

## **The SKT construction in English: A corpus-based perspective\***

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**Kim, Jong-Bok and Grace Ge-Soon Moon. 2014. The SKT construction in English: A corpus-based perspective.** *Linguistic Research* 31(3), 519-539. The so-called SKT constructions in English involve *sort of*, *kind of* and *type of*. This paper looks into the grammatical properties of the constructions and discusses their four main uses: referential, qualifier, adnominal, and adverbial. Based on a corpus-based research of the constructions, the paper first reviews the syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic properties of these four uses and then discusses the properties shared among these four uses as well as the distinctive properties of each use. It also offers a construction-based view in accounting for how the mapping relations between form and functions in the SKT constructions have been changed in the present day of American English. (**Kyung Hee University · Dongduk Women's University**)

**Keywords** COCA, COHA, corpus, *sort of*, *type of*, *kind of*, hedging, referential, qualifier

### **1. Introduction**

The so-called SKT-constructions, involving expressions like *sort of*, *kind of*, and *type of*, are used in quite different ways. Consider the following attested examples from the corpus:<sup>1</sup>

- (1) a. It depends on **what kind of cheese** it is, how large the piece is, how much surface was exposed to. (COCA 2007 FIC)

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\* We thank anonymous reviewers for helpful comments and suggestions that helped improve the quality of the paper.

<sup>1</sup> The corpora we use in this study are the COCA (Corpus of Contemporary American English) and COHA (Corpus of Historical America), both of which are freely available online. COCA is based on a variety of genres (i.e. spoken, fiction, magazines, newspapers, and academic), and it contains 450 million words of text from 1990-2012. COHA consists of more than 400 million words of text of American English from 1810 to 2009.

- b. He sees these USO Tours as **a kind of vacation** from controversy.  
(COCA 2005 MAG)
- c. I wasn't accustomed to singing **those kind of songs**. (COCA 1997 SPOK)
- d. It **kind of** makes me sick, being here. (COCA 2010 FIC)

The SKT constructions here, except (1d), have the string 'Det1 + N1 + of + N2', in which N1 is one of the three items (*sort, kind, type*) while N2 is an open-class nominal expression (Biber et al. 1999, Huddleston and Pullum 2002). Despite this surface identity, each use of the expression *kind of* here behaves differently, in particular, with respect to its grammatical functions. In (1a), the overall reference of the SKT is determined by the N1 *kind* which functions as the syntactic and semantic head of the SKT construction. In (1b), the expression *kind* qualifies the denotation of N2. That is, the expression *a kind of vacation* here does not refer to a specific type of vacation, but describes a peripheral individual close to the set membership of vacation. In (1c), the SKT construction *those kind of songs*, in which there is no number agreement between Det1 and N1, refers to the set of songs. The expression *kind of* functions as an adnominal adjunct or postdeterminer, as such, is omissible. In (1d), *kind of*, accompanying no Det1 or N2, is positioned in an adverbial position as a mitigating expression. We call each of these uses referential, qualifying, adnominal, and adverbial, respectively (see Denison 2002, Brems and Davidse 2010, Davidse et al. 2008, Keizer 2007).

This paper looks into the grammatical properties of these four different uses of the so-called SKT constructions in English. In what follows, we first review the syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic properties of these four uses of the three SKT constructions. In doing so, we investigate authentic data of the constructions by investigating the corpora COCA (Corpus of Contemporary American English) and COHA (Corpus of Historical American English). We also offer a short statistical view of the corpus findings with respect to the uses of the constructions. We then conclude the paper with a construction-based view of how the SKT constructions have been developed.

## 2. Grammatical Uses of the SKT Constructions

### 2.1 Referential Uses

The first use of the SKT constructions refers to examples like (2) in which *sort*, *kind*, and *type* function as a referential noun.

