (42) She started off as a **kind of supergroupie**, but then he couldn't be without her. (CB – Times)

It may also be used humorously and ironically. The irony sometimes springs from an exaggerated or inappropriate categorization used by others, which the speaker reprises, prefaced by the qualifying construction, and thus relativizes, as in

- (43) One of them called optimistically for the enshrining of the World Cup triumph ... as **some kind of national treasure**. (CB – Times)

Alternatively, it is the speaker's own witty categorization that creates the irony: the qualifying string then announces this personal and sometimes rather sharp characterization, e.g.

- (44) But the wedding dance, a **kind of courtly disco**, is a nonsense ... (CB – Times)

At face value, the qualifying string conveys that the description is only approximate, but its real rhetorical value is often the opposite, viz. that the categorization is carefully chosen and worded by the speaker, as in (44). Qualifying uses of type nouns often have a metalinguistic value, typified by Aijmer as a warning of a style shift, or as a self-conscious marker of creative idiom or metaphor, which "enables the speaker to be creative, to use words in an innovative and humorous way, to borrow phrases belonging to literary or more formal style and to use a slangy turn of speech" (Aijmer 2002:195). For instance,

- (45) More than any other nation, the Scots regard the passing of the year as **some kind of baptism in booze** ... (CB – Times)

## 8. Quantifier use

As a final prenominal function, we distinguish the quantifier sense ‘many/much’ which the fixed expressions *all kinds/sorts/types of* may have in Present-day English, as in

- (46) In competitive dancing, they mark men and women separately and if one gets more marks than the other there is **all sorts of trouble**. (CB – Times)

The fact of a specific meaning being associated with a fixed lexical chunk suggests that this quantifier use came about through lexicalization, the “process by which new linguistic entities, be it simple or complex words or just new senses, become conventionalized on the level of the lexicon” (Blank 2001:1603 quoted in Brinton & Traugott 2005:21). This quantifier use is included in the *Collins COBUILD English Language Dictionary* (1987), where, interestingly, the different entries of *sort*, *kind* and *type* suggest that, depending on the specific type noun, a stronger or weaker quantifying meaning has to be ascribed to these fixed expressions. According to Sinclair et al. (1987: 1391), *all sorts of* “things or people means a large number of different things or people” and has *many* as synonym, but *all kinds of* “things or people means a great variety of different things or people” (1987:796), even though *many* is also mentioned as synonym. For *all types of* no quantifier use is posited. This suggests that the quantifying meaning of *all sorts of* is established most clearly, while the quantifier sense of *all kinds of* is less entrenched and that of *all types of* only emergent. We checked in the *Times* data whether this was supported by the relative frequencies of clear quantifier uses and did find that *all sorts of* came first with 48 tokens, whereas *all kinds of* was second with 10 tokens, and *all types of* third with 8.

## 9. Intra-NP type noun uses: A case of right to left layering?

In this final section we will focus on the interpretation of the intra-NP uses discussed in Sections 4–8 as synchronic layers resulting from diachronic change.<sup>10</sup> In Section 9.1, we will first summarize the diachronic hypotheses proposed by Denison (2005). We will then discuss the quantitative profiles of the six layers and the transitional phenomena between them and see to what extent these confirm Denison’s chronology. In Section 9.2, we will discuss in more detail the semantic and formal mechanisms of change which appear to link these layers, and how they relate to the principle of right to left layering.

### 9.1 The layering of intra-NP type noun uses

Denison's (2005:9) chronology only includes the type noun uses that he distinguished in his study, from which we further single out the intra-NP uses, viz. the binominal, postdeterminer and qualifier constructions. According to Denison, the postdeterminer use<sup>11</sup> was the first to derive — rather quickly — from the binominal construction: for *kind* it appeared about 40 years later (c1380) after its source construction, for *sort* it was over a century later (c1560), while with *type* the two constructions emerged at the same time (c1860). The qualifying use of *sort* and *kind* developed from the binominal construction at a later stage, at the end of the 16th century, and was also influenced by the postdeterminer construction.

This chronology can be related to the relative frequencies found for the three uses in our data (Table 3).

**Table 3.** Relative frequencies of intra-NP type noun uses in the *Times* data

	N	%
Head use	357	21.3
Modifier use	69	4.1
Attributive	42	2.5
Semi-suffix	27	1.6
Postdeterminer use	815	48.5
Qualifying use	303	18.1
Quantifier use	66	3.9
Head/postdeterminer	42	2.7
Head/modifier	8	0.5
Head/quantifier	10	0.6
Attributive/semi-suffix	2	0.12
Postdeterminer/qualifying	1	0.06
Attributive/qualifying	2	0.12
<b>Total</b>	<b>1675</b>	<b>100</b>

Head, postdeterminer and nominal qualifier uses predominate with 21.3%, 48.5% and 18.1% respectively. As increased frequency as such is seen as a symptom of grammaticalization, this is consistent with the diachronic development proposed by Denison, in which the postdeterminer use developed first from the head use, followed by the qualifier use. No diachronic hypotheses have been formulated about the attributive modifier, semi-suffix and quantifier uses, which are represented by small fractions in the data, 2.5%, 1.6% and 3.9% respectively.

