

# Indefinite Determiner Doubling

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## 1. Introduction

Both formal and functional analyses of nominals have to acknowledge that in terms of word order, it is not enough to observe that in nominals, determiners precede the noun. After considering (1) below, the temptation is to call *all*, *the* and *many* ‘determiners’. However, the fact that sentences like (2) are perfectly fine but, as (3) shows, *many* must occupy the first slot following the determiner in adjectival order has led to it being classified as a ‘postdeterminer’, giving three general areas preceding the noun in a traditional Quirk grammar approach

- (1) a. The books are interesting.  
b. All books are interesting.  
c. Many books are interesting.
- (2) I believe it could, but for **all the many young people** who are entering foster care and who are presently in foster care. COCA: ABC Nightline)
- (3) \*all the young many people. . .

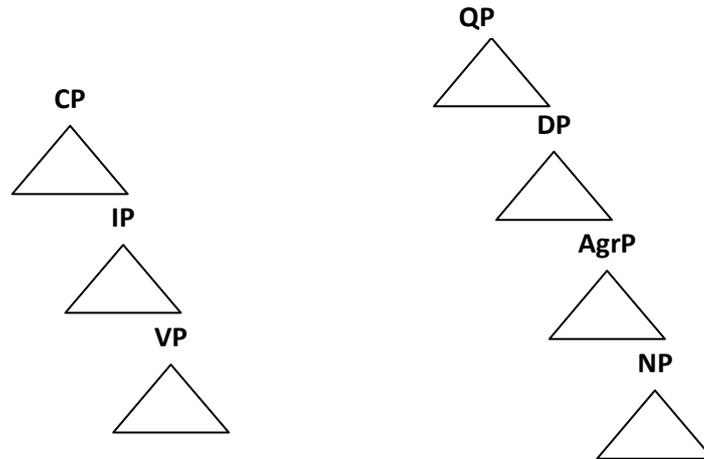
Hence the three classes of determiners shown below:

(4) Distribution of determiners (adapted from Quirk et. al. 1985:253-63)

Pre-determiners	Central determiners	Post-determiners
<i>All, both, half,</i> fractions: <i>one, (a)third, etc.</i> multipliers: <i>double,</i> <i>twice</i>	articles: <i>the, a</i> demonstratives: <i>this, that, these, those.</i> possessives: <i>my our, your, his, her, its,</i> <i>their.</i> relatives: <i>whose, which.</i> interrogatives: <i>what, which, whose.</i> quantificational: <i>no, some, every, each,</i> <i>either, neither, enough.</i>	cardinal & ordinal numerals: <i>one/first; two; second</i> <i>many. few, several, much, little.</i>

Generative approaches make a somewhat similar division, with a determiner phrase selecting a lower phrase which I have called Agr(eement) below. Although various agreement phrases have been proposed, the most widely accepted is Num(ber) Phrase. As can be seen below, the structure of the nominal then becomes parallel to the clausal structure. In addition there is sometimes an extra Q(uantificational) phrase added to account for pre-determiners

(5)



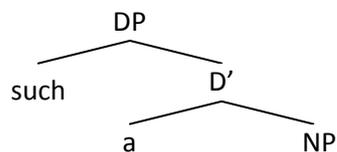
There are a number of challenges for both approaches. If we consider the word *such* in the Quirk framework, it is considered a predeterminer as it must precede the central determiner, *a*:

- (6) *such* a large group
- (7) \**a such* large group

In the generative approach, an early analysis by Haegemann and Guéron (1999:447) suggests that the indefinite article is the head of the DP, that is in  $D^0$ , and *such* is in Spec-DP, due to its similarity with demonstratives:

- (8) a. He proposed approved *such a plan*
- b. He approved *that plan*

(9)



However, both of these analyses of *such* have difficulty in accounting for constructions in which central determiners occur twice, as with *no* and *any* in (10) (11) and (12) below, in which case *such* is both a predeterminer to *a* and a post determiner to *no*:

- (10) and there was no, **no such a thing** as bales in those days, duckie. **No such a thing** as bales of straw, it was loose hay stacked. (oral history, BNC; Wood 2002:110)
- (11) on the basis of **any such a proposal** or application form  
(BNC; Wood 2002:110)
- (12) Japanese kinship had **no such a rule**, except for a very top echelon of the samurai class.  
(academic writing, COCA)

A similar situation, also theoretically challenging, occurs with nominal expressions in which the indefinite article occurs twice within the same DP, the so called ‘indefinite determiner doubling’ constructions.