- (2) a. He doesn't like **the kind of beer** you buy. (COCA1990FIC)
- b. The treatment of bladder cancer depends on **the type of cancer**.  
        (COCA 2011 ACAD)
- c. It's not **the sort of problem** we've had to deal with yet. (COCA  
        2008 FIC)

In these examples, N1 is the syntactic and semantic locus of the construction whereas the *of*-N2 is a posthead PP expression (Denison 2002, 2011, De Smedt et al. 2007, Keiser 2007).

The most typical Det1 in this referential use is a definite article, but an indefinite article is also possible, as illustrated by the corpus examples:

- (3) a. They also posit that the earliest fermented beverage, apparently a  
        kind of beer, might have been considered so desirable. (COCA  
        1994 NEWS)
- b. Halling is a type of rhythm, a type of dance that we have in  
        Norway. (COCA 2000 SPOK)
- c. ...not share their sensitivity, and may, in fact, regard teasing as a  
        sort of game. (COCA 1992 ACAD)

The SKT with an indefinite article here does not talk about the denotation of N2 *beer*, *dance* or *game*. It describes one subcategory of these N2 nouns.

The corpus search also yields examples in which the SKT construction is modified by a relative clause:

- (4) a. They would tender [the kind of advice [which makes it easier for  
        the policymakers to carry out]] ... (COCA 1998 ACAD)

- b. It may be [the sort of story [that people think will fade]]... (COCA 2010 SPOK)

In such examples, the SKT introduces an identifiable individual, and the restrictive relative clause offers the information needed for the identification of the sort/kind/type in question.

This referential use of N1 allows the head N1 to be plural too:

- (5) a. The challenge also is creating the right kinds of jobs. (COCA 2011 SPOK)
- b. I asked him a few questions about himself, and he told me all sorts of information. (COCA 2009 ACAD)
- c. They saw the direct benefits of these types of activities (COCA 2010 ACAD)

Considering the referential properties of N1, it is natural to have the plural form of N1.

The headedness and referential property of N1 also implies that it would agree with the preceding Det1. This is what we observe from the corpus data:

- (6) a. Mishenko has a history of making those sorts of statements. (COCA 2004 SPOK)
- b. Those types of books were available at the local library. (COCA 2001 FIC)
- c. The EU is also unused to dealing with Russia on these kinds of issues (COCA 2007 MAG)

Both Det1 and N1 are plural. We found no referential uses in which Det1 and N1 disagree in number (see the adnominal use of the SKT construction in what follows). Observe the subject-verb agreement in the following attested examples:

- (7) a. These types of aircraft are used throughout the military, often as transport planes. (COCA 2003 SPOK)
- b. But I think there are some rules you need to know about what

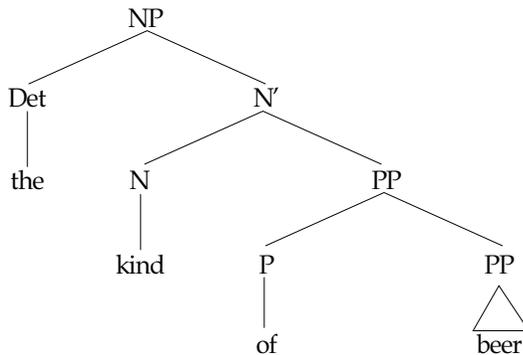
kinds of fat are OK and what kinds of fat are not OK. (COCA 2000 SPOK)

- c. Both sorts of attack are conducted at a level of abstraction that does not take into account. (COCA 2000 ACAD)

The above examples, in which the matrix verb agrees with the plural N1, not with the singular or uncountable N2, support the syntactic headedness of N1.

The observations we have made so far for the referential use of the SKT construction indicate that the referential use would yield a typical NP structure as sketched in the following (see Keizer 2007, Danison 2002):

(8)



This hierarchical structure takes N1 as a fully lexical noun heading the SKT construction while N2 is the prepositional object of the PP complement. The structure implies that if there is an adjective preceding N1, the adjective can structurally scope over N1, but not over N2. This is borne out from the attested data.