In addition to the sets of examples corresponding clearly to the six constructional layers discussed above, the *Times* data also contained examples that are ambivalent between two readings. The following dual readings were attested

(Table 4): head/postdeterminer (H/PD), head/attributive modifier (H/AM), attributive/semi-suffix (Att./Ss), head/quantifier (H/Q), postdeterminer/qualifier (PD/Qual.) and attributive modifier/qualifier (AM/Qual.).

Table 4. Token frequencies of examples with two readings

	H/PD	H/AM	Att/Ss	H/Q	PD/Qual.	Att/Qual.	Total
<i>Times</i>	42	8	2	10	1	2	65

We will look more closely at the more frequent sets of dual readings constituting bridging contexts (Evans & Wilkins 2000), i.e. structurally ambiguous examples with two distinct readings which are, however, both supported by elements in the context.

Bridging contexts for which both a head and a quantifier reading are possible, e.g. (47), give an insight into this pragmatic-semantic shift: if ‘all’ possible subtypes are involved, then a natural implication is that there are ‘many’ instances.

- (47) Performers need to arrange specialist insurance against **all kinds of eventuality** to ensure that the band plays on. (CB – Times)

In time, the ‘many’ sense, which was at first only an associative pragmatic meaning, became a conventionalized meaning.

Examples such as (48) which can receive either a head or postdeterminer reading likewise show how this shift can come about.

- (48) Lee himself ... is to be seen in the crowd of onlookers that gather around the corpse, as if curious to see **what sort of plot** will sprout up around it. The seeds for a thriller, perhaps? (CB – Times)

In (48) *what sort of* can be interpreted as a head noun construction, inquiring about a real subclass of ‘plots’, a reading which is made plausible by the subsequent mention of *thriller*. One can also read the sentence with the type noun demoted and generic reference faded. *What sort of plot* then seeks to identify one instance of a plot, with *what sort of* to be filled in with specific properties of that plot.

As illustrated by (49), the shift from head to attributive modifier depends on the referential value of the type noun as reflected by its phonetic realization and the meaning of the adjective.

- (49) Leiths at Fyvie inherited a dreadful curse on the castle, ... which says the eldest son never inherits (**a pretty standard sort of curse** in the 16th century). (CB – Times)

If the type noun has head status and refers to a real subtype of 'curse', it will be read as *a pretty STANDARD SORT of curse*, with *pretty standard* ascribing a quality to the subtype. The construction can also refer to one instance of a curse, in which case the type noun string will be phonetically reduced, *a pretty STANDARD sort of CURSE*, and *pretty standard sort of* is an attributive modifier of that one curse.

From the qualitative and quantitative analysis (Table 4) of bridging contexts we can conclude that head/postdeterminer, head/quantifier and head/attributive modifier are the transitional zones associated most strongly with ongoing semantic extension and syntactic re-analysis.

## 9.2 Characterization of the layers and mechanisms of change

By way of conclusion, we will discuss the mechanisms of change linking the right-left ordered layers of type noun constructions.

Type nouns with their lexically full 'subclass' sense occurring as the head at the right end of NP structure seem to constitute a use that is somewhat in retreat. They account for only a fifth of all uses, and adjectives premodifying type noun heads are typically restricted to a few common collocates such as the qualitative adjectives *special*, *wrong*, *new*. Occasionally the subtype may be named by a classifying adjective as in *the East African type of elephant*.

Just to the left of the head use comes the semi-suffix use. The lexical material in front of the type noun has a primarily classifying function and consists mostly of unusual, longer expressions. Importantly, NPs such as *a keeping-up-with-the-Joneses-sort of person* refer to an instance of the subtype, whereas binominal constructions with classifier such as *the East African type of elephant* refer to the whole subclass. Obvious grammaticalization parameters apply to type nouns in semi-suffix use. They have been semantically and phonetically demoted from head status and they have decategorizedized, i.e. they have lost the typical properties of nounhood. As they display enclitic-like status, they qualify as a clear case of grammaticalization according to Lehmann (1985), who defines this process primarily as formal attrition on a cline from free word status over affix towards clitic status. The semi-suffix use also displays at least emergent subjective and/or metalinguistic meaning.