### 1.1 Previously reported data

Constructions of this type were first reported in Swedish (13), and subsequently most extensively in varieties of German, such as Swiss German (14) and Bavarian German, (15) and also, finally, one English dialect example:

- (13) **en stor en ful en kar** (Northern Swedish, Delsing 1993:143)  
a big a ugly a guy,  
'a big, ugly guy'
- (14) **ä ganz ä schönä Baum** (Swiss German, Leu 2001:63)  
a totally a beautiful tree,  
'a totally beautiful tree'
- (15) **a so a große Bua** (Bavarian: Kallulli and Rothmayr 2008:97)  
a such a big boy,  
'such a big boy' or 'so big a boy'
- (16) I had **a such a gurry** on me as if I hadn't eaten nothink of a fortnit.  
(OED, 1881 S. Evans *Evans's Leicestershire Words*; Wood 2002:109)

When confronted with grammaticality judgments, native speakers invariably reject the construction, although, according to Kallulli and Rothmayr (2008), some speakers of Standard German accept an optional extra article as below:

- (17) **ein so ein großer Bub**  
a such a big boy (Standard German: Kallulli and Rothmayr 2008:97)  
'such a big boy'

Although earlier reports have focused on non-standard varieties, it is now becoming clear that the indefinite article doubling construction is less exotic than first reported. The availability of corpus material and more advanced search tools reveals that the indefinite article construction is widespread in what has to be considered Standard English. In Wood (2002:109) I report several examples with *such* from the spoken part of the British National Corpus. For example:

- (18) My rules are to cut down drinking, control my temper if I am drinking, not to drink in **a such a large group** and not to waste much money.

### Goals and outline

What happens? Why does it happen? How can it be accounted for within the theory?

**Section 2** briefly speculates on why there could be two indefinite articles

**Section 3** looks at data: When does indefinite article doubling occur? Two hypotheses which do not hold.

**Section 4** looks at structure: article doubling with *sådan* and *such*; derivation of fronted premodifiers (*so bad a hotel*)

**Section 5** is a footnote about additional data

## 2. Why two indefinite articles?

Two lines of thinking as to why we get double articulation:

- (i) One of the articles is the 'real' one; the other is 'spurious' (Bennis, Corver and Den Dikken (1998). Evidence (?) from English:

Reduced *sucha* in corpora:

- (19) How low am I fallen in your esteem, since you think it possible for **sucha** bribe to prevail? (1827 Fiction, COHA)
- (20) There is **sucha** multiplicity of candidates for the Presidential nomination, the attitude of the Progressives is so uncertain. (1916 NY Times, COHA)
- (21) Or is this just **sucha** great story that there's no danger of that happening? (2000 CNN\_Reliable)
- (22) It can be confusing with **sucha** range of cheese (BNC)

Reduced *sucha* with doubled article:

- (23) She was **a sucha** lovely and caring person, who did not deserve such a tragic end to her life. (Obituary at <http://announce.jpress.co.uk/724976>)

(ii) Both articles are required. Some varieties choose not to articulate both. Evidence? (Google) examples from Bavarian showing that sometimes the lower article agrees and sometimes the higher one:

- (24) ist echt      **ein ganz**      **eine**      tolle Schule !!!  
is really      a quite      a.FEM      great school.  
'It's a really good school!'  
(Kalluli & Rothmayr, 2008, ex 85a)

- (25) ich wünsche üch      **en**      **ganz**      **e** schöne abe.  
I wish you      a.MASC      quite      a nice evening.  
'I wish you a pleasant evening.'  
(Kalluli & Rothmayr, 2008, ex 86c)

If both articles are required would not we expect indefinite determiner doubling to occur more frequently?