- (9) a. I'm a different kind of Democrat. (COCA 2003 SPOK)  
 b. Prostate cancer is the most common type of cancer. (2006 MAG)  
 c. A clog almost has that distinct sort of heel. (COCA 1998 NEWS)

The adjective occurring in front of N1 here applies only to N1, as the structure predicts: it is unnatural to say *different Democrat*, *common cancer* or *distinct heel*.

The typical adjective preceding N1 includes those given in the following:

- (10) a. Adj *sort of*: general, funny, different, weird, odd, normal, best, etc  
 b. Adj *kind of*: different, new, funny, special, right, wrong, common, certain, etc.  
 c. Adj *type of*: certain, different, new, particular, special, common, specific, single, etc.

These adjectives form a natural semantic prosody with the following N1 *sort, kind, type*.

In sum, N1 in the referential use of the SKT construction restricts the denotation of the SKT construction as a whole to a particular kind/sort/type, and N2 specifies the nature of N1. N1 therefore is a full-fledged referential expression with a full lexical content and referential power.

## 2.2 Qualifying Uses

In the qualifying use, the SKT constructions basically function as a downtoner, as exemplified by the following:

- (11) a. The world then was a sort of hell. (COCA 2004 ACAD)  
 b. She says at this point, a kind of miracle occurred. A man appeared at the door. (COCA 1991 SPOK)

The SKT here does not denote a hell or a miracle, but a member in the resemblance set. Each of the SKT constructions here describes something like a hell or a miracle, as seen from the fact that *sort of* and *kind of* can be paraphrased as or substitutable by ‘more or less’ or ‘almost’ (Bolinger 1972, Keizer 2007, De Smedt et al. 2007, Davidsen et al. 2008, Denison 2011). The individual denoted by the SKT constructions in this use thus does not have the perfect qualification for the membership of the class denoted by N2, but the individual is almost qualified for the membership of the set denoted by N2. In this sense N1 does not have any referential power.

The noun *type* does not occur in this use, possibly because of its denotation.

Consider the following three *wh*-questions:

- (12) a. What is your blood type?
- b. What sort of prices do they charge?
- c. What kind of dog is that?

The expected answer for (12a) is a precise named category while the one for (12b) is a description rather than a named category. The answer for (12c) can be a named category, but not necessarily as precise as (12a). A descriptive answer is also possible here. As such, *type* usually means a precisely defined category while *sort* is more general, often about referring to characteristics rather than categories, and *kind* usually refers to large categories or families of things that are naturally related. Such a semantic difference appears to bar *type of* from being used to describe an entity in terms of something similar.

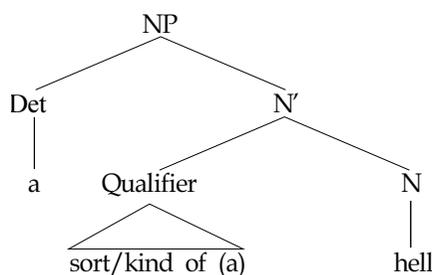
We observe that Det1 in this use of the SKT constructions tends to be indefinite since the construction does not refer to a specific individual but an individual whose properties are similar to those of the canonical members denoted by the individual. Corpus findings also support this:

- (13) a. He hopped from one foot to another in a sort of dance. (COCA2003 FIC)
- b. He gazed at the boy and waited, and it was a kind of test. (COCA 2005 FIC)

The SKT here does not refer to the typical membership of a dance or a test. Rather, the referent of the SKT describes an individual that can be qualified as a dance or a test. It is thus not N1 but N2 that has a referential power.

The lack of referential power or qualified property of N1 (*sort and kind*) makes N2 the syntactic and semantic head. The strings *sort of* and *kind of* can be taken to be a complex word forming one syntactic unit pairing with its own downtoner function, employed as a rather evasive or vague use of language. This being said, the syntactic structure for the qualifying use of the SKT construction would then be something like the following:

(14)



As represented by the structure, the strings *sort of* and *kind of* are a qualifier in the adnominal position while N2 functions as the syntactic locus. When there is a restrictive relative clause following N2, we can observe that the clause modifies not N2, but N :

- (15) a. Superior respects a [kind of art [that values control and emotional directness]]. (COCA 2002 FIC)  
 b. the only place in town to eat was in a [sort of store [that sold greeting cards, batteries, and barrettes]]. (COCA 2001 FIC)

The relative clause here modifies not N2 itself but the resemblance membership denoted by N .

