

Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg
Anglistisches Seminar
Wintersemester 2022/2023
Masterarbeit
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Such a Construction!

Evidence for an Exclamatory Evaluative
Construction with Pivotal *such*

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English Studies: Linguistics

December 23, 2022

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Honor Pledge

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Angela Queisser

Heidelberg, December 23, 2022

Abstract (Deutsch)

In der Konstruktionsgrammatik werden Form-Bedeutungspaare ('form-meaning pairs')¹, genannt 'Konstruktionen', als Basiseinheiten der Sprache angesehen. Dies betrifft nicht nur Worte und Wortbedeutungen, sondern auch grammatische Strukturen und vor allem idiomatische Ausdrücke wie Redewendungen. Lexikon und Syntax gelten nicht als getrennte Sprachdomänen. Die Bedeutung von Konstruktionen lässt sich oft nicht allein anhand ihres lexikalischen Aufbaus bestimmen, sondern geht darüber hinaus oder weicht davon ab, ist also nicht-kompositionell ('non-compositional'). In dieser Masterarbeit wird eine Konstruktion des Englischen postuliert, näher bestimmt und auf ihre Funktion im Sprachgebrauch untersucht. Beispiele für den Gebrauch der 'exclamatory evaluative construction with pivotal *such*', oder 'evaluative *such* construction', sind Sätze wie *You are [such an idiot]* und *You are [such a nice person]*, wobei die Konstruktion in eckigen Klammern steht. Die Form der Konstruktion wird daher als [*such* (Artikel) (Adjektiv) Nomen] dargestellt. Das modifizierende Element *such* ist obligatorischer Bestandteil der Konstruktion, während die Slots für Artikel, Adjektiv und Nomen von den Sprecher:innen befüllt werden. In der Fachliteratur wird *such* oft als intensivierendes Element beschrieben. In dieser Masterarbeit wird die These aufgestellt, dass die konstruktionelle Bedeutung der evaluative *such* construction über eine Intensivierung hinausgeht. Es wird angenommen, dass die Konstruktion der Wertung dient und dabei deutlich zu einer *negativen* Wertung neigt. Diese Neigung, die *such* zugeschrieben wird, hat zur Folge, dass neutrale Nomen, die ohne disambiguierendes Adjektiv in der Konstruktion auftreten, eine negative Konnotation annehmen. Dieser Effekt der Lesarterzwingung ('coercion') ist ein deutliches Anzeichen für die kognitive Verfestigung ('entrenchment') der Konstruktion. Für diese Masterarbeit wurden drei empirische Studien durchgeführt, um Belege für die aufgestellten Thesen zu erlangen. In zwei Korpusanalysen werden sowohl die Häufigkeit des Auftretens der Konstruktion sowie der bevorzugte Kontext und die in den einzelnen Slots vorkommenden Adjektive und Nomen untersucht. Hierzu wurden sechs englische Korpora ausgewertet. Die Analyse der lexikalischen Bestandteile ist besonders aufschlussreich und zeigt, dass in der Konstruktion vorwiegend negativ wertende Nomen, aber positiv wertende Adjektive auftreten. Die dritte Studie untersucht, wie Sprecher:innen prädikative Beispielsätze mit und ohne *such* bewerten, vor allem, wenn neutrale Nomen darin auftreten. Die Ergebnisse zeigen, dass Sprecher:innen Sätze mit *such* negativer bewerten. Die Belege aus den Studien werden als substantiell, aber nicht als abschließend konklusiv erachtet.

¹ Die deutschsprachige Fachterminologie aus dem Bereich Konstruktionsgrammatik ist Ziem und Lasch (2013) entnommen. Inhaltliche Referenzen werden im Haupttext angegeben.

Abstract (English)

In Construction Grammar, form-meaning pairs called 'constructions' are regarded as the basic units of language. This applies not only to words and word meanings but also to grammatical structures and especially to idioms. Lexicon and syntax are not considered separate domains of language. The meaning of constructions often cannot be determined through their lexical makeup alone, but goes beyond it or deviates from it, i.e. it is non-compositional. In this master's thesis, a construction of English will be postulated, specified, and examined for its function in language use. Examples of the 'exclamatory evaluative construction with pivotal *such*', or 'evaluative *such* construction', are sentences such as *You are [such an idiot]* and *You are [such a nice person]*, with the construction enclosed in square brackets. The form of the construction is therefore represented as [*such* (article) (adjective) noun]. The modifying element *such* is an obligatory constituent of the construction while the slots for article, adjective, and noun are filled by the speakers. In the literature, *such* is often described as an intensifying element. In this master's thesis, it is argued that the constructional meaning of the evaluative *such* construction goes beyond intensification. It is proposed that the construction serves the purpose of evaluation, with a clear tendency towards *negative* evaluation. This tendency, which is attributed to *such*, has the consequence that neutral nouns occurring in the construction without a disambiguating adjective take on a negative connotation. This effect of coercion is a clear indication of cognitive entrenchment of the construction. For this master's thesis, three empirical studies were conducted in order to obtain evidence for the hypotheses put forward. In two corpus analyses, the frequency of occurrence of the construction as well as its preferred context and the adjectives and nouns occurring in the individual slots are examined. For this purpose, six English corpora were examined. The analysis of the lexical constituents is particularly revealing and shows that predominantly negative nouns, but positive adjectives, occur in the construction. The third study investigates how speakers evaluate predicative example sentences with and without *such*, particularly when they occur with neutral nouns. The results show that speakers evaluate sentences with *such* more negatively. The evidence from the studies is considered substantial but not fully conclusive.

1. Introduction

Without having been introduced to the topic, readers may consider the title 'Such a Construction!' to be somewhat 'off'. Very broadly speaking, this master's thesis² will analyze the peculiarities of the kind of utterance exemplified by its title. The following exchange (1)³, taken from the television series *The Handmaid's Tale*⁴, is more illustrative of the type of statement this paper will analyze. Instantiations of the proposed construction are underlined.

- (1) Character A: *How could you be so stupid?*
[...]
Character A: *You are such a fucking idiot!*
Character B: *Fuck, when did you become such a bitch?!*

It was through this dialog that I became aware of a construction which, going by intuition, is characterized by the modifier *such* as the pivotal item and a tendency to feature epithets⁵. This occurred during the Hauptseminar 'Constructions' in the winter semester of 2020/2021. I then chose this particular construction for my term paper, which is enclosed in the current paper as Appendix 5 and which will be cited as Queisser 2021 (unpublished manuscript).

In my term paper, I proposed the form of the construction to be [*such* (ART) (ADJ) N] and its main function to be negative evaluation (Queisser 2021: 2). Several formal and functional ambiguities pertaining to the use of the construction, or rather, similar strings of lexical items, challenged these proposals. Some of these ambiguities were resolved through corpus data. I found that the proposed form is not exclusive to the construction and provided a more fine-grained analysis of the construction's semantics. I concluded that "there is substantial evidence for [...] a construction whose form is [*such* (art) (adj) N] and whose function is to assign an unfavorable quality to the subject, indicating that the subject represents this quality to a high or even absolute degree." (ibid.: 17). The current paper is to conduct a more thorough analysis and is expected to solidify this claim. Particularly, it aims to establish that *such*, when occurring in this specific form, has an evaluative rather than an only intensifying effect. The latter effect, intensification of some meaning inherent in the nominal, has been described in the literature (e.g. Altenberg 1994; De Mönnink 2000; Spinillo 2003; Ghesquière 2012), however,

² For reasons of simplicity, the term 'paper' will hereafter be used to refer to the current document.

³ See also Appendix 1 for a comprehensive list of examples used throughout this paper.

⁴ The quote in Season 2, Episode 11 "Holly" can be viewed here (personal Dropbox, duration ca. 45 seconds): <https://www.dropbox.com/s/vsggeq0z8brwip/Video%20The%20Handmaid%27s%20Tale.mp4?dl=0>

⁵ The term 'epithet' may describe various concepts. In this paper, it will be used in the sense defined by Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 380-1) as "an emotive expression which serves to indicate annoyance with the individual concerned rather than to give an objective description."

there is, to my best knowledge, no detailed study of an evaluative nuance of *such* in its own right. Though not very recently, Culpeper (2011: 113), from an (im)politeness studies perspective, also notes that "[v]irtually no study has attempted to understand how the notion of conventionality might be linked to politeness or impoliteness. [...] Such conventionalized behaviours/formulae must be a focal point of study." In this paper, I attempt to contribute to this study and term the construction the 'exclamatory evaluative construction with pivotal *such*', or short, 'evaluative *such* construction'.

Before the exact scope of this paper will be detailed, this section will situate it within its theoretical framework. The approach taken here, as well as in the term paper enclosed, is that of Construction Grammar. This cognitive-linguistic approach⁶, which first emerged in the 1980s (Goldberg 1995: 6), has produced extensive research throughout the decades and views linguistic expressions as pairings of form and function (Goldberg 1995, 2006, 2019; Hilpert 2014). Construction Grammar puts special focus on conventionalized and idiomatic expressions (Fillmore et al. 1988; Taylor 2012: 69; Hilpert 2014: 13; Goldberg 2019: 1). Fillmore et al. (1988: 534) note that "idiomaticity in a language includes a great deal that is productive, highly structured, and worthy of serious grammatical investigation." Construction Grammar thus underscores the significance of an expression's *use*. Generally, theories distinguish between three types of constructions: lexically fixed constructions such as idioms, constructions with some fixed lexical material and some slots that can be filled (partially schematic constructions), and constructions that provide a template but do not specify any lexical material (fully schematic constructions, often grammatical constructions), as exemplified by (2) below (cf. Goldberg 2006, 2019; Taylor 2012; Hilpert 2014). The evaluative *such* construction is part of the second category, as the lexical item *such* is fixed. In the following, some of the key concepts of Construction Grammar and how it approaches the analysis of constructions will be detailed. These concepts will be applied to analyze the evaluative *such* construction throughout the current paper. Said key concepts are printed in bold in the following paragraphs.

Construction Grammar proposes that linguistic items of various kinds are stored in the mind within a **network** in which they cluster and connect, overlap, and can get co-activated (Goldberg 2019). Goldberg (2019) calls this network 'hyper-dimensional conceptual space' whereas Hilpert (2014) uses the perhaps more accessible term 'construct-i-con'. Novel constructions enter the network through repeated exposure, which leaves memory traces and

⁶ Rather, a group of approaches that differ to some extent in their theoretical framework. See Goldberg (2006: 213ff) for a discussion of similarities and differences across approaches.

ultimately leads to the **entrenchment** of a construction (Taylor 2012: 122). As constructions are related to higher-level constructions by which they are motivated (Goldberg 1995: 72), they inherit formal and/or semantic features from their parent constructions (Goldberg 1995, 2019; Taylor 2012; Hilpert 2014). The concept of **inheritance** will be particularly relevant to the current discussion (see Section 3.3.1). Another crucial aspect is that constructions may express meaning beyond that which is provided by their constituents. This **non-compositional meaning**, often a meaning idiosyncratic to a construction, may cause an effect of **coercion**: the idiosyncratic meaning determined by the construction overrides the traditional, or denotational (Crystal 1999: 69), meaning of certain lexical items occurring in the construction (Fillmore et al. 1988; Goldberg 1995, 2019; Hilpert 2014). A final relevant concept is that of **constraints**. Constructions very often impose constraints, e.g. on the lexical material that is admissible to enter their slots (Hilpert 2014; Goldberg 2019).

The following example sentence (2), taken from Goldberg (1995:3), illustrates some of the concepts introduced above and how they will be applied in the current discussion.

(2) *Pat sneezed the napkin off the table.*

Goldberg uses this example to illustrate the 'caused-motion construction'. It is related to the 'transitive construction' (Goldberg 2019: 37) and **inherits** its transitive character. The verb *sneeze*, usually intransitive, therefore attains a three-argument sense (Goldberg 1995: 225), which exemplifies how **coercion** operates on the verb (for empirical evidence see Goldberg 2019: 31ff). We could also imagine sentences such as *Pat coughed the napkin off the table* or *?Pat breathed the napkin off the table*. Here, the verb *coughed* seems admissible while the verb *breathe* does not. However, all three verbs describe an emission of air through the nose or mouth. Presumably, the act of breathing lacks the force needed to move a napkin off a table. Sufficient force, also noted by Goldberg (1995: 29, 2006: 100) seems to be a **constraint** determining which verbs can enter this particular construction.

The current paper will provide evidence for the proposed evaluative *such* construction and argues that the construction is more than only intensifying in character. While there is research on *such* as an intensifying item and a tendency for it to co-occur with epithets is sometimes mentioned (Bolinger 1972; Culpeper 2011; Ghesquière 2012; Taylor 2012), there seems to be no detailed analysis targeting this particular feature of *such*. However, especially with regard to subtle nuances and changes in the idiomatic use of constructions (cf. Hilpert 2014: 179ff), this is a topic of linguistic interest. This paper will first provide an analysis of

such. Section 2 will examine its lexical and syntactic peculiarities, its identifying and intensifying variants, its connection to the expression of degree and gradation, and its exclamatory character, one of its most central attributes for the current discussion.

Section 3 will detail the proposed evaluative *such* construction by providing a formal description specifying its slots and the syntactic contexts in which it occurs. A semantic and pragmatic description will examine the lexical material that can enter the construction's slots as well as focus more closely on the speech situation in which the construction is expected to occur. It will then establish an argument for the constructionhood of the evaluative *such* construction by situating it within its construction network and inheritance schema, and will demonstrate the coercion effects that arise.

Two corpus studies and a survey conducted for this paper will be detailed in Section 4. Corpus Study I examines the frequency of occurrence of the construction across different corpora. Here, the focus is put on genre and register, in particular. Corpus Study II takes a closer look at the lexical material occurring in the construction across the corpora. Specifically, the adjective and noun slots and the clausal context preceding the construction are of interest. Both a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the lexical material is conducted. For this, the frequency of occurrence of the individual lexical items as well as their denotation and connotation will be considered. The latter aspect is particularly significant with regard to coercion effects. Both studies aim to reproduce the findings obtained for the HS 'Constructions' term paper. They were conducted with a very similar methodology, however with a larger amount of data, and across more corpora. To provide real-world data, an online survey⁷ was conducted to obtain behavioral evidence from speakers. A general discussion will connect the findings of all three studies and interpret them within the theoretical framework and in connection with the claims made about the evaluative *such* construction. Section 5 provides a conclusion and details some possible objectives for further study that would have exceeded the scope of the current paper.

2. On *such*

"[D]espite the rich grammatical tradition, English grammarians do not know what to do with *such*". This rather casual observation made by Van der Auwera and Sahoo (2020: 2) pinpoints the very unclear status of the word. A closer examination of *such* is therefore in order. For the

⁷ 'Online' here refers to an internet-based survey, not to an online method in the psycholinguistic sense, in which data are collected in real-time as language is being processed by participants (Mertins 2016: 16ff).

current analysis, particularly its position 'outside' the noun phrase within the evaluative *such* construction and its quite unclear semantic function pose a challenge. This section will discuss the lexical, syntactic and functional peculiarities of *such*, its identifying and intensifying variants, and its resulting role as a marker of degree. It will then elaborate on its exclamatory character, an expression of the highest degree. While many uses of *such* exist and may be introduced below, the focus will be put on the uses relevant to the current discussion. Others will be introduced to be subsequently rejected for the current analysis.

2.1 Different Uses of *such*

The Oxford English Dictionary⁸ lists *such* as an adjective and a pronoun and recognizes its demonstrative character. It then lists 38 sub-entries of different uses, only few of them obsolete, some of which have several further sub-sections. This illustrates the variety with which the word *such* is used. As indicated, its lexical category is to a large extent unclear. While Quirk et al. (1985) and Altenberg (1994) advocate the distinction made in the OED and classify *such* as an adjective⁹ as well as a pronoun or, more generally, a pro-form, Spinillo (2003: 195), referring to Huddleston and Pullum (2002), opts for the 'uniform adjective analysis', in which *such* is an adjective only.

To arrive at the adjective-only stance, Spinillo (2003: 195) discusses the distinction made between pre-nominal *such* as in (3), which is classed as an adjective, and pro-nominal *such* as in (4).

(3) *Such an attack would take a terrible toll*

(4) *Such is their awareness of the foaming discontent in the ranks.*

In both examples, *such* is sentence-initial, the difference being that in (3) *such* occurs with a noun, hence the term prenominal, and in (4) *such* occurs without a noun, hence the term pronominal (definition by Spinillo 2003: 195). While (3) looks like it may exemplify the evaluative *such* construction, (4) can be ruled out as a comparable use due to the lack of a nominal directly following *such*. Pronominal *such*, whether or not there are sound arguments for it, will therefore be disregarded in the current analysis as it does not instantiate the construction to be discussed.

⁸ The online version is used for this paper and will hereafter be abbreviated to 'OED'. Access dates for all OED citations are provided in the list of references.

⁹ Altenberg (1994: 228) classifies it as an adverb in some contexts.

Although (3) has the form [*such* + article + noun], it is quite evident that it does not in fact exemplify the evaluative *such* construction. As part of the subject, *such* evidently establishes an anaphoric reference to the preceding context. It follows that there must be several pronominal variants of *such*. Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 1546) describe *such* in their section on deixis and anaphora and identify it as a modifier in a noun phrase (NP) structure that concerns either degree or kind. In their distinction, (3) applies to the kind sense, as it refers to an attack of the kind described, while (10), *I've never had to wait such a long time before*, applies to the degree sense and can be paraphrased to *so long a time*. This, at least formally, is congruent with the evaluative *such* construction (see also Section 2.2).

We are thus already concerned with the function of pronominal *such*. Across authors, it is seen as a predeterminer (Quirk et al. 1985; Altenberg 1994), a fronted premodifier (De Mönink 2000), an (external) modifier (Huddleston and Pullum 2002), an intensifier (Quirk et al. 1985), or a complex subordinator when combined with *that* (ibid.), to name just a few of the functions proposed. Some of these can be seen as overlapping, for instance, intensification and modification. To complicate things even further, some authors propose that *such*, when intensifying in character (see Section 2.2), is always followed by a result clause, as exemplified in (5) and (6), and that one is implied when none is expressed (e.g. Bolinger 1972). Huddleston and Pullum and Quirk et al. do not go as far as making a result clause obligatory but agree that *such* licenses clauses such as in (5), taken from Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 967) and (6), taken from Quirk et al (1985: 1109). This explains why one of the classifications of *such* applied by Quirk et al. is that of a complex subordinator. In the current paper, result clauses are not seen as obligatory or necessarily implied, but it is acknowledged that they may be invited.

(5) *It was such a miserable day (that we decided to stay at home).*

(6) *She is such a good lecturer (that all her courses are full).*

Many details about the uses of *such* found in the literature had to be omitted here, and this paper does not attempt to clarify the status of the word. It should have become clear, however, that *such* is quite a chameleon and that it will be necessary to find its exact function in a specific context. For the current paper, this context is a construction where *such* is pronominal and occurs as a modifier to a noun or adjective-noun combination in a predicative context (cf. (5) and (6)). This will be elaborated upon in Section 3. One last comment on *such* to be made here is that it is inherently indefinite and therefore only occurs with the indefinite article *a* or *an* (Altenberg 1994: 229ff), which can also be observed in the evaluative *such*

construction. This is relevant to the concept of 'comparative reference' (Section 2.2) and the assignment of an ad hoc category (Section 3.2.1).

2.2 Identifying vs. Intensifying *such*

Before encountering the evaluative *such* construction, I had a 'blind spot' concerning the different semantic dimensions of *such* and its identifying and intensifying variants discussed in the literature. One of the first questions that emerged during my attempts to pinpoint the evaluative *such* construction was, however, what exactly *such* refers to when occurring in the construction. My intuition was that *such* is a referential, or phoric, word, referring either anaphorically or cataphorically to an item retrievable from the context. Examples (7) and (8) illustrate these presumably prototypical uses. Note how the form of [*such* + indefinite article + noun] corresponds to the form of the evaluative *such* construction.

(7) *In such a case, please call for assistance.*

(8) *There is such a thing as paid parental leave in Germany.*

The definition found in the OED supports this view, stating that "[*s*]uch is a demonstrative word used to indicate the quality or quantity of a thing by reference to that of another [...]. Thus, syntactically, *such* may have backward or forward reference". However, in example (1), there is no retrievable co-referent either before or after the construction is used.

The OED also lists a different, interesting use of *such*, namely that of an "absolute intensive, the implied clause of comparison being indeterminate and quite lost sight of." This use, tagged as colloquial, interestingly lists the following example (9) from the year 1566 as the earliest occurrence. The use of [*such* + indefinite article + noun], where the noun slot is filled by an epithet, corresponds exactly to the evaluative *such* construction.

(9) *Ye are such a calfe, such an asse, such a blocke.*

Although the OED recognizes an intensifying meaning, it still presupposes a co-referent, albeit one that cannot be identified in the context. Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 1546) adopt a similar view, but specify that for example (10), "the secondary term is retrieved from the situation of utterance: 'such a long time as this, i.e. as the time I'm currently having to wait'." Altenberg (1994: 231) also identifies this 'exophoric' (cf. Halliday and Hasan 1976), or situational, reference for *such*, but notes that it is not as common and hard to establish.

(10) *I've never had to wait such a long time before.*

However, Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 1546) distinguish between two types of *such*. They describe *such* as a modifier concerning either kind or degree (cf. OED: 'quality or quantity') and add in a footnote that when degree is concerned, there may not be an implied comparison at all. This last notion is not shared here (see also Section 3.2.1).

While degree is discussed in more detail in Section 2.3, this distinction made by Huddleston and Pullum may roughly correspond to the distinction between identifying *such* and intensifying *such*, one that is made by several authors investigating the development of the word (Bolinger 1972; Altenberg 1994; Ghesquière and Van de Velde 2011; Ghesquière 2012). Spinillo (2003: 209), on the other hand, argues that *such* is both identifying and intensifying and that whether it is perceived as one or the other depends on the nominal with which it occurs in a construction. Identifying *such* is described as establishing a 'comparative reference', as previously argued by Halliday and Hasan (1976: 76ff). This means that the two co-referents are not identical, as they would be with a regular phoric reference, but share a class identity or are otherwise alike (Altenberg 1994: 229). As Bolinger (1972: 62) puts it, *such* here "identifies a quality rather than an object." Intensifying *such* does not establish co-reference, but, as the name suggests, intensifies one or more gradable elements in the noun phrase (Bolinger 1972; Altenberg 1994; Ghesquière 2012). Overall, we can understand the identifying version of *such* to be synonymous with the phoric use mentioned at the beginning of this section (cf. Ghesquière 2012: 542), as exemplified by (7) anaphoric, (8) cataphoric and (10) exophoric. For intensifying *such*, Altenberg (1994: 228ff) offers the following example (11).

(11) *It was just such a nightmare.*

Altenberg (1994: 232) argues that here, intensifying *such* modifies the gradable noun *nightmare*. Note how this example corresponds in form and even lexical content to the proposed evaluative *such* construction. Altenberg offers a quite accessible way of distinguishing between identifying and intensifying readings of *such* (cf. also Spinillo 2003):

[W]hat determines the interpretation is the presence or absence of two features: a defining referent in the context and a gradable element in the noun phrase. If there is a contextual referent but no gradable element, *such* is interpreted as identifying; in the reverse situation it is interpreted as intensifying. (Altenberg 1994: 234)

Bolinger (1972) and Altenberg (1994) both argue that the function of *such* has shifted in the direction of intensification and refer to a cline from propositional via textual to expressive meaning introduced by Traugott (1982). Ghesquière and Van de Velde (2011) and Ghesquière (2012) conducted corpus analyses to verify this theory. Their work is particularly valuable for

the current discussion as they, as opposed to e.g. Bolinger and Altenberg¹⁰, adopt a data-driven, constructional, cognitive-functional view (Ghesquière 2012: 516). Ghesquière (2012: 542) found evidence in support of the theory that identifying and intensifying *such* each display their "own differentiating syntactic, collocational and semantic-pragmatic characteristics." The study conducted by Ghesquière and Van de Velde (2011: 793) found statistically robust evidence in support of a diachronic development towards intensifying *such* and thus towards an increase in expressive use, as described by Traugott (1982). They attribute this change to pragmatic strengthening. Section 2.3 will therefore take a closer look at *such* in its degree sense and describe an 'intensifying *such* construction'.

2.3 *Such* as a Degree Word and an Intensifying *such* Construction

Going forward from the previous section, this section will view *such* strictly as a degree word. A question still to be posed is what exactly *such* modifies. De Mönnink (2000: 78) investigates the type of modification that intensifying *such* performs in different phrasal contexts and suggests two types of readings, depending on whether or not an adjective is present in the phrase. This is interesting because the presence or absence of an adjective is one major concern in the study of the evaluative *such* construction (Section 3.2.3, Queisser 2021). De Mönnink argues that the gradable element in the absence of an adjective is the noun, or head of the NP. In this case, she suggests that *such* functions as a 'limiter' on the noun, as exemplified by (12) below. Note, however, the likely discrepancy between a limiter and intensification. When a gradable adjective is present, she proposes *such* to be part of a 'discontinuous adjective phrase' (AP). She argues that in this case, *such* acts as a modifier of the head of the AP. Examples (13) and (14), taken from her analysis¹¹, illustrate what De Mönnink means by discontinuous AP. Lexical items that are part of the discontinuous AP are underlined.

- (12) *such* a snob (cf. *rather* a bore)
- (13) *such* a small house (cf. *quite* a large apartment)
- (14) *such* a rude joke that it shocked me. (cf. *almost* an impossible task to perform)

De Mönnink (2000: 78) also states that "intensifying *such* resembles other adverbs that can either occur as limiter in the NP or as part of a discontinuous [AP]." Her examples are reproduced on the right-hand side in (12) through (14) above. One problem with her analysis, however, is that examples with *such* in (13) and (14) cannot be paraphrased to form a

¹⁰ Altenberg (1994) does, however, conduct a corpus analysis.

¹¹ The emphasis has been graphically adapted to match that of this paper.

predicative AP like their counterparts. While *the apartment is quite large* and *the task is almost impossible to perform* are not questionable sentences, **the house is such small* and **the joke was such rude that it shocked me* should be perceived as ungrammatical (cf. also Ghesquière 2012: 524). While an AP interpretation is not adopted in this paper, as *such* is clearly part of a NP in either condition of the evaluative *such* construction, it is included here to present a more complete picture and to show that *such* may even cause confusion as to which phrase type one is confronted with. Also, it serves to clarify that the distinction made by De Mönnink does not correspond to the 'adjective problem' of the evaluative *such* construction.

Ghesquière (2012: 531ff) also picks up the concept of *such* occurring in this type of discontinuous construction but concludes that this applies mostly to identifying *such* and describes it as marginal in her corpus data for intensifying *such*. Importantly, she analyzes the adjective not as the head of an AP, but as an intervening modifier between *such* and the head noun in a NP. This analysis will be favored here. She makes a different, meaning-based distinction between possible types of modification, that between qualitative and quantitative degree. This means that both quality and quantity are seen as gradable. In her view, the degree of both the head noun and intervening adjectives can be modified by *such*. In the case of quantitative modification, the notion of size or quantity is seen as inherent in lexical items such as *number*, *time*, *long*, and *big*. For qualitative degree, she distinguishes between gradable properties *inherent* in the head and properties *associated* with the head. The different types of modification Ghesquière recognizes can be summarized graphically as follows:

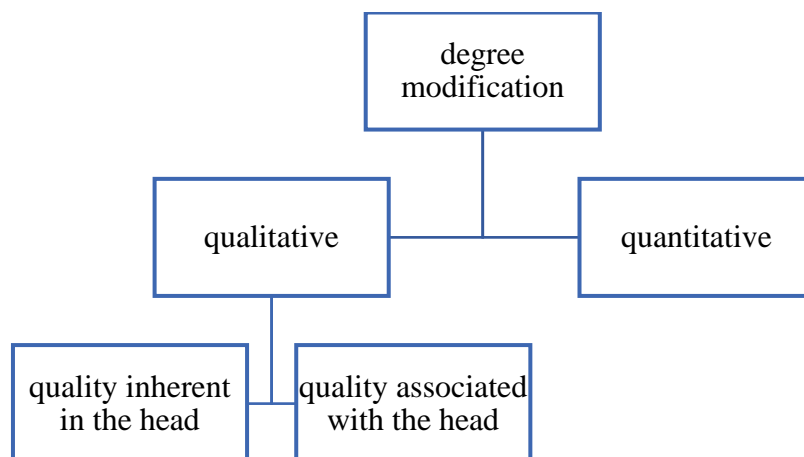


Figure 1: Degree modification with *such* after Ghesquière 2012.

Ghesquière (2012: 533) also observes a difference between NPs with and without a modifying adjective and notes that "in NPs with modifiers intervening between *such* and the head noun, the heads can convey gradable concepts, but also, and more typically, non-gradable,

semantically more neutral concepts" (emphasis added). She provides example (15) for the gradable version and (16) for the non-gradable version. Note how this difference in meaning with and without an adjective relates to that proposed for the evaluative *such* construction (Section 3.2.3).

