

Liberated Modifiers: An Autolexical Account of Modifiers Found  
Outside the NP

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## Liberated modifiers:

An Autolexical account of modifiers found outside the NP<sup>1</sup>

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Modern English has a set of constructions in which part of the modifier is liberated from the NP and placed before the DET. Such constructions are shown in (1).<sup>2</sup>

- (1) a) He's such a nice boy  
b) That is too big a house for us  
c) This is quite a/the problem

In these constructions, instead of the normal [<sub>NP</sub> DET (Adv) (Adj) N'] pattern, we find what I will call for now [<sub>NP</sub> ModP NP]. Such a construction would be difficult for a standard transformational syntax to handle for several reasons: 1) If the grammar had a rule as in (2) which permitted it to generate sentences as in (1), it would then permit the ungrammatical constructions in (3).

(2) NP → AP NP

- (3) a) \*He's very a nice boy  
b) \*That's very big a house

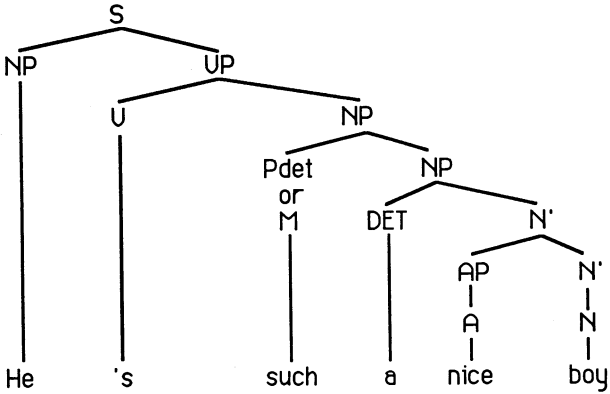
2) On the other hand, in GB, permitting movement to Spec of DP would then require movement at LF since the liberated modifiers do modify the N' (as in (1b) or (1c)) or the AP (as in (1a)) inside the NP. Abney (1987) suggests another alternative. He argues that the AP (or DegP) appears at d-structure in the position it has in s-structure. For Abney, "prenominal adjectives ... head the noun phrase they appear in" (p.326). That is, prenominal adjectives f-select a noun-phrase (DP in his notation) and inherit "certain nominal features from the noun phrase" (p.325).<sup>3</sup> However, an analysis within a system with independent modules, as in Autolexical syntax, is straightforward and not very complex. There are, in fact,

several possible solutions to the problem of how to analyze *such* and other such modifiers within this framework.

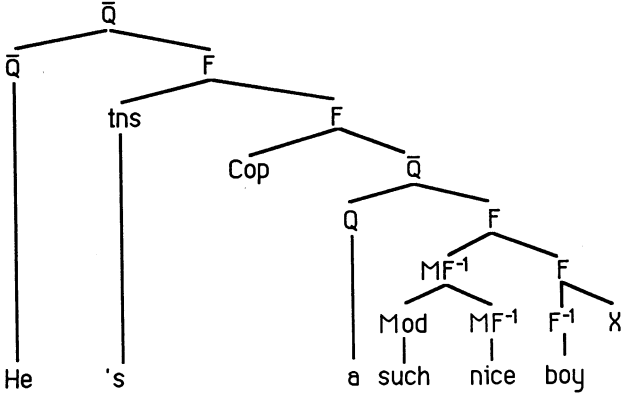
One of the advantages of an Autolexical approach to such a problem is that it allows us to describe the language as simply as possible in each of several modules. When the modules are compared in the Interface the structures in each module may match with the structures in other modules in terms of dominance and constituency, but there may also be structural mismatches between the representations in different modules. In cases where mismatches occur, either the construction is ungrammatical, or one of the modules takes precedence within limits (morphology generally takes precedence over syntax and syntax over semantics (Schiller 1989, 1991)). Two solutions to the problem of *such* involve a mismatch between what is described in the syntax and what is described in the logico-semantic. The difference between these two solutions relates to the syntactic category of the elements liberated: are they modifiers, or do they form a new category of predeterminer? For the third solution under discussion, the syntax is of the familiar sort (some version of X-Bar (Pullum 1985)) with the modifier inside the NP in the syntax, but there is a mismatch between the syntax and the morphology where forms like *such a* form a superword.<sup>4</sup> An analysis of this sort would leave settled the syntactic category membership of *too* + Adj and *such* and other forms which can be liberated from the noun phrase. Something which may help us to both understand the construction under discussion and choose among the possible analyses is an examination of the historical source of such constructions. They are not new in English, except insofar as fixed word order has forced the question.