Note that N2 typically has no determiner preceding it, but the corpus search examples give us examples like the following:

- (16) a. This Hispanic guy had an ear in his hand and he made **a sort of a joke**,... (COCA 2005 FIC)  
 b. The two major parties have **a sort of a monopoly** on the system.. (COCA 1995 SPOK)  
 c. Then **a sort of a sigh** went up from everyone when it lay still on the ground. (COCA 2002 MAG)
- (17) a. I asked our lady for **a kind of a gift** that night. (COCA 1992 SPOK)  
 b. People are going to undergo **a kind of a shock**. (COCA 2001

SPOK)

- c. I think that's **a kind of a pop**, heavy metal kind of song. (COCA 1994 SPOK)

The above examples have an indefinite article in the Det2 position. The indefinite article in this position is optional, and we observe that only the qualifier use license an indefinite article in this position. This leads us to assume that the complex words *sort of* and *kind of* can optionally include *a* as its member, as represented in the structure (14). Such a complex word formation can be also found from binominal NPs like *a hell of a day* as argued by Aarts (1998). These SKT examples with an indefinite article in Det2 here also function as a hedging device employed to mitigate the illocutionary force, i.e., the declarative strength of the predication.

### 2.3 Adnominal Uses

The adnominal use of the SKT constructions is exemplified by the following:<sup>2</sup>

- (18) a. Banks can't afford to take those sort of risks at the moment.  
(COCA 1992 SPOK)
- b. I regret that he makes those kind of comments,... (COCA 1995 SPOK)
- c. Now maybe they are asking themselves those type of questions.  
(COCA 1995 NEWS)

One key property of this use is that N1 is singular, regardless of the plurality of Det1. The demonstratives in Det1 here are all plural, but the N1 *sort*, *kind*, *type* is singular. This number incongruence is one main reason to take such SKT examples different from those in the referential or qualifying use.

The presence of N2 is obligatory though the presence of *sort/kind/type* of is optional. For example, those in (18) can be paraphrased as following without losing any significant meaning:

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<sup>2</sup> The adnominal use of *sort/kind/type* is taken to be a postdeterminer by Denison (2002, 2005) and Keiser (2007).

- (19) a. Banks can't afford to take those risks at the moment....  
b. I regret that he makes those comments,...  
c. They are asking themselves those questions.

This does not mean that Det1 must be plural. We find examples with a singular Det1 for the adnominal use:

- (20) a. It wasn't as if she were angry, just curious in a sad sort of way.  
(COCA 1990 FIC)  
b. I wondered in a vague sort of way. (COCA 1991 MAG)  
c. It is a poor sort of memory that only works backwards. (COCA 2010 NEWS)

It is natural to say *a sad way*, *a vague way*, *a poor memory*, but unnatural to say *a sad sort*, *a vague sort* or *a poor sort*. A definite determiner is also possible in the Det1 position:

- (21) a. But this sort of argument is almost always taken too far. (COCA 2001 ACAD)  
b. Some of you have experienced this kind of violence firsthand.  
(COCA 2009 SPOK)  
c. My answer to this type of question involves an affirmation of belief in God as the creator of time. (COCA 1992 MAG)

The SKT here refers to a concept of argument, violence, and question, which generalizes from the instance discussed in the previous context. In other words, it has an anaphoric relation to an instance of it discussed in the discourse. The anaphoric function can be attested by the replacement *this* with *such* (see Denison 2002 also):

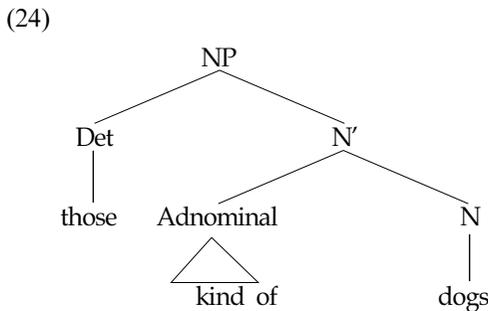
- (22) a. But such an argument is almost always taken too far.  
b. Some of you have experienced such a violence firsthand.  
c. My answer to this type of question involves an affirmation of belief in God as the creator of time.