(15) *They're such stupid people, they're such stupid cows.*

(16) *There's such a nice swimming pool there which nobody goes to really.*

Based on the observations made so far, it is possible to propose the existence of an intensifying *such* construction, which is not explicitly described in the literature covered but is the logical consequence of the proposals the abovementioned authors have made. The intensifying *such* construction may take the same form as the proposed evaluative *such* construction and may function essentially as its precursor. As the authors provide the above examples, e.g. (10) through (16), in their discussions on the intensifying character of *such*, and they clearly illustrate the formal characteristics of an intensifying *such* construction, I argue that this construction is implicitly attested in the literature. This is supported by an observation made by Altenberg, who, when discussing ambiguous cases in which it is not clear whether an instance of *such* is identifying or intensifying, states that

it is interesting to note that in most ambiguous cases the intensifying function of *such* tends to prevail. The fact that *such* is normally intensifying before a gradable word is evidently strong enough to tip the balance in favour of an intensifying interpretation. (Altenberg 1994: 235)

This clearly describes a coercion effect. As *such* is so entrenched as an intensifying item, it is interpreted as intensifying even when both readings are available. All the examples Altenberg lists under the ambiguous category have the form [*such* ART ADJ N]. As coercion effects are a consequence of constructional meaning overriding lexical meaning (Hilpert 2014: 17), this should count as evidence for an intensifying *such* construction.

2.4 Exclamatory Character of *such*

During the work on the HS 'Constructions' term paper, one question arose quite frequently: is the construction exclamative in nature or not? Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 923) take a very clear stance and, when discussing *so* and *such*, state that "these words closely match *how* and *what* in their grammatical distribution, except that they are not exclamative and hence the phrase containing them is not obligatorily fronted". They list *such* in their section on 'non-exclamative exclamations' and provide the following examples (17) and (18). They restrict the term 'exclamative' to examples with fronted *how* and *what*, such as (19).

- (17) *It was such a disaster!*
 (18) *Don't be such a wet blanket!*
 (19) *What a difficult problem we have on our hands!*

As these examples illustrate, the use Huddleston and Pullum discuss corresponds to the evaluative *such* construction. While Ghesquière (2012: 543), in light of the definition by Huddleston and Pullum and despite discussing *such* as an intensifier, deliberately opts not to use the alternative term 'exclamatory', others, such as Bolinger (1972: 68) and Altenberg (1994: 233) *do* call examples such as (17) exclamatory. This paper will also adopt this term to refer to the arguably emphatic use of *such*.

The exclamatory character of *such* explains the 'absolute intensive' *such* listed in the OED (see Section 1). If *such* were 'just' intensifying, it is conceivable that it might modify a gradable item to various degrees, including to a low or mid-degree. This is, however, not what we observe. Instead, we can paraphrase this 'absolute intensive' as the highest possible point on a scale, or the highest possible degree, which would warrant the use of an exclamation. This is in fact what several authors have observed when investigating intensifying *such*. Halliday and Hasan (1976: 84) use the term 'extremely' to describe the degree of intensification. Quirk et al. (1985: 1416) observe that "[i]n familiar speech of a style that strikes many people as extravagantly emphatic, the determiner *such* [...] [is] stressed so as to give exclamatory force to a statement, question, or directive." They also acknowledge that this makes *such* equivalent to the exclamatives *how* and *what*, and observe that for additional emotive emphasis, nuclear stress can be put on *such*. They provide the following transcriptions for (20) and (21).¹²

- (20) *She was /wearing 'such a lovely DRÈSS/*
 (21) */Why are you 'such a BÀby/*

As prosody plays an important role when emphatic speech is concerned (cf. Culpeper 2011: 145ff), further analysis in this regard would be very interesting and beneficial for the current discussion. However, due to the scope of this paper as well as the lack of audio data, this will not be possible.

¹² In the transcription convention used in Quirk et al. (1985: 1598-9), this means that the words between the vertical lines are in the same tone unit, there is a primary stress on *such*, and the nucleus of the tone unit is the stressed syllable of the noun, with falling tone.

3. Proposed Construction

As mentioned in the introduction to this paper, I first encountered the construction proposed here during the HS 'Constructions' in the winter semester of 2020/2021. The task was to identify a construction that had not been discussed in the reading for the course and to present it in a group project as well as to analyze it in a term paper. In the dialog between two characters on a television series, I noticed the exchange in example (1), reproduced here:

Character A: *How could you be so stupid?*

[...]

Character A: *You are such a fucking idiot!*

Character B: *Fuck, when did you become such a bitch?!*

Based on these example utterances, the construction theorized to exist in English was termed, motivated by its form, the '[*such* (ART) (ADJ) N] construction', or, at that point, 'scalar evaluative construction'¹³. Its prototypical function was proposed to be negative evaluation, and, when the noun is not clearly evaluative, a non-compositional meaning implying negative evaluation was theorized to occur due to *such* (Queisser 2021: 6). For the group presentation, individual contributions of the group members were made transparent, and the research and results covered by the term paper were entirely my own.

Following the discovery of the (alleged) construction, which one should also be familiar with from one's own linguistic experience, several intuitions, but also puzzles, presented themselves. The intuitions included that

- a) when *such* is followed by an article and noun, the noun is typically an epithet,
- b) this kind of utterance has an emphatic force and is typically made in an emotionally laden context of interaction, in informal spoken language,
- c) this kind of utterance seems to be a reaction to something that was either said or done.

While a) may be attributed to the bias of having just encountered an exchange (1) in which derogatory language is being used, the broader context available in the video in which the quote occurs illustrates that b) is very likely true. Assuming such an emotionally laden context is in place, c) may follow quite logically. Although these intuitions seem very plausible, they alone cannot serve as evidence for the existence of a construction. Additionally, there were several puzzles and challenges, including that:

¹³ However, as 'scalar' implies the full use of a scale whereas the construction is theorized to assign a quality on the highest point of a scale only (see previous section), this title will no longer be used.

- d) *such* seems to be the pivotal element of this kind of utterance, but it is unclear what kind of *idiot* or *bitch* the speakers refer to in the example,
- e) there are either two versions of the construction, with and without an adjective, or two separate constructions, in which case they may have to be analyzed separately,
- f) a preliminary corpus search yielded a considerable number of results with a positive rather than a negative evaluation, as well as examples that seemed 'merely' intensifying.

Early during the research for the current paper, another challenge emerged. Literature I had not been aware of while writing the term paper essentially describes a similar construction, the intensifying *such* construction proposed in Section 2.3. An additional challenge is therefore to provide evidence for the theory that *such* does not just intensify a gradable meaning in the lexical material, but that an evaluative notion does in fact arise from the construction. Some authors have recognized this particular function of this particular form, however without conducting a more detailed analysis. Taylor (2012: 90) lists it among his 'epithet constructions', and Culpeper (2011: 135), based on an analysis of naturalistic data, identifies it as a 'conventionalised impolite formula'¹⁴. In what follows, the construction will be described more closely. First, a formal description will be provided, followed by a semantic and pragmatic description. The construction will then be examined for its constructionhood. To this end, an inheritance schema for the construction will be proposed, and evidence for coercion effects occurring with the construction will be provided. Finally, the construction will be situated within a proposed construction network. This section anticipates some corpus data that will be discussed in more detail in Section 4.

3.1 Formal Description

Although the name of the construction has been changed to the evaluative *such* construction, the form proposed in the HS 'Constructions' term paper, [*such* (ART) (ADJ) N], remains. Originally, there was some uncertainty regarding the form of the construction. It was theorized that there may be two separate constructions, one with and one without an adjective (see also the general discussion in Section 4), and that the copula *be* may also be part of the construction (Queisser 2021: 3). This section will discuss the slots and possible configurations of the construction, and investigate the syntactic contexts the construction occurs in.

¹⁴ Culpeper (2011: 134) uses an approach very similar to Construction Grammar as described by Goldberg (1995), as he himself notes.

As was briefly mentioned in the introduction to this paper, constructions, or rather, multi-word constructions, come in three different types: lexically fixed constructions, fully schematic constructions, and partially schematic constructions (cf. Goldberg 1995, 2019; Taylor 2012; Hilpert 2014). Examples given for lexically fixed constructions are often idioms, such as *kick the bucket* (Goldberg 2019: 60). Here, none of the constituents can be replaced while preserving the meaning of the utterance. Even *kick a bucket*, with only the definite article replaced by the indefinite one, would be understood as the literal kicking of a bucket, instead of the non-compositional meaning *to die*, which this idiomatic expression bears. Fully schematic constructions, on the other hand, have no lexically fixed material at all. They consist of slots that can be filled by various items, given that said items meet the constraints the construction imposes. Examples are grammatical constructions, such as the transitive construction, which, in one basic configuration, consists of a subject slot, a transitive verb, and an object slot. Here, roughly speaking, any noun can enter the subject and object slots and any transitive verb can enter the verb slot. Coercion effects may apply, as we have seen in example (2) above.

The evaluative *such* construction is part of the third category, partially schematic constructions. Like fully schematic constructions, they have slots that can be filled by various lexical items. However, they also have lexically fixed material. An example other than the evaluative *such* construction is the 'way construction'. For instance, one can *make one's way*, *dig one's way*, or *punch one's way into a ballroom, out of prison, or through a crowd* (cf. Goldberg 1995: 199ff). In the case of the evaluative *such* construction, the lexically fixed item is *such*, while the other positions are slots in a schema. It fits the description of 'formal idioms' in Fillmore et al. (1988: 505), "syntactic patterns dedicated to semantic and pragmatic purposes not knowable from their form alone." In Taylor's (2012: 84) terminology, the construction corresponds to a 'constructional idiom', a class which he describes as "productive to a greater or lesser extent, in that the pattern can be instantiated by a number (in some cases, a very large, or even open-ended number) of specific expressions." The productivity of the construction will be illustrated by the corpus data in Section 4.

3.1.1 Slots and Configurations

As indicated by the parentheses in the form [*such* (ART) (ADJ) N], the article and adjective do not always occur in the construction. While the absence of the article is easily explained by the occurrence of non-count nouns and plurals, the situation of the adjective is more complex. Table

1, originally used in the HS 'Constructions' term paper (Queisser 2021: 3) and slightly adapted for this paper, illustrates the main configurations of the evaluative *such* construction.

No.	Preceding Context	Fixed: (external) modifier <i>such</i>	Slot 1: determiner: indef. article	Slot 2: attributive adjective	Slot 3: noun
(22)	You are	such	a-n	-	idiot
(23)	You are	such	a	fucking	idiot
(24)	They are	such	-	-	idiot-s
(25)	They are	such	-	fucking	idiot-s

Table 1: Construction schema and slots of the evaluative *such* construction.

The examples in Table 1 illustrate the construction embedded in a predicative context, meaning that the entire NP expressed by the form [*such* (ART) (ADJ) N] is a predicative complement of the subject (Kortmann 2005: 129f) and that the role or quality expressed by the construction is ascribed to the subject, or predicand (Huddleston and Pullum 2002: 73). The construction is preceded by the singular and plural form of the second-person pronoun and the copula *be*. The only fixed item in the construction is pivotal *such*. It is followed by three slots, of which Slot 1 and Slot 2 are not always filled while Slot 3 is obligatory and must be filled. Each position will be discussed in more detail below.

Preceding Context

For the examples in Table 1, a predicative context was chosen due to its frequency in connection with the construction and the semantic properties that follow from its use (see Sections 3.2 and 4). This predicative context is the main context used for the current analysis. Other contexts are possible, however. For this reason, it was decided that the copula *be* is not part of the construction. Section 3.1.2 will take a closer look at the syntactic contexts in which the construction occurs. Across different types of subjects investigated, pronouns occur most frequently while nouns and proper nouns are rare. Within the pronoun category, the singular second-person pronoun *you* occurs most frequently with the construction.

(External) Modifier *such*

Such is the only lexically fixed item of the construction. It functions as its pivot, a term adopted from 'pivot schemas' (cf. Hilpert 2014: 164), and is therefore obligatory. Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 435) classify *such* as an adjectival predeterminer, or, more precisely, an adjectival external modifier preceding the indefinite article, or determiner, in a NP like *such an idiot*. Although the adjective category can be challenged (cf. Section 2), the lexical category of *such*

is not important for its function as a modifier in the construction. *Such* is external only when the determiner, here the indefinite article, is present, which applies to examples (22) and (23) in Table 1. In the plural versions (24) and (25), as well as with non-count nouns, *such* functions as an internal modifier (ibid.). The crucial aspect about the status of *such* is that external modification is odd in an English NP and that formal idiosyncrasies like this are good evidence for the existence of a construction (Hilpert 2014: 5, 15). Fillmore et al. (1988: 508) speak of "familiar pieces unfamiliarly arranged", which contributes to the non-compositional meaning of a construction. Although learners may understand the intended meaning, they may not be able to infer the conventionality of the form without having learned the construction (cf. ibid.).

Slot 1: Determiner: Indefinite Article

As Altenberg (1994: 231) points out, *such* is an indefinite determiner and cannot occur with definite determiners, such as *the*. This is, logically, also what we find in the evaluative *such* construction, where it co-occurs with the indefinite article *a* or *an*. The article slot must be filled when the noun slot is filled by a singular count noun such as *idiot* in Table 1. The article slot cannot be filled when the noun slot is occupied by a non-count or plural noun as the indefinite article cannot occur with such nouns (Huddleston and Pullum 2002: 371)¹⁵. As the indefinite article takes a linking *n* when occurring before an adjective or noun starting with a vowel, the determiner slot also contains a morphological slot. This is, however, not important for the current discussion.

Slot 2: Attributive Adjective

While the NP as a whole is predicative in the examples in Table 1, the adjective modifying the noun within the NP is attributive (Crystal 1999: 6). One of the biggest challenges when trying to delineate the evaluative *such* construction was that the adjective slot is not always filled, as illustrated by examples (22) and (24) in Table 1, making it seem like the adjective is not an obligatory constituent of the construction. However, the corpus analysis for the HS 'Constructions' term paper suggested that the adjective is obligatory depending on the intended meaning of the utterance (Queisser 2021: 15). This will be discussed in more detail in Section 3.2 and the general discussion in Section 4.

¹⁵ Some authors (e.g. Altenberg 1994: 231; Ghesquière and Van de Velde 2011: 778) propose a zero article here.

Slot 3: Noun

Above, it was mentioned that the entire NP expressed by the form [*such* (ART) (ART) N] is a predicative complement of the subject¹⁶. The noun filling the noun slot is the head of said NP and its role or quality is ascribed to the subject. As with the indefinite article slot, the noun slot contains a morphological slot, for the plural *-s*. As a predicative complement, the noun matches the subject in number (Huddleston and Pullum 2002: 254), creating the need for such a slot. As the head of the phrase, the noun is obligatory in the construction and the noun slot must be filled.

On closer inspection, the term 'noun' may be too imprecise. In (26), the noun slot is not filled by a single noun, but by a larger expression.

(26) *You are such a (fucking) pain in the ass.*

Taking examples like this into account, it may be more accurate to define the expression occurring in this slot as a 'nominal', a term that was already used for the modified item in Section 2. However, there is a problem with this definition. In an example like (26), Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 55) define all constituents following the determiner as the nominal and the head of the NP. This means that *pain in the ass* and *fucking pain in the ass*, respectively, count as the nominal in the NP. Adhering to this definition, the adjective would be included in the nominal slot instead of occurring in its own adjective slot. As the adjective slot is part of the construction's schema and as there is a major semantic component pertaining to whether or not the adjective slot is filled, a view of the noun as separate from the adjective will be maintained for now. Expressions such as the one underlined in (26) are to be understood as phrasal nouns¹⁷.

3.1.2 Syntactic Contexts

Above, the construction was illustrated using a predicative context. The form [*such* (ART) (ADJ) N] being a NP, it should be able to occur in subject and object position as well. The Corpus of Contemporary American English¹⁸ lists several high-frequency entries in which it occurs in object position (cf. also (20)), including *make such a fuss*, *do such a good job*, *make such a big deal*, and *have such a good time*. While many examples exist for the adjective-condition, only a few exist for the condition without an adjective and most instances are

¹⁶ Here, Bolinger's (1972: 85ff) treatment of 'predicative degree nouns' is quite interesting.

¹⁷ Hilpert (2014: 79) agrees that expressions such as *over the counter drugs* are 'phrasal compounds', understood as one word. An alternative analysis could be that there is no adjective slot, but that the adjective is included in the nominal slot and the intended meaning of the utterance determines whether or not the nominal requires an adjectival modifier. See also the general discussion in Section 4.

¹⁸ Accessed August 17, 2022. Hereafter abbreviated to COCA.

anaphoric (or exophoric), as in *do such a thing* or *say such a thing*. For both conditions, predicative examples outnumber those in which the construction occurs in object position. What is missing in the examples from the COCA are person-denoting examples, which we might expect given the frequency of pronouns in the predicative context. For instance, we can easily imagine an example such as (27), and comparable instances can be found in online discourses¹⁹.

(27) *They hired such an idiot.*

Although *such an idiot*, a prototypical instantiation of the evaluative *such* construction, does occur in the object position in this example, there is an underlying presupposition that *he or she is an idiot*. Here, it is therefore argued that examples like (27), which are rare in general, are in fact predicative as well, albeit implicitly. Bolinger (1972: 73) also observes this.

While the construction does occur in object position, instances of the form [*such* (ART) (ADJ) N] in subject position could be verified only for phoric examples (cf. example (3)), however not for the proposed construction. Examples such as *?Such an idiot spilled the water* are conceivable, but intuitively unidiomatic or even ungrammatical, as indicated by the question mark preceding the example sentence. The lack of evidence for the construction in subject position implies that this type of use, if it occurs at all, is marginal and hence negligible for the current analysis. It is not surprising, however, because as Altenberg (1994: 233) notes, "[*such*] typically introduces noun phrases conveying new information, characteristically placed in the postverbal, rhematic part of sentences, where it acts as a descriptive complement".

Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 923) observe that *such* can occur in "any of the major clause types". Table 2 illustrates the evaluative *such* construction occurring in its predicative form within different types of clauses.

No.	Example	Clause Type
(28)	<i>You're such an idiot.</i>	declarative
(29)	<i>You're not such an idiot.</i>	declarative negated
(30)	<i>Do you have to be such an idiot?</i>	closed interrogative
(31)	<i>When did you become such an idiot?</i>	open interrogative
(32)	<i>Don't be such an idiot.</i>	imperative
(33)	<i>Such an idiot!</i>	exclamative?

Table 2: The evaluative *such* construction across clause types (cf. also Huddleston and Pullum 2002: 923).

¹⁹ A user commented *Seriously ,who hired such an idiot human as a police officer* on a [Twitter post by New York Daily News](#) and another user commented *No... i think that it's stupid Dumbledore hired such an idiot to teach a 12 year old how to defend himself against Voldemort* on a [post in a Harry Potter fan forum](#). Accessed August 17, 2022. See also list of examples.

While (28) is well attested in the COCA, the other examples seem to be quite rare. However, (29) occurs in an episode of *The Simpsons*, and (30) through (32) can be found in blog and magazine posts expressing personal opinions²⁰. Example (33) may be slightly critical. While a comparable example is attested in the COCA²¹ and it seems reasonable that an utterance like this would be used, Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 923) limit the definition of exclamative clauses strictly to those introduced by *what* and *how*. As mentioned earlier, the term 'exclamatory' will be used for the evaluative *such* construction instead. However, as clause types are concerned in this section, the term 'exclamative' is maintained and tagged with a question mark to stress this slightly controversial point.

3.2 Semantic Description and Use

The title 'exclamatory evaluative construction with pivotal *such*' covers two important semantic components associated with the construction: exclamatory and evaluative. What is not included in the title is the aspect of comparison. As we have seen above, identifying *such* establishes a comparative reference (Halliday and Hasan 1976: 76ff), or 'scalar comparison of equality' (Huddleston and Pullum 2002: 1130). In example (1), one may get the impression that a comparison of the addressee to an *idiot* or a *bitch* of the highest possible degree is made. Within a speech situation in which interlocuters orient their turns towards each other and each other's utterances (Couper-Kuhlen and Selting 2018), we can expect each utterance to be a reaction to what has just been said or done (cf. also Gricean 'relevance', e.g. Kortmann 2005: 237ff). This was one of the intuitions mentioned above, and in the video linked in the introduction, it is quite evident that both speakers do react to something in the speech situation. As Fillmore et al. (1988: 534) note, "semantically interpreted objects are invariable first situated in contexts and then given their contextualized construals." The utterances in (1), *You are such a fucking idiot* and *When did you become such a bitch*, then react to, or point towards the other person's utterance or behavior and can be paraphrased as 'you are such a fucking idiot to have done such a thing' and 'you are such a bitch to behave in such a way'. This 'pointing', also noted by Ghesquière (2012: 529), is essentially indexical and hence retains a trace of the phoric (here: exophoric), or identifying, character of *such*. This means the concept of identifying vs. intensifying *such* discussed above needs to be revisited.

²⁰ See list of examples for links to the respective resources.

²¹ The example attested in the COCA contains an adjective: *Such a stupid idiot!* Accessed August 18, 2022.

3.2.1 Identifying vs. Intensifying *such*?

Above, the utterances from example (1) were paraphrased as 'you are such a fucking idiot to have done such a thing' and 'you are such a bitch to behave in such a way', claiming that they point towards the other person's utterance or behavior. Section 2.2 discussed identifying vs. intensifying *such*, and the literature as well as the examples indicated that we can propose an intensifying *such* construction closely related to the evaluative *such* construction, with both of them sharing the use of intensifying *such* as their pivotal constituent. The instances of *such* underlined in the paraphrases above, although not part of the actual utterances, suggest that *identifying such* may play a bigger role than expected. Returning to one of the puzzles listed in the introductory paragraphs of Section 3, what kind of *idiot* or *bitch* is being referred to, and to the concept(s) of comparative reference and scalar comparison of equality, identifying rather than intensifying *such* could provide an answer.

Not all authors agree on a division between identifying and intensifying *such*. Spinillo (2003: 207) states that "*such* is at the same time identifying and intensifying [and] [t]he distinction between identifying and intensifying *such* is not determined by *such* per se, but by whether the noun phrase is seen as gradable or not." She compares the examples *such a snob* and *such a telescope* and concludes that one can be more or less of a snob, warranting an intensifying reading, but a telescope is either there or not, eliciting an identifying reading. Van der Auwera and Sahoo (2020: 2) explain the comparative reference that *such* achieves through an ad hoc, context-dependent category that *such* establishes in discourse. For the utterance *I want such a cat*, they state that "[t]he speaker [...] might well stand in front of a cat and point at it. [...] The speaker has just created an *ad hoc* category and the cat that (s)he wants is an indefinite exemplar of this new category."

Merging these two approaches may provide a sound explanation for what the evaluative *such* construction does. *Such*, being both identifying and intensifying, creates an ad hoc category of an *idiot* or *bitch*, one that behaves in a particular way, based on the context, as exemplified by example (1)²². It identifies the subject, here, the interlocutor, as belonging to said ad hoc category, and at the same time establishes a scalar comparison of equality with a prototypical specimen of the category. Due to the intensifying, or even absolute intensive, character of *such*, this prototypical specimen is situated on the upper extreme of the scale,

²² It should be noted that Van der Auwera and Sahoo (2020: 3) explicitly mention *It was such a beautiful day* as an example in which *such* is just intensifying and does *not* create an ad hoc category. However, due to the reasoning detailed in this section, it will be maintained that the theory does apply to the use of *such* currently discussed.

meaning it displays the attributes inherent or associated with the category (cf. Figure 1) to the largest possible extent. *Such* is then both identifying and intensifying, but not in an either-or fashion as Spinillo suggests, but simultaneously. Ghesquière (2012: 538) describes this phenomenon in her corpus data despite adopting an 'identifying vs. intensifying' view. What this does not yet explain is the evaluative character of the construction, as a category does not necessarily entail an evaluation. Here, the attributes inherent in or associated with the noun phrase are relevant. The lexical material occurring in the construction thus needs to be examined.

3.2.2 Lexical Material

The first intuition listed at the beginning of Section 3 was that when *such* is followed by an article and noun, the noun is typically an epithet. The corpus data (see Section 4) support this intuition, although there are some nouns that have a positive denotation, as well as some unclear cases where a clear positive or negative meaning cannot be assigned from a purely denotational point of view. During the work for the HS 'Constructions', it became clear that negative evaluation is not the sole function of the construction. Nouns occurring frequently include *inspiration* and *expert*, which, assuming no sarcasm is involved, can hardly be interpreted as an epithet. Even more puzzling was the predominance of positive adjectives when the adjective slot is filled. This clear dichotomy between primarily negative nouns and primarily positive adjectives was theorized to be the key to determining the exact function of the construction. To give an impression of the lexical material, Table 3 lists the most frequent nouns and adjective-noun combinations occurring in the construction in the COCA. A more detailed list and discussion will be provided in Section 4.

Search String	Five Most Frequent Results
I BE such ART N	idiot, fan, fool, loser, jerk
I BE such ART ADJ N	big fan, huge fan, nice guy, fucking idiot, awful mother
you BE such ART N	asshole, liar, jerk, idiot, bitch
you BE such ART ADJ N	good friend, good boy, good girl, nice guy, good person
he BE such ART N	jerk, asshole, gentleman, idiot, liar
he BE such ART ADJ N	nice guy, good man, good guy, great guy, nice man
she BE such ART N	bitch, inspiration, idiot, character, slut
she BE such ART ADJ N	sweet girl, good girl, nice girl, nice person, good kid
it BE such ART N	shame, pleasure, relief, honor, mess
it BE such ART ADJ N	good idea, big deal, beautiful day, great idea, long time

Table 3: Most frequent nouns and adjectives to occur in the evaluative *such* construction. Accessed July 23, 2022.

The examples in Table 3 clearly illustrate that the construction prefers evaluative lexical material. This is most evident in the noun-only condition. Although some cases are hard to interpret without context, such as *she is such a character*, the overall clearly negative and sometimes positive evaluation is apparent. When considering the adjectives in the adjective-noun condition, one can also identify most of them as clearly evaluative. However, as mentioned above, the adjectives are predominantly positive rather than negative. Some adjectives, such as *big* and *huge*, are intensifying rather than evaluative. This is not surprising as the intensifying character of the construction has already been established. What is interesting, however, are the nouns in the adjective-noun condition. Although some of them do have a clear positive or negative denotation, most of them can be considered neutral. In the HS 'Construction' term paper, I proposed one constraint of the evaluative *such* construction to be that nouns without a clear positive or negative denotation cannot occur without an adjective without being subject to coercion effects (Queisser 2021: 14-5, see also Section 3.3.2 below).

When discussing what I have termed the intensifying *such* construction, several authors (e.g. Bolinger 1972: 69; Altenberg 1994: 235) recognize a constraint on the noun. The constraint they propose is not connected to positive or negative evaluation, but to gradability. In their analysis, nouns that enter the construction must be degree nouns. Bolinger (1972: 61) discusses examples (34) and (35) and proposes that (34) "exclaims at something external to the fact of being a lad. Being a lad is assumed, and the surprise is directed to some quality such as being extraordinarily reckless, amorous, inventive, amusing, or whatnot. [...] *Lad* is nondegree. [35] refers to childishness [...] *Child* is degree."

(34) *What a lad John is!*

(35) *What a child John is!*

While Bolinger does not use a construction with *such*, but a regular exclamative, he treats both *such* and *what* together in the section 'Degree nouns with *such* and *what*'. The parallels between the evaluative *such* construction and exclamatives have already been pointed out. The examples are therefore considered transferable. What he seeks to point out is that (34) is a comparison, in his terminology, 'of X identity' while (35) is 'of X magnitude'. This roughly corresponds to identifying vs. intensifying *such*, a distinction that was challenged in the previous section. The reason why the examples and Bolinger's interpretation are listed here is to question his claim that *lad* is non-degree while *child* is degree. Bolinger makes the important observation that it is attributes associated with being a lad that are being intensified (cf. Figure 1). However, the same is true for *child*, as childishness is one of many attributes associated with children. We

can assume, for instance, that the example could not refer to height. In both cases, it is not a degree sense of the noun that warrants the terms being used emphatically, but attributes associated with them. Subsequently, the question arises of how these attributes are evaluated.

Taylor (2012: 90), in contrast, does recognize the evaluative character of emphatic structures and observes that "epithets have a number of distributional possibilities not shared with 'normal' nouns." He lists several constructions that he classifies as epithet constructions, one of them being an example of the evaluative *such* construction. He contrasts *You are such an idiot* with example (36), noting that the non-emotive word renders the utterance 'bizarre'.

(36) *You are such an architect.*

The reason why *architect* does not work as well in the construction is that there are no distinct objective negative or positive attributes associated with architects that would make clear to an interlocutor which judgment is being cast. *Architect* does not have a clear positive or negative valence. As will be argued in Section 3.3.2, non-evaluative nouns can still enter the construction. They will then be subject to coercion effects. In these cases, recipients may likely interpret the utterance by inferring a characteristic associated with the noun and congruent with the discourse context. In the case of *architect*, possibly accuracy, or, in the vein of a negative evaluation, pedantry or compulsive planning.