(iii) A ‘tongue in cheek’ comment? ‘Affectivity and negligent monitoring have also proved strongly conducive to double articulation of various sorts. It is only natural therefore, that peoples ruled by passions and laissez- faire should have gone on record as being among the most prolific double articulators- such as the rustics of Bavaria, who seldom weigh their words, let alone articles. (Plank 2003:386)

### 3. In which structures does indefinite article doubling occur?

**Hypothesis 1: Article doubling occurs with degree elements** (*so* and *ganz* in German, *such* in English)

Corver & van Koppen (2006: 12-14) show examples such as (26) below from Kruiningen Dutch. The *-en* affix is a degree marker and has the same form as the indefinite article. They analyse the *-en* affix as an additional indefinite article in varieties of Dutch.

- (26) Zo'n lief-en oma!  
such-a sweet-en grandmother  
'Such a sweet grandmother!'

'Often indefinite article doubling co-occurs with intensifying *such* → assumption: *such* is the overt realization of a degree-operator in Spec,FocP.'

Corver & van Koppen suggest that article doubling occurs with 'intensifying' *such*. There are two *such*'s originally called intensifying and identifying by Bolinger (1972). A preferable way to refer to them is as Bresnan (1973) 'degree' and 'kind' *such*.

Does doubling occur with both *such*'s or only degree *such*?

#### 3.1 Kind and degree *such*

As was first observed by Bolinger (1972) for English, there are semantically two *such*'s a 'kind' reading and a 'degree' reading and they behave differently syntactically:

Examples of **kind** *such*:

- (27) Had Appleby felt himself to be in charge he could no doubt have assembled in ten minutes **such preliminary facts** as there were.
- (28) Det vanskelige ved **sådan et forbud** er ...  
*The problem with such a ban is . . .* (http://ordnet.dk/korpusdk)

Examples of **degree** *such*:

- (29) She gave way to **such grief** that I was alarmed.
- (30) No other manufacturer makes **such a wide variety of shirts** as the CWS.

- (31) Du gør **sådan et sympatisk indtryk** på mig  
 (http://ordnet.dk/korpusdk)  
*You make such a pleasant impression on me*

Both the degree and the kind readings are possible with and without an adjective. So, for example *such grief* in (29) could have a kind reading (*grief like that*), but because *grief* is a gradable noun, the degree reading comes to the fore.

- (32) English *such*: syntactic, semantic and register differences:  
 (adapted from Wood 2002:97)

Kind	Degree
Referential—requires a defining referent in the context ((27)-(28))	Degree—requires a gradable element in its noun phrase ((29)-(31))
Paraphrased by ‘ <i>of that kind</i> ’ or ‘ <i>like that</i> ’	Paraphrased by ‘ <i>so</i> ’ + adj.
Correlative clause is restrictive (27)	Correlative clause is comparative or resultative (29),(30)
May be a post-determiner (33),(34)	Never a post-determiner
May co-occur with quantifiers (33),(34)	Does not co-occur with quantifiers
Tends to be used in more formal registers	Tends to be used in less formal registers

Only kind *such* may be a ‘post-determiner’, i.e. follow a quantifier like *no* and *any*:

- (33) on the basis of **any such a proposal** or application form  
 (34) For the time being at least, **no such a change** in Congressional attitudes would occur. (Wood 2002:110).

The observation that only a ‘kind’ reading is obtained from (33) and (34) indicates the possibility of different syntactic positions for the two *such*’s.

What about the hypothesis that doubling occurs only with intensifying *such* ?

The search for data led me to an advanced text search of the OED and to a search of Danish corpora.

### 3.2 More doubling data: kind and degree

It turns out not difficult to find examples of ‘kind’ *such* from English.

- (1) But erm they are built in **a such a** way that they should cater for the largest vehicle that is likely to use that road. (BNC)

An advanced text search in the Oxford English Dictionary even reveals 9 examples of ‘*a such a N*’ in the text of definitions (unlike (16) above, which is an actual example of a lexical entry). For example, the kind reading below:

- (2) (also) produced or obtained **by a such a process**, and therefore unpredictable in detail. (OED s.v. random).