In Autolexical syntax, as noted, we can define node admissibility requirements which allow grammatical constructions as in (1) without allowing the ungrammatical ones in (3). In such a model, the sentence in (1a) would have the syntactic tree structure in (4a) and the semantic tree structure in (4b),<sup>5</sup> with a lexical entry for *such* as in (4c). In this analysis there is a mismatch between the syntax and the semantics, since the dominance relationships between *such* and *a* are different in the syntax and the semantics: *such* commands *a* in the syntax, but is commanded by *a* in the semantics. However, such a mismatch is acceptable since it violates none of the constraints proposed by Sadock (1991a). In (4a), the node label for

(4) a)



b)



c) *such*:

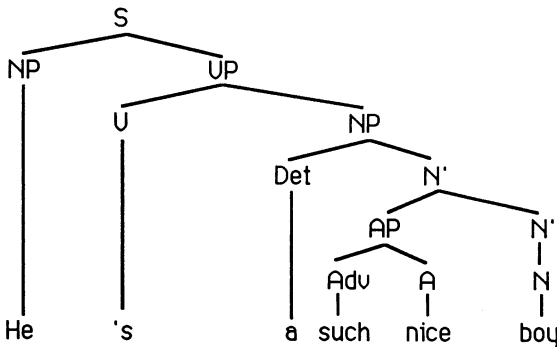
- Syn: [<sub>NP</sub> — NP]
- Mor: P
- Sem: Mod

*such* is left undetermined, since this tree could represent one of two structures. Traditionally *such* would be called an adverb (a modifier in the syntactic module of Autolexical syntax), but it may be more illuminating to identify *such* as a member of an independent category called predeterminer. One reason to argue for that analysis is that the label adverb relies on the role of *such* in the semantics as a modifier of the adjective *nice*. However,

it's position in the syntax is not the usual position of a modifier of elements in the NP in Modern English, and the node labels in the syntax may not make reference to the semantic roles of the forms involved. It is also hard to call the form an adverb (or an adjective) in the morphology, since it takes none of the usual adverb/adjective morphology. There are no comparative or superlative forms, no *\*sucher* or *\*suchest*. We would argue, therefore, that given the syntactic structure in (4a), the best syntactic definition of *such* is a predeterminer whose characteristic is to return the same category that it takes (in this case [NP>>NP]<sup>6</sup>). One reason to argue for the identity of *such* as a predeterminer is that that is a purely descriptive syntactic label: it describes where *such* appears in the syntax. Its role as modifier is elaborated in the semantics. This is more insightful than calling *such* an adverb and then trying to adjust the rules of the syntax to explain its modifying role.

The solution in which the modifier is within the NP in the syntax puts the burden of explanation on the morphology. This solution reflects one stage of the historical development of the *such a* construction. The semantic tree for (1a) would still be (4b) under this scenario, but the syntactic tree would be as in (5a) and there would be a morphological entry for the superword *such a*, as in (5b). This solution does reflect the historical evidence fairly well: as we shall see, there was a time when *such a* and related constructions were written as one word, suggesting that those speakers of English who could write felt that it was one word. The main problem with the superword solution is that, while *quite a* could also be de-

(5) a)



b) such a:

Syn:

Mor: W + W

Sem:

fined as a superword, the analysis leaves no room for the liberated modifiers of the type *too* + Adj *a*, as in (1b). We could propose the superwords *too good a*, *too big a*, *too rich a*, etc., but this would fail to capture the generalization that just about any adjective can appear between the *too* and the *a*. And, as Schiller (p.c.) reminded me, there is, at least in some varieties of English, the possibility of *Isn't he such the gentleman?* (and some speakers also accept *such the* in the declarative: *He's such the gentleman* (cf. (1c) above)).

Historically, *swelc* (*swilc*, *swylc*) was what is traditionally called a demonstrative in Old English and it was used both pronominally and adjectivally, as in (6).

(6)a) Manegum swylcum bispellum he spræc to hym  
 Many such parables he said to them  
 'He said many such parables to them'

(Mark (Kisbye 2:144))

b) Be swylcum and be swylcum  
 by such and by such  
 'By such a one and by such a one'

(Alfred: Boethius (Kisbye 2:144))

Like other members of this class, it was generally inflected with the strong adjectival endings (as in (7)) and was not usually found with a demonstrative, though it has been found with weak adjectival endings following a demonstrative in "Alfredian" prose in the ninth century (Mitchell, § 504).<sup>7</sup> The traditional name of demonstrative, I believe, stems from the fact that *such* pointed out (demonstrated) a quality that was said to be held by the noun being modified. However, there is no reason to treat OE *swilc* as any different from other adjectives in the syntax, since the adjective had the same endings and could also be used nominally, as in (8). Note that

in (8a), when the adjective follows the article *ða*, it takes a weak ending

(7)

	masc	Fem	Neut
Sng:			
nom	swilc	swilc	swilc
acc	swilcne	swilce	swilc
gen	swilces	swilcre	swilces
dat	swilcum	swilcre	swilcum
inst	swilce		swilce
Pl:			
nom	swilce	swilce	swilce
acc	swilce	swilce	swilce
gen	swilcra	swilcra	swilcra
dat	swilcum	swilcum	swilcum