3.2.3 Role of the Adjective

Example (36) illustrates that – seemingly – not all nouns can easily enter the evaluative *such* construction. However, authors discussing *such* do not only refer to nouns when they say that there must be a gradable element in the utterance to elicit an intensifying reading. They explicitly include adjectives (e.g. Ghesquière 2012: 518). As modifiers often associated with quality and degree (Crystal 1999: 6), adjectives are an even better candidate for a gradable and/or evaluative element in an utterance. If we add an adjective to (36), forming (37) and (38), respectively, we should be able to resolve the 'bizarreness' of the example, to use Taylor's expression. The results are quite different depending on the adjectives used, however. In (37), we get examples that should no longer be perceived as bizarre. On the other hand, in (38), the problem is not resolved, or the examples are at least hard to interpret.

(37) *You are such a good/bad/busy architect.*

(38) *You are such a tall/dark-haired/freckled architect.*

All adjectives in (37) and (38) are gradable. One can be more or less good, bad, busy, tall, dark-haired, or freckled. What distinguishes the adjectives in (37) from those in (38) is that

they have a clearly positive or negative denotation. Where the noun fails to provide this essential feature for the construction to form an easily interpretable statement, the adjective provides the evaluation needed. *Busy* may be a debatable example, but at least when occurring with *architect* we can assume that being a busy architect means being a well-to-do architect, which is desirable and therefore positively connotated. Although it can be argued that attributes such as those in (38) may be desirable, they are descriptive rather than evaluative, meaning they are not entrenched as inherently positive or negative, but their desirability depends on personal disposition²³.

The role of the adjective is then to assign a clear positive or negative evaluation when the noun itself is not entrenched with a specific valence. Phenomena like this are described by Hilpert (2014: 186) as a 'variable rule', a rule whose application depends on "the presence or absence of certain contextual features." This requirement for an adjective is caused by *such*, which selects an ad hoc category (cf. van der Auwera and Sahoo 2020) for a scalar comparison of equality (Huddleston and Pullum 2002) and places the subject on the highest (absolute intensive, OED) point of the scale. As (37) and (38) show, it is a value-expressing adjective that is needed to form an easily interpretable utterance and to put the subject on the highest point of a scale of good/bad/busy architects.

3.2.4 Register, Speech Situation, and Interpersonal Character

As mentioned, the evaluative *such* construction is expected to occur predominantly in informal spoken language. Altenberg (1994: 235) and Ghesquière (2012: 539ff) conducted corpus analyses examining intensifying *such* and their findings support this hypothesis. Altenberg found that intensifying *such* is most frequent in 'personal categories' and concludes that "[t]his distribution strongly underlines the emotive character of intensifying *such*". The term 'informal spoken language' covers two important concepts that need to be examined in more detail to determine more closely how the construction is used: (informal) register and (spoken) speech situation. While the high frequency of expletives is telling about the register, the exchange in example (1) is quite illustrative of the speech situation, which is emotionally laden. Crystal

²³ It may be criticized that the adjectives in (38) do not seem very relevant or typical as modifiers for the word *architect*, which is certainly true. However, even when combined with a more expectable noun such as *guy*, the utterances *You are such a tall/dark-haired/freckled guy* would seem strange, with *tall* maybe being an exception. It seems more natural to use a different construction such as *You are so tall*, *Your hair is so dark*, and *You have so many freckles*, i.e. a construction focusing on a predicative adjective, not on the noun (except *freckles*). This may indicate that when the adjective contributes actual descriptive content rather than an evaluation, its meaning is the core meaning of the utterance and it should be the head of an AP. A construction revolving around the noun would not be appropriate. This is pure speculation, but seems logical and, if true, it would provide further evidence for the theory that in this particular construction, an evaluative adjective is needed.

(1999: 103) observes that "[t]he clearest case [of emotive language] is the use of swearing or obscenity as a means of getting rid of nervous energy when people are under stress." Likewise, the use of exclamatory words is connected to emotive language, which should be undisputed (cf. *ibid.*: 111). *Such* has been linked to exclamations by numerous authors, as has been pointed out above.

Another important aspect in connection with the speech situation is the interpersonal character of the exchange. Support for this notion comes from the study of (im)politeness. As Culpeper (2011: 125) points out, "[i]f (im)politeness is defined as a negative evaluative attitude evoked by certain situated communicative behaviours, then an expression that did not in some way link itself to interpersonal context could hardly be inherently (im)polite." For instance, Halliday and Hasan (1976: 276) note that an interpersonal element is an inherent part of the meaning of nouns such as *idiot*, *fool*, and *dear*. Ghesquière and Van de Velde (2011: 792), referring to Traugott (2003: e.g. 134), argue that *such* is developing towards an 'intersubjective' meaning encompassing speaker and addressee in a speech event. Especially in genres in which a high degree of colloquial language is typically found, such as the Movie Corpus, the TV Corpus, and the Corpus of American Soap Operas, the share of the singular first- and second-person pronouns *I* and *you* is particularly high, which will be discussed in more detail in Section 4. *I* and *you* are interpersonal not just because as deixis (Crystal 1999: 83) they establish that speaker and addressee are likely within a shared immediate speech situation (cf. Traugott 1982: 248), they also show that the interlocutors speak about themselves or each other. The neutral pronoun *it* also has a large share, presumably to discuss a shared situation or context.

The most frequent pronoun in the selected corpora is singular *you*. The context examined is a predicative context with *you* as the subject, followed by the copula *be*, *such*, the indefinite article, and a noun or adjective and noun: [*you* BE *such* ART (ADJ) N]. Spelled out, this very specific context means that the speaker tells the addressee what the addressee is. This poses the question of why the speaker should do this. It cannot be information-giving, as the addressee can be expected to know best what they are. The 'social action' (Couper-Kuhlen and Selting 2018: 210ff) the speaker is really performing must then be stating an *opinion* about the addressee (cf. Leisi 1985: 51). This underscores the evaluative rather than just intensifying character of the construction.

To summarize the proposed prototypical use of the evaluative *such* construction: the construction is theorized to be used in informal spoken language, more specifically in an emotionally laden, interpersonal speech situation in which it appears in a predicative context.

It identifies the subject, which is often the interlocutor of the speaker, as a member of a specific category, displaying certain attributes associated with said category to an extreme or even absolute degree. The assignment to a certain category expresses the speaker's personal evaluation of the addressee. Prototypically, this evaluation is a negative one, although examples of positive evaluation exist. Unclear cases are theorized to be subject to coercion effects rendering the evaluation negative unless a disambiguating adjective intervenes. This will be discussed further in the following section.

3.3 Constructionhood

Some idiosyncrasies of the evaluative *such* construction have already been mentioned above. To recapitulate the criteria of Construction Grammar introduced in Section 1, in order to count as a construction, an expression or pattern needs to be delineated as a clear form-meaning pair. It is part of a construction network in which it is connected to other constructions, more strongly to some than to others, and in which it inherits features from higher-level constructions. It likely creates non-compositional meaning and causes coercion effects. Goldberg (1995: 4) originally proposed that a construction needs to display formal or semantic characteristics "not strictly predictable from [the construction's] component parts or from other previously established constructions." She later adapted her definition to be more inclusive:

Any linguistic pattern is recognized as a construction as long as some aspect of its form or function is not strictly predictable from its component parts or from other constructions recognized to exist. *In addition, patterns are stored as constructions even if they are fully predictable as long as they occur with sufficient frequency.* (Goldberg 2006: 5, emphasis added)

In this paper, it is argued that due to *such*, the construction is not strictly predictable from its component parts. However, it may still be seen as quite transparent, so establishing that it is also frequent can provide additional evidence. This is particularly important as frequency is directly connected to entrenchment: a high frequency leads to entrenchment, which in turn leads to a higher frequency (Goldberg 2019: 56).

Frequencies can be investigated through corpora. Section 4 will provide a synchronic²⁴ analysis with data from various corpora. Here, a brief diachronic analysis is provided. Appendix 2 illustrates the development of the construction in the TV Corpus since the 1950s and the COCA since the 1990s. Unfortunately, no earlier data are available for the COCA. As can be

²⁴ The analysis in Section 4 cannot *truly* be called synchronic as all instantiations in the corpora are analyzed regardless of their time of occurrence. For this paper, the entire period covered by the corpora will count as the current period.

seen, the general use of the string [*such* ART N] has declined over time in both corpora while the use of the string [BE *such* ART N], indicating a predicative context, as well as the use of [PRON BE *such* ART N], have *increased*. This means that not only have the predicative form and specifically the predicative form occurring with a pronoun as subject increased overall, but they also represent a larger share of all occurrences of the general string [*such* ART N]. The development is particularly visible in the period between the 1960s and the 1990s. The increase in use is one reason why this form is of linguistic interest and should be studied further.

More evidence for an increasing frequency of the construction can be found on Google Books. Although books are a written genre, dialog in fiction should be modeled after natural speech, just as dialog on television. An increase is also visible here, as Figure 2 illustrates.

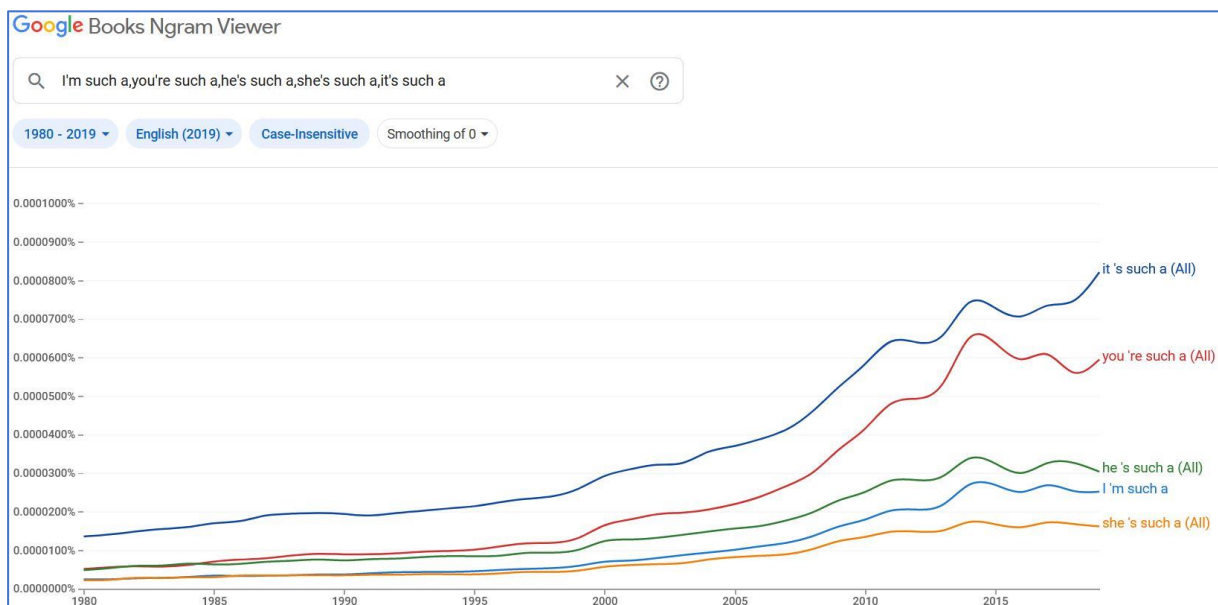


Figure 2: Frequency of the construction on Google Books since 1980. Accessed August 20, 2022. An interactive version of the Ngram Viewer is available [here \(click\)](#).

As there is no wildcard search option to search for 'any noun', the form is restricted to the singular pronouns followed by the (contracted) copula *be*, *such*, and the indefinite article *a*. The development is roughly the same for the non-contracted versions. However, overall, the search strings occur about 50 % more frequently with contractions than without. This may indicate that the form is most frequent in dialog mimicking spoken language, and it indicates a less formal style (cf. Huddleston and Pullum 2002: 91). It is also interesting to note the development of the second-person singular pronoun *you*. Above, it was theorized that the construction frequently casts a (negative) evaluation on the interlocutor. The stark increase in the use of *you* since roughly the year 2000 may indicate an ongoing increase in use and thus entrenchment of

the construction with this specific purpose. Neuter *it*, which is even more frequent, has always had a larger share. Its apparent increase is therefore not as pronounced in relative terms.

3.3.1 Inheritance

Various origins for the exclamatory and evaluative character of the evaluative *such* construction have been mentioned above, however, so far not in a structured way that would explain how exactly the construction may inherit its characteristics. The notion of inheritance is crucial as it explains how constructions are motivated by higher-level constructions (Goldberg 1995: 72). It "allows us to capture the fact that constructions may be in some ways the same and in other ways distinct" (ibid.). Based on the considerations made so far, the following inheritance schema can be proposed. It should be noted, however, that it is most likely impossible to ascertain how constructions are really related and from where they draw their individual influences.

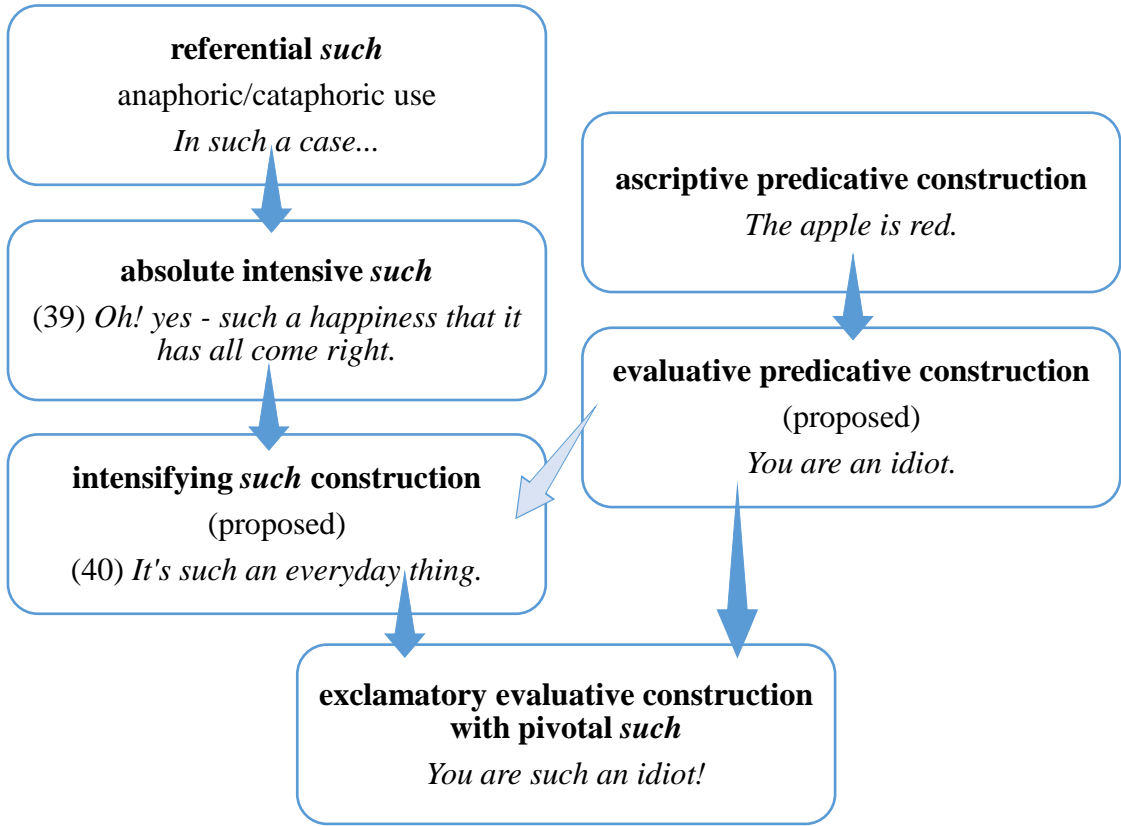


Figure 3: Inheritance schema proposed for the evaluative *such* construction.

The proposed inheritance schema consists of two branches, both of which provide formal as well as semantic characteristics. The division is made based on formal criteria: while the left-hand branch provides pivotal *such*, the right-hand branch provides the predicative environment. On the left-hand side, referential *such* as the 'original' function of the word should be undisputed

and is well attested in the OED and the literature. Its metamorphosis to an intensifying and emphatic item, following Traugott's (1982) cline from propositional to expressive meaning, was discussed in Section 2.2. This development yields the absolute intensive *such*, which is also attested in the OED. Based on absolute intensive *such*, I proposed an intensifying *such* construction implicit in the treatments of *such* by several authors (see Section 2), who may not use the term 'construction' to refer to the concept. As was pointed out above, and as many of the examples show, the intensifying *such* construction often occurs in predicative form. An arrow has therefore been added to illustrate that the right-hand branch also influences this construction. It does, however, not always occur in predicative form, as examples such as *Joan had such trouble coping with the time difference*²⁵ are also possible.

On the right-hand side, the ascriptive predicative construction is discussed in Huddleston and Pullum (2002, e.g. 513). The evaluative predicative construction is, to my knowledge, not attested in the literature, but can be proposed as a clear form-function pair taking predicative form and expressing a personal evaluation. Also, a very similar form, "[X + copula verb + assessment term]", is listed as one of the most frequent forms for making assessments in Couper-Kuhlen and Selting (2018: 292). The example chosen for Figure 3 displays negative evaluation, positive evaluation, such as *You are a sweetheart*, is also possible, however. Like the intensifying *such* construction, the evaluative predicative construction is *assumed* to exist as it would provide a logical intermediate step on the way to the evaluative *such* construction.

The evaluative *such* construction thus inherits both formal and semantic features from both branches of the inheritance schema. The left-hand branch provides *such* as the pivotal item, and the exclamatory character. The right-hand branch provides the predicative form and the evaluative character. In Section 3.2.1, it was argued that an ad hoc category is assigned and a comparative reference established. While the category should be assigned through the predicative form, the comparative reference should be understood through *such*. Table 4 illustrates the proposed origins more clearly.

	Left-hand Branch	Right-hand Branch
Formal	pivotal <i>such</i>	predicative form
Semantic	comparative reference, exclamatory character	category assignment, evaluative character

Table 4: Proposed origins of inherited characteristics (matrix).

²⁵ Example taken from COCA, accessed November 28, 2022.

This is, however, an extremely simplified view. As the exclamatory character, passed down through the left-hand branch, represents emotive language use, the concept of personal evaluation can be expected to be present as soon as the absolute intensive *such* appears. Through the predicative form, passed down through the right-hand branch, the evaluation becomes formally explicit, which is why it is assigned to this branch in the current analysis. Additionally, other constructions in the network (see Section 3.4), may also have an influence as they can be expected to be closely associated with our construction and therefore co-activated (cf. Goldberg 2019: 117).

3.3.2 Coercion

As has been noted, idiosyncratic or non-compositional meanings often arise from constructions. These meanings amount to 'something more' than the meaning of the individual parts of the construction. In Goldberg's (2006: 5) terminology, a meaning that is "not strictly predictable from its component parts". The construction's idiosyncratic meaning will then often "override word meanings, creating non-compositional constructional meanings in the process." (Hilpert 2014: 17). In example (2), *Pat sneezed the napkin off the table*, *sneeze* is perceived as a transitive and causative verb due to its occurrence in the caused-motion construction.

In Section 3.2.3, it was argued that an adjective is required in the evaluative *such* construction when the noun slot is filled by a noun without an inherently evaluative denotation. Here, it is argued that the noun will be subject to a coercion effect if no adjective is present, causing it to adopt an evaluative connotation. Goldberg (2019: 145) describes a similar effect for the 'nice-of-you construction'. In the case of the evaluative *such* construction, the noun will adopt a *negative* connotation. Both Altenberg and Bolinger recognize a coercion effect for intensifying *such*, although they do not explicitly mention the phenomenon of coercion. Altenberg (1994: 232) writes that "*such* may even intensify a normally non-gradable element as long as it is used in a gradable sense or incorporates a gradable feature" and provides example (40), *It's such an everyday thing*, featured in the inheritance schema above. Bolinger (1972: 69) marks the following example (41) as ungrammatical and states that "[t]he preponderance of degree words is such that we are tempted to take *postman* [...] in a humorous sense as a kind of epithet."

(41) *He is such a postman!*

While Altenberg's example seems comprehensible and we understand 'a thing that is to a great extent everyday', it does not become clear why Bolinger infers an epithet reading solely based on *postman* being non-degree.

This example is quite similar to Taylor's (2012) (36) *You are such an architect*, which may also invite a negative reading. This should not happen when *such* is absent, as in *You are an architect* and *He is a postman*. Taylor (2012: 90) categorizes the evaluative *such* construction as one of several epithet constructions, however without analyzing it more closely. This would of course explain the coercion effect affecting the neutral nouns: occurring within an epithet construction, they adopt an epithet meaning. However, it is interesting to examine which characteristics of the construction lead to this. Here, the observation made by van der Auwera and Sahoo (2020) becomes relevant again. If *such* creates an ad hoc category that is subject to an absolute intensive (OED) scalar comparison of equality (Huddleston and Pullum 2002), the category must be filled with meaningful attributes that can be intensified. Above, it was argued that the adjective provides this if the noun cannot. It is the absence of the adjective which then triggers the coercion and causes a non-evaluative noun to adopt an evaluative connotation. Inserting an adjective can in turn heal the coercion, as illustrated in example (37).

The direction, or polarity, of the evaluation caused by the coercion is then determined by the high frequency and the resulting stronger entrenchment of negative nouns found in the construction (cf. Section 4). Additionally, Bolinger makes an interesting observation pertaining to predicative degree nouns. According to him, epithets may even be *inclined* to appear predominantly in predicative contexts:

The question of predicative degree nouns gains in importance when it is discovered that while probably any degree noun can occur in predicative as well as nonpredicative use, some are specialized in that way and some are used more often predicatively than not. Among the former, the incidence of epithets and stereotyped metaphors, particularly hyperbolic ones, is high: *fool, boob, lush, skinflint, hovel, cur, balderdash*, etc. (Bolinger 1972: 76)

What Bolinger describes may be another frequency effect acting on the construction. Not only does the construction invite epithets, but epithets preferentially occur in predicative contexts, of which the construction is an example. The effect may therefore be working from two sides.

3.4 Construction Network

This section will provide a brief overview of the construction network proposed for the evaluative *such* construction. Goldberg (2019: 36ff) and Hilpert (2014: 57ff) describe a construction network as a hierarchical, 'content-addressable', network within which individual

constructions are embedded and in which they overlap and inherit characteristics from higher-level constructions. As it is not possible to truly access how constructions are stored in the mind and how they overlap or interact, the network proposed here is to be understood as an abstract representation based on the observations made above. The network can be visualized as follows:

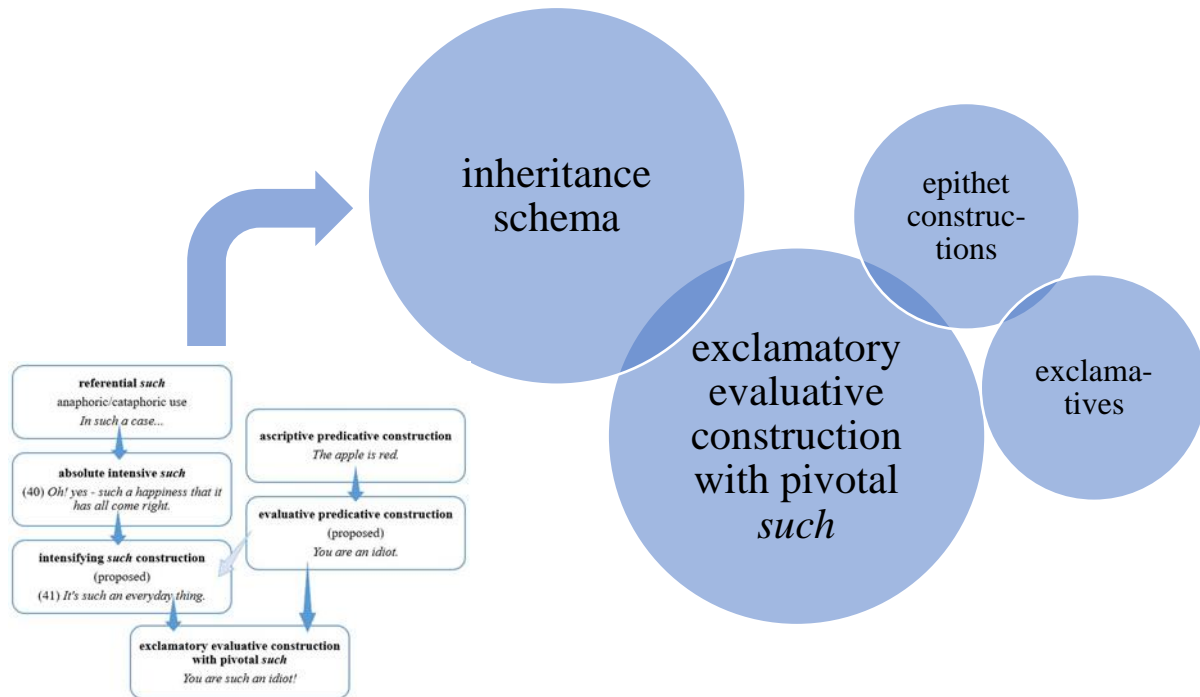


Figure 4: Proposed construction network of the evaluative *such* construction.

First and foremost, included in the network are the constructions and other influences featured in the inheritance schema of the construction (Figure 3 in Section 3.3.1). This includes referential *such*, absolute intensive *such*, the proposed intensifying *such* construction, the ascriptive predicative construction, and the proposed evaluative predicative construction. The overlap of the sets representing the evaluative *such* construction and the inheritance schema indicates features shared by the construction and (some of) the elements in the inheritance schema, such as the predicative form or the intensifying character of *such*.

The set termed 'epithet constructions' follows Taylor (2012: 87ff), who lists the following examples representing constructions in which epithets preferentially occur:

- That idiot of a man.
- You fool!
- Bastard!
- Bernard just confessed, the idiot.
- I'll kill him, the bastard.
- You are such an idiot.
- Don't be more of an idiot than you can help. (ibid.: 90)

As Taylor's list features the example *You are such an idiot*, there is also an overlap between this set of constructions and the evaluative *such* construction. In other words, the construction can be seen as a member of this group of constructions. It is conceivable that the evaluative *such* construction competes with these other options and that they get co-activated when a speaker seeks to express a particular message (cf. Goldberg 2019: 117). Very similar constructions, such as *You idiot!* or simply *Idiot!* may be likely candidates.

The final group of constructions featured in the network is that of exclamatives. This encompasses the 'true' exclamatives as defined by Huddleston and Pullum (2002), meaning exclamations with initial *how* and *what*. This group is included due to the exclamatory character of *such*. Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 923) treat *such* as a 'non-exclamative exclamation', drawing the line between true exclamatives and those with *such* on formal grounds as *such* is not obligatorily fronted. They observe, however, that "[*so* and *such*] closely match *how* and *what* in their grammatical distribution" and provide *It was such a disaster* as an example. This warrants that they be included in the construction network of the evaluative *such* construction. The respective sets are therefore brought in close proximity. There is also a small overlap with the epithet constructions as Taylor's list could easily be extended to include *What an idiot!*

4. Corpus Studies & Survey

During the work for the HS 'Constructions', I conducted two corpus analyses to find and provide evidence in support of the intuitions about the evaluative *such* construction detailed so far in this paper. I replicated these studies for the corresponding term paper (cf. Queisser 2021: 8ff), obtaining largely the same results. The first study was concerned with the frequency with which the construction and certain configurations of it, for instance, particular preceding contexts, occur across different corpora representing different types of discourse and register. The corpora initially chosen were the COCA as a default corpus due to its broad variety of genres and its large size of about one billion words, the TV Corpus and the Movie Corpus due to their genre of spoken, interpersonal language, and the News on the Web Corpus²⁶ due to its more formal register, which was predicted to mostly lack an interpersonal character.

The TV and Movie corpora were assumed to mimic natural, interpersonal spoken language as dialog on television and in movies was expected to be modeled sufficiently after

²⁶ Hereafter abbreviated to NOW.

natural language to appear believable to the audience²⁷. These corpora were predicted to contain the highest frequencies of the evaluative *such* construction. The NOW, although it does contain a spoken, interpersonal component in the form of transcribed interviews, was predicted to contain the lowest share of the evaluative *such* construction due to its more formal register and public rather than personal character. The COCA was predicted to contain a share of the evaluative *such* construction intermediate between the other types of corpora as it features the aforementioned genres as well as others, such as blogs, fiction, and academic language. The NOW had to be excluded from the study conducted for the term paper due to a technical issue causing data retrieval problems.

The second study conducted made use of the same set of corpora and investigated the lexical material occurring in the adjective slot and noun slot of the construction. As a preliminary probing had shown, the noun slot seems to prefer negative nouns (epithets), while the adjective slot seems to feature predominantly positive adjectives, especially co-occurring with neutral nouns, as illustrated in Table 3 in Section 3.2.2. This was theorized to be due to coercion effects. It was thus predicted that the relative number of negative nouns and positive adjectives would be higher than their respective positive/negative counterparts. The hypotheses for both the first study (frequencies) and the second study (lexical material) were confirmed in both the initial study for the in-class presentation and the follow-up study for the term paper.