Surprisingly, the doubled construction turns up in Danish is well. A corpus search for examples in Danish revealed 5 examples of *en sådan en* and three examples of *et sådan et*.

This is degree:

- (3) Det modsatte er, at du er **en sådan en smart fyr**, der er meget ude om natten.  
(<http://ordnet.dk/korpusdk>)  
*The opposite is that you are a such a smart guy who is out a lot at night*

But the two following are 'kind':

- (4) Hvis de kan slå fast, hvem der har gjort det, så skal der i **en sådan en sag** falde en bøde på nogle tusinde kroner. (<http://www.sondagsavisen.dk/Site/Arkiv/legArc-gb-hb/Artikler/Indland/1eefa3fa-0ce7-11d7-936f-0010b555f137.htm>)  
*if they can establish who has done it, then shall there in a such a case fall a fine of some thousand kroner*
- (5) Og det gør han med **en sådan en flid**, at hans medarbejdere ikke mener, han overhovedet kan afse tid til andet. (<http://ordnet.dk/korpusdk>) (DK87-90: Dagens portræt: Rævedygtig i retten @ Claus Larsen)  
*And he does that with a such a diligence that his colleagues do not think he can at all afford time for anything else.*

Hypothesis 1 does not hold.

### 3.3 English *quite* (and *rather*) (German *ganz*)

So far we have only seen examples of doubling with English *such* and its German equivalent *so*, as well as with *ganz* in German. A quotation search of the OED finds two examples of article doubling with *quite*, the English equivalent of *ganz*; :

- (6) I note that there is **a quite a demand** for snake virus. It can be procured by writing Caspar Pentz, Louray, Va. Price is \$14,000 a pound.  
(OED, s.v. *virus*: 1909 [Bedford \(Pa.\) Gaz.](#) 11 June 8/3: )
- (7) There is **a quite a** telling mysticism in the wise men of the east, who are astrologising—studying the heavens—on their mountain, and first behold the wondrous star.  
(OED s.v. *astrologising* 1883 'L. Scott' [Renaissance of Art in Italy](#) i. iii. 65)

In fact, the construction appears to be much more prolific than I had imagined. It also appears with *rather* which behaves in English in a similar way to *quite*.:

- (8) you realise that accountability is **a rather a** hot and fashionable word in education these days (BNC)

### 3.4 Data from English corpora:

Comprehensive corpus searches for *a such a*, *a quite a*, *a rather a* and reveal the following occurrences: (The examples were first judged as to whether they were misspeaking or typos):

(9) Comprehensive corpus searches for doubling: *such*, *rather*, *quite* & *a many a*

corpus	number of words	<i>a such a</i>		<i>a quite a</i>		<i>a rather a</i>		<i>a many a</i>	
		spoken	written	spoken	written	spoken	written	spoken	written
BNC	100 million	6	4	46	2	8	0	0	0
COCA	450 million	14	38	19	14	3	0	0	6
COHA (pre-1950)	400 million	-	6	-	2	-	0	-	8
COHA (post 1950)		-	11	-	4	-	0	0	-
SOAP	100 million	13	-	8	-	1	-	0	0

Unexpected here is the large number of written examples in American English compared with British English. An expression which is judged a ‘mistake’ and could be easily edited out seems to pass by unnoticed!

As far as text types go, there is no discernable bias. Academic texts are represented as well as newspapers:

- (10) During our interview, he ticks off what he believes the daily life of **a such a worker** would have been like. (COCA *Archaeology*)
- (11) He had **a such a legendary police career** that Hollywood modeled a hard-boiled TV character after him. (COHA, News, Associated Press)

Most of the spoken examples are from the Public Broadcasting Service. In the example below the speaker is Sir Leon Brittan, educated at Trinity College Cambridge and former Member of Parliament:

- (12) If you are able to break a logjam that's existed for two or three years and achieve agreement on **a such a complex detail** but important matter as a single market in securities, that says that we're still in business .  
(COCA ABC Business Report)

As far as syntactic constraints go, doubled expressions appear in verbal complements, (11), complements of a preposition (10) and with existential *there* (7). I have not found it as a subject, except in a *wh*-question (from fiction):

- (13) How could **a such a humane face** belong to someone so merciless, Cilke wondered. (COCA (Fiction) Mario Puzo).