The replacement thus supports that *this sort of* and *this kind of* function as a complex determiner, conveying the meaning ‘such’.

As pointed out Keiser (2007), the N1 *sort, kind, type* in this construction does not refer to any specific individual. Instead, the SKT construction refers to a subset of the individuals described by N2, assigning the headedness properties to N2. The headedness of N2 is also observed from the number concord between Det1 and N2, not between Det1 and N1. Consider the following examples:

- (23) a. This kind of dog is dangerous.  
 b. These kind of dogs are dangerous.  
 c. These kinds of dogs are dangerous.

(23a) and (23b) follow the normal agreement rule, but in (23b) there is a number mismatch between the plural demonstrative and the head noun *kind*. The SKT in (23b) here refers to a single kind of dog, involving number-transparency. The lack of number concord with the determiner indicates that the head of the SKT is not the type noun N1 but N2, reflected in the following structure:



The structure assures that it is N2 *dogs* that behaves as the syntactic head of the construction. This is also evidenced from the subject-verb agreement:

- (25) a. Those sort of stories **are** quite, probably, relevant to our past.  
 (COCA 2012 SPOK)  
 b. Those kind of guys **are** worth their weight in gold, especially now.  
 (COCA 2004 NEWS)

The structure in (24) also implies that if there is an adjective preceding N1, it would be able to modify N2. This prediction is borne out.

- (26) a. They do these high sort of screams, almost, and yips, that also carry quite a distance... (COCA 2004 SPOK)
- b. I'd like to have meat and potatoes and beans and all those good kind of things. (COCA 1992 SPOK)

The collocations *high screams* and *good things* are natural but not *high sort* or *good sort*. In fact, the modifier to N1 is not allowed in such examples, as noted by Keiser (2007):

- (27) a. \*these ill-defined sort of problems
- b. \*these common type of questions
- c. \*those general type of changes

In sum, the adnominal use of of the SKT construction renders the expression *sort/kind/type of* as a complex word that functions as an adjectival or postdeterminer expression with no referential power. This property makes them optional as well as adnominal.

## 2.4 Adverbial Uses

The adverbial use differs from the other uses in that only the string *sort of* or *kind of* appears in the adverbial position:

- (28) a. I'd sort of promised that we'd find a place big enough for the three of us. (COCA 1996 FIC)
- b. I mean, I kind of lost my mind, so I don't really want anyone to see me screaming. (COCA 2009 SPOK)

Note the obvious difference from the other uses of the SKT constructions we have observed. This use requires neither Det1 nor N2. It has only *sort of* and *kind of*, which function as approximating or hedging expressions. That is, the conditions of

application of the verbal expression are approximately satisfied (Kay 1984, Gries and David 2007). For example, in (28a) what is conveyed is that the promise is in fact made but the act did not qualify as a promise.

This use of *sort of X* and *kind of X* expresses a reservation of the speaker in attempting to denote what X is being used to pick out in the utterance (Kay 1984). Consider the following examples from the COCA:

- (29) a. I found it very uncomfortable to play sort of a sport and take it all that seriously when people were dying.  
b. I just felt kind of a chemistry as I was carrying her around the room a little bit.  
c. I saw him literally giving sort of a victory yelp yesterday.

The nominal expressions *sport*, *chemistry* or *victory* are not scalar predicates, but the accompanying *sort/kind of* renders them as such conveying a ‘metalinguistic’ mitigation – marking a speaker’s sense of inaptness of his/her words in expressing what the speaker is talking about.