As the studies conducted provided convincing results but had to remain comparatively superficial due to the limited scope of the group presentation and term paper, I conducted a third round of corpus analyses for the current paper. This time, additional corpora were included, and a larger number of individual instantiations was exported. The NOW was included again as this time there were no data retrieval issues. Additionally, the spoken part of the COCA was investigated separately, and the Corpus of American Soap Operas and the British National Corpus²⁸, as well as its spoken sub-part, were added. The spoken parts of the corpora were predicted to provide a clearer picture of the real-life use of the evaluative *such* construction, the Soap Opera Corpus was expected to best portray the type of discourse the

²⁷ In the HS 'Constructions' term paper, it was mentioned that the construction may be overrepresented in the TV and Movie corpora as emotionally laden situations of conflict may be more frequent (Queisser 2021: 16). Culpeper (2011: 133) describes exploitative TV shows as one context in which conventional impoliteness formulae can be studied. However, he seems to mean reality TV rather than scripted television and points out that the contexts are often to some extent contrived. This is a caveat one should be aware of in the current paper.

²⁸ Hereafter referred to as the Soap Opera Corpus and BNC, respectively.

construction occurs in, and the purpose of including the BNC was to gain insight into a different variety of English.

As the assignment of positive and negative valence to the lexical material found in the corpora, along with the proposed coercion effects, was based on my own intuition only, I conducted an additional survey in which participants rated the valence of expressions instantiating the evaluative *such* construction and identical examples without *such*. This was to gain additional, behavioral evidence from actual speakers to substantiate my intuitions on the valence of the lexical material and to establish whether coercion effects are affecting the participants' evaluation as predicted. Each section below will detail the methodology applied as well as the findings obtained and a discussion. A general discussion follows.

4.1 Corpus Study I: Frequencies

This first study aims to investigate the relative frequencies of the evaluative *such* construction as well as particular configurations of it across the corpora indicated below. It is hypothesized that, as in the previous studies, the construction will occur more frequently in the corpora dominated by informal spoken language. Based on the findings of the previous runs, it is also predicted that, in the predicative context chosen for the analysis, pronouns will be most frequent in the subject position, with the second-person singular pronoun *you* occurring more frequently than other pronouns.

4.1.1 Data and Methodology

For this study, eight individual data sets were compiled from six different corpora. The corpora were the COCA (1 billion words), the NOW (over 15 billion words), The TV Corpus (325 million words), the Movie Corpus (200 million words), the Soap Opera Corpus (100 million words), and the BNC (100 million words). Two additional sub-sets were compiled from the spoken part of the COCA (127 million words) and the spoken part of the BNC (10 million words). It is important to note that the sub-sets are also included in the main sets of the respective corpora. They do thus not provide additional data but provide more specific insights.

The search strings used for this paper were identical to those used for the previous runs. Three sets of search strings are differentiated as Segments A, B, and C, as listed in Table 5, with an increasing level of specificity.

Segment A	Segment B	Segment C
* such ART	PRON BE such ART N	you BE such ART N
* such ART N	PRON BE such ART ADJ N	you BE such ART ADJ N
* such ART ADJ N	NOUN BE such ART N	I BE such ART N
* BE such ART	NOUN BE such ART ADJ N	I BE such ART ADJ N
* BE such ART N	NAME BE such ART N	he BE such ART N
* BE such ART ADJ N	NAME BE such ART ADJ N	he BE such ART ADJ N
-	-	she BE such ART N
-	-	she BE such ART ADJ N
-	-	it BE such ART N
-	-	it BE such ART ADJ N

Table 5: Search strings used in the corpus studies.

Segment A investigates occurrences of *such* followed by any article, any article and noun, and any article and adjective-noun combination, each preceded by any word, as indicated by the asterisk (*)²⁹. It also investigates the same search strings preceded by the copula *be*, with any preceding word. This segment serves to establish the overall frequency of *such a(n)* followed by a noun or adjective and noun, as in the anaphoric *in such a case*, and to contrast it with the frequency of the copula *be such a(n)*, which favors a predicative context. However, the search strings preceded by *be* in Segment A do not account for predicative contexts only. Especially the existential and often cataphoric *there* as in *there is such a thing as* can still be expected to occur quite frequently.

Segment B specifies the context preceding the copula *be*, filling the subject position of the predicative clause. Likely subjects are pronouns, common nouns, and proper nouns, although multi-word nominals and noun phrases can of course occur in this position as well. This, as well as the fact that other copula verbs such as *become* or *seem* are not included in the search, means that not all occurrences of predicative instantiations with *such* will be featured in the results. Although this would be desirable, it is not feasible in the scope of the current paper, particularly due to the limited selection of search tags on the English Corpora website³⁰.

As personal pronouns were previously found to occur most frequently in this context, Segment C investigates each singular personal pronoun specifically. Plurals are excluded due to their low frequency in previous searches. In this final condition, the respective pronoun, the copula *be*, and pivotal *such* are lexically fixed. The three segments can be seen as a funnel narrowing down the results from the frequency of the overall form to specific configurations

²⁹ When occurring with corpus search strings, the asterisk (*) will be used as 'any word', not as 'ungrammatical'.

³⁰ A comprehensive list of part-of-speech tags is available here: <https://ucrel.lancs.ac.uk/claws7tags.html>

actually representing the evaluative *such* construction. The selection of the specific contexts – predicative form and personal pronouns as subjects – was made based on the findings of the previous studies as well as on the expectations about how the construction is most likely used, as treated in more detail in the sections above.

4.1.2 Findings and Discussion

The frequencies obtained from the corpora are provided in Table 6 in occurrences per million words in the corpus (parts per million, ppm). The search strings are numbered by line (No.) for easier identification and will be referred to by their numbers in the discussion. Lines of particular interest are highlighted. A full overview of the results containing more detailed information is provided in Table 16 in Appendix 3.

Input		No.	COCA	TV	Movie	Soap	NOW	BNC
Segment A	* such ART	01	177.4	166.3	193.0	211.4	127.2	247.0
	* such ART N	02	69.9	75.6	94.9	81.2	43.0	171.2
	* such ART ADJ N	03	34.8	77.7	81.8	111.6	7.8	60.6
	* BE such ART	04	37.2	71.0	76.5	104.1	20.3	22.5
	* BE such ART N	05	15.5	34.4	38.4	46.2	5.1	9.7
	* BE such ART ADJ N	06	17.9	30.3	30.8	47.5	5.6	10.1
Segment B	PRON BE such ART N	07	6.6	19.9	22.5	27.8	2.5	2.6
	PRON BE such ART ADJ N	08	8.2	16.4	17.9	24.4	4.1	4.5
	NOUN BE such ART N	09	1.5	2.0	2.0	2.3	0.9	0.8
	NOUN BE such ART ADJ N	10	2.3	2.1	1.8	1.6	1.6	1.3
	NAME BE such ART N	11	0.6	0.8	0.7	1.3	0.3	0.3
	NAME BE such ART ADJ N	12	0.9	0.9	0.9	2.0	0.9	0.5
Segment C	you BE such ART N	13	2.1	8.4	11.2	12.8	0.1	0.3
	you BE such ART ADJ N	14	1.3	5.0	5.8	10.0	0.1	0.3
	I BE such ART N	15	1.1	4.5	3.9	7.4	0.2	0.1
	I BE such ART ADJ N	16	0.5	1.5	1.4	2.0	0.2	0.2
	he BE such ART N	17	0.9	2.3	2.6	2.2	0.4	0.4
	he BE such ART ADJ N	18	1.4	2.6	2.8	3.4	1.1	0.9
	she BE such ART N	19	0.4	1.0	1.0	1.3	0.2	0.2
	she BE such ART ADJ N	20	0.5	1.0	1.0	1.9	0.3	0.5
	it BE such ART N	21	2.0	3.5	3.7	3.8	1.6	1.3
	it BE such ART ADJ N	22	4.3	6.0	6.5	6.5	3.2	2.5

Table 6: Frequencies across corpora in parts per million (ppm). BNC accessed August 01, 2022. All other corpora accessed July 22, 2022.

The corpora also used for the previous studies for the HS 'Constructions' – COCA, TV Corpus, and Movie Corpus – yielded identical results in the current analysis. As these corpora are no longer expanded and as the basic methodology applied was identical in all studies, this was expected. The results obtained from the NOW, a corpus that is constantly being expanded, are comparable to those obtained for the group project in the seminar. No results were obtained

from the NOW for the term paper due to the data retrieval problems mentioned above. The Soap Opera Corpus and BNC are used for the first time in the current study.

As Line 01 illustrates, the overall frequency of *such* followed by an article does not significantly differ across the COCA, TV, and Movie Corpus. However, the share of instantiations preceded by *be*, as seen in Line 04, differs substantially between the COCA and the TV and Movie corpora. This supports the theory that the predicative use of *such* occurs predominantly in informal spoken language³¹. The difference is even more significant in the Soap Opera Corpus. Here, the frequency is increased even in Line 01, presumably due to numerous predicative instantiations (cf. Line 04). The NOW shows a quite different distribution, with significantly lower frequencies in both Line 01 and Line 04. As the NOW is expected to contain only little informal spoken language, these results are in concurrence with the predictions made above. The BNC displays the highest frequency of all corpora in Line 01, but is comparable, if not identical, to the NOW as soon as the copula *be* enters the search string. A brief look at the most frequent instantiations in the BNC reveals that the phoric use of *such* in expressions such as *in such a way* or *in such a case* predominates this corpus. This discovery is interesting as the BNC as a corpus of mixed genres may be expected to yield results comparable to the COCA. The fact that it does not may indicate that predicative uses of *such* are not as widespread in the British varieties of English. However, a closer analysis is not possible within the scope of this paper.

Segment B illustrates the prevalence of pronouns occurring as the subject. The frequencies in Lines 07 and 08 are significantly higher than those in Lines 09 and 10 (common nouns) and 11 and 12 (proper nouns). This applies across all corpora, although there is an inter-corpora variation corresponding to the overall frequencies established in the previous paragraph. Even more interesting is the fact that the frequencies in lines 09 through 12 (common and proper nouns) do almost *not* differ across the corpora. This means that in the corpora in which the construction occurs most frequently, the overbalance is caused mainly by instantiations featuring pronouns as the subject³². This further supports the theory that an

³¹ However, as was predicted (Section 4.1.1), existential *there* does occur frequently in this search string.

³² Segment B does not account for all instantiations, as the higher figures in Line 4 (or, more specifically, Lines 05 and 06) show. This is due to other lexical material entering the slot preceding the copula, such as the quite frequent existential *there*, verbs such as *quit* in *Quit being such an idiot*, and intervening material, such as *always* in *You've always been such a help*. This is not a comprehensive list. The data in Segment B are here seen as sufficiently conclusive without further analysis of the alternative lexical material.

interpersonal, immediate speech situation, in which pronouns can be expected to be frequent, is crucial for the use of the evaluative *such* construction.

Segment C further distinguishes between the personal pronouns occurring as the subject. In all corpora, the sum of the instantiations listed across the individual pronouns (Lines 13 through 22) roughly corresponds to the sum of all pronouns occurring (Lines 07 and 08). This means that other pronouns, such as *they* and the relative pronoun *who*, both of which do occur, are quite infrequent. In the COCA, there is a slight but not significant difference between *you* (Lines 13 and 14) and the other personal pronouns, excluding *it*. This difference is amplified in the TV, Movie, and Soap Opera corpora. Here, *you* occurs much more frequently than the other personal pronouns. In the NOW and BNC, this effect is reversed, with *you* occurring overall less frequently than the other pronouns. To a lesser extent, the same distribution holds for the first-person singular pronoun *I* (Line 15). The interpersonal character of the construction is thus again underscored. Additionally, the frequent use of *you* highlights the evaluative character of the construction. As was pointed out in Section 3.2.4, the addressee can be expected to know best what they are, so an utterance such as this must logically entail the speaker's evaluation of the addressee.

The neuter pronoun *it* also occurs more often than most other pronouns. There is a slight but not very big difference that corresponds to that observed for *you*: *it* occurs more frequently in the TV, Movie, and Soap Opera corpora than in the COCA, NOW, and BNC. Again, the frequency in the COCA is slightly higher than in the latter two corpora. *It* is, however, a rather troublesome subject. As a so-called 'dummy-subject' (Huddleston and Pullum 2002: 1482) its reference is vaguer than that of a personal pronoun referring to an identifiable person in the discourse context. *It* may refer to an item, an abstract entity, or a situation. Also, very frequent expressions such as *It's such a pleasure*, *It's such an honor*, and *It's such a shame* may be formulaic expressions serving social functions such as establishing rapport or sympathy rather than a 'true' contribution to an ongoing discourse. While the potentially unclear reference of *it* further highlights the interpersonal character of the evaluative *such* construction, as the interlocutors need to share context and/or knowledge to identify the reference, the formulaic character of *it* poses a challenge in assessing the pronoun's significance for the current analysis. The pronoun *it* will therefore be excluded from further discussion and a focus will be put on the person-denoting pronouns.

Altogether, the frequency data obtained support the predictions made: that the evaluative *such* construction, or, more specifically, its form, occurs most frequently in informal

spoken language and that it has a strong interpersonal component. The variation between the corpora can be explained by the nature of the language they feature. The target register is most prevalent in the TV, Movie, and Soap Opera corpora, which can be expected to consist of spoken language only, and which, due to their genre, should also contain a lot of informal language and particularly *dialog* between characters. In contrast, the NOW contains some dialog in the form of interviews, but just as Culpeper (2011: 133) points out that language on exploitative TV is to some extent contrived, speakers on news interviews can be expected to adopt a more formal style and to closely monitor their language.

Mixed corpora such as the COCA and BNC provide the option of filtering specific sub-parts of the corpus. In both cases, this includes a spoken part. Data contrasting the spoken parts and the entirety of the respective corpora were also collected for this study. The data are included in Table 16 in Appendix 3. Based on the findings detailed above, it can be predicted that the relative frequencies of the relevant search strings should be higher in the spoken parts than in the corpus as a whole. For the COCA, this prediction is not confirmed. Although pronouns are more frequent in the spoken part for the adjective-noun condition (Line 08), the pronoun *you* occurs *less* instead of more frequently in the spoken part than in the full corpus. In the BNC, however, the prediction is confirmed, with pronouns being much more frequent and *you* almost four times as frequent in the spoken part than in the full corpus. This contrast can be explained by the type of spoken language featured in the two corpora. While the COCA lists mostly news programs as the sources for the spoken data, the BNC consists of a wide variety of genres, including meetings and conversations. The spoken part of the BNC, unlike that of the COCA, thus features interpersonal spoken language that is not broadcast. Although the speakers in the BNC must have been aware the discourse was being recorded, the material can be expected to be more natural and informal than that of the COCA. The results obtained from this comparison thus also support the hypotheses about the evaluative *such* construction. It has to be noted, however, that the construction is very rare in the BNC. The results are therefore based on a very small sample of data.

4.2 Corpus Study II: Lexical Material

One of the main intuitions about the evaluative *such* construction was that the noun slot is frequently filled by epithets. It was this intuition, paired with the lexical material found in the first corpus studies, that led to the naming of the construction. To substantiate this intuition, a second corpus study was conducted during the work for the HS 'Constructions'. The study focused on the lexical material entering the adjective slot and the noun slot, a 'collostructional

analysis' investigating which lexical items collocate with the construction (Taylor 2012: 141). It also attempted to explain under which condition(s) the adjective slot is filled. The current study uses the same approach but is based on a larger quantity of corpus data. Unlike the previous studies, it also puts a particular focus on the collocations between adjectives and nouns. These collocations are of particular interest as it is theorized that they will provide strong evidence for the proposed coercion effect (Section 3.3.2)

4.2.1 Data and Methodology

The search strings in Segment C, in which personal pronouns function as the subject (Table 5 in Section 4.1), were used for this second corpus study. The BNC and its spoken sub-part were excluded from this study as they yielded only very few results. Both a word search and a lemma search were conducted. The advantage of the word search is that details such as tense and contractions are preserved in the results, so further insight into the use is possible. The advantage of the lemma search is that entries that, due to said differences in e.g. tense or contractions, are displayed separately in the word search are consolidated. This way, the true frequency of words in the adjective and noun slots becomes visible. The adjective-noun condition is more complex as the adjectives and nouns occur in various combinations, each displayed as a separate entry. The true frequency of individual lexical items is thus not discernible from a simple search. The data were therefore processed further in Microsoft Excel.

For each search string, 1,000 search results were displayed in each corpus. All results were exported into Microsoft Excel for the individual lexical items to be consolidated. In many cases, there were fewer than 1,000 results. In these cases, *all* occurrences of the search string could be exported from the corpus. In most other cases, search results towards the end of the list featured words occurring only a single time in the corpus, so-called 'hapax legomena' (Crystal 1999: 144). The results extracted are thus considered representative of the corpora, with the limitations put forward in Section 4.1. Subsequently, the results were filtered by the noun slot and adjective slots, respectively. Entries with identical nouns or adjectives were consolidated and their frequencies of occurrence were added up to obtain the total frequency of the individual lexical items. In the adjective-noun condition, occurrences of the same adjectives were consolidated regardless of which noun they modified. The results were then filtered by frequency.

In the next step, the scope of data to be analyzed for the study was chosen. The aim was to use only items with a reasonably high frequency in the corpora while also ensuring a substantial enough sample of data. The number of results differed quite significantly across the

search strings, due to the size of the corpora and the frequency of the individual pronouns (cf. Table 6 in Section 4.1.2). The samples used are thus to some extent heterogenous. In most cases, between 50 and 100 individual nouns and between 50 and 100 individual adjectives per search string were included from each corpus. Initially, only nouns and adjectives occurring at least five times in a corpus were included. For some search strings, this had to be reduced to words occurring at least four, three, or two times in a corpus to reach the threshold of 50 results per search string. Due to their small size, the TV, Movie, and Soap Opera corpora did not reach the threshold for less frequent pronouns, despite the relative frequency of the construction in these corpora. On the other hand, the NOW, due to its massive size, has an overabundance of data despite the relatively low frequency of the construction in the corpus. Hapax legomena, which are quite frequent in all corpora, were excluded as there was no objective measure of choosing which ones to include and which ones to exclude. A full list of the number of items in the sample is available in Table 18 in Appendix 3.

Next, the nouns and adjectives were categorized according to their valence. The categories applied to nouns are 'positive', 'negative', 'coercion', or 'unclear'. 'Coercion' was assigned to nouns that are expected to be subject to a coercion effect when used in the evaluative *such* construction. The criterion was that the noun would not be interpreted negatively in a predicative sentence without *such*, but may be interpreted negatively in a predicative sentence with *such*³³. Nouns that could not be assigned to either of the categories were classed as 'unclear'. These nouns are assumed to be interpretable positively or negatively as well, however only within a larger context³⁴. The adjectives were categorized as 'positive', 'negative', 'intensifying', or 'unclear'. Adjectives that were assumed to intensify a quality inherent in the noun they modify were classed as 'intensifying'. Adjectives whose evaluative polarity was assumed to depend on the discourse context and speaker attitude were categorized as 'unclear'. The frequencies were then compared. This constitutes the main analysis of lexical material.

In addition, collocations between adjectives and nouns were investigated. For this analysis, all search results for the search string [*you* BE *such* ART ADJ N] obtained from the

³³ The assignment of valence is, of course, a weak point in the methodology. Despite the large amount of data, I attempted to assign all nouns and adjectives with great care and to my best 'objective' knowledge. Personal biases are still likely to have had an influence, however.

³⁴ Originally, one aim of this paper was to examine specific discourse contexts in which the construction occurs in the corpora more closely. Due to the following challenges, this was not achieved. (1) Any selection of examples would have been arbitrary and not necessarily representative of the construction's use. (2) More importantly, the extended context available in the corpora (particularly, in the COCA) does often not include speakers. Dialog is presented as one text. (3) When speakers are indicated, the situation is often still difficult to assess without extralinguistic cues or knowledge. Under these circumstances, a discourse analysis was considered too unreliable and ultimately not feasible.

COCA were analyzed in detail. These results amounted to 1,185 expressions. The COCA was chosen due to its role as a default corpus. The search string was chosen due to its significant frequency across the corpora (see Table 6 in Section 4.1.2). It was hypothesized that, if coercion effects really do apply to the evaluative *such* construction, nouns that are expected to be subject to these effects should be modified by adjectives canceling the coercion (Section 3.3.2). The nouns and adjectives in the data were tagged for their valence as outlined above. Their respective categories were then cross-referenced to investigate which type of noun collocates with which type of adjective and how frequent the individual collocations are in the corpus. Below, this methodology will be outlined in greater detail.

Finally, an additional search was conducted to investigate the lexical material occurring in the adjective and noun slot of expressions *without* the word *such*. If *such* plays the role theorized in this paper, the lexical material may be predicted to differ in its absence. For this search, all search strings with pronouns as subjects were used with the word *such* removed. The corpora searched were the COCA as the default corpus and the TV Corpus due to its informal spoken language. The other corpora were excluded to maintain a manageable data set. For the same reason, the analysis was not conducted in as much detail as the main analysis. Instead, a lemma search was conducted for both conditions in both corpora and the top 20 results were compared.

4.2.2 Findings and Discussion

Across all corpora, the construction occurs most frequently in present tense and with contracted copula *be*. This was expected and supports the theory that the prototypical context for the construction is an immediate, informal speech situation. The focus of the current analysis is on the adjective and noun slots, however. In the following, the most frequent lexical items occurring in these slots will be detailed. Due to the large amount of data, only the most relevant excerpts could be included in the main text. Additional results are available in Appendix 3.

Table 7 illustrates the most frequent nouns and adjectives occurring in the construction. The excerpt shown here features the search string [you BE *such* ART ADJ N] in the COCA and the TV Corpus. The Movie and Soap Opera corpora yielded comparable results. Table 17 in Appendix 3 also includes the NOW for comparison. Negative nouns and adjectives are marked in red, nouns subject to coercion in blue, positive nouns and adjectives in green, and intensifying adjectives in yellow (see also key). The frequency is here provided in absolute numbers to make the data more transparent for an intra-corpus, intra-category comparison. A comparative analysis with normalized data will follow below.

COCA				TV Corpus			
Nouns		Adjectives		Nouns		Adjectives	
asshole	96	good	299	liar	137	good	453
liar	89	great	82	idiot	114	great	107
jerk	79	big	61	jerk	104	big	81
idiot	61	little	54	ass-/arsehole	85	fucking	61
bitch	61	fucking	52	bitch	77	nice	46
dick	52	beautiful	35	dick	65	little	42
loser	52	nice	35	hypocrite	65	bad	40
baby	49	bad	32	baby	55	sweet	32
inspiration	46	amazing	24	loser	54	beautiful	31
child	31	sweet	18	ass	46	amazing	27
gentleman	31	wonderful	16	child	45	pretty	21
ass	30	smart	15	gentleman	41	smart	20
expert	29	pretty	14	expert	39	cute	14
hypocrite	24	tough (?)	14	girl	39	lovely	14
doll	21	incredible	10	doll	25	strong	14
coward	18	lovely	9	pig	24	terrible	14
fool	18	strong	9	man	24	brilliant	13
pig	18	cute	8	fan	23	wonderful	13
pussy	17	fine	8	disappointment	22	old	13
slut	17	talented	8	dork	22	special	12
Key:							
negative N/ADJ		positive N/ADJ		coercion N		intensifying ADJ	

Table 7: Top 20 nouns and adjectives occurring in [you BE such ART ADJ N] in the COCA and TV Corpus in absolute numbers. Corpora accessed July 23, 2022.

As Table 7 shows, the frequencies decrease quite quickly even across the 20 most frequent lexical items for each category, particularly for the adjective. As the list goes on, there are many instantiations with nouns and adjectives that occur only a single time in the respective corpora. These hapax legomena were excluded from the analysis, as mentioned above. The large number of 'hapaxes' indicates that the construction is very productive (cf. Hilpert 2014: 82; Goldberg 2019: 133), as the ratio of total and unique results (t/u) in Table 16 in Appendix 3 also shows. A perfectly productive construction with every instantiation being unique would have a total/unique-ratio of 1.0. For all of the search strings employed here, the ratio is under five, meaning that on average, each particular item occurs less than five times in the respective corpus. This indicates that the construction should be quite entrenched and that speakers use it creatively (Goldberg 2019: 60ff). This creative use, particularly when neutral nouns are used, indicates that speakers are aware of the idiosyncratic meaning of the construction and know how to exploit it (cf. Hilpert 2014: 7).

The nouns and adjectives occurring most frequently in the construction can be expected to also be quite entrenched as prototypical items filling the respective slot (cf. Goldberg 2019: 69-70). Goldberg (2006: 89) notes an effect of 'cognitive anchoring', "a high-frequency type of example act[ing] as [...] a salient standard of comparison." As Table 7 shows, the nouns are predominantly negative. As Taylor (2012: 89) notes, words such as *idiot*, *fool*, or *bastard* "have an entrenched status as epithets". There are some quite frequent nouns with positive valence and some that can be expected to be subject to coercion. In Table 7, these latter nouns are *baby*, *child*, *girl*, and *man*. These nouns should usually not be interpreted negatively. However, the OED lists negative or derogatory uses for *baby*, *child*, and *girl*, but not for *man*. The main criterion to identify whether a noun should be categorized as being subject to coercion effects was whether it would be interpreted negatively without *such* in a predicative sentence. However, this is very dependent on the subject. While *You are a baby* or *You are a girl* may be a clear insult to an adult man, *You are a man* may not have this effect. If the subject is *she*, *She is a baby* or *She is a girl* may be interpreted negatively depending on her age. As these nouns cannot be identified as clear epithets, they are here included in the 'coercion' category. Their potential to be used as derogatory terms outside of the evaluative *such* construction should be noted, however. In this view, they contribute to the high frequency of nouns with negative valence.

The adjectives occurring most frequently in the evaluative *such* construction are predominantly positive. Especially the adjectives *good*, and to a lesser extent *great*, are very frequent. As the construction leans towards negative evaluation, as indicated by the high frequency of negative nouns, the function of the adjective is to clarify the polarity of the evaluation. If the construction did *not* imply negative evaluation, we might expect to find a roughly equal number of positive and negative adjectives. The high frequency of positive adjectives thus supports the theory that negative evaluation is indeed the key function of the evaluative *such* construction. Here, it should be noted that there is evidence that verbal impoliteness is an overall rare phenomenon when compared to politeness (Culpeper 2011: 130). This would mean that the frequency of positive adjectives may be a general phenomenon. However, this should be different within the scope of the construction, as the epithets in the noun slot show.

Some adjectives are categorized as intensifying. As the construction is inherently intensifying due to *such*, as we have seen in Section 2, the quite frequent occurrence of intensifying adjectives is not surprising. In Table 7, *big*, *little*, *fucking*, and *incredible* have been

marked as intensifying. It may seem unusual to mark *little* as intensifying as it is commonly associated with diminution. However, it emphasizes the smallness of something, as in *You are such a little guy*. When combined with a negative or positive noun, it intensifies the evaluation, as in *You are such a little bitch* or *You are such a little cutie*. An ironic intensifying use is also attested in the OED. It should be noted that the adjectives categorized as intensifying also carry a positive (e.g. *incredible*) or negative (e.g. *fucking*) layer. Culpeper (2011: 144) categorizes *fucking* as a 'taboo intensifier' that "deflates the low value of the item to which it refers yet further." In the data, there is in fact a tendency for *fucking* to occur with negative nouns and for *incredible* to occur with positive nouns. However, expressions such as *fucking stud* and *incredible asshole* do occur as well.

A quantitative analysis of the entire sample was conducted to investigate the shares of the different noun and adjective categories in percent. An excerpt displaying two of the search strings is provided in Table 8. Due to its relative frequency and interpersonal character, the pronoun *you* was chosen as a default. The results for all other personal pronouns are provided in Table 19 in Appendix 3.

Search	Type	COCA	TV	Movie	Soap	NOW
you BE such ART N	Noun negative	69.3	71.5	79.5	74.4	37.2
	Noun positive	17.7	13.5	11.2	14.5	44.9
	Noun coercion	10.7	12.1	8.4	9.0	11.4
	Noun unclear	2.3	3.0	0.9	2.1	6.5
you BE such ART ADJ N	Adjective positive	66.9	69.3	57.1	77.4	69.7
	Adjective intensifying	20.2	16.2	29.7	9.1	18.3
	Adjective negative	8.1	8.5	7.8	8.5	4.2
	Adjective unclear	4.7	6.0	5.4	5.0	7.9

Table 8: Percentages of lexical material across corpora. Accessed July 23, 2022.

As was expected, negative nouns account for the majority across the corpora, except in the NOW. Here, positive nouns predominate, most likely due to the register and speech situation, as mentioned previously. The share of nouns that are subject to coercion is similar across all corpora³⁵. With some variation, particularly concerning the Movie Corpus and the Soap Opera Corpus, the share of positive and negative adjectives is comparable across corpora. Here, the NOW does not perform differently from the other corpora. This is not surprising as the adjective

³⁵ We may wonder whether the type of discourse typical for the NOW creates altogether different expectations about the polarity of the evaluation, so that coercion effects will cause a neutral noun to be interpreted positively, not negatively. Unfortunately, it will not be possible to investigate this within the scope of this paper.

was theorized to be in charge of positive evaluation in the evaluative *such* construction and the NOW seems to lean towards positive evaluation.