**Recap: Data to account for:**

- There are two reading for *such* constructions, kind and degree
- If quantifiers like *any* or *no* occur with *such* the degree reading is impossible
- Apart from *such*, which has two readings, all the other constructions that trigger indefinite article doubling are degree elements.

**3.5 More data: Adjectival modification versus DP modification**

**Hypothesis 2: Doubling occurs only with elements that can modify DPs.**

This is a point made by Kalluli and Rothmayr (2008:99) to explain why certain degree words like *so* occur with doubling in Bavarian German. They say, ‘Crucially, while *so* can modify DPs that are not modified by adjectives both in BG and SG . . . *sehr/ur* and *irrsinnig* cannot do so.’

The relevant data are shown below:

- (14) So ein Mist (SG)  
such a garbage  
‘*Such garbage!*’
- (15) \*sehr/\*irrsinnig ein Mist (SG)  
*very/insanely a garbage*

If this hypothesis is to hold, we would not expect degree adverbs that modify adjectives but not nouns to participate in doubling. Simply put, this is the difference between English *so* and *such*.

- (16) It was such a surprise  
(17) It was so wonderful a surprise  
(18) \*It was so a surprise

These data have been worked through in detail by Wood and Vikner (2011:94)

The tables below set out the logical possibilities in for word order and modification for English, Danish and German *so*, *så* and *so*, followed by the logical possibilities for English *such* and Danish *sådan*.

(19)

	pre-article	post-article
modifying the whole DP/NP	<b>a</b>	<b>b</b>
modifying only the AdjP	<b>c</b>	<b>d</b>

(20) **English so**

	pre-article	post-article
DP/NP	-	-
AdjP	<b>so</b>	<b>%so</b>

- a. \*so a hotel
- b. \*a so hotel
- c. so bad a hotel
- d. ?? a SO bad hotel

(21) **Danish så**

	pre-article	post-article
DP/NP	-	-
AdjP	<b>så</b>	<b>så</b>

- a. \*så et hotel
- b. \*et så hotel
- c. så dårligt et hotel
- d. et så dårligt hotel

(22) **German so**

	pre-article	post-article
DP/NP	<b>so</b>	-
AdjP	-	<b>so</b>

- a. so ein Hotel
- b. \*ein so Hotel
- c. \*so schlecht ein Hotel
- d. ein so schlechtes Hotel

– **English** and **Danish**: *so/så* only modifies an adjective phrase and has to be immediately adjacent to that phrase.

(23) **English such**

	pre-article	post-article
DP/NP	<b>such</b>	-
AdjP	-	-

- a. such a hotel
- b. \*a such hotel
- c. \*such bad a hotel
- d. \*a such bad hotel

(24) **Danish sådan**

	pre-article	post-article
DP/NP	<b>sådan(t)</b>	<b>sådant</b>
AdjP	-	-

- a. sådan(t) et hotel
- b. et sådant hotel
- c. \*sådan(t) dårligt et hotel
- d. \*et sådan(t) dårligt hotel

If hypothesis 2 holds, then we would not expect doubling in English and Danish with *so* and *så*.

Searches in the above mentioned English corpora failed to find any examples of *a so ADJ a*. I did find a Google example:

- (25) However, in **a so long a** process, the genetic variability, knowledge and know-how determine the vital capacity for genetic improvement in the future  
[www.actahort.org/books](http://www.actahort.org/books)

However, in Danish I found three examples of *en så ADJ en* and two of *et så ADJ et*. In these examples, the article agrees with the noun in gender and the adjective shows agreement morphology with the neuter noun (*et så stort*).