- (8) a) we sceolon ða hungrian fedan, nacode scrydan, ... ða  
 we shall the hungry feed, naked clothe, ... the  
 ungeðwæran gesibbian, untrume geneosian, deade bebyrian.  
 quarrelsome reconcile, infirm visit dead bury  
 "We shall feed the hungry, cloth the naked, reconcile the  
 quarrelsome, visit the infirm, bury the dead"

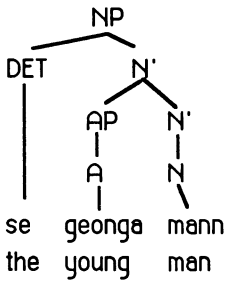
(ÆCHom. ii. 442 (Mitchell S133))

- b) Þær wearð Ongenðiow ecgum sweorda  
 There became Ongentheow edge-dat sword-gen  
 blondenfxa on bid wrecen  
 greyhaired-nom on halt pushed  
 "There was grey-haired Ongentheow brought to a halt by sword-  
 edges"

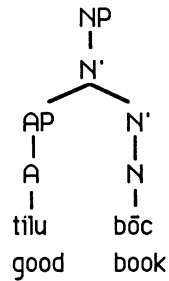
(Beowulf 2961 (Mitchell S134))

- (9) a) NP → (DET), N'  
 N' → (AP), (N')  
 N' → N

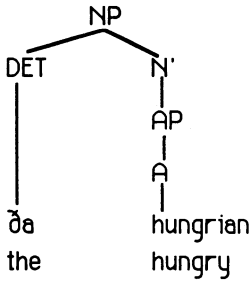
b)



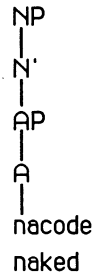
c)



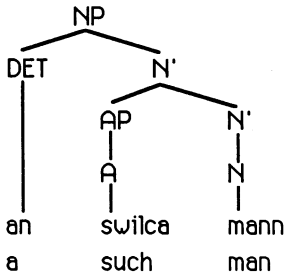
d)



e)



f)



(-an), and when it stands by itself, it takes the strong ending (-e). The articles as such, *an* and *se*, however, and the demonstrative *þē* could not in general be used alone. So the structure of the noun phrase in Old English could be defined by the rules of syntax in (9a).<sup>8</sup> This would give the trees in (9b-e) as possible noun phrases in Old English.<sup>9</sup> And since, as Mitchell notes, *swilc* has been found with a demonstrative, the tree in (9f) is also available. By the Middle English period both *a such* and *such a* became available, as in (10), possibly with the onset of the requirement that singular, non-generic NP's have a DET. (Note that in both of these sentences *swilc/such* has anaphoric reference.)

- (10) a) þat of Uðere Pendragene scal arisen swilc a sune.  
 "that from Uther Pendragon shall arise such a son."  
 (Layamon Brut 18881, c1205 (OED))
- b) Lute wonder it was þat strange men in is owe land dude a such  
 trespas.  
 "Little wonder it was that strange men in his own land did such a  
 trespass."  
 (R. Gloucester (Rolls) 379, 1297 (OED))
- (11) a) To a such bale  
 "To such an evil"  
 (Sawles Warde in O.E. Hom. I 251, a1240 (OED))
- b) Wel longe we mowe clep & crie, Er we a such kyng han y-founde!  
 "well long must we call and cry before we had found such a king"  
 (Elegy on Edw. I, xix, 1307 (OED))

Since *such* had been a demonstrative adjective as that is understood traditionally, and since several other Old English demonstratives (such as *this* and *which*) were making the shift from modifier to determiner,<sup>9</sup> the problem of how to include the more recognized determiner *a* arose and permitted either order. The syntax would still have the same rules as in (9a); however, there would be additional restrictions on when an NP could appear without a DET. The order *a such* lasted only a few centuries (the examples in (11) are the first and last citation in the OED). During the Middle English period, a related construction arose from the use of *such* in absolute constructions (as in 6b). This change also affected the absolute use of adjectives: English developed a requirement that the adjective be supported by a dummy noun, *one*. For *such (a)*, this resulted in *such (a) one*, with the form without the additional article the older.

- (12) þei schullen presenten hym to the nexte custode of þat place where  
 euere þei find sychon  
 "they should present him to the next custodian of that place  
 wherever they might find such a one"  
 (Wyclif Works 47, c1380 (OED))

It was often written as one word *suchon*, see (12)). This resulted in the restriction of the availability  $N' \rightarrow AP$ .