As Table 19 (Appendix 3) illustrates, the distribution of nouns and adjectives differs to a remarkable extent across the personal pronouns. The share of negative nouns is the largest for the first-person pronoun *I*, again except in the NOW. To little surprise, the share of positive adjectives is the lowest for *I*. The most frequent nouns occurring with *I* in the COCA are *idiot*, *fool*, and *loser*. The share of intensifying adjectives, whose function is to emphasize this negative evaluation, is particularly high, which is also not surprising. This self-deprecating language (cf. Couper-Kuhlen and Selting 2018: 292ff) may be a spontaneous reaction to the realization of having done something stupid, or 'fishing for compliments'. For the third-person pronouns *he* and *she*, the share of negative nouns is lower and the share of positive nouns higher than for *you* and *I*. However, negative nouns still account for the largest share. Although there is a certain variation between the pronouns, which most likely reflects a more general way of how we speak about ourselves, our interlocutors, and third parties, the overall predominance of negative nouns and particularly of positive adjectives persists throughout the data and thus supports the predictions made.

It has been argued that the adjective's chief function is to avoid or cancel coercion effects by indicating the polarity of the evaluation, particularly when a positive evaluation is intended. If this is true, it should be expected that positive adjectives co-occur predominantly with neutral nouns lacking a clear inherent valence. To investigate this further, collocations between adjectives and nouns occurring in the results for the search string [*you* BE *such* ART ADJ N] in the COCA were analyzed. Of all search results, roughly 90 expressions were excluded as they were problematic. For instance, some comprised incomplete nominals or expressions that resembled adjective-noun pairings, but were in fact phrasal nouns or set idiomatic expressions, such as *smart ass*, *wet blanket*, and *scaredy cat*³⁶.

1,185 total adjective-noun pairings, around 800 individual expressions, remained. These were then analyzed from the 'adjective perspective' as well as the 'noun perspective'. In the adjective perspective, the total number of each type of adjective was set to 100 %. Subsequently, the share of each type of noun occurring with each type of adjective was calculated. For instance, in Table 9 there is a total of 1,185 adjective-noun pairings, of which 731 (61.7 %)

³⁶ This is, of course, a problem inherent in the data in general. Due to the large amount of data, it was not possible to revise and adjust them for every corpus and search string. However, as these examples show, these phrasal nouns constitute further examples of nouns with negative valence, thus further supporting the hypotheses of this paper.

feature a positive adjective, 166 (14.0 %) a negative adjective, 202 (17.0 %) an intensifying adjective, and 86 (7.3 %) an unclear adjective³⁷. Positive adjectives occur 87 times with positive nouns, 16 times with negative nouns, 625 times with nouns tagged for coercion, and 3 times with unclear nouns. With this information, it is possible to calculate the percentage of the cases in which positive adjectives occur with the individual types of nouns (731 positive adjectives = 100 %, column marked green) and, more interestingly, the percentage of combinations of positive adjectives and different nouns in the entire data set (all 1,185 pairings = 100 %, column marked red).

Total Pairings: 1,185	Positive A 731, 61.7 %			Negative A 166, 14.0 %			Intensifying A 202, 17.0 %			Unclear A 86, 7.3 %		
	No.	%	% T	No.	%	% T	No.	%	% T	No.	%	% T
Positive N	87	11.9	7.3	2	1.2	0.2	27	13.4	2.3	4	4.7	0.3
Negative N	16	2.2	1.4	77	46.4	6.5	95	47.0	8.0	14	16.3	1.2
Coercion N	625	85.5	52.7	84	50.6	7.1	78	38.6	6.6	66	76.7	5.6
Unclear N	3	0.4	0.3	3	1.8	0.3	2	1.0	0.2	2	2.3	0.2

Table 9: Collocations from the adjective perspective. Data from the COCA for the search string [you BE such ART ADJ N]. Accessed July 23, 2022.

As we can see in Table 9, 85.5 % of the positive adjectives occur with nouns that are marked for coercion, meaning that they should not have an inherent valence and might be interpreted negatively when occurring in the construction without the adjective. The most frequent combinations in the data are *good boy*, *good girl*, *nice guy*, *good guy*, and *good person*. While the former two are most likely used to address animals or children, the others are more indicative of the kind of exchange postulated for the evaluative *such* construction. When all pairings are considered, combinations of positive adjectives and coercion nouns make up 50.2 % of the data. The share of negative adjectives modifying coercion nouns is significantly lower, 50.6 % (7.1 % of the total sample), as opposed to 85.5 % of positive adjectives. Other frequent combinations are negative and intensifying adjectives modifying negative nouns, and positive adjectives modifying positive nouns. None of these findings are surprising as both negative and intensifying adjectives are expected to emphasize the pre-existing negative valence of a noun, while positive adjectives emphasize the pre-existing positive valence of a noun. These combinations are an example of what Leisi (1985: 55) describes as the 'collocability' of certain attributive adjectives and nouns. The 38.6 % intensifying adjectives modifying coercion nouns, at first sight, seems a challenge to the current theory. However, as was pointed out, intensifying

³⁷ These figures differ from those provided in Table 8 for the same search string in the COCA. This discrepancy is due to the differing samples used for the two analyses. For Table 8, the 60 most frequent adjectives out of over 300 were analyzed. For Table 9, all results were analyzed.

adjectives may carry an evaluative layer as well. The example *You are such a fucking guy* illustrates how this combination may lead to a negative reading, while *You are such a big influence* may lead to a positive reading.

To gain additional insight, the analysis was also conducted from the noun perspective (Table 10). Here, the nouns are set to 100 % and the shares of the various adjective types co-occurring with the nouns are calculated. As the number of pairings is identical to Table 9 above and only the perspective is switched, the share of the pairings relative to the number of total pairings (red column in Table 9) is also identical and is thus not repeated here.

Total Pairings: 1,185	Positive N 120, 10.1 %		Negative N 202, 17.0 %		Coercion N 853, 72.0 %		Unclear N 10, 0.8 %	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Positive A	87	72.5	16	7.9	625	73.3	3	30.0
Negative A	2	1.7	77	38.1	84	9.9	3	30.0
Intensifying A	27	22.5	95	47.0	78	9.1	2	20.0
Unclear A	4	3.3	14	6.9	66	7.7	2	20.0

Table 10: Collocations from the noun perspective. Data from the COCA for the search string [you BE such ART ADJ N]. Accessed July 23, 2022.

The results are not surprising. 72.5 % of the positive nouns are modified by positive adjectives. Intensifying adjectives also take a significant share. Negative nouns are mostly intensified (47.0 %), but also modified, mostly by negative adjectives. Compare, for instance, *fucking asshole* (intensified) and *controlling asshole* (modified). The coercion nouns occur mostly with positive adjectives (73.3 %), yet with both negative and intensifying adjectives accounting for close to 10 %. The negative adjectives are not a surprise, as speakers may wish to indicate negative polarity in some cases. The use of intensifying adjectives was explained in the previous paragraph. The predictions made about the collocations are thus confirmed.

The final analysis conducted compared search strings with personal pronouns as subjects with and without *such* in the COCA and TV Corpus. As an analysis as thorough as the ones above was not possible within the scope of this paper, only the overall observations and most relevant discoveries will be detailed here. A comparison of the noun condition with and without *such* revealed that in both corpora, the number of clearly evaluative nouns – positive as well as negative – within the top 20 results is higher when *such* is present. Especially with the first-person pronoun *I* this difference is very noticeable. When *such* is present, the results are very self-deprecating, as has been shown above. Without *such*, only few of the nouns carry a negative meaning. Instead, most of the results are purely descriptive. Although less pronounced, the difference holds across the pronouns. Nevertheless, evaluative nouns do occur

within the top 20 results even when *such* is not present in the search string. In the adjective-noun condition, however, there is only little difference between the results with and without *such*, although purely descriptive expressions do also occur. Here, we see mostly positive adjectives modifying the noun in both conditions. This means the theory that the use of positive adjectives occurring in the evaluative *such* construction is motivated by impending coercion effects may be problematic. On the other hand, it is interesting to see how many evaluative examples occur in this condition as they can be seen as evidence for the evaluative predicative construction proposed as an intermediate stage in the inheritance schema in Section 3.3.1.

4.3 Survey

To obtain real speakers' evaluation of the type of sentences studied for this paper and particularly to investigate presumably neutral nouns and the proposed coercion effect, an online survey was conducted³⁸. In this survey, participants rated predicative, otherwise identical, statements with and without pivotal *such*. The sentences were manipulated to be either positive, negative, or neutral. The survey ran on the online tool SoSci Survey from October 10 to October 30, 2022. The data set used for the analysis comprised 48 completed questionnaires. The relevant survey materials are provided in Appendix 4.

4.3.1 Data and Methodology

Stimuli

For this survey, two separate questionnaires were created. Condition 1 comprises predicative sentences without pivotal *such*, Condition 2 comprises the same sentences with the target form [*he/she is such* ART N]. Only the noun-only condition was tested as the main aim of the survey was to investigate participants' evaluation of the nouns and the resulting coercion effect, which does not occur when a disambiguating adjective is present. The predicative nouns used in the ten experimental sentences were presumed to be either positive (2), negative (2), or neutral (6). A higher number of neutral nouns was chosen to obtain more data relevant to the study of coercion effects. The nouns were chosen based on their frequency in the corpus data. Frequent nouns (*child, girl, man*) are contrasted with likely less entrenched but attested low-frequency nouns (*perfectionist, student, teacher*).

³⁸ The methodology follows experiment design recommendations by Myers (2009) and Mertins (2016). To avoid methodological pitfalls, prior feedback was asked of, and provided by, Dr. Michael Schiffmann, Dr. Monika Pleyer, and Dr. Michael Pleyer. As the feedback was positive, the methodology was left unchanged.

In addition, 20 filler items were incorporated into the questionnaires. The fillers were identical in both versions and were presumably non-ambiguous statements designed to be either positive (8), negative (8), or neutral (4). The lower number of neutral sentences in the fillers compensated for the overweight of neutral items in the experimental condition. The fillers did not share the form [(*such*) ART N]. While some filler sentences contained predicative adjectives, most did not have a predicative form. In sum, each questionnaire comprised 30 items, of which ten each were considered positive, negative, and neutral. The experimental sentences are listed in Table 11 and the complete list, including the fillers, is available in Table 21 in Appendix 4.

Denotation	No.	Condition 1 (without <i>such</i>)	Condition 2 (with <i>such</i>)
Negative	01	She is an asshole.	She is such an asshole.
Negative	02	He is an idiot.	He is such an idiot.
Positive	03	She is an inspiration.	She is such an inspiration.
Positive	04	He is a sweetheart.	He is such a sweetheart.
Neutral	05	She is a perfectionist.	She is such a perfectionist.
Neutral	06	She is a girl.	She is such a girl.
Neutral	07	She is a student.	She is such a student.
Neutral	08	He is a teacher.	He is such a teacher.
Neutral	09	He is a man.	He is such a man.
Neutral	10	He is a child.	He is such a child.

Table 11: Experimental stimuli in Condition 1 and Condition 2.

Although the corpus data had shown that the use of nouns carrying a negative meaning is highest when used with first and second-person pronouns *I* and *you*, third-person pronouns were used for the survey to avoid that participants would feel addressed, which may have influenced their evaluation of the statements. *He* and *she* were used in equal numbers. The non-binary singular pronoun *they* was not used as its prototypically plural meaning may have affected the perceived grammaticality of the statements.

Presentation of the Stimuli

The two conditions were run between-group, meaning that each participant saw only one version of the questionnaire. Participants were not aware of this. The questionnaires were assigned by a random generator when the link was opened. The ratio was 50:50. The 30 stimuli were displayed one per page, in a randomized order through another random generator. The prompt accompanying each statement was *Do you think the speaker is making a positive, negative, or neutral statement about the person?* The prompt aimed to make the participants focus on the communicative intention of the speaker. Participants rated each statement on a

five-point Likert scale with the options 'very negative', 'negative', 'neutral', 'positive', and 'very positive'. A three-point scale comprising only positive, negative, and neutral was considered too narrow and predicted to invite many neutral ratings for possibly ambiguous items. Smiley faces accompanied each option as an aid to avoid a reverse reading of the scale. The participants saw the stimuli as illustrated in Figure 5.

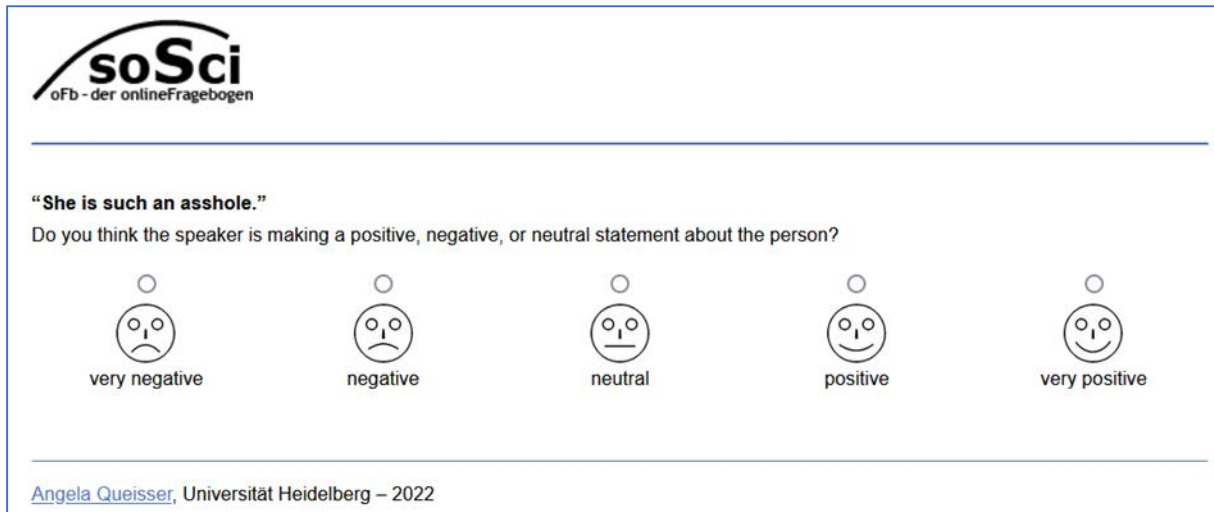


Figure 5: Presentation of the stimuli and fillers in the survey (screenshot).

Participants and Data Obtained

The survey link was spread in my personal network through Facebook. People were also asked to share the link to their respective networks. The data were collected between October 10 and October 30, 2022. In addition to the responses to the stimuli, some sociodemographic data were gathered. This was done after a welcome and consent slide and before the presentation of the stimuli. The data gathered were gender (female, male, other), age in years, highest educational achievement, level of proficiency in English with the options 'basic', 'intermediate', 'advanced', 'fluent', 'close to native', and 'I am a native speaker of English', and variety of English spoken (optional answer). Only data sets of participants who rated their proficiency in English as 'fluent' or higher were used for the analysis. Of the participants included in the study, 27 are female, 20 are male, and one is non-binary. Ages range from 22 to 69 with a mean age of 37. The majority of participants are in their thirties. All participants have at least a high school diploma or equivalent, most have a university degree. Most participants are native speakers of English (31), followed by 'close to native' (10) and 'fluent' (7). It should be noted again that the level of proficiency is self-identified. Gender, age, education, and variety of English spoken did not seem to have an impact on the ratings.

A total of 51 completed surveys were saved, 27 for Condition 1 (without *such*) and 24 for Condition 2 (with *such*). Although the questionnaires were assigned on a 50:50 basis, fewer results were obtained for Condition 2 due to prematurely aborted questionnaires. Moreover, three data sets had to be excluded from Condition 2. One participant rated their English as 'basic' and two participants displayed an unusual performance when rating the filler items. Apart from masking the true purpose of the survey, the fillers were used as a baseline to judge the participants' overall rating behavior. While the fillers were rated quite uniformly across participants, one participant rated 50% of the evaluative fillers as neutral. Another participant rated all of the neutral fillers as positive. These two data sets were therefore excluded as the participants' rating behavior was not considered representative. As they were both self-identified non-native speakers of English, they may not have had an idiomatic understanding of the sentences. After the exclusion of the three data sets, 21 data sets remained for Condition 2 and 27 for Condition 1, amounting to a total of 48 data sets used for the analysis.

4.3.2 Findings and Discussion

With some exceptions, all participants rated the filler items as expected. One supposedly negative filler was rated as neutral by about 50 % of the participants. This particular item was therefore not an ideal choice for the survey. Although the fillers are not part of the experimental condition, their mostly uniform ratings show that there is a high degree of consensus among the participants. Of the experimental stimuli, all of the statements with overt positive or negative nouns (01 through 04 in Table 11) were rated as expected in both conditions. One participant rated *She is such an asshole* as positive, which most likely happened by mistake. An overview of the ratings of the filler items and clearly positive and negative experimental items is available in Figure 8 in Appendix 4. Here, the focus will be on the stimuli for which coercion effects were predicted (05 through 10 in Table 11).

Assuming that otherwise neutral nouns adopt an evaluative meaning when occurring in the evaluative *such* construction, Stimuli 05 through 10 in Table 11 should be rated as neutral when occurring in Condition 1 (without *such*) and as positive or negative in Condition 2 (with *such*). To a large extent, this is what the results obtained show. The complete overview with all individual ratings is available in Tables 22 and 23 in Appendix 4. The findings are summarized in percentages in the following tables. These results are based on the full sample. A sub-sample comprising only native speakers was also analyzed and yielded very comparable results. Table 12 shows the percentage of positive (green), negative (red), and neutral (yellow) ratings as well as the sum of positive and negative (total evaluative, blue) ratings in Condition 1 (without *such*).

As can be seen in the column 'Average', both positive and negative ratings account for under 10 %. However, there is an interesting variation between the stimuli, indicating that some of the nouns do lean towards a positive or negative evaluation. *Perfectionist* is the only item with both positive and negative ratings. None of the stimuli were rated as 'very positive' or 'very negative'. The majority (81.5 %, on average) of the ratings are neutral, as was predicted.

Stim. 05 perfectionist	Stim. 06 girl	Stim. 07 student	Stim. 08 teacher	Stim. 09 man	Stim. 10 child	Average
25.9	0.0	14.8	3.7	7.4	0.0	8.6
18.5	3.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	37.0	9.9
55.6	96.3	85.2	96.3	92.6	63.0	81.5
44.4	3.7	14.8	3.7	7.4	37.0	18.5
Legend:	positive	negative	neutral	Total evaluative (pos. + neg.)		

Table 12: Percentages of positive, negative, and neutral ratings in Condition 1 (without such).

This changes quite clearly when *such* is present in the stimuli. Table 13 illustrates the ratings for Condition 2 (with *such*). The share of neutral ratings drops to 30.2 %, while positive and negative ratings increase to 21.4 % and 48.4 %, respectively. As Table 23 in Appendix 4 shows, individual statements were also rated stronger, meaning 'very positive' or 'very negative' in this condition. This did not happen in Condition 1. Negative ratings now account for almost half of all ratings. This is crucial as one of the hypotheses of this paper is that the evaluative *such* construction has a particularly negative connotation and that coercion will work towards negative polarity.

Stim. 05 perfectionist	Stim. 06 girl	Stim. 07 student	Stim. 08 teacher	Stim. 09 man	Stim. 10 child	Average
19.0	9.5	28.6	47.6	23.8	0.0	21.4
52.4	52.4	33.3	19.0	42.9	90.5	48.4
28.6	38.1	38.1	33.3	33.3	9.5	30.2
71.4	61.9	61.9	66.7	66.7	90.5	69.8
Legend:	positive	negative	neutral	Total evaluative (pos. + neg.)		

Table 13: Percentages of positive, negative, and neutral ratings in Condition 2 (with such).

Table 14 illustrates the exact differences in rating. For this calculation, the percentages in Table 12 (Condition 1) were subtracted from the percentages in Table 13 (Condition 2)³⁹. As the average of neutral ratings is only 30.2 % in Condition 2 but 81.5 % in Condition 1, the difference is a negative -51.3 %. As positive and negative ratings are (mostly) higher in

³⁹ It should be noted that 27 participants rated Condition 1 while only 21 participants rated Condition 2. This means that fewer individuals account for the percentages obtained for Condition 2 than for those obtained for Condition 1. However, calculating the difference relative to the number of participants was considered overly complicated for the current purpose. Therefore, the percentages obtained previously are simply subtracted from each other.

Condition 2, the differences are over all positive as the numbers have increased. The increase in total evaluative ratings, quite logically, corresponds to the decrease in neutral ratings.

Stim. 05 perfectionist	Stim. 06 girl	Stim. 07 student	Stim. 08 teacher	Stim. 09 man	Stim. 10 child	Average
-6.9	+9.5	+13.8	+43.6	+16.4	0.0	+12.8
+33.9	+48.7	+33.3	+19.0	+42.9	+53.4	+38.5
-27.0	-58.2	-47.1	-63.0	-59.3	-53.4	-51.3
+27.0	+58.2	+47.1	+63.0	+59.3	+53.4	+51.3
Legend:	positive	negative	neutral	Total evaluative (pos. + neg.)		

Table 14: Differences in ratings between Condition 1 and Condition 2 in percent.

The juxtaposition performed above shows that predicative statements of the type used for this survey are more likely to be rated as evaluative when they contain *such*. Moreover, there is also a tendency for the ratings to be negative rather than positive. As shown in Table 14, positive ratings increase by 12.8 % when *such* is present, as opposed to 38.5 % for negative ratings, more than three times as much. All stimuli with exception of *teacher* increase more strongly in their negative rating than in their positive rating. *Child*, which was already rated quite negatively without *such*, was rated so in 90 % of the questionnaires with *such*. No negative ratings at all were obtained for *student*, *teacher*, and *man* in Condition 1 (without *such*). In Condition 2 (with *such*), however, all these stimuli were rated negatively. For *student* and *man*, the negative ratings even exceed the positive ones. *Perfectionist* is even more interesting. In Condition 1 it is the most positively rated of the items. In Condition 2, this is reversed. It is the only stimulus to *lose* positive ratings. This indicates that *such* may not just tip a neutral noun towards negative polarity, but may even override an otherwise positive reading. The different outcomes across the stimuli indicate that the lexical meaning and the constructional meaning interact. This is not surprising and has been noted by Goldberg (1995: 24) for verbs. Overall, the negative tendency supports the hypothesis that the coercion effect proposed for the evaluative *such* construction does indeed enforce a negative connotation.

There are several limitations to the current survey. The sample of experimental stimuli in the supposedly neutral condition comprised only six sentences. The selection of nouns from the corpus data was by design deliberate. A conventionalized connotation of the nouns, such as the negative uses of *child* and *girl* listed in the OED (see Section 4.2.2) may have influenced the ratings. Different nouns may have elicited different ratings while a higher number of experimental stimuli may have yielded a more fine-grained overall result. In order to motivate potential participants to complete the survey, a short duration was considered essential for the current project, however. The sample size poses a further limitation. Although a sample of 48

participants may be quite satisfying for a small-scale study, a larger sample would have made the results more robust. A test of statistical significance, which was not possible within the scope of this paper, is a further desideratum for both for the survey and corpus studies.

4.4 Summary of the Findings and General Discussion

The current paper aims to provide evidence for the evaluative *such* construction and for a predominantly negative evaluative character in order to show that the construction does more than just intensify. Although an intensifying *such* construction has – to my best knowledge – not been explicitly proposed by any author, it is implicitly described quite extensively in the literature (see Section 2). The evaluative *such* construction has not been suggested, but individual examples have been recognized and mentioned; for instance, by Bolinger (1972: 69), who notes that *postman* in *He is such a postman* may be read as an epithet, which constitutes a case of coercion. Taylor (2012: 90), mentions the example sentence *You are such an idiot* in a list of what he calls 'epithet constructions' without further analyzing it, and Culpeper (2011: 135) lists examples of the construction when discussing conventionalized impolite formulae. Both intensifying and evaluative uses of the specific form of the construction are therefore attested. It remains unclear what determines whether an utterance containing *such* is intensifying only or also evaluative, and whether an evaluation is achieved through the use of *such*, as proposed here, or by the denotation and connotation(s) of the lexical material used in the construction. Many, if not all, examples listed in this paper can be read as both intensifying and evaluative, and intensification is an integral part of the evaluative *such* construction, as the subject is made to resemble the predicative noun to an absolute intensive degree (see Section 3.2.1). The main question that remains is whether the evaluative force can in fact be assigned to *such*. With the results obtained through the two corpus studies and the survey conducted for this paper, I hope to shed some light on this concern.

The first corpus study investigated the frequency of occurrence of the evaluative *such* construction across different corpora. This was done to determine the register(s) it is most likely to occur in as well as the context preceding the construction. As the construction was discovered to be most frequent in the TV, Movie, and Soap Opera corpora, and more frequent in the spoken part of the BNC than in the BNC overall, a prevalence in spoken language can be presumed. This is supported by the frequent occurrence of pronouns as subjects, which indicates an immediate speech situation (Crystal 1999: 83). In this kind of discourse, emotive language may occur, and the proposed use of the construction does conform to this. While it was possible to analyze the distribution and formal characteristics of the context in which the construction is

used most frequently, it is not possible to determine an intensifying and/or evaluative use based on frequencies and distributional characteristics. Although the first corpus study yielded valuable insights that establish that a conventionalized use of the construction does exist, it is not suitable to further investigate intensification and evaluation.

The second corpus study was concerned with the lexical material occurring in the adjective and noun slots of the construction as well as with the preceding context. It was found that in the absence of an adjective, the nouns entering the noun slot are predominantly negative, except in the NOW corpus, with a considerable frequency of positive nouns and nouns for which coercion effects are predicted. When an adjective is present, it is most likely positive. It was this dichotomy between negative nouns and positive adjectives which originally led to the hypothesis that the construction's main function is negative evaluation and that the adjective occurs as an obligatory constituent when the speaker wishes to avoid coercion. In this view, positive adjectives and neutral nouns that would otherwise be subject to coercion should most frequently occur together. This was investigated by cross-referencing the adjectives and nouns occurring in the adjective-noun version of the construction. It was found that neutral nouns and positive adjectives do in fact occur together most frequently (see Section 4.2.2). This finding provides support for the theory that positive adjectives are needed to prevent coercion. It is also telling that in this condition, neutral nouns make up the largest share while evaluative (mostly negative) nouns occur most frequently in the condition without the adjective. Neutral nouns must be modified in order for the polarity of the evaluation to be clear, nouns with an inherent valence do not require an adjective.

One may think that something is very problematic about this central theory, depending on one's view of how speakers actually retrieve constructions and form utterances corresponding to the adjective-noun condition of the evaluative *such* construction. According to the theory just stated above, speakers may need to retrieve the noun-only condition first, insert the noun, realize an adjective is needed for modification, and then insert an adjective that appropriately modifies the noun according to their communicative intention. *You are such a guy* would then become *You are such a nice guy*, one of the most frequent adjective-noun combinations in the COCA. This, however, seems very counterintuitive. It seems much more likely that the concept the speaker has of the addressee is a 'nice guy' from the start. They should then form *You are a nice guy* first, and add *such*, thereby intensifying the meaning already established. In this view, *such* is purely intensifying, and the construction, of which *such* is an obligatory part, is formed post hoc. This view, however, is quite reminiscent of the 'dictionary-

and-grammar-model' in which lexical items are arranged according to rules (cf. Taylor 2012: 19ff; Hilpert 2014: 3). Importantly, in a Construction Grammar approach, lexicon and syntax are not strictly divided, and constructions are form-meaning pairs that are *one unit* of language (Goldberg 1995: 6, 19; Taylor 2012: 125; Hilpert 2014: 10). It follows that form and meaning are retrieved as one package. A variable rule, as described by Hilpert (2014: 186, see Section 3.2.3), would then cause retrieval of the adjective-noun condition whenever the noun-only condition does not meet the communicative intention due to the construction's coercion effect. The lexical material found in the second corpus study provides quite strong evidence for this. Frequent instantiations of the construction may also be stored as fixed expressions, available without the filling of slots (Taylor 2012: 80, 130).

Nevertheless, the form of the evaluative *such* construction, which was proposed to be [*such* (ART) (ADJ) N], should probably be revised. If there are in fact *two* forms, as there is one slot each for the noun and adjective, it may be difficult to speak of *one* construction. One possible revision is to propose two separate constructions with the forms [*such* (ART) N] and [*such* (ART) ADJ N], respectively. In this view, whether or not the adjective slot is filled is not determined by a semantic constraint, but a specific form is retrieved based on the speaker's communicative intention. This is an attractive approach as it would allow us to postulate different prototypical meanings for the different forms. In this case, the coercion effect observed would apply only to the construction without the adjective. The construction with the adjective, on the other hand, could have positive rather than negative evaluation as its core meaning. As the corpus data obtained for predicatives without *such* also features many positive evaluative statements (see Section 4.2.2), this version of the construction could even be only intensifying in character, thereby representing a 'sister branch' to the noun-only evaluative *such* construction in the inheritance schema. However, if this version of the construction is only intensifying, can it still be said to select an ad hoc category that the subject is supposed to represent to an absolute intensive degree (see Section 3.2.1)? This solution may therefore not be satisfactory after all.