Next comes the attributive modifier use, which involves reanalysis of the head use through demotion of the type noun and promotion of the second noun to head. It has a qualitative adjective in front of the type noun, and the whole NP refers to an instance, a qualitative variant, not a generic class, as in *he is a clubbable sort of politician*. The adjectives used in this construction contrast strongly with the small set found in the head use, in that they are unusual adjectives which mostly occur just once in this construction in our data. The type noun string frames these



adjectives with hints of subjective and metalinguistic meaning, but less strongly so than in the semi-suffix use.

In the remaining three constructions the type noun has moved out of the central modification zone and into the determiner zone at the left end of the NP. The shift towards postdeterminer use, firstly, constitutes in our view a process of grammaticalization-cum-subjectification.<sup>12</sup> The type noun has delexicalized from the generic 'subtype' meaning towards referential determiner meaning, which, arguably, still reflects its source meaning in the notion of generalized reference that is often present. This has happened in contexts with remarkably fixed colligational relations, viz. of anaphora with *these/those*, of cataphora with *the*, and of non-phoric uses with *what/some/any*. We have a striking example here of the claim that grammaticalization takes place in very specific syntactic contexts (Traugott 1995:15). A number of Lehmann's (1985) grammaticalization parameters clearly apply. There is paradigmaticization, in that new members are added to the relatively restricted class of postdeterminers. The type noun and *of* function as one string and the strong cohesion between the primary determiner and type noun-string as determiner complexes can be viewed as coalescence. The subjectification involved in the development of postdeterminer uses is "from meanings situated in the described [...] external or internal situation" to "meanings situated in the textual situation" (Traugott 1988:409). Following Breban (2006), we also view this as a process of intersubjectification (see Section 2). Giving precise instructions for referent retrieval involves "meanings that explicitly reveal recipient design" (Traugott 2003:30).

According to Denison (2005), the nominal qualifying use resulted from syntactic reanalysis of the head noun construction, mediated by the postdeterminer construction. It is commonly assumed that this shift involves grammaticalization (Bolinger 1972; Denison 2005; Aijmer 2002; Margerie 2005). The syntactic reanalysis is enabled by bleaching of the lexical 'subtype' meaning into the pragmatic sense of 'peripheral membership'. With the latter there is clear pragmatic enrichment (Traugott 1988) as shown by the pragmatic values of irony, humour, metalinguistic framing, etc that can be conveyed. Coalescence (Lehmann 1985) effects in the form of phonetic attrition can also be observed in coalesced spellings and phonetically reduced type noun-strings. Subjectification has also been argued to be at work (Aijmer 2002), as well as the development of intersubjective pragmatic meaning (Traugott forthcoming). Nominal qualifiers are speaker-related, i.e. subjective, when they signal that the speaker is unsure, humorous or ironic about the categorization of some referent. The semantic prosody tends towards negatively evaluated collocates. Qualifier uses are also intersubjective in that such approximator semantics may show the speaker's concern for the face of the hearer or his or her effort to explain a less familiar item by classifying it as a non-prototypical

member of some category. Traugott (forthcoming) claims that such intersubjective meaning hardly ever becomes semanticized, but mostly remains pragmatic in nature. In qualifying uses subjectivity and intersubjectivity thus intersect in a number of ways and are difficult to tease apart.

The quantifier use, finally, is the result of lexicalization of the fixed chunks *all kinds/sorts/types of*. As such, it also forms a clearly recognizable layer. The shift from head to quantifier use is, like that to postdeterminer use, towards textually intersubjective meaning, as the identification and quantification of referential sets refers to the speaker-hearer exchange.

What conclusions can we draw, then, regarding the application of Adamson's (2000) leftward movement hypothesis to type nouns? As a diachronic principle leftward movement applies in general, as all re-analysed, grammaticalized and lexicalized uses developed from the head use, which is most rightward in NP-structure. However, the hypothesis cannot be verified in detail as Denison's (2005) diachronic hypotheses are presented as tentative and do not cover the attributive modifier, semi-suffix and quantifier uses. Synchronically, we do find extensive right to left layering in that the intra-NP type noun uses present themselves as specialized (Hopper 1991) uses linked to all main functions in the NP. The first leftward shift involves re-analysis of type noun heads as part of modifiers. The transfer of adjectives or other lexical material from applying to the type noun used as head to applying to the second noun in the attributive modifier and semi-suffix constructions reflects this leftward movement. With the functional-structural coalescence of the type noun string with the determiner in postdeterminer and qualifier uses, the type noun has moved up further to the left in NP-structure. As part of the lexicalized quantifier use, finally, it occupies the most leftward functional position, viz. that of the primary determiner. These uses also generally correspond to the more objective > more subjective > textually and attitudinally intersubjective continuum (Traugott 1988, 1995, 2003) that we expected to find in right to left order, thus bearing out Adamson's (2000) hypothesis.