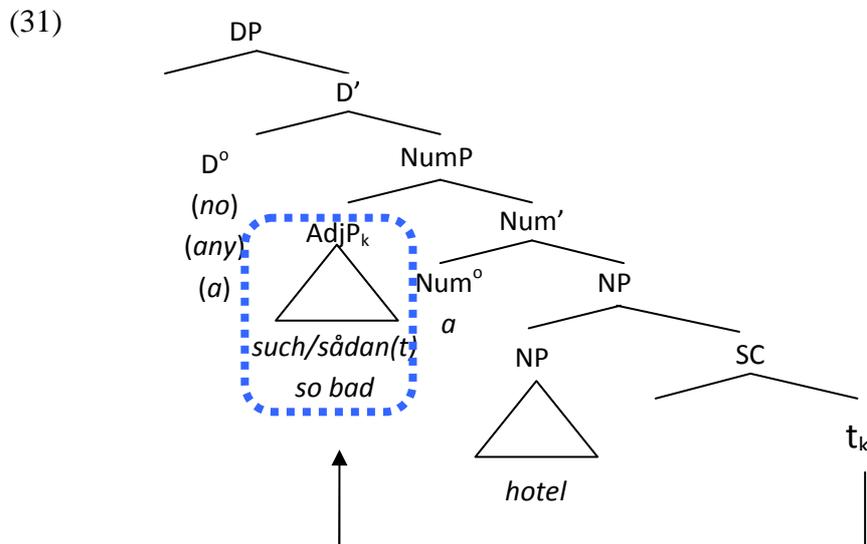
- (26) Men detektivarbejdet har været **en så stor en succes**. (<http://ordnet.dk/korpusdk>)  
*But the detective work has been a so big a success*
- (27) Men **et så stort et projekt** i byens hjerte kræver selvsagt en langt højere informationsgrad. (<http://ordnet.dk/korpusdk>)  
*But a-NEUT so big-NEUT a-NEUT project-NEUT in the heart of the town of course demands a much higher amount of information.*
- (28) Det var første gang, at den kommunistiske ledelse på så markant en plads tillod kritik af **et så kontroversielt et projekt**. (<http://ordnet.dk/korpusdk>)  
*That was the first time that the communist leadership in so prominent a place permitted criticism of a so controversial a project.*

The Danish data show that the hypothesis 2 does not hold.

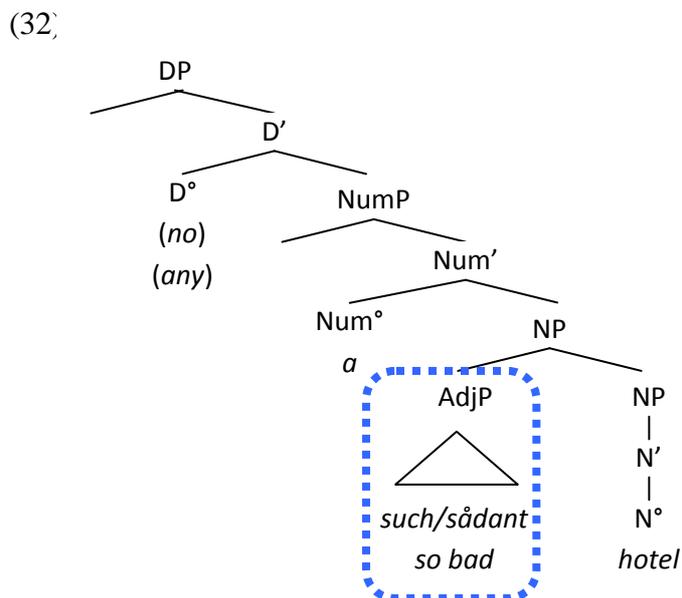


#### 4.1 Derivation of doubling: Danish *sådan*, English *such*

Wood and Vikner (2011) derive pre-article *sådan* and *such* from a predicate raising construction as in (31). Post-article *sådan* is base generated as in (32). The arguments are based on adjectival agreement morphology in Danish (and German). Post-article, base generated *sådan* always shows agreement with the (neuter) noun. Pre-article *sådan* rarely shows agreement with the (neuter) noun.