Another possible revision is to propose a construction in which the adjective and noun are seen as one nominal, as discussed by Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 55). This approach was rejected for the construction in question in Section 3.1.1, but may solve the problem and allow for *one* construction occurring with and without an adjective. This construction would have the form [*such* (ART) NOM⁴⁰]. In this view, speakers fill the nominal slot with either a noun or an adjective-noun combination. The coercion effect would then operate on the whole nominal and

⁴⁰ NOM = nominal

determine whether a noun is sufficient, or an adjective is needed. In yet a third view, the form [*such* (ART) NOM] could be proposed as a superordinate construction with two subordinate constructions: [*such* (ART) N] and [*such* (ART) ADJ N]. As all three options are compatible with the results observed, the form originally proposed for the construction, [*such* (ART) (ADJ) N] is maintained for the current paper. The discussion of the phenomenon as *one* construction would otherwise have been seriously impeded.

It may, however, not even be necessary to be absolutely strict about one form mapping onto one meaning. Goldberg (1995, e.g. 38) describes 'constructional polysemy' as constructions having a central sense as well as extended senses. Hilpert (2014: 181) notes that "constructions are many-to-many mappings, connecting a set of related forms to a set of related meanings." In this view, the heterogeneity observed in the case of the evaluative *such* construction can be nicely accommodated within one proposed construction or one constructional field. The prototypical sense proposed for the construction predominates in certain contexts whereas other related senses are appropriate in different contexts. The proposed intensifying *such* construction and the evaluative *such* construction may thus form a continuum with one very specific configuration, personal pronouns occurring as subjects without a modifying adjective, having the strongest evaluative effect. However, one should be aware of the complications this view causes for the taxonomy of the construction(s). One should also note that the forms, inheritance schema, and network proposed are only models, symbolizing cognitive processes that are to a large extent inaccessible for actual study, at least for the current paper.

To some extent, at least, these cognitive processes could be accessed through the online survey conducted. Otherwise identical sentences with and without *such* were compared through a survey in which participants rated whether the statements made about a third person were positive, negative, or neutral. This survey focused on the noun-only condition as no ambiguity was expected with an adjective present. It provides quite compelling evidence for the theory that neutral nouns are subject to coercion when occurring in the construction. While few participants rated statements without *such* positively and/or negatively, this changed significantly when *such* was present in the statements. In this condition, the statements were rated predominantly negatively, although a significant number of positive ratings also occurred. If the construction only intensified preexisting lexical meaning, the evaluations obtained in the condition without *such* should simply be amplified in the condition with *such*. However, three statements for which there were only positive ratings without *such* were rated negatively with

such. Two of these statements were rated predominantly negatively. For another statement, the positive-negative ratio was even flipped towards a predominantly negative evaluation when *such* was present. Despite the limitations of the survey, this should count as robust evidence for coercion and hence for the existence of a construction.

Of the three studies conducted for this paper, the survey provides the most valuable evidence. The second corpus study provided compelling evidence for the theory that the adjective's role is to avoid coercion. However, although the lexical information seems conclusive, the interpretation must remain speculative unless a coercion effect is actually witnessed. This is possible through the survey results. The theory that the evaluative *such* construction leans towards negative evaluation and that the noun is subject to coercion is thus corroborated. Although the sentences were presented without any discourse context, the prompt *Do you think the speaker is making a positive, negative, or neutral statement about the person?*, which invited participants to imagine the speaker's communicative intention, should have made the participants imagine a context in which they would typically encounter such a statement. This imagined context can perhaps be seen as the default context that speakers expect, and thus the rating can be seen as the participants' default interpretation of the statements, independent of a specific, modifying context⁴¹.

That *such* is intensifying in character is not disputed (see Sections 2, 3). The remaining question is whether the evaluative character, too, arises from *such*. Culpeper (2011: 144) supports this view and states that words used as intensifiers can "be loaded with positive or negative affective meaning". With a clearly evaluative noun or adjective-noun combination present, we can assume that the evaluation is based on the lexical meaning of these constituents rather than on *such*. Here, *such* should be intensifying the evaluation already established. However, when a noun without a clear evaluation occurs in the noun-only condition, evaluation can also take place, as the survey results have shown. As the only difference between the two experimental conditions in the survey was the presence or absence of *such*, it must be concluded that in this particular condition, *such* is responsible for the evaluation, as well as simultaneous intensification. This does not mean that examples with clearly evaluative lexical material should be excluded from the evaluative *such* construction, as their function is quite clearly evaluation. Establishing that the form can indeed be *responsible* for evaluation to occur is, however, crucial

⁴¹ Context is, naturally, very relevant. For instance, when an example of *He is such a student* is viewed with more context in the COCA, it is apparent that the statement is not to be understood negatively: *He's such a student of the game. By the time we get to Sunday, he's so dialed in on defenders, their tendencies, their strengths and weaknesses and where he may be able to get an advantage.* Accessed November 14, 2022.

as it provides evidence for a non-compositional meaning component and thus for constructionhood.

One aspect that could not be analyzed adequately is context. This includes discourse context as well as a broader extralinguistic context. As with any utterance, uses of the evaluative *such* construction are subject to interpretation through both speaker and addressee. This should apply to negative or positive polarity of evaluation in particular, for instance in friendly banter (cf. Culpeper 2011). Also, as was pointed out in the HS 'Constructions' term paper (Queisser 2021: 15), the statement *You are such a man* will carry very different evaluations when uttered by a chauvinist versus a radical feminist. Culpeper (2011: 113), when discussing conventionalized formulaic impoliteness, agrees that it is not "the case that any particular linguistic form guarantees an evaluation of impoliteness in all contexts; moreover, people may disagree about how impolite a linguistic form is." This last point underscores the significance of individual attitudes, which can be assessed only on an individual basis. The evaluative *such* construction, therefore, describes a tendency of how these utterances are likely to be used and understood. It does not constitute a general rule. That tendencies such as this are cognitively real is supported by Culpeper (2011: 114), who points out that "one can only be rude to someone in a way that they recognise as being rude." Designated constructions, such as the evaluative *such* construction, represent such recognizable ways.

5. Conclusion and Objectives for Further Study

When I first encountered the evaluative *such* construction, it seemed like a difficult but solvable puzzle. The research and corpus analyses conducted for the HS 'Constructions' presentation and subsequent term paper seemed to offer the key to the puzzle's solution. The predominance of negative nouns and positive adjectives clearly indicated that the noun was subject to a coercion effect implying negative evaluation and that the positive adjective was needed to avoid or cancel this coercion effect. During the research for this master's thesis, I discovered literature (see Section 2) indicating, though not explicitly proposing, an intensifying *such* construction. The aim of this paper was thus to provide further evidence for the evaluative *such* construction and to show that *such*, when used in this particular form, does more than just intensify. The main objective of this was to solidify its standing as a true construction, a form-meaning pair with idiosyncratic meaning (cf. Goldberg 1995, 2019; Taylor 2012; Hilpert 2014).

After a brief revision of the most important concepts of the Construction Grammar approach used for this paper, a closer look at the peculiarities of *such* was taken in Section 2. It

was pointed out that the word is itself quite intricate. After determining which use of *such* was relevant for the current discussion, an intensifying *such* construction, as implied in the literature, was proposed as a precursor to the evaluative *such* construction. In Section 3, the evaluative *such* construction was described in detail within the framework of Construction Grammar. Proposals were made about its origins (inheritance), its predominance in informal spoken language, its prototypical function, and of course its constructionhood, established primarily by the predicted coercion effect. It was theorized that the construction is at the same time evaluative and intensifying by establishing an ad hoc category of e.g. an *idiot* and ascribing this property to the subject to an absolute intensive degree. Where the noun does not offer a clear evaluation, an evaluative adjective is needed. The corpus studies conducted for the HS 'Constructions' were reproduced for Section 4. They were conducted using additional corpora and a much larger amount of data from each corpus. Moreover, collocations in the adjective-noun condition were examined. An online survey was conducted to obtain speakers' evaluation of examples for which coercion effects were predicted. The results obtained from the corpus studies support the hypotheses previously made. The results obtained from the online survey are even more promising.

This paper has several limitations, or perhaps shortcomings, that one should be aware of. Due to the sheer amount of corpus data, which was considered necessary to ensure the construction and its proposed use are not an isolated or peripheral phenomenon, a lot of data could be analyzed superficially, but only selected data could be analyzed in more detail. Consequently, the inferences and conclusions drawn from these selected data may have to be qualified for other uses of the construction. For instance, the prevalence of negative nouns did not hold for the NOW corpus, owing to register and speech situation. Due to its interpersonal component, the construction is used more frequently with some pronouns than others, and the lexical material found in the construction differs across the pronouns. Besides its somewhat heterogeneous use, its concrete form, with or without the adjective, still poses a challenge. Determining the form is crucial if one seeks to propose a construction, a form-meaning pair. The musings about the construction's true form and the mode of retrieval retain, without any psycholinguistic insights, an 'armchair' quality. The heterogeneity observed may not be too big a problem, however, as constructional polysemy (Goldberg 1995: 38) and many-to-many mappings (Hilpert 2014: 181) can account for this phenomenon.

There are several objectives for further study that should have the potential to provide further evidence and insight. A rating study similar to the one conducted for this paper should

yield interesting results when done within a psycholinguistic framework. Participants could be presented with clearly positive and negative examples of the evaluative *such* construction as well as with examples for which coercion effects are predicted. In addition to the ratings, reaction times could be recorded in a laboratory setup. For neutral nouns that are subject to coercion, an increase in reaction time may be predicted as the intended meaning may not be as readily available as the lexical meaning, or because the two potential meanings compete. This may differ with the frequency with which the nouns typically occur in the construction, as performance in experimental tasks is influenced by frequency (Taylor 2012: 148). Alternatively, decision time could be limited so that participants would need to react fast, which may influence the outcome of their ratings, again due to lexical meaning and frequency of occurrence. This approach might provide further evidence for entrenchment.

A second promising objective for further study is a thorough discourse- or conversation-analytical investigation to examine relevant aspects such as speaker attitudes and the possible use of sarcasm. A broader discourse context is available in the corpora, however, in many cases, it does not specify the speakers and extralinguistic context. More detailed sources are needed, ideally, naturalistic data from real interaction, or, as Couper-Kuhlen and Selting (2018: 3) put it, spoken language "in its natural habitat: in social interaction." Audio and video recordings would be needed to investigate intonation, gaze, and gestures, which provide crucial cues beyond the bare content of the utterance, as Culpeper (2011) points out. As the construction is hypothesized to be used as the reaction to something the interlocutor has said or done, the preceding context should be of particular interest. Likewise, addressee behavior following the use of the construction should be examined to determine how the utterance is understood. The video from which example (1) is taken is a good yet fictional example.

In addition to the areas for further study suggested, further work on the limitations mentioned throughout this paper would certainly be beneficial. Nonetheless, although the current paper could not offer a conclusive account of the evaluative *such* construction, and the question of the adjective, in particular, could not be solved, the claims made about the construction's use and its cognitive reality should have been solidified to a considerable extent.

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Appendix 1: List of Examples

The following table lists all examples used in the main text in their order of occurrence, along with the respective sources. Additional example sentences mentioned in the text and footnotes, but not labeled (numbered) as 'main' examples, are not included. For examples from online resources, links are provided at the end.

No.	Example	Source
(1)	Character A: How could you be so stupid? [...] Character A: You are such a fucking idiot! Character B: Fuck, when did you become such a bitch?!	<i>The Handmaid's Tale</i> , Season 2, Episode 11 " Holly "
(2)	Pat sneezed the napkin off the table.	Golberg 1995
(3)	Such an attack would take a terrible toll.	Spinillo 2003
(4)	Such is their awareness of the foaming discontent in the ranks.	Spinillo 2003
(5)	It was such a miserable day that we decided to stay at home.	Huddleston and Pullum 2002
(6)	She is such a good lecturer that all her courses are full.	Quirk et al. 1985
(7)	In such a case, please call for assistance.	Own example
(8)	There is such a thing as paid parental leave in Germany.	Own example
(9)	Ye are such a calfe, such an asse, such a blocke.	OED
(10)	I've never had to wait such a long time before.	Huddleston and Pullum 2002
(11)	It was just such a nightmare.	Altenberg 1994
(12)	<u>such</u> a snob (cf. rather a bore)	De Mönnink 2000
(13)	<u>such</u> a <u>small</u> house (cf. quite a large apartment)	De Mönnink 2000
(14)	<u>such</u> a <u>rude</u> joke <u>that it shocked me</u> . (cf. almost an impossible task to perform)	De Mönnink 2000
(15)	They're such stupid people, they're such stupid cows.	Ghesquière 2012
(16)	There's such a nice swimming pool there which nobody goes to really.	Ghesquière 2012
(17)	It was such a disaster!	Huddleston and Pullum 2002
(18)	Don't be such a wet blanket!	Huddleston and Pullum 2002
(19)	What a difficult problem we have on our hands!	Huddleston and Pullum 2002
(20)	She was wearing 'such a lovely DRÈSS	Quirk et al. 1985
(21)	Why are you 'such a BÀby	Quirk et al. 1985
(22)	You are such an idiot.	Own example.
(23)	You are such a fucking idiot.	Own example.
(24)	They are such idiots.	Own example.
(25)	They are such fucking idiots.	Own example.
(26)	You are such a (fucking) pain in the ass.	Own example.

(27)	They hired such an idiot.	Own example.
(28)	You're such an idiot.	Own example.
(29)	You're not such an idiot.	<i>The Simpsons</i>
(30)	Do you have to be such an idiot?	Blog post
(31)	When did you become such an idiot?	Movie review
(32)	Don't be such an idiot.	Opinion piece
(33)	Such an idiot!	Own example.
(34)	What a lad John is!	Bolinger 1972
(35)	What a child John is!	Bolinger 1972
(36)	You are such an architect.	Taylor 2012
(37)	You are such a good/bad/busy architect	Own example.
(38)	You are such a tall/dark-haired/freckled architect	Own example.
(39)	Oh! yes - such a happiness that it has all come right.	OED
(40)	It's such an everyday thing.	Altenberg 1994
(41)	He is such a postman!	Bolinger 1972

Table 15: List of examples used in the main text.

All online examples (see below) are available as screenshots here:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/ddtigwz59xw3y9h/AAB636L6EJHRAPQoAXVMjliIa?dl=0>

List of Links to Online Sources of Examples:

(29) Episode of *The Simpsons*, Season 23, Episode 4 "Replaceable You". Transcript:

<https://tvshowtranscripts.ourboard.org/viewtopic.php?f=431&t=22351>

(30) *Dogged*, a personal blog by Christie Keith. "It's okay to not like Scott Walker, but do you have to be such an idiot about it?", 25 January 2009:

<https://www.doggedblog.com/doggedblog/2009/01/its-okay-to-not-like-scott-walker-but-do-you-have-to-be-such-an-idiot-about-it.html>

(31) *Movie Nation*, a personal blog by Roger Moore (not *the* Roger Moore). "Is That a Gun In Your Pocket?", 06 September 2016: <https://rogersmovienation.com/2016/09/06/movie-review-is-that-a-gun-in-your-pocket/>

(32) *Courier Journal*, an online magazine. Opinion piece/letter by Tom Ketterman: "Hey tRump fan, don't be such an idiot", no date available: <https://eu.courier-journal.com/story/opinion/readers/2017/05/26/letter-hey-trump-fan-dont-such-idiot/349136001/>

Examples from Footnote 19:

<https://twitter.com/nydailynews/status/1038076536899952640>

<https://harrypotter.fandom.com/f/p/4400000000003194925/r/4400000000010076159>

Appendix 2: Development of Frequency in the Corpora

Search String	Frequencies in the TV Corpus									Frequencies in the COCA					
	SECTION	ALL	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s	2010s	1990-94	1995-99	2000-04	2005-09	2010-14	2015-19
such ART N	FREQ	24673	224	794	715	1378	2692	6423	12447	13870	12674	11818	10842	9771	9649
	WORDS (M)	325	2.0	8.9	8.8	15.0	31.5	87.5	172.4	121.1	125.2	124.6	123.1	123.3	122.8
	PER MIL	75.92	110.16	89.19	81.42	91.80	85.44	73.37	72.19	114.53	101.22	94.83	88.11	79.21	78.61
	SEE ALL YEARS AT ONCE														
BE such ART N	FREQ	11225	52	157	162	413	1138	3242	6061	1689	1960	1996	2036	2021	1987
	WORDS (M)	325	2.0	8.9	8.8	15.0	31.5	87.5	172.4	121.1	125.2	124.6	123.1	123.3	122.8
	PER MIL	34.54	25.57	17.64	18.45	27.51	36.12	37.03	35.15	13.95	15.65	16.02	16.55	16.38	16.19
	SEE ALL YEARS AT ONCE														
PRON BE such ART N	FREQ	6495	19	60	68	211	620	1912	3605	680	857	885	988	1027	1020
	WORDS (M)	325	2.0	8.9	8.8	15.0	31.5	87.5	172.4	121.1	125.2	124.6	123.1	123.3	122.8
	PER MIL	19.98	9.34	6.74	7.74	14.06	19.68	21.84	20.91	5.61	6.84	7.10	8.03	8.33	8.31
	SEE ALL YEARS AT ONCE														

Figure 6: Frequency data from the TV Corpus and the COCA illustrating the relative frequencies of use with and without the copula be over time. Corpora accessed August 22, 2022.

Appendix 3: Corpus Findings

Frequencies of the Evaluative *Such* Construction Across Corpora

Input		No.	COCA			TV		Movie		Soap		NOW	BNC	
			ppm	tot/uni	ppm S.	ppm	tot/uni	ppm	tot/uni	ppm	tot/uni	ppm	ppm	ppm S.
Segment A	* such ART	01	177.4	24.8	142.2	166.3	25.9	193.0	22.0	211.4	29.5	127.2	247.0	127.8
	* such ART N	02	69.9	3.8	56.4	75.6	2.4	94.9	2.2	81.2	2.7	43.0	171.2	66.2
	* such ART ADJ N	03	34.8	1.8	72.3	77.7	1.5	81.8	1.4	111.6	1.8	7.8	60.6	43.4
	* BE such ART	04	37.2	7.1	52.3	71.0	11.4	76.5	12.2	104.1	12.9	20.3	22.5	37.1
	* BE such ART N	05	15.5	1.8	16.8	34.4	2.2	38.4	2.2	46.2	2.2	5.1	9.7	14.6
	* BE such ART ADJ N	06	17.9	1.3	29.4	30.3	1.5	30.8	1.4	47.5	1.6	5.6	10.1	16.0
Segment B	PRON BE such ART N	07	6.6	2.2	6.6	19.9	2.7	22.5	2.6	27.8	2.8	2.5	2.6	7.7
	PRON BE such ART ADJ N	08	8.2	1.3	15.1	16.4	1.5	17.9	1.4	24.4	1.7	4.1	4.5	9.1
	NOUN BE such ART N	09	1.5	1.1	1.2	2.0	1.1	2.0	1.2	2.3	1.3	0.9	0.8	0.2
	NOUN BE such ART ADJ N	10	2.3	1.0	2.3	2.1	1.1	1.8	1.1	1.6	1.1	1.6	1.3	0.4
	NAME BE such ART N	11	0.6	1.0	0.6	0.8	1.0	0.7	1.0	1.3	1.1	0.3	0.3	0.3
	NAME BE such ART ADJ N	12	0.9	1.0	1.1	0.9	1.0	0.9	1.0	2.0	1.0	0.9	0.5	0.1
Segment C	you BE such ART N	13	2.1	2.5	0.8	8.4	2.8	11.2	3.0	12.8	3.1	0.1	0.3	1.1
	you BE such ART ADJ N	14	1.3	1.4	1.1	5.0	1.6	5.8	1.4	10.0	1.9	0.1	0.3	1.1
	I BE such ART N	15	1.1	2.5	0.5	4.5	3.6	3.9	3.1	7.4	4.4	0.2	0.1	0.2
	I BE such ART ADJ N	16	0.5	1.4	0.5	1.5	1.4	1.4	1.4	2.0	1.2	0.2	0.2	0.2
	he BE such ART N	17	0.9	1.7	0.9	2.3	1.8	2.6	1.8	2.2	1.6	0.4	0.4	2.2
	he BE such ART ADJ N	18	1.4	1.4	2.5	2.6	1.5	2.8	1.4	3.4	1.8	1.1	0.9	2.1
	she BE such ART N	19	0.4	1.4	0.4	1.0	1.5	1.0	1.5	1.3	1.3	0.2	0.2	1.0
	she BE such ART ADJ N	20	0.5	1.2	1.0	1.0	1.3	1.0	1.2	1.9	1.3	0.3	0.5	0.9
	it BE such ART N	21	2.0	2.7	3.7	3.5	3.4	3.7	2.8	3.8	2.9	1.6	1.3	3.2
	it BE such ART ADJ N	22	4.3	1.3	9.5	6.0	1.5	6.5	1.4	6.5	1.6	3.2	2.5	4.6

Table 16: Frequencies across corpora in parts per million (ppm, dark blue) and the ratio of total and unique occurrences (tot/uni, mid blue). Ppm S (light blue) for occurrences in the spoken part of the respective corpora. COCA Spoken and BNC (incl. Spoken) accessed August 01, 2022. All other corpora accessed July 22, 2022.

Most Frequent Lexical Material in the Noun and Adjective Slot Across Corpora

COCA				TV Corpus				NOW			
Nouns		Adjectives		Nouns		Adjectives		Nouns		Adjectives	
asshole	96	good	299	liar	137	good	453	inspiration	170	good	209
liar	89	great	82	idiot	114	great	107	expert	48	great	109
jerk	79	big	61	jerk	104	big	81	idiot	44	amazing	108
idiot	61	little	54	ass-/arsehole	85	fucking	61	blessing	39	big	71
bitch	61	fucking	52	bitch	77	nice	46	person	36	beautiful	60
dick	52	beautiful	35	dick	65	little	42	liar	33	wonderful	52
loser	52	nice	35	hypocrite	65	bad	40	baby	30	special	45
baby	49	bad	32	baby	55	sweet	32	coward	26	strong	43
inspiration	46	amazing	24	loser	54	beautiful	31	fool	23	incredible	35
child	31	sweet	18	ass	46	amazing	27	loser	23	nice	30
gentleman	31	wonderful	16	child	45	pretty	21	legend	23	lovely	22
ass	30	smart	15	gentleman	41	smart	20	light	23	huge	22
expert	29	pretty	14	expert	39	cute	14	bitch	19	bad	20
hypocrite	24	tough (?)	14	girl	39	lovely	14	jerk	17	bright	19
doll	21	incredible	10	doll	25	strong	14	job	17	brilliant	19
coward	18	lovely	9	pig	24	terrible	14	star	17	long	17
fool	18	strong	9	man	24	brilliant	13	asshole	16	awesome	16
pig	18	cute	8	fan	23	wonderful	13	gift	16	fucking	15
pussy	17	fine	8	disappointment	22	old	13	fan	16	important	14
slut	17	talented	8	dork	22	special	12	disgrace	13	little	14
Legend:		negative noun/adjective		positive noun/adjective		coercion noun		intensifying adjective			

Table 17: Top 20 nouns and adjectives occurring in [you BE such ART ADJ N] in the COCA, TV Corpus, and NOW in absolute numbers. Corpora accessed July 23, 2022.

Number of Expressions Used for Lexical Analysis

Search String	COCA		TV		Movie		Soap		NOW	
	Individ.	Total	Individ.	Total	Individ.	Total	Individ.	Total	Individ.	Total
you BE such ART N	82	1,378	101	1,895	79	1,559	62	953	69	1,017
you BE such ART ADJ N	59	974	63	1,292	59	923	76	902	49	1,150
I BE such ART N	55	752	66	1,182	61	613	41	701	82	1,814
I BE such ART ADJ N	50	358	37	385	29	215	24	151	60	1,754
he BE such ART N	62	467	65	461	77	374	39	149	178	4,263
he BE such ART ADJ N	69	996	73	721	50	441	26	291	145	9,932
she BE such ART N	56	208	46	195	31	113	24	71	98	1,679
she BE such ART ADJ N	61	384	34	262	23	156	23	154	78	3,226

Table 18: Number of individual and total expressions used for lexical analysis of the noun and adjective slots. Corpora accessed July 23, 2022.

Percentages of Lexical Material Across Corpora.

Search String	Type	COCA	TV	Movie	Soap	NOW
you BE such ART N	Noun negative	69.3	71.5	79.5	74.4	37.2
	Noun positive	17.7	13.5	11.2	14.5	44.9
	Noun coercion	10.7	12.1	8.4	9.0	11.4
	Noun unclear	2.3	3.0	0.9	2.1	6.5
you BE such ART ADJ N	Adjective positive	66.9	69.3	57.1	77.4	69.7
	Adjective intensifying	20.2	16.2	29.7	9.1	18.3
	Adjective negative	8.1	8.5	7.8	8.5	4.2
	Adjective unclear	4.7	6.0	5.4	5.0	7.9
I BE such ART N	Noun negative	84.4	90.9	89.0	95.9	36.2
	Noun positive	2.1	0.8	3.0	1.4	0.9

	Noun coercion	3.2	1.8	3.8	0.7	24.4
	Noun unclear	10.2	6.4	4.6	2.0	38.5
I BE such ART ADJ N	Adjective positive	24.9	33.0	31.6	43.7	26.3
	Adjective intensifying	37.7	36.6	37.2	14.6	50.0
	Adjective negative	28.8	26.5	24.7	39.1	7.5
	Adjective unclear	8.7	3.9	6.5	2.6	16.2
he BE such ART N	Noun negative	52.5	56.0	65.5	53.0	-
	Noun positive	30.2	25.6	16.3	36.9	-
	Noun coercion	11.6	13.7	12.6	6.7	-
	Noun unclear	5.8	4.8	5.6	3.4	-
he BE such ART ADJ N	Adjective positive	80.0	77.0	71.9	84.9	-
	Adjective intensifying	10.5	11.1	14.5	7.6	-
	Adjective negative	2.4	6.1	7.3	4.5	-
	Adjective unclear	7.0	5.8	7.0	3.1	-
she BE such ART N	Noun negative	50.5	55.4	60.2	47.9	-
	Noun positive	27.5	27.2	21.2	39.4	-
	Noun coercion	11.5	6.7	8.8	7.0	-
	Noun unclear	10.1	10.8	11.5	5.6	-
she BE such ART ADJ N	Adjective positive	74.2	84.4	78.8	77.3	-
	Adjective intensifying	9.9	10.7	17.3	13.6	-
	Adjective negative	2.1	2.7	1.3	2.6	-
	Adjective unclear	13.8	2.3	2.6	6.5	-

Table 19: Percentages of lexical material across corpora. Corpora accessed July 23, 2022. Pronouns he and she were not analyzed further for the NOW due to the large amount of data and as the corpus was considered atypical for the construction. The focus was instead put on the more interpersonal pronouns I and you.