We have seen three possible solutions for the problem of how to treat the liberated modifiers of (1): one where the syntax is that of the form expected in some version of X-bar and the order that we get in actual sentences is due to the morphological requirement of the superword *such+a* (written as two words by convention) and two where the syntax describes a structure where the modifier is outside of the noun phrase in the syntax. In these later two, the question is what to call the modifier in the syntax: should it be called a modifier (which is a better description of its semantic role) or a predeterminer which gives back the same category it takes. The superword analysis has the apparent advantage of reflecting one stage in the historical development, but this is primarily the development of the pronominal form and not the adjectival form. Neither the predeterminer or the modifier solution, however, contradict the historical evidence, which is fairly straightforward. A change in the morphology (loss of inflectional endings which categorized *such* as an adjective) and its semantics as a demonstrative with anaphoric reference as well as a syntax in which the word order still has not reached absolutely strict order allowed *such* to appear either before or after the determiner. Why it should be that the predeterminer position won out over the postdeterminer one is not clear (but that is for another paper). Since, however, if we decide to name the syntactic category of *such* "modifier," we are relying on the semantic function of the form to identify the syntactic node label, and since the superword solution fails to capture the generalizations demonstrated in *such a* and *such the*, and *quite a* and *quite the*, and the full range of possibilities of *too* + Adj, we prefer the solution which identifies the syntactic category of *such* and related constructions as a predeterminer which returns the same category it takes. This solution follows comfortably from the historical facts and adheres closely to the principles of Autolexical syntax. Those principles allow us to analyze the data completely in each of the relevant dimensions and this leads us to an analysis which is a clear and concise exposition of the data.

Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Many thanks are due to Eric Schiller who has read rough drafts of this paper and offered suggestions about the Autolexical analysis presented here. Thanks are also due to the members of ANSAX-L, the electronic net for those interested in Anglo-Saxon studies, who responded to my cry for help on the forms of *swilc*. All faults are, of course, mine.
- <sup>2</sup> Several examples of *such* after the determiner were mentioned in the question period after the paper. However, it is important to recognize an important distinction between those *such*'s and the *such* under discussion here: the *such* in (i)-(iii) are demonstrative rather than emphatic (*such* in (1a)). Also demonstrative is the *such* in (iv) and (v). (The examples are some of those raised at the meeting.)

- i) every such case should be reported
- ii) another such construction/other such constructions
- iii) three such people
- iv) such a person should be directed
- v) such of you as want to come

The development of the emphatic stems from a construction of *such* with an N or NP and a following dependent clause which provided the basis of comparison. Such constructions date from the Old English period. Later developments allowed suppression of the dependent clause (this began roughly in the sixteenth century). For more about the development of *such*, see Schiller and Need (1992).

- <sup>3</sup> Quirk and Greenbaum (1973) describe *such* and *quite* as "intensifiers [which] may premodify noun phrases" (128).
- <sup>4</sup> A fourth possible solution within Autolexical theory involves the notion of surfotax (as first described by Steinberg and Caskey (1988) and elaborated by Sadock (1991b) in which the mismatch would be between the syntax and a fourth module, the surfotax, which would take precedence over the ordering in the syntax. In this solution the syntax is as in (4'a), but there is a template in the surfotax which requires the order *such* *a*. However, there is no strong motivation for the surfotax in this situation (as there is in describing the order of pronouns in Yiddish or the agreement patterns of Spanish). One major problem is how to capture the facts of which elements must come before the determiner--we could just list such elements, but that does not seem very satisfactory since it captures no generalizations. However, another reason to argue against a surfotax solution for this problem is that a strong solution can be found within the core modules of Autolexical Syntax.

<sup>5</sup> For more on the semantics of similar constructions, see Napoli (1989).

<sup>6</sup> Properly this is [N2>>N2] (for a fuller discussion see Sadock (in prep) and Schiller

1992).

<sup>7</sup> The weak endings for *swilc* would be as follows:

	masc	Fem	Neut
Sng:			
nom	swilca	swilce	swilce
acc	swilcan	swilcen	swilce
gen	swilcan	swilcan	swilcan
dat	swilcan	swilcan	swilcan
inst	swilcan		swilcan
Pt			
nom	swilcan	swilcan	swilcan
acc	swilcan	swilcan	swilcan
gen	swilcra/swilcena	swilcra/swilcena	swilcra/swilcena
dat	swilcum	swilcum	swilcum

<sup>8</sup> It is important to remember that the rules of syntax in the Autolexical framework are node admissability rules, as in GPSG.

<sup>9</sup> Adjectives and even articles could appear after the noun; however, the structures here are the most common in prose.

<sup>10</sup> See Lightfoot for a discussion of the category label of items like *such*. The items Lightfoot discusses are forms that become quantifiers in Modern English.

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