Wood & Vikner (2011:104) ex. (68)



Wood & Vikner (2011:104) ex. (67)

The derivation in (31) allows for the inclusion of a double article. The prediction is that indefinite determiner doubling constructions derived from (31) are not likely to show agreement morphology. Although the data are sparse this is borne out:

- (33) Som tidligere ansvarshavende chefredaktør på ugebladet, *Se og Hør*, ved han hvordan **et sådan et** blad skal skrues sammen.  
*As a former chief editor of the magazine, Se og Hør, he knows how such a magazine should be put together.*

This structure also allows the *no such a* and *any such a* constructions shown in (10) (11) and (12).

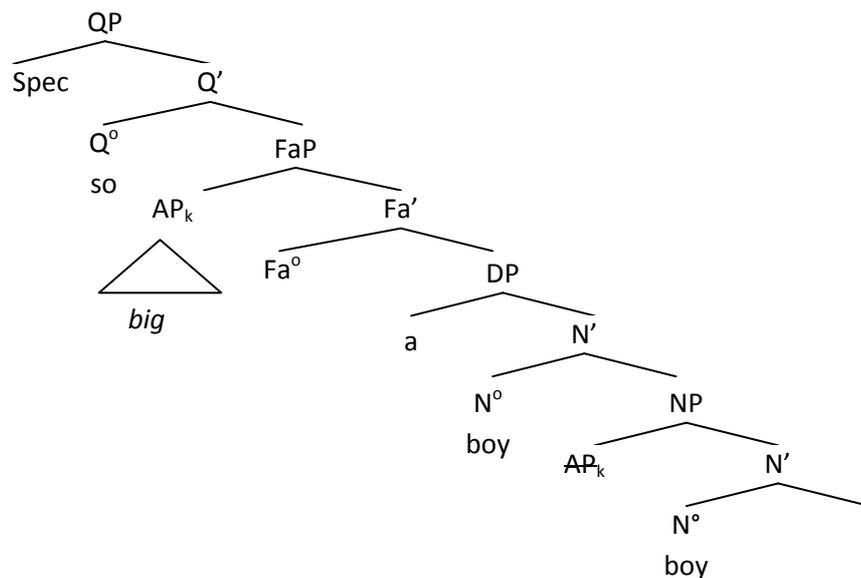
However, filling the D° position predicts that all doubled constructions will have a *kind* reading.

#### 4.2 Derivation of English *so*

Kalluli and Rothmayr (2008), merge English *so* directly in a QP. But, as they point out, *so* in English cannot combine with a DP, which means they must introduce an additional functional category. As they say in a footnote, ‘FaP is thus the label of an adjective-like functional projection (that is, a projection that has adjectival-like properties, or needs to merge with an AdjP at some point).’

Wood and Vikner (2011) derive pre-nominal *so bad* from a predicate raising construction as in (31) which gives the correct prediction about the constituency of *so big/so bad*

(34)



Kalluli & Rothmayr (2008: 114). ex. (49)

In the Kalluli and Rothmayr analysis, an extra functional projection is introduced, FaP, and the adjective moves to a position adjacent to this functional projection. Thus, the adjective and the degree modifier do not form a constituent.

As can be seen, in the Wood and Vikner analysis in (31), the adjective phrase forms a constituent and moves to the pre-article position. This gives also the agreement in Danish: *så dårligt et hotel/ et så dårligt hotel*

## 5. More data

I searched the available corpora for examples of article doubling with *still*. In the BNC there are three spoken examples and one written; in COCA there are eleven spoken and six written.

- (35) It's **a still a** very difficult situation. There are many challenges we have to overcome.  
(COHA , PBS *Newshour* 2012; speaker is David Cameron)
- (36) At the moment all we're doing is keeping the lid on **a still a** pretty serious problem  
(BNC, broadcast)
- (37) " The New York area is **a still a** hub, and I think it's as good a bet as any. "  
(COHA. *New York Times* quotation)

Most of these examples are in existential constructions or follow the copula, except for (36). But if *still* can have doubled articles, what are the limits?

## Conclusion

I have shown that indefinite article doubling occurs with both degree and kind *such*; that it occurs with degree modifiers that are modifiers of the DP as well as those that modify the AP

I have shown data from standard and non-standard English and Danish and attempted a syntactic analysis.

## Sources

British National Corpus (BNC) <http://corpus.byu.edu/bnc/>

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