Categorization of Lexical Items Analyzed for Cross-Referencing Collocations

Type	Lexical Items Found in Corpus
Adjective positive	accomplished, adorable, amazing, animated, attractive, authoritative, avid, awesome, beautiful, better, brave, bright, brilliant, broad-minded, buoyant, careful, caring, central, cheerful, clever, colorful, compassionate, cool, creative, cute, dear, decent, deep, devoted, eloquent, erudite, excellent, experienced, extraordinary, famous, fantastic, fast, fine, forgiving, fortunate, foxy, friendly, funny, gallant, generous, gentle, genuine, gifted, good-looking, gorgeous, great, handsome, happy, helpful, high-class, honest, honorable, hot, important, independent, inspiring, institutional, integral, intelligent, interesting, intriguing, legendary, likable, lovely, loving, lucky, modern, modest, moral, muscular, natural, neat, nice, noble, open, outstanding, persuasive, phenomenal, polished, positive, powerful, precious, pretty, pro, productive, pure, quick, real, renowned, rich, sexy, sharp, silver-tongued, sincere, skilled, smart, snuggly, stand-up, straight-up, striking, strong, successful, super, superior, sweet, swell, talented, terrific, thoughtful, unique, upstanding, valuable, warm-hearted, well-known, winning, wise, witty, wonderful.
Adjective intensifying	absolute, big, exceptional, fucking, gaping, giant, goddamn, huge, incredible, large, little, major, total, tremendous
Adjective negative	angry, arrogant, average, bad, beaten, blatant, bloods, bossy, cheap, clueless, clumsy, cockeyed, cold, conceited, controlling, credulous, crummy, d-bag, degenerate, demanding, dense, depraved, destructive, difficult, disgraceful, dithering, divisive, dreadful, drunken, dumb, egotistical, egregious, evil, faithless, fat, foolish, fuddy-duddy, glass-half-empty, gullible, horrible, ignorant, immature, insecure, irresponsible, lame, limited, lousy, low-life, mallard-headed, mean, mean-spirited, mindless, miserable, naughty, negative, nervous, odd, pathetic, poisonous, poor, rabid, raving, ridiculous, rotten, sad, sappy, self-absorbed, selfish, self-righteous, shallow, shameless, shitty, shrewd, sick, slimy, smug, sore, sorry, spoiled, strange, stubborn, stupid, sullen, terrible, tiresome, tragic, ugly, unfit, vicious, vulgar, weak, weird, worthless
Adjective unclear	anti-government, aspiring, busy, Californian, catholic, complex, different, easy, expensive, financial, frisky, girly, hard, leftist, lonely, normal, old, outdoor, physical, prominent, public, quiet, regular, religious, romantic, rough, scientific, sensitive, serious, shy, silly, simple, skinny, small, southern, special, straight, tall, tiny, tough, transparent, trusting, typical, vocal, voracious, wild, young
Noun negative	arsehole, ass, asshole, ass-kisser, bastard, bitch, brat, bully, butthead, card, clown, cock, con, cow, cunt, curmudgeon, devil, dick, dickwad, disappointment, dog, douchebag, drinker, egomaniac, excuse, fag, faker, fish, fool, freak, fuck, fucker, gasbag, grouch, hippie, ho, hoax, hustler, hypocrite, idiot, ignoramus, issue, jackass, jerk, killer, klutz, lapdog, liar, loser, martyr, monster, moralist, moron, morsel, nerd, nightmare, nitwit, nut, nutcase, overachiever, pain, piece, pig, piss, prick, prude, punk, pussy, rat, scallion, scum, scumbag, shit, sissy, sizeist, slut,

	snitch, snob, spy, stalker, stick, target, thief, tyke, victim, viper, vixen, wanker, watchdog, weirdo, whacko, whiner, wimp
Noun positive	artist, asset, athlete, beauty, blessing, cuties, doll, expert, fighter, friend, gem, genius, gentleman, gift, god, healer, help, helper, hero, hottie, inspiration, lady, leader, light, ninja, poet, pumpkin, saint, star, stud, success, support, talent, teddy, warrior
Noun coercion	actor, actress, admirer, advocate, audience, aunt, author, baby, believer, benefactor, bird, bloke, boy, bride, brother, bunch, businessman, businesswoman, catcher, catholic, CEO, character, chef, chick, child, cleaner, coach, comedian, commander, communicator, conqueror, conversationalist, cook, cop, counselor, couple, creature, cricketer, crowd, customer, D.A, dad, dancer, daughter, designer, detective, diagnostician, doctor, dresser, driver, drummer, dude, engineer, entity, family, fan, farmer, father, fella, feller, fellow, figure, filmmaker, find, flyer, follower, gambler, generation, girl, golfer, group, guest, guy, host, husband, idealist, individual, influence, judge, kicker, kid , kidder, king, kisser, latino, lawyer, learner, lefty, listener, lover, male, mama, man, match, mechanic, member, mentor, merchant, mimic, mix, mom , mommy, mother, mum, musician, name, negotiator, neighbor, nephew, painter, parent, part, participant, partner, patient, person, photographer, pianist, pixie, player, politician, presence, princess, prize, provider, reader, reporter, republican, romeo, runner, salesman, scientist, sculptor, seal, seamstress, shareholder, shooter, shot, singer, sister, skater, skier, son, sort, soul, speaker, spirit, spokesman, sport, steward, story , storyteller, student, study, supporter, surgeon, swimmer, talker, teacher, therapist, thespian, thing, thinker, trooper, uncle, voice, walker, wingwoman, woman, worker, writer, zionist
Noun unclear	addition, alumni, crimestopper, energy, ham, machine, pin, ride, right

Table 20: Categorization of the lexical items in the COCA used to cross-reference collocations between adjectives and nouns for [you BE such ART ADJ N]. Corpus accessed July 23, 2022.

Appendix 4: Survey Materials and Findings

List of Stimuli and Filler Items

Stimuli Condition 1		
01	negative	She is an asshole.
02	negative	He is an idiot.
03	positive	She is an inspiration.
04	positive	He is a sweetheart.
05	neutral	She is a perfectionist.
06	neutral	She is a student.
07	neutral	She is a girl.
08	neutral	He is a teacher.
09	neutral	He is a man.
10	neutral	He is a child.
Stimuli Condition 2		
01	negative	She is such an asshole.
02	negative	He is such an idiot.
03	positive	She is such an inspiration.
04	positive	He is such a sweetheart.
05	neutral/coercion	She is such a perfectionist.
06	neutral/coercion	She is such a girl.
07	neutral/coercion	She is such a student.
08	neutral/coercion	He is such a teacher.
09	neutral/coercion	He is such a man.
10	neutral/coercion	He is such a child.
Fillers (both conditions)		
01	positive	She makes great art.
02	positive	She quickly solved our problem.
03	positive	She brings the best gifts.
04	positive	She was there when I needed her.
05	positive	He makes the best pizza.
06	positive	He gave a great speech.
07	positive	He helped me move.
08	positive	He inspired me to write a book.
09	negative	She has bad breath.
10	negative	She stole my idea.
11	negative	She stood me up again.
12	negative	She is always late.
13	negative	He is balding.
14	negative	He can't keep deadlines.
15	negative	He drinks too much.
16	negative	He is annoying.

17	neutral	She is from Australia.
18	neutral	She submitted the report.
19	neutral	He works as an accountant.
20	neutral	He lives in Denver.

Table 21: List of stimuli and fillers used in the survey experiment.

Welcome and Consent Slide of the Survey Experiment



3% completed

You are invited to participate in a research study for my master's thesis project. This study is being done by Angela Queisser, MA student at Heidelberg University.

The purpose of this research study is to investigate how people evaluate statements made about others. If you agree to take part in this study, you will be asked to complete an online survey/questionnaire. This survey/questionnaire will ask you to rate 30 statements on a positive-negative scale and it will take you approximately 5 minutes to complete.

You may not directly benefit from this research; however, I hope that your participation in the study may increase knowledge of how we communicate.

Your participation in this study is completely anonymous and voluntary, and you can withdraw at any time.

If you have questions about this project or if you have a research-related problem, you may contact me at angela.queisser@stud.uni-heidelberg.de.

By clicking "I agree" below you are indicating that you have read and understood this consent form and agree to participate in this research study. If you do not want to participate in this study, please close this website and do not complete the survey.

Yes, I agree

Next

[Angela Queisser](#), Universität Heidelberg – 2022

Figure 7: Welcome and consent slide of the survey experiment.

Individual Ratings of Neutral Nouns in Condition 2 (with *such*)

Stim. 05 perfectionist	Stim. 06 girl	Stim. 07 student	Stim. 08 teacher	Stim. 09 man	Stim. 10 child	Average
2	1	2	2	1	1	
2	2	2	2	1	1	
2	2	2	2	1	1	
2	2	2	2	2	1	
2	2	2	3	2	1	
2	2	2	3	2	1	
2	2	2	3	2	1	
2	2	3	3	2	2	
2	2	3	3	2	2	
2	2	3	3	3	2	
2	2	3	3	3	2	
3	3	3	4	3	2	
3	3	3	4	3	2	
3	3	3	4	3	2	
3	3	3	4	3	2	
3	3	4	4	3	2	
3	3	4	4	4	2	
4	3	4	4	4	2	
4	3	4	4	4	2	
4	4	4	4	4	3	
5	4	4	5	5	3	
19.0	9.5	28.6	47.6	23.8	0.0	21.4
52.4	52.4	33.3	19.0	42.9	90.5	48.4
28.6	38.1	38.1	33.3	33.3	9.5	30.2
71.4	61.9	61.9	66.7	66.7	90.5	69.8

Table 23: Individual ratings for stimuli with neutral nouns, Condition 2 (with *such*). Red = negative, green = positive, no color = neutral. 1 = very negative, 2 = negative, 0 = neutral, 4 = positive, 5 = very positive.

Individual Ratings of Other Stimuli and Fillers

Individual ratings of the negative and positive stimuli (B-E) as well as the fillers (L-AE).

	B	C	D	E	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	AA	AB	AC	AD	AE
1	S	H	S	H	S	S	S	S	H	H	H	H	S	S	S	S	H	H	H	H	S	S	H	H
2	2	1	4	5	5	5	5	4	4	5	4	4	1	2	1	1	2	2	2	3	3	3	4	3
3	1	1	5	5	4	4	4	5	4	4	4	4	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	3
4	1	1	5	5	5	3	4	4	5	4	4	4	2	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	3	3	3	3
5	1	1	5	4	5	4	5	5	5	5	4	5	2	1	1	2	2	2	2	1	3	4	3	3
6	2	2	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	2	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	3	4	3	3
7	1	2	5	4	4	4	5	5	4	4	4	5	1	2	2	1	2	2	2	1	3	3	3	3
8	1	1	5	4	4	4	4	4	5	5	5	4	1	2	1	1	2	2	1	2	3	3	2	3
9	1	2	5	4	5	4	5	4	5	5	5	4	2	1	1	1	1	3	1	2	3	3	3	3
10	1	1	4	4	4	4	5	5	5	5	4	4	1	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	3	3	3	3
11	1	1	5	4	5	4	5	4	4	4	4	5	2	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	3	4	3	3
12	1	1	5	5	4	4	5	4	5	4	3	5	2	1	1	2	1	3	2	1	3	3	3	3
13	1	2	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	4	2	2	1	2	3	2	2	2	3	3	3	3
14	1	2	5	4	5	4	5	5	5	5	4	4	2	2	1	2	2	1	2	2	3	3	3	3
15	1	1	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	5	1	1	1	2	1	2	2	1	3	4	3	3
16	2	2	5	4	4	4	4	5	4	4	5	4	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	4	4	3
17	1	2	5	4	4	4	4	5	4	4	4	5	2	2	1	2	2	3	2	1	3	3	3	3
18	2	2	4	4	5	5	4	4	4	4	3	3	2	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	3	3	3	3
19	1	2	5	5	4	4	5	5	4	4	4	5	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	1	3	3	3	3
20	1	2	5	4	4	4	4	5	4	4	4	5	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	3	2	3
21	1	1	5	4	4	4	4	5	4	5	4	4	1	1	1	1	2	3	2	2	3	3	3	3
22	1	1	5	5	5	4	4	4	5	5	4	4	2	1	2	2	2	3	2	2	3	3	3	3
23	1	2	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	5	3	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	3	4	3	3
24	1	1	4	4	5	4	5	5	5	4	4	5	2	1	2	2	1	2	2	1	3	3	3	3
25	1	1	4	4	5	4	5	4	5	5	4	4	2	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	3	3	3	3
26	1	1	4	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	3	4	2	1	1	1	1	2	2	1	3	3	3	3
27	1	1	5	4	5	4	4	4	4	5	4	5	2	2	1	1	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	3
28	1	1	5	4	5	5	5	4	4	5	4	5	2	1	1	2	2	3	2	1	3	3	3	3

	B	C	D	E	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	AA	AB	AC	AD	AE
1	S	H	S	H	S	S	S	S	H	H	H	H	S	S	S	S	H	H	H	H	S	S	H	H
2	1	1	5	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	4	2	2	2	3	3	2	2	1	3	3	3	3
3	1	1	5	5	5	4	4	5	4	4	4	5	2	1	2	2	2	3	1	1	3	3	3	3
4	1	1	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	5	4	2	2	2	2	1	2	1	2	3	3	3	3
5	1	1	5	5	5	4	4	5	4	4	4	5	2	1	1	2	2	1	2	1	3	3	3	3
6	1	1	4	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	4	2	1	1	1	2	3	1	2	3	3	3	3
7	2	2	5	4	5	4	4	4	4	4	5	5	3	2	5	3	2	3	2	3	3	4	3	3
8	1	1	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	4	5	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	4	3	3	3
9	1	1	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	4	5	2	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	3	4	3	3
10	2	2	5	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	2	2	4	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	3
11	4	2	5	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	3	2	1	1	3	2	3	1	2	3	3	3	3
12	1	2	5	4	4	5	4	4	4	4	4	4	2	2	1	2	2	3	2	2	3	3	3	3
13	1	1	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	3	3	3	3
14	1	1	4	4	4	5	4	4	5	4	4	4	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	3
15	1	1	5	4	5	4	4	4	4	5	4	5	1	2	1	1	1	3	2	1	3	3	3	3
16	2	1	5	4	5	5	5	5	4	4	4	5	2	2	2	1	1	3	2	2	3	4	4	3
17	1	1	4	4	5	4	4	5	4	4	4	5	2	1	1	2	2	3	2	2	3	3	3	3
18	1	1	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	5	2	2	1	1	2	3	2	2	3	3	3	3
19	1	1	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	5	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	1	3	3	3	3
20	1	1	4	5	5	4	4	5	5	4	4	3	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	3
21	1	1	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	5	2	1	2	2	2	3	1	2	3	3	3	3
22	2	2	5	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	1	2	2	2	3	2	2	3	3	3	3

Figure 8: Individual ratings by participants who saw Condition 1 (top), Condition 2 (bottom).

Appendix 5: Hauptseminar 'Constructions' Term Paper

The HS 'Constructions' term paper follows on the next page. The original PDF submitted after the seminar, including the original page numbers for reference, has been added to the current paper.

University of Heidelberg
Anglistisches Seminar
Hauptseminar 'Constructions'
Instructor: Dr. Michael Isermann
WS 2020/2021

[such (art) (adj) N]

A Scalar Evaluative Construction

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English Studies/Anglistik (M.A.)

April 29, 2021

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1. Introduction

When analyzing a linguistic expression, two dimensions are typically relevant, its form and its function (cf. Goldberg 2019: 2; Hilpert 2014: 8; Crystal 1999: 122, 127). Construction grammarians such as Adele Goldberg and Martin Hilpert tackle the question of what exactly language users need to know in order to comprehend an utterance (Hilpert 2014: 1). One answer to this question is that they need to know form-function pairings, specific (strings of) words that come with a specific semantic or pragmatic function, also referred to as constructions (Goldberg 2019: 2). The authors observe that some utterances cannot be understood by knowing the lexical items that constitute them, concluding that their consequently 'non-compositional' meaning must come from somewhere else (Hilpert 2014: 10). They also observe that there may be various ways of expressing one and the same meaning, but that certain expressions are used more frequently than others as they have been conventionalized as a part of idiomatic speech (Goldberg 2019: 1; Hilpert 2014: 13). Its non-compositional meaning, then, arises from a construction as a whole as well as from its conventionalized, idiomatic use to express a certain meaning.

We can distinguish lexically specified constructions that are set strings of words (e.g., idioms¹), schematic constructions consisting partly of fixed linguistic material and partly of slots to be filled by the speaker (such as the construction to be covered here), and grammatical constructions that correlate with syntactic configurations and that lack fixed linguistic material, such as the transitive construction (Goldberg 2019; Hilpert 2014; Taylor 2012). Constructions do not exist in a vacuum, but are embedded in a hierarchical network of other constructions, with which they overlap and from which they inherit characteristics (Goldberg 2019: 36ff; Hilpert 2014: 57ff).

When confronted with the task of finding a 'novel' construction for research which was not covered in the course reading for the 'Constructions' Hauptseminar, I encountered the following dialog between two characters on the television series 'The Handmaid's Tale'²:

Character A: "How could you be so stupid?"
[...]
Character A: "You are such a fucking idiot!"
Character B: "[.] when did you become such a bitch?!"

¹ Cf. *kick the bucket* (Goldberg 2019: 60), *bite the dust*, *let off steam*, *jump the gun* (Hilpert 2014: 5).

² Season 2, episode 11: "[Holly](#)" ([click to watch, duration ca. 1:30 minutes](#)).

It occurred to me that the word *such* in its prototypical sense is used in a referential way, either anaphorically or cataphorically³ referring to something retrievable in the discourse. This is confirmed by the Oxford English Dictionary (hereafter OED)⁴, which states that *such* "is a demonstrative word used to indicate the quality or quantity of a thing by reference to that of another [...]. Thus, syntactically, *such* may have backward or forward reference". In the broader context of the exchange quoted above, there was no co-referential item that the characters could have referred to. Which *idiot* or *bitch* do the speakers compare their interlocutor with? It also occurred to me that one rarely encounters an utterance such as *You are such an architect* (Taylor 2012: 90). Instead, *you are such* followed by a noun seems to be used primarily when making an evaluative statement about someone, as in the dialog quoted above. In addition, the noun slot is likely to be filled by a noun carrying a negative meaning, an epithet.

Based on this intuition, my fellow group members and I proposed a schematic construction with *such* as a lexically fixed item, the [such (art) (adj) N]⁵ construction. We hypothesized that it is chiefly used for negative evaluation, although expressions exist which are positive in nature or merely intensifying instead of evaluative⁶. I conducted a corpus search to examine the lexical material that can enter the construction as well as the frequencies with which certain items occur. The findings are provided below. First, Section 2 presents a formal and semantic description of the construction along with evidence for its constructionhood. Section 3 situates the construction in its network of inheritance. The findings from the corpus search are provided and discussed in Section 4. Section 5 treats some potentially problematic loose ends. It is argued that the [such (art) (adj) N] construction assigns an unfavorable quality to the subject, indicating that the subject represents this quality to a high or even absolute degree.

2. Formal and Semantic Description

The [such (art) (adj) N] construction is a schematic construction (cf. Taylor 2021: 128) consisting of the lexically fixed item *such* as well as three successive slots into which lexical items that fit the construction can enter (cf. Taylor 2012: 84, 140ff). This section

³ Cf. anaphoric: *In such a case*; cataphoric: *There is such a thing as...*

⁴ Accessed March 13, 2021.

⁵ The orthographic representation (lower case, except for the single letter N) was chosen for better readability.

⁶ Cf. *You are such a sweetheart* (positive evaluation) and *It's been such a long time* (intensifying).

will explore the conditions in which the slots are filled as well as the constraints that apply. When we first set out to analyze the [such (art) (adj) N] construction, we soon realized that it would prove difficult to narrow it down to an adequate level of specificity. Concerning its form, this was partly due to the seemingly optional slots occupied by the indefinite article (art) and the adjective (adj), which are therefore in brackets. A second source of uncertainty was the copula *be*, which precedes the construction so frequently that, initially, we were considering a [BE such (art) (adj) N] construction. Both of these complications, as well as the semantic properties of the construction, which also seemed ambiguous, are discussed below.

2.1 Formal Description

The [such (art) (adj) N] construction comes in two main configurations: with and without an adjective, as illustrated by the following examples⁷. The lexical material that can enter the individual slots is defined more closely by the headlines in the table. The plural forms are included in the table to provide a comprehensive representation, but – due to their relatively low frequency and for reasons of brevity – will not be discussed further.

Context	Fixed: (external) modifier <i>such</i>	Slot 1: determiner: indef. article	Slot 2: attributive adjective	Slot 3: Noun
You are	such	a-n	-	idiot
You are	such	a	fucking	idiot
They are	such	-	-	idiot-s
They are	such	-	fucking	idiot-s

Table 1: Construction schema and slots

Such is lexically fixed and functions as an adjectival external modifier⁸ as it is part of the noun phrase *such an idiot* but precedes the determiner (Huddleston & Pullum 2002: 435). It is the pivot of the construction, contributes to the meaning that arises from it, and accounts for its idiomaticity and consequently its constructionhood, which will be elaborated upon below. In the first slot we find the determiner of the noun phrase, which must be the indefinite article. As the examples in the table illustrate, it must be filled when

⁷ While examples 1 and 2 are attested in the COCA and example 3 is attested in the TV Corpus, example 4 is not attested. There are, however, attested combinations with plural nouns and adjectives (such as *They are such close friends*, which fits the construction's form). Corpora accessed March 10, 2021.

⁸ An adjective according to Huddleston & Pullum (2002), which may be disputable but serves as a 'good enough' classification here. *Such* is *external* only when the indefinite article is present. This excludes the plural and non-count versions, in which it is an *internal* modifier (Huddleston & Pullum 2002: 435).

the noun slot is occupied by a singular count noun and cannot be filled when the noun slot is occupied by a plural noun⁹, as the indefinite article is incompatible with plurals (Huddleston & Pullum 2002: 371). The second slot is occupied by an attributive adjective which seems to be optional in both singular and plural contexts. Below, it will be shown that it is the construction's semantics and not its form that determine whether the adjective slot is filled. The third and final slot is filled by a noun, which functions as the head of the noun phrase and – being a predicative complement (Huddleston & Pullum 2002: 54, Kortmann 2005: 129f) – matches the predicand (subject) in number (Huddleston & Pullum 2002: 254), as shown by the plural suffix *-s*.

So far, only declarative sentences have been considered. The [such (art) (adj) N] construction occurs in a variety of syntactic contexts, however. Examples of the construction occurring in the major clause types (Huddleston & Pullum 2002: 923), or grammatical constructions (cf. Goldberg 2019; Hilpert 2014), are given below.

Declarative (exclamation)	<i>You are such an idiot!</i>
Interrogative (exclamation)	<i>When did you become such an idiot?</i>
Imperative (exclamation)	<i>Stop being such an idiot! / Don't be such an idiot!</i>

Table 2: Syntactic environment and clause types

The copula *be* – which is not part of the construction, but frequently occurs with it¹⁰ – is inflected for subject agreement and tense, and can also occur as a participle and in infinitival form, as is partly illustrated by the examples¹¹. In almost all clause types, the examples take on a clearly exclamative character. Huddleston & Pullum (2002: 918) propose a rather narrow definition of 'exclamatives', however, and call *It was such a disaster!* a 'non-exclamative exclamation' (923) instead.

2.2 Semantic Description and Use

In the introduction, it was claimed that the [such (art) (adj) N] construction is used primarily to make an evaluative statement about someone. Yet there are instantiations such as *It's been such a long time*, which lacks an evaluative character, and instead seems only intensifying. When considering the construction's form only, it is hardly – if at all – possible to draw a line between the construction proposed here and the more general use

⁹ The determiner slot also remains empty when the noun slot is occupied by a mass (non-count) noun. Cf. *Joan had such trouble coping...* (COCA, accessed March 10, 2021).

¹⁰ Other frequent copula (linking) verbs (Crystal 2019: 239) attested in the COCA (accessed March 10, 2021) in this position are *feel*, *seem*, *act*, and *look like*.

¹¹ In addition, cf. *You were such an idiot; He had been such an idiot*.

of the string *such* (art) (adj) N. It is not until the functional dimension is considered that a clearer picture emerges. Specifically, the kind of discourse or context in which it is used and the intended meaning it conveys are relevant.

The type of discourse the [such (art) (adj) N] construction is expected to occur in is informal spoken language. Evidence for this is provided by the high frequency of colloquial terminology, especially abusive language, as will be illustrated by corpus data below. As spoken language takes place between speakers who orient their turns towards each other's utterances (Couper-Kuhlen & Selting 2018), it follows that talk is highly interpersonal and dependent on the speech situation. In the example quoted in the introduction, it is apparent that both speakers react to something their interlocutor has just said or done. Moreover, there is no indication what *such* refers to, what type of e.g. *idiot* is meant, yet the statement is understood as an implicit comparison. More precisely, the subject is understood to be an idiot to a large extent. This must be caused by *such*, which "occurs in scalar comparisons of equality" (Huddleston & Pullum 2002: 1130). This 'reacting to' along with the intuitive understanding of what *such* means carries a trace of the anaphoric use of *such*. Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 1546) agree that in *I've never had to wait such a long time before*, the meaning is "retrieved from the situation of utterance."¹² The OED¹³ lists this colloquial use of *such* as "an absolute intensive, the implied clause of comparison being indeterminate and quite lost sight of".

This 'absolute intensive' use provides half of the meaning that is conveyed by the construction. The frequent use of the copula *be* pointed out above supplies the other half. Through the copula *be*, the noun is predicative and hence semantically equivalent with the subject (Crystal 1999: 73). It follows that the characteristics associated with the noun are ascribed to the subject (Huddleston & Pullum 2002: 73). The absolute intensive *such* adds an intensifying scalar dimension and expresses that the subject is an idiot to the largest possible extent, in other words, the epitome of an idiot. This is the 'quite lost sight of' reference referred to in the OED. This finding imposes a constraint on the noun slot of the construction and explains why instances such as Taylor's *You are such an architect*

¹² They list this example in their chapter on deixis and anaphora, in the section *Comparatives*, in the subsection *Recovery of an implicit secondary term in the comparison*. This practically pinpoints the 'pseudo-anaphoric' use of *such* proposed here.

¹³ Accessed April 9, 2021.

are uncommon. In order to produce a good example of the construction, the noun needs to have a clear (evaluative) characteristic that can be ascribed to the subject.

2.3 Constructionhood

Taken together, the interpersonal character of the construction's use, the evaluative and intensifying meaning it carries, and the exclamative character that Huddleston & Pullum describe illustrate the specifically emotive use that sets 'our' construction apart from non-evaluative examples that it shares its form with – such as *It's been such a long time*. This supports the notion that we are indeed dealing with a construction in its own right. More evidence is provided by two concepts central to construction grammar – idiomaticity and coercion (Goldberg 1995, Taylor 2012, Hilpert 2014).

As was briefly mentioned above, the lexically fixed *such* gives the construction a non-compositional meaning. A learner would not be able to grasp the *full* meaning of the utterance simply by knowing the constituent words. They might understand that the characteristic of being an idiot is ascribed, but they would stumble over the pseudo-anaphoric *such*, unable to retrieve a co-referent. The absolute intensive meaning the construction carries lies in its idiomatic use, and hearers must know it in order to understand it (cf. Hilpert 2014: 130). Moreover, there are more accessible, more compositional ways of conveying the same meaning. Instead of *You are such an idiot*, one could say *You are an extreme idiot*, or *You are the biggest possible idiot*. Although grammatical, these sentences seem strange. This suggests that expressing this particular meaning in an idiomatic way (Taylor 2012: 100ff) is done by using the string *such (art) (adj) N*, and that the meaning is entrenched in our minds as a construction along with this particular form (cf. Goldberg 2019; Taylor 2012).

Another phenomenon connected to non-compositional meaning is that of coercion, which means "that constructions may override word meanings, creating non-compositional constructional meanings in the process" (Hilpert 2014: 17). Above, it was stated that *You are such an architect* is not a good example of the construction because *architect* does not convey a clear (evaluative) characteristic. Yet when encountering the sentence, one might feel like there must be a distinct characteristic architects have that is ascribed to the subject, and that the term *architect* is not used in an appreciative fashion. This becomes even more evident when considering the example *You are such a baby*.

Babies are generally associated with positive characteristics¹⁴, yet the above utterance is clearly a negative evaluation. Here, the construction imposes a negative connotation on the noun, presumably because it is entrenched not only with an evaluative meaning, which might as well be positive, but specifically with a *negative* evaluative meaning. This provides strong evidence for coercion.

3. Inheritance

Assuming that constructions do not exist in a cognitive vacuum, but "form a network of interrelated knowledge" (Goldberg 2019: 36), it follows that the [such (art) (adj) N] construction, too, is part of a network and will partially overlap (Goldberg 2019: 37) with other constructions. Hilpert (2014: 57ff) adds that constructions inherit formal and/or semantic traits from other constructions, particularly from higher level constructions that they are an instantiation of. Apart from inherited traits, constructions may have idiosyncratic characteristics that the higher-level constructions do not display (Hilpert 2014: 59). As we have seen above, *You are such an idiot* does something that the more general *It's been such a long time* does not do.

Although it is difficult or perhaps even impossible to say with certainty how and from where the [such (art) (adj) N] construction inherits its characteristics, a possible inheritance network can be proposed based on the similar constructions that have been mentioned. The inheritance schema illustrated in Figure 1 seems plausible:

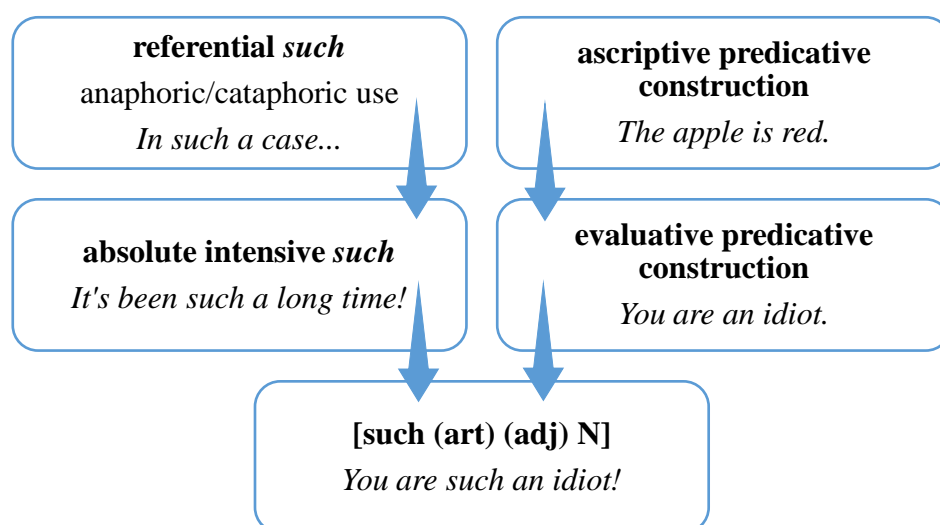


Figure 1: Proposed inheritance schema

¹⁴ The most frequent adjective to follow *babies are* in the COCA is *cute* (accessed April 9, 2021).

The lexically fixed item *such* most likely originates in its 'native' environment, the referential use. Its absolute intensive use is attested by the OED, with its referential character already having been bleached. The [such (art) (adj) N] construction can hence be presumed to have inherited at least part of its emphatic and exclamative character through this route. Formally, the construction is an instantiation of the ascriptive predicative construction (Huddleston & Pullum 2002: 513). An 'instance link', in Goldberg's (1995: 78) and Hilpert's (2012: 62ff) terminology. What has not been proposed yet is the intermediate stage, a presumed evaluative predicative construction. The reasoning behind this assumption is that when using a noun with a clear evaluative connotation in an ascriptive predicative construction, one does more than just describe the subject. This applies to the second person pronoun in particular. As the addressee should know what he or she is, why would one use this form in an utterance? The answer must be that what one truly does is express an attitude towards, or evaluation of, the addressee.