As pointed out by Kay (1984), the adverbial use of the SKT has a variety of distributional possibilities. It can modify an AP, an NP or a PP, as seen from the following attested data:

- (30) a. I feel [sort of [intimidated]]. (COCA 2008 MAG)  
b. That’s [sort of [very cool]]. (COCA 2011 SPOK)
- (31) a. “I go backstage and say hello, but I feel there is [kind of [an invisible wall between us]], ” she says. (COCA 2007 SPOK)  
b. Delta and AirTran have duked it out for years, and they’re [kind of [at this standoff]] now, this kind of competitive equilibrium. (COCA 2010 NEWS)

More intriguing examples would be cases like the following in which *sort/kind of* modifies a clausal expression:

- (32) a. That’s [kind of [how we roll and how we operate]]. (COCA 2010

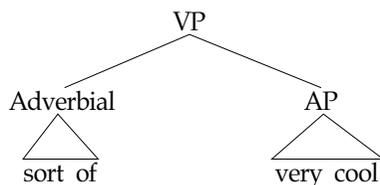
NEWS)

- b. “I couldn’t help it it’s [kind of [like somebody else was screaming]], ” she told The Associated Press. (COCA 2010 NEWS)
- c. It’s [sort of [that he still loves you]]. (COCA 2010 SPOK)
- d. It’s [sort of [as if you’re sitting on top of part of the cello there]]. (COCA 1998 SPOK)

In all these examples, *sort of* and *kind of* are ommissible, indicating that they are basically an adverbial expression.

The grammatical properties of the adverbial use of *sort/kind of* as an hedge expression imply that they are one complex word in which the preposition *of* is incorporated into a unit with the preceding noun *sort*, *kind*. This can be represented as follows:

(33)



The structure represents that *sort/kind of* functions as an adverbial expression, combining with the following expression. The adverbial use of this construction can also expect that *sort/kind of* can also modify a lexical or an intermediate phrase (Kay 1984):

- (34) a. He wanted a more [kind of [objective organization reviewing the pictures]]. (COCA 1996 SPOK)
- b. We, the public, puts a fairly [sort of [irrational pressure on them]]. (COCA 2006 SPOK)

The structure can also imply that the hedging expression *sort of/kind of* can thus position to the left of any syntactic category:

(35) \*That theory is [[classical] very sort of].

### 3. On the Corpus Findings

As stated earlier, this research is based on the two online corpora, COCA (Corpus of Contemporary American English) and COHA (Corpus of Historical American English), both of which are freely available online. The simple frequency of the three SKT constructions in the COCA indicates that the *kind of* SKT is the most frequent among the SKT constructions, as shown in Table 1.<sup>3</sup>

Table 1. Top 100 Frequency of the Three SKT Constructions in COCA

SKT Constructions	Raw Frequency
The sort of SKT construction in COCA	8471
The kind of of SKT construction in COCA	28794
The type of SKT construction in COCA	7368

To see how these three SKT constructions have changed in their frequencies, we have investigated the historical corpus COHA whose data range from 1800 to 2000. What we have found is that of the three SKT constructions, the use of the *kind of* SKT (per million frequency) has significantly increased over the last 200 years in American English. On the other hand, the *sort of* SKT construction peaked in the 1920s but has decreased since. The *type of* SKT construction, the least frequent of the three constructions, has increased in usage since the 1910s. As is clear from Figure 1, the *kind of* SKT construction has been the dominant pattern in the present day of American English since 1940s.

<sup>3</sup> The search string we used is 'Det sort/kind/type of N'.