## 10. Conclusion

At the outset of this study we identified the gap in the literature with regard to intra-NP uses of the three main type nouns. Yet, a fine-grained description of these uses is a precondition to the accurate historical reconstruction of their development and to variation studies — two types of investigation that type noun uses have attracted recently. In comparison with existing partial descriptions, we have introduced two descriptive heuristics that are relatively novel to this domain. Firstly, we have systematically linked the intra-NP type noun uses to the main functions

of the NP, which in English are ordered in left to right fashion: the quantifier, qualifier and postdeterminer uses fall within the general determiner function, the attributive modifier use relates to the attribute function, the semi-suffix use to the classifying function, and the binominal construction to the head use. While the type noun uses cover only a specialized, restricted part of these functions, this approach has nevertheless helped us to grasp the distinctness of the constructions which all have the surface form type N + *of* + N2. It is also in this general analytical sense that the six intra-NP uses constitute a case of right to left layering. Secondly, we have paid particular attention to the collocational phenomena in a broad sense (collocational range, semantic prosody, colligation) which turned out to differentiate the six synchronic layers of different type noun uses in the NP vis-à-vis each other. Particularly with a view to this second aspect, we believe that working with our extended but coherent data set from the *Times*, which we knew favoured intra-NP uses, was an advantage. In this way, we hope to have contributed to further research and debate on this set of elusively subtle yet also very patterned data.

## Notes

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1. The examples marked with (CB) were extracted from the COBUILD corpus via remote log-in and are reproduced with the kind permission of HarperCollins Publishers. They are followed by the name of the subcorpus.
2. The *Times* subcorpus of the COBUILD corpus consists of 5,763,761 words collected between 1993 and 1995 from the newspaper *Times*. The COLT corpus, a constituent of the British National Corpus, consists of about 500,000 words collected in 1993 and contains spontaneous spoken conversation by 13 to 17-year-old teenagers.
3. Internet examples are quoted with their url. They were all last accessed on 17/01/2008, except for example (28), which was last accessed on 17/10/2006.

4. Our data show that very exceptionally in spoken language, the number concord principle may not be observed, as in: *it's a — we try to go for a range of people across a broad spectrum of different sort of disciplines, as it were*. (CB – NPR). It may be that the speaker occasionally overgeneralizes a property of the newer uses to the original use or gets confused in his online speech processing. In this example the most logical meaning of the type noun would seem to be the literal subclassifying one, but the speaker's tentativeness (cf. *we try to go, as it were*) may have led him to use the qualifying construction.
5. The scores for the type noun collocates were obtained within a span of 1:0 surrounding the type noun.
6. Other syntagms in English have also exploited the structural versatility of the schematic particle *of*, most notably, as also pointed out by Kruisinga (1932:391), complex nominals in which N1 designates a 'measure'. English quantifiers such as *(a) lot(s) of*, *(a) bit(s) of* derive from prior lexical uses in which the measure nouns functioned as head of the NP, as in *a lot of land*. A similar but still ongoing shift from head to modifier has led to a whole set of new quantifying expressions in English such as *heaps of* and *piles of* (Brems 2003).
7. Lavrysen et al. (2005) found that the variant with *a(n)* in front of N2 is now rather uncommon in English usage, even though it is still attested, as in *In Brisbane it was a funny sort of a game* (CB – Oznews).
8. In informal registers, these phonetic spelling variants are not consistently used with modifier uses, while, on the other hand, they are also found with head uses, as in *What **typa** shampoo do you use?* (<http://www.golivewire.com/forums/peer-btoooa-support-a.html>).
9. This quantitative implicature was first pointed out to us by Calcoen et al. (2003).
10. For a more detailed discussion of the transitional phenomena and mechanisms of change linking the layers, see Brems (2007:283–302).
11. It is not fully clear whether or not Denison (2005) restricts the postdeterminer construction to plural NPs, but as plural and singular uses can be expected to emerge at about the same time, this does not greatly influence the chronology proposed by him.
12. As noted by Traugott (forthcoming), subjectification and grammaticalization often go hand in hand.

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## Corpora and corpus tools

Abundantia Verborum.

Dirk Speelman

<http://www.ling.arts.kuleuven.ac.be/genling/abundant>

COBUILD: Collins Wordbanks *Online* English corpus

John Sinclair

<http://www.collins.co.uk/corpus/CorpusSearch.aspx>

COLT: The Bergen Corpus of London Teenage Language

Anna-Brita Stenström, Gisle Andersen, Kristine Hasund, Kristine Monstad and Hanne Aas

<http://khnt.hit.uib.no/icame/manuals/INDEX.HTM>

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