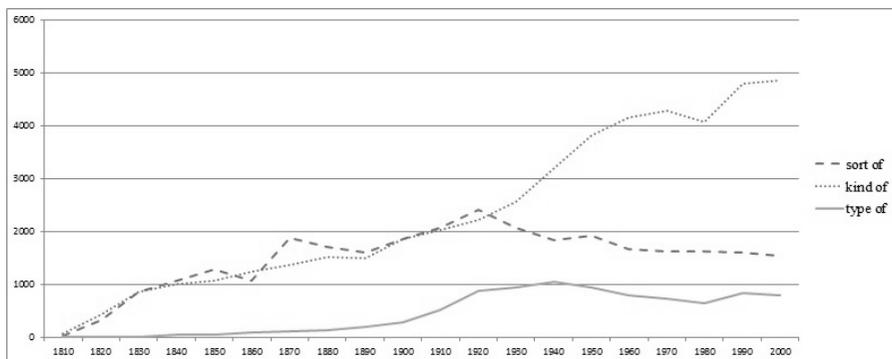


Figure 1. Per Million Frequency of the Three SKT Constructions in the COHA

The corpus search also reveals that the nouns occurring in the N2 position in the three SKI constructions are quite various, but there are nouns appearing in all the three patterns as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Top 20 N2 nouns and Their frequency in the Three SKT Constructions in COCA

sort of N	Freq	kind of N	Freq	type of N	Freq
way	636	thing	7371	thing	868
people	364	people	1625	person	494
person	307	person	1351	information	340
stuff	292	stuff	1306	cancer	325
man	230	guy	1174	people	322
problem	172	work	859	activity	317
place	164	man	794	music	302
question	161	money	763	work	271
information	124	information	720	service	220
woman	108	problem	712	question	217
life	98	question	697	program	213
story	97	place	693	behavior	208
behavior	87	music	668	guy	202
situation	86	way	633	situation	197
issue	85	life	571	food	192
reason	85	situation	510	data	176
work	79	job	456	relationship	173
guy	74	story	456	treatment	160
business	73	behavior	421	research	159

Nouns like *people, person, problem, question, information, behavior, situation*, and so forth appear in all the three SKT constructions with high frequency. On the other hand, those like *research, data* appear only in the type of SKT construction while those like *reason* only in the sort of SKT constructions. This implies that there are certain preferences among nouns with regard to the type of SKT construction they appear in.

As we saw earlier, there are three main uses of the SKT constructions: referential, qualifying, and adnominal. To observe which of the three uses is more or most widely used, we have randomly selected 100 COCA examples for each SKT construction and checked each use. Figure 2 shows the percentage of each use we find for the three SKT constructions.

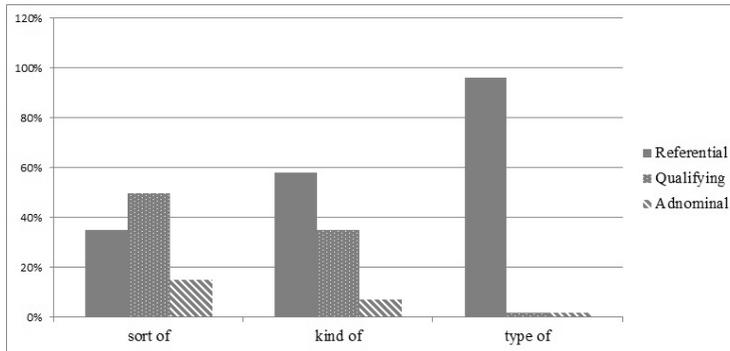


Figure 2. Three Main Uses of the Three SKT Constructions

The Figure 2 illustrates that the qualifying use is the most widely attested function of the *sort of* the construction, whereas the referential use is the most common function for the *kind of* and *type of* SKT constructions. Figure 2 also shows that the *type of* SKT rarely occurs in the qualifying use possibly because of its denotation as we have discussed earlier.

The adverbial use of *sort of* and *kind of* has been also increased in recent years. Figure 3 shows the per million frequency of *sort of* and *kind of* preceding a verb.

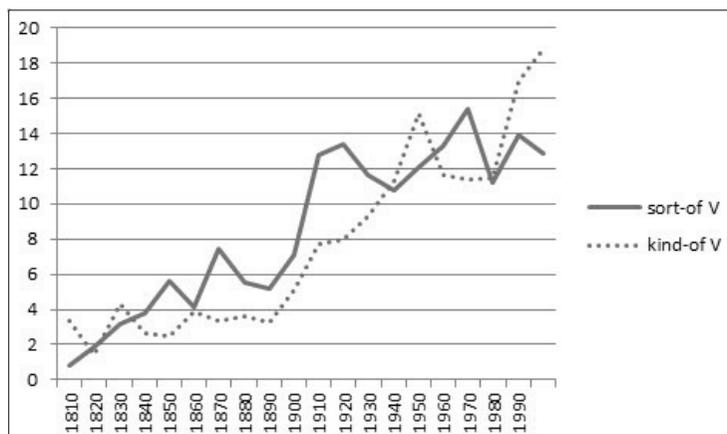


Figure 3. Three Main Uses of the Three SKT Constructions

As shown in the figure, *sort of* jumped from 0.86 per million frequency in the 1810s to 12.89 per million frequency in the 2000s. The usage of *kind of* as an adverbial expression also shows a sharp increase from 3.39 per million in the 1810s to 18.84 per million frequency in the 2000s. This implies that *sort of* and *kind of* have earned their firm status as a mitigating expression in the present day of American English.

#### 4. Concluding Remarks

We have seen that the SKT constructions can be used at least in four different ways: referential, qualifying, adnominal, and adverbial uses. The following data again illustrate each of these four uses.

- (36) a. It is the very kind of monkey that led to the death two years ago of a 22-year-old researcher at Emory University. (COCA 1999 SPOK)
- b. The assailants had developed a kind of art known as facial scalping,... (COCA 2001 MAG)
- c. Our mothers want to see us in those kind of clothes. (COCA 1996 NEWS)

- d. I kind of felt like everybody was looking at me. (COCA 2004 SPOK)

All the uses of the SKT constructions with the sole exception of the adverbial use in (36d) have the form of ‘NP1 of NP2’ or ‘Det1 N1 of N2’. English employs this ‘NP1 of NP2’ form in numerous different ways, including possession (as in *employees of the company*), measure (as in *a bottle of beer*), characteristic (as in *face of an angel*), relational (as in *the highlight of the show*), amount (as in *three cups of milk*), locative (as in *the back of my house*), partitive (as in *a piece of the plate*), and so forth. The SKT constructions differ from all these.

The SKT constructions originally started with the referential use in which N1 (or NP1) functions as the head. For example, the noun *sort* started to be used around the 14th century with the meaning of ‘group’ or ‘set’ (Traugott 2008). This expression, when combined with an indefinite in Det1 position, then started to be used as a qualifier, adnominal, or adverbial expression after being reanalyzed as a complex word with the following preposition *of*.

We have also seen that the SKT constructions employ two main forms, a single word and a complex word, with respect to the usage of *sort*, *kind* and *type*. That is, the single word usage is a typical usage of common noun in which the noun has a full referential capacity. Meanwhile, the complex word usage (*sort of*, *kind of*, *type of*) is developed from a reanalysis process with the preposition *of* and is realized into three different functions: qualifier, adnominal (adjectival), and adverbial. These two different form and function mappings can be schematized as following:<sup>4</sup>

- (37) a. [Det1N1[*of*N2]]  
 b. [Det [N1 *of*] N2]

These two forms are linked to different semantic and pragmatic functions as we have seen in the foregoing discussion. The structural form in (37a) is linked to only the referential use, reflecting a typical NP structure. The syntactic form in (37b) is mainly used for the qualifier and adnominal uses with a later development into the

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<sup>4</sup> A similar realization or development of nominal uses can be found from examples like *a lot of* and partitive expressions like *a shred of*. See Kim (2002), Brems (2003), Brems and Davidse (2010), and Traugott (2008) for further discussion.

adverbial use. Each of these form-to-function mapping also has its own distinctive properties, as we have seen. This view parallels with the tenets of Construction Grammar in which language is taken to be a symbolic system that pairs form and meaning (Goldberg 1995, 2006). The uses of the SKT constructions we have discussed in this paper show us that these mapping relations between form and function have undergone systematic changes, reorganizing syntagmatic and paradigmatic aspects of English.

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