It can be concluded that each branch of the inheritance schema provides both formal and functional characteristics that enter the [such (art) (adj) N] construction. The left-hand branch provides the external modifier *such* as well as the emphatic/exclamative meaning while the right-hand branch supplies the overall syntactic schema and the evaluative character. As this type of evaluation can be expected to be emotionally laden, it is likely that part of the emphatic/exclamative force also derives from this branch. The coercion mentioned in Section 2.3 most likely emerges from the combination of all these characteristics and can be assumed to be a new, idiosyncratic trait of the [such (art) (adj) N] construction (cf. Hilpert 2014: 59).

4. Corpus Findings and Discussion

In order to substantiate the claims made so far about the [such (art) (adj) N] construction, a corpus search was conducted. In this section, the results will be presented and discussed.

4.1 Frequencies in Selected Corpora

First, different search strings pertaining to the construction on different levels of abstraction were entered in selected corpora to verify their frequencies in attested data. The focus of this investigation was the clausal context that precedes the construction. The COCA was chosen as a 'default' corpus as it consists of a wide range of genres. As the

construction is hypothesized to appear chiefly in informal spoken language, the TV Corpus and the Movie Corpus were also included¹⁵. Dialog on television and in movies was considered to be adequately modeled after naturally occurring speech in order to appear believable to the audience. The results are illustrated in Appendix 1. The data are reproduced in abbreviated form in Table 3 below. Results of particular interest are highlighted.

		COCA		TV		Movie	
Input		ppm	t/u	ppm	t/u	ppm	t/u
Area A	* such ART	177.4	24.8	166.3	25.9	193.0	22.0
	* such ART N	69.9	3.8	75.6	2.4	94.9	2.2
	* such ART ADJ N	34.8	1.8	77.7	1.5	81.8	1.4
	* BE such ART	37.2	7.1	71.0	11.4	76.5	12.2
	* BE such ART N	15.5	1.8	34.4	2.2	38.4	2.2
	* BE such ART ADJ N	17.9	1.3	30.3	1.5	30.8	1.4
Area B	PRON BE such ART N	6.6	2.2	19.9	2.7	22.5	2.6
	PRON BE such ART ADJ N	8.2	1.3	16.4	1.5	17.9	1.4
	NOUN BE such ART N	1.5	1.1	2.0	1.1	2.0	1.2
	NOUN BE such ART ADJ N	2.3	1.0	2.1	1.1	1.8	1.1
	NAME BE such ART N	0.6	1.0	0.8	1.0	0.7	1.0
	NAME BE such ART ADJ N	0.9	1.0	0.9	1.0	0.9	1.0
Area C	you BE such ART N	2.1	2.5	8.4	2.8	11.2	3.0
	you BE such ART ADJ N	1.3	1.4	5.0	1.6	5.8	1.4
	I BE such ART N	1.1	2.5	4.4	3.5	3.9	3.1
	I BE such ART ADJ N	0.5	1.4	1.5	1.4	1.4	1.4
	he BE such ART N	0.9	1.7	2.3	1.8	2.6	1.8
	he BE such ART ADJ N	1.4	1.4	2.6	1.5	2.8	1.4
	she BE such ART N	0.4	1.4	1.0	1.5	1.0	1.5
	she BE such ART ADJ N	0.5	1.2	1.0	1.3	1.0	1.2
	it BE such ART N	2.0	2.7	3.5	3.4	3.7	2.8
	it BE such ART ADJ N	4.3	1.3	6.0	1.5	6.5	1.4

Table 3: Frequencies in occurrence per million words (parts per million - ppm) and ratio of total and unique hits (t/u). Corpora accessed March 17, 2021.

The part of the table labeled Area A investigates the lexical material immediately preceding the construction. In the first condition, any word preceding *such* is counted, as indicated by an asterisk (*)¹⁶. In the second condition, only forms of *be* are counted,

¹⁵ During the project work for the presentation, the News on the Web (NOW) corpus was also included. When verifying and updating the data in March 2021, I obtained radically different and most likely faulty data from it, however. Consequently, it was excluded from the new and updated data.

¹⁶ Throughout this paper, the asterisk will be used to indicate 'any' word in a corpus search string, *not* to indicate ungrammatical linguistic material, as is usually customary in linguistic writing.

assuming that this will give insight into the frequency of the copula *be* co-occurring with the construction to form predicative examples¹⁷. As *be*, too, is a word, all hits in condition two are expected to be included in condition one, making it possible to calculate its share of the total hits. While the frequency per million words is quite similar in the COCA and the TV Corpus in the first condition (see cells highlighted in blue) – with a surprisingly high occurrence in the Movie Corpus – the ratio changes in the second condition (orange). Here, in less than a quarter of the hits in the COCA *be* precedes *such*, as opposed to almost half of the hits in the TV Corpus. This provides evidence for the claim that the predicative use that is part of the [such (art) (adj) N] construction, especially with the emotive and exclamative notion added, occurs most frequently in the informal spoken language of television and movies. A previous search in the NOW corpus, whose data are not included here (see footnote 10 on page 8), yielded an even smaller share. This is congruent with the rather matter-of-fact language of news reporting in which emotionally colored language plays a minor role, if any (cf. Crystal 2019: 406ff).

In the part of the table labeled Area B, the word preceding *be* – the subject of the clause – is specified by different types of noun phrases: pronouns, nouns and proper nouns/names. In this condition, the [such (art) (adj) N] construction is embedded in a full sentence, *be* is a copula verb and the noun phrase constituted by [*such (art) (adj) N*] is predicative in nature. When considering the occurrence of pronouns (green), the difference between the corpora that was pointed out above persists. The construction occurs much more frequently in the TV and Movie corpora than in the COCA – at least twice as many times per million words. When examining the frequencies of nouns and proper nouns in the subject position, there no longer is a significant difference. The numbers are not only comparable, but quasi-identical, and very low. This provides evidence for the claim that the construction is interpersonal and dependent on the context as pronouns are typically used deictically within a speech situation (Crystal 1999: 83).

This interpersonal dimension becomes even more apparent with regard to the data in Area C. Not only are pronouns the most frequent subject of the [such (art) (adj) N] construction, it is the personal pronoun *you* (peach color) which consistently occurs most frequently across the three corpora. The personal pronoun *I* also occurs quite frequently, which can best be seen in the TV Corpus and the Movie Corpus. If any two pronouns are

¹⁷ However, one should be aware of the quite frequent non-copula *be* (e.g. *There is such a...*)

used in interpersonal contexts, it must surely be *you* and *I* (cf. Crystal 1999: 83). It is likely, but can hardly be proven, that this interpersonal character is where the evaluative and emotive quality of the construction originates (see also Section 3).

4.2 Relative Frequencies of Lexical Material

Two main features of the [such (art) (adj) N] construction have not yet been accounted for with corpus data: its evaluative character and the seemingly optional adjective, which has not played a role since Section 2.1. These two issues are strongly interconnected, as this section will show.

When conducting the corpus search for Section 4.1, I also recorded the three (or more) most frequent instantiations for each search string. These are listed in Appendix 2 for all three corpora. As might be expected, on the more general level (Area A above) the referential *such*, as in *such a thing*, still prevails. However, in the TV Corpus the first instantiations that display an evaluative character start appearing on a quite general level. For instance, * *such ART* yields *'re such a*¹⁸ as the second most frequent hit, and * *such ART N* yields *'m such an idiot* as the third most frequent hit. This is before the potentially copula *be* or a subject are introduced into the search string. Even in the COCA, * *such ART ADJ N* yields *'s such a good idea* as the third most frequent hit at the same pre-*be*, pre-subject level. As frequency begets entrenchment begets frequency (Goldberg 2019: 56; Dąbrowska 2014: 647), this indicates that the evaluative connotation may be strongly connected to this specific linguistic form in our minds.

As soon as *be* and the subject slot enter the search string, all corpora yield a high number of evaluative expressions, with both positive and negative evaluation. It is at this point that a pattern becomes apparent. Nouns are mostly derogatory, and adjectives are mostly positive. This contrast becomes most obvious when the subject slot is filled by a pronoun, as is shown in this excerpt from Appendix 2, taken from the COCA:

you BE such ART N	asshole, liar, jerk, idiot, baby
you BE such ART ADJ	good friend, good boy, good girl, nice guy, good guy
I BE such ART N	idiot, fan, loser, mess, fool
I BE such ART ADJ N	big fan, huge fan, nice guy, fucking idiot, awful mother
he BE such ART N	jerk, asshole, idiot, liar, gentleman
he BE such ART ADJ N	nice guy, good guy, great guy, good man, good friend

¹⁸ As was argued in Section 3.1, saying *you are X* is not just descriptive, but carries an evaluative layer. The cliticized copula could conceivably stand for *they're* as well as *you're*, but as the string includes the singular indefinite article, this should be unlikely.

she BE such ART N	bitch, slut, inspiration, friend, liar
she BE such ART ADJ	sweet girl, good kid, good girl, nice person, groovy lady
it BE such ART N	shame, pleasure, honor, relief, mess
it BE such ART ADJ N	good idea, beautiful day, big deal, long time, great idea

Table 4: The switch from negative to positive evaluation with an adjective present. COCA, accessed March 17, 2021.

Although there are some instances of positive evaluation in the noun-only condition, the overwhelming majority is distinctly negative. In the adjective-condition, there is a very clear reversal. This persists – with some variation – across all pronouns. The pronoun *it* seems to be an exception as three out of five nouns are in fact positive. This may mean that we do not speak about things or events in the same way that we speak about people, and may strengthen the claim that the [such (art) (adj) N] construction in its proposed negative evaluation form has a highly interpersonal dimension.

A simple corpus search is quite inexact, however, as variations in the copula *be* are displayed as separate entries. For instance, the search string *you BE such ART N* will yield *You are such an idiot*, *You're such an idiot* and *You were such an idiot* as individual entries, with other results in between, all ranked by their frequency. To investigate the 'true' frequency of specific lexical items (nouns and adjectives), I conducted a second search. Based on the data from Table 4, this second search was conducted using the personal pronoun *you* as the subject of a predicative declarative clause introduced by the copula *be*. The same three corpora – COCA, TV Corpus, and Movie Corpus – were searched. The complete results are provided in Appendix 3. The results from the COCA are reproduced in Table 5 below.

Three conditions were analyzed: the noun-only condition (searching for *you BE such ART N*), the adjective-noun condition (searching for *you BE such ART ADJ N*), and – to avoid interference by possible collocations between specific adjectives and nouns, a 'control' condition omitting the noun – the adjective-only condition (searching for *you BE such ART ADJ*). Of all the results, all hits occurring a certain number of times were extracted into Microsoft Excel¹⁹. The resulting clauses were then split into individual lexical items (one word per cell) and sorted by the slot that was investigated (noun and adjective, respectively), so that the number of occurrences could be added up for identical

¹⁹ This number depended on the number of overall results. Here, it was 5 times in the noun-only condition and the adjective-only condition, but only 3 times in the adjective-noun condition, due to the low number of individual frequencies in the corpora.

lexical items. Finally, they were sorted by their overall frequency. All items occurring a certain number of times²⁰ are listed in Appendix 3 as well as in Table 5. Colors were assigned according to the semantic features of the item (see key in table).

[you BE such ART N]		[you BE such ART ADJ N]		[you BE such ART ADJ]	
ass(hole)	122	good	186	good	317
liar	89	big	37	great	82
jerk	79	beautiful	23	big	65
bitch	61	fucking	22	fucking	58
idiot	59	great	19	little (?)	55
dick	52	nice	18	beautiful	42
loser	51	bad	13	nice	42
baby	45	amazing	10	bad	31
inspiration	43	tough (?)	8	amazing	26
child	29	little (?)	7	sweet	24
gentleman	23	sweet	7	romantic	23
expert	21		350	wonderful	21
doll	20			smart	19
hypocrite	20			incredible	11
pussy	17			pretty	11
slut	17			tough (?)	11
fool	16				838
coward	15				
	779				
negative	598	positive	263	positive	618
coercion	74	intensifying	59	intensifying	123
total neg.	672	negative	13	negative	31
positive	107	unclear (?)	15	unclear (?)	66

Table 5: Nouns and adjectives occurring in the respective slots in the COCA, including frequencies. Accessed February 13, 2021.

As the results in Table 5 show, the majority of nouns used in the [such (art) (adj) N] construction are person-denoting or take on a person-denoting sense²¹, and have an inherently negative meaning. Some nouns, for instance *baby* and *child*, take on a negative meaning in utterances such as *You're such a baby*. These are marked for coercion in the table and counted along with the negative nouns. In sum, they constitute 86 % of nouns

²⁰ At least 20 times in the noun-only condition (except in the COCA; here, items occurring at least 15 times are considered due to the lower number of hits), at least 5 times in the adjective-noun condition and at least 10 times in the adjective-only condition.

²¹ At least when used with a personal pronoun. In *You are such a doll*, *doll* is understood as person-denoting, which indicates another coercion effect.

in this sample, with an even higher percentage in the TV Corpus (89.5 %) and the Movie Corpus (97 %!). In the adjective-noun condition, 75 % of the adjectives have a positive meaning, with another 17 % having an intensifying character and only under 4 % being negative. The numbers in the other corpora are comparable. The adjective-only condition (control condition) does not differ considerably from the adjective-noun condition, indicating that collocations between specific adjectives and nouns should not have a significant impact on the distribution. The following four inferences can be drawn from these data:

1. The construction prefers inherently negative nouns.
2. 'Neutral' nouns take on a negative connotation due to coercion.
3. Inherently positive nouns survive the coercion.
4. Positive adjectives cancel the coercion that affects neutral nouns.

The first point is illustrated by the relative frequencies in the corpus data. Taylor (2012: 90) also makes this point and lists the [such (art) (adj) N] construction among those constructions that occur with epithets, stating that "epithets have a number of distributional possibilities not shared with 'normal' nouns", this specific construction being one of them. The second point has been made before: *You are such a baby* or *You are such a child* will hardly be understood as a compliment, but as a negative evaluation expressing that the addressee is behaving cowardly, or in an immature fashion, respectively. It is not the positive properties of babies and children that are ascribed to the subject, but the negative ones. Positive nouns do occur, however, as stated in point three. These are not affected by the coercion effect, and we would not understand *You are such an inspiration* as an insult, unless it was uttered in a clearly sarcastic tone. Coercion is thus limited to the 'neutral' nouns that do not come with a clear evaluative sense of their own.

Point four solves the mystery of the seemingly optional adjective. To avoid coercion, neutral nouns need a modifier that provides a clear evaluation, which the construction provides in the form of an attributive adjective. As the term suggests, its properties are attributed to the noun it modifies (Crystal 1999: 6). As the corpus data have shown, the adjectives that occur are chiefly positive, with the most obvious one – *good* – taking the major share. The fact that mostly positive adjectives occur must arise from the need to modify the noun for it to be understood in the intended, positive way, or put differently, for it to *not* be understood in the negative way that would otherwise be

encouraged – coerced – by the construction. The adjective is therefore not optional at all, but obligatory when the coercion effect is to be circumvented.

However, not all adjectives that occur in the construction are positive. As the data show, some have been marked as intensifying, some as negative and some as unclear. The intensifying character of the construction has been illustrated above, and the occurrence of adjectives that allow the speaker to add an even more extreme nuance does not come as a surprise. As may be expected, *fucking* co-occurs almost exclusively with the negative nouns listed in the data above. *Big* is less clear, but mostly occurs with neutral nouns such as *boy*, *girl*, and *man*, indicating a large specimen of its kind. As large size implies a high/intense point on a scale (OED²²), this use of *big* fits well into the intensifying category. The negative adjectives such as *bad* occur mostly with nouns such as *liar*, *boy*, and *influence*. These could also be modified by *good* to indicate the opposite quality. Here, the adjective is needed to indicate the *direction* the speaker intends on a good-bad-scale. Compared to the adjectives expressing positive evaluation, all cases discussed in this paragraph are small in number. They are thus assumed to represent rather peripheral instantiations of the construction.

5. Loose Ends

Due to the limited scope of this paper, many interesting aspects of the [such (art) (adj) N] construction had to remain unexplored, which may have made the analysis seem slightly superficial. Speaker attitude (Huddleston & Pullum 2002: 922) and potential sarcasm (Crystal 2019: 393) in particular are aspects that are central to contexts such as the ones the [such (art) (adj) N] construction has been shown to be found in. These aspects have not yet been factored in because doing so would have required a thorough analysis of the individual contexts the instantiations recorded in the corpora are embedded in²³. Another interesting aspect is the actual scope of use of the construction. As the construction is quite productive²⁴, it can be used creatively by speakers (Goldberg 2019: 61ff; Hilpert 2014: 7, 82). This creative use may lead to many clear-cut, prototypical examples that

²² Accessed April 9, 2021.

²³ Especially the cases that are assumed to display coercion may be interesting in this regard. *You are such a man* may have very different meanings when uttered by either a chauvinist or a radical feminist. Also, *good* in *You are such a good liar* may imply a negative rather than a positive evaluation after all, making the role of the adjective more complicated than expected.

²⁴ As illustrated by the type-token-ratio listed in Table 3 and Appendix 1.

comply with the construction's alleged function, or it may lead to many peripheral examples that either challenge the claims made here or that are so context-dependent that categorizing them may not be possible.

The source corpora used here and consequently the results obtained may be problematic. Even though dialog on TV and in movies should be modeled after naturally occurring speech in order to seem believable to the audience, it is possible that viewers accept a certain amount of staginess, and that the data in the TV Corpus and Movie Corpus are therefore not truly representative of real interaction. For instance, characters on TV and in movies may find themselves in conflict situations, which would warrant the use of the [such (art) (adj) N] construction, more frequently than speakers do in real life. The construction may therefore be overrepresented and its frequency inflated in the corpus data. As a high number of results in the COCA is in fact from TV and movies, there is evidence that this may be true. Using a corpus of recorded natural speech for comparison may give a better insight. The corpora used here must therefore serve only as a 'good enough' data source.

6. Conclusion

The [such (art) (adj) N] construction was a quite difficult one to 'crack'. The initial intuition that its 'deviant' form caused by the external modifier *such* and its *perceived* function – negative evaluation – must constitute a distinct form-function-pair and hence a construction faced a number of difficulties. On closer inspection, it became apparent that its proposed schema (form) was in fact not as clear-cut as expected. After excluding the copula *be* and accounting for the presence or absence of the indefinite article, the problematic 'optional' adjective remained. Numerous instantiations that bear a clearly positive evaluation or are intensifying rather than evaluative posed a challenge on the functional side. With the assumptions about both form and function being of questionable nature, how could a claim for constructionhood be sustained? With some relativization and the support of corpus data, it was possible to define the construction more closely and to substantiate the claims that were initially based only on intuition.

Relativization was necessary to understand that the form [*such* (art) (adj) N] is not exclusive to the construction, to distinguish the intended use from the more general, referential use, and to identify the predicative context that causes the assignment of a quality and ultimately facilitates the evaluative character that the construction carries.

Relating the construction back to its referential and chiefly anaphoric origin made it possible to understand the impression that an implicit comparison is taking place, while the exclamative nature of the construction provided the reason why the abstract concept the subject is compared to via the predicative noun or noun phrase is the absolute intensive or epitome of the characteristic that is being assigned.

The initial corpus data supported the intuition that the construction is used chiefly in informal spoken language such as on TV and in movies. It also supported the intuition that it is used predominantly for negative evaluation in an emotionally laden, exclamative fashion, and revealed the function of the adjective as well as the coercion effect, providing further evidence for the constructionhood of the [such (art) (adj) N] construction. The second corpus search, which targeted particular lexical material, further supported the points made about the semantics of the noun and adjective by providing quantitative evidence. Summing up, using the data available in the corpora, it has been shown that there is substantial evidence for the claim made above: that there is a construction whose form is [such (art) (adj) N] and whose function is to assign an unfavorable quality to the subject, indicating that the subject represents this quality to a high or even absolute degree. Although I have not been able to find a name distinctive enough to describe the construction and the construction alone, I would suggest a 'scalar evaluative construction' as its type, as indicated by the subtitle of this paper.

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Other

Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA)

Oxford English Dictionary (online)

The TV Corpus

The Movie Corpus

Appendix 1: Frequencies in Selected Corpora

Corpus:		COCA				TV Corpus				Movie Corpus			
Words:		1001610938				326201276				199479302			
Input:		ppm	total	unique	t/u	ppm	total	unique	t/u	ppm	total	unique	t/u
Area A	such ART	177.4	177,716	20	8885.8	166.3	54,260	7	7751.4	193.0	38,505	7	5500.7
	* such ART	177.4	177,716	7,162	24.8	166.3	54,260	2,091	25.9	193.0	38,505	1,749	22.0
	* such ART N	69.9	70,010	18,540	3.8	75.6	24,673	10,484	2.4	94.9	18,936	8,603	2.2
	* such ART ADJ N	34.8	34,889	19,520	1.8	77.7	25,358	16,615	1.5	81.8	16,327	11,658	1.4
	BE such ART	37.2	37,254	35	1064.4	71.0	23,144	34	680.7	76.5	15,269	31	492.5
	* BE such ART	37.2	37,254	5,275	7.1	71.0	23,144	2,027	11.4	76.5	15,269	1,255	12.2
	* BE such ART N	15.5	15,515	8,700	1.8	34.4	11,225	5,132	2.2	38.4	7,663	3,497	2.2
	* BE such ART ADJ N	17.9	17,914	14,295	1.3	30.3	9,882	6,804	1.5	30.8	6,136	4,486	1.4
Area B	PRON BE such ART N	6.6	6,603	2,980	2.2	19.9	6,495	2,438	2.7	22.5	4,491	1,717	2.6
	PRON BE such ART ADJ N	8.2	8,234	6,162	1.3	16.4	5,340	3,534	1.5	17.9	3,575	2,563	1.4
	NOUN BE such ART N	1.5	1,507	1,421	1.1	2.0	646	565	1.1	2.0	402	346	1.2
	NOUN BE such ART ADJ N	2.3	2,302	2,200	1.0	2.1	701	636	1.1	1.8	352	334	1.1
	NAME BE such ART N	0.6	578	559	1.0	0.8	253	247	1.0	0.7	132	128	1.0
	NAME BE such ART ADJ N	0.9	862	841	1.0	0.9	305	302	1.0	0.9	174	172	1.0
Area C	you BE such ART N	2.1	2,126	838	2.5	8.4	2,741	994	2.8	11.2	2,238	744	3.0
	you BE such ART ADJ N	1.3	1,288	906	1.4	5.0	1,617	1,008	1.6	5.8	1,164	806	1.4
	I BE such ART N	1.1	1,075	430	2.5	4.4	1,437	415	3.5	3.9	780	255	3.1
	I BE such ART ADJ N	0.5	466	336	1.4	1.5	475	328	1.4	1.4	282	205	1.4
	he BE such ART N	0.9	868	507	1.7	2.3	750	417	1.8	2.6	509	281	1.8
	he BE such ART ADJ N	1.4	1,358	986	1.4	2.6	851	550	1.5	2.8	554	407	1.4
	she BE such ART N	0.4	370	271	1.4	1.0	322	216	1.5	1.0	190	127	1.5
	she BE such ART ADJ N	0.5	499	412	1.2	1.0	339	252	1.3	1.0	209	173	1.2
	it BE such ART N	2.0	1,970	742	2.7	3.5	1,155	338	3.4	3.7	730	263	2.8
	it BE such ART ADJ N	4.3	4,297	3,202	1.3	6.0	1,959	1,300	1.5	6.5	1,304	912	1.4

Table 6: Frequencies in different corpora. Accessed March 17, 2021.

Appendix 2: Most Frequent Instantiations

Corpus:	Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA)
such ART	such a, such an, such the
* such ART	in such a, is such a, of such a
* such ART N	in such a way, is such a thing, do such a thing
* such ART ADJ N	for such a long time, at such a young age, 's such a good idea
BE such ART	is/'s such a, was such a, be such a
* BE such ART	it's such a, you're such a , it was such a
* BE such ART N	there is/there's/there was such a thing, I'm such an idiot , it's such a shame
* BE such ART ADJ N	that's such/this is such/it's such a good idea, 's been such a long time, it's such a beautiful day
PRON BE such ART N	I'm such an idiot , it's such a shame , it's such a pleasure
PRON BE such ART ADJ N	it's such a good idea, it's such a beautiful day, it's such a big deal
NOUN BE such ART N	place is such a mess , process is such a blur, Obummer is such a paragon
NOUN BE such ART ADJ N	guys are such a cute couple , hair is such a big part, hate is such a strong word
NAME BE such ART N	McCain is such a man, McCarthy is such a book, Iraq is such a mess
NAME BE such ART ADJ N	Jackson was such a dumb butt , Israel is such a tiny country, Iraq is such a free society
you BE such ART N	asshole, liar, jerk, idiot, baby
you BE such ART ADJ N	good friend, good boy, good girl, nice guy, good guy
I BE such ART N	idiot, fan, loser, mess, fool
I BE such ART ADJ N	big fan, huge fan, nice guy, fucking idiot, awful mother
he BE such ART N	jerk, asshole, idiot, liar, gentleman
he BE such ART ADJ N	nice guy, good guy, great guy, good man, good friend
she BE such ART N	bitch, slut, inspiration, friend, liar
she BE such ART ADJ N	sweet girl, good kid, good girl, nice person, groovy lady
it BE such ART N	shame, pleasure, honor, relief, mess
it BE such ART ADJ N	good idea, beautiful day, big deal, long time, great idea

Table 7: Most frequent instantiations in the COCA. Accessed March 17, 2021.

Corpus:	The TV Corpus
such ART	such a, such an, such the
* such ART	s/is such a, 're such a , in such a
* such ART N	do such a thing, in such a hurry, 'm such an idiot
* such ART ADJ N	is/'s such a good idea, n't such a good idea, having such a good time
BE such ART	s/is such a, 're such a , was such a
* BE such ART	you're/you are such a , it's such a, he's such a
* BE such ART N	I'm such an idiot , there's/there is such a thing, it's such a shame
* BE such ART ADJ N	that's/this is/it's such a good idea, 's been such a long time, you're such a good friend
PRON BE such ART N	I'm such an idiot , it's such a shame, you're such an idiot
PRON BE such ART ADJ N	It's such a good idea, you're such a good friend, it's such a big deal
NOUN BE such ART N	place is such a mess , life is such a mess , place is such a dump
NOUN BE such ART ADJ N	love is such an easy thing, issues are such a big deal, guys are such a cute couple
NAME BE such ART N	Noel was such a freak , Tuesdays were such a problem, Chandler is such an idiot
NAME BE such ART ADJ N	Marisa was such a sweet girl , Hilton is such a good man , John is such a wild card
you BE such ART N	idiot, liar, asshole, jerk, hypocrite
you BE such ART ADJ N	good friend, good boy, good guy, good girl, good person
I BE such ART N	idiot, fool, klutz, loser, jerk
I BE such ART ADJ N	big/huge fan, fucking idiot, horrible person, good friend, delicate flower
he BE such ART N	jerk, idiot, loser, gentleman, dick
he BE such ART ADJ N	nice guy, good guy, great guy, good boy, nice man
she BE such ART N	bitch, sweetheart, slut, idiot, cow
she BE such ART ADJ N	good kid, good person, sweet girl, nice girl, lovely girl
it BE such ART N	shame, pleasure, honor, relief, waste
it BE such ART ADJ N	good idea, big deal, beautiful day, nice day, long time

Table 8: Most frequent instantiations in the TV Corpus. Accessed March 17, 2021.

Corpus:	The Movie Corpus
such ART	such a, such an, such the
* such ART	s such a, 're such a , in such a
* such ART N	do such a thing, in such a hurry, in such a way
* such ART ADJ N	is/'s/isn't such a good idea, for such a long time, having such a good time
BE such ART	is/'s such a, 're such a , be such a
* BE such ART	you're such a , it's such a, he's such a
* BE such ART N	there is/'s such a thing, I'm such an idiot , you're such an asshole
* BE such ART ADJ N	that's/this is such a good idea, 's been such a long time, it's such a beautiful day
PRON BE such ART N	I'm such an idiot , you're such an asshole , you're such an idiot
PRON BE such ART ADJ N	It's such a good idea, it's such a beautiful day, you're such a good boy
NOUN BE such ART N	place is such a mess , life is such a pleasure , life is such a masquerade
NOUN BE such ART ADJ N	years is such a long time, youth is such a wonderful thing, love is such a curious thing
NAME BE such ART N	Grey is such a pity , Eddie was such a hothead , Fawlty was such a gentleman
NAME BE such ART ADJ N	Danny is such a good person , Laroche is such a fun character , Leduc is such a private person
you BE such ART N	asshole , idiot , dick , liar , jerk
you BE such ART ADJ N	good boy , good friend , good girl , fucking asshole , big boy
I BE such ART N	idiot , fool , mess , klutz , loser
I BE such ART ADJ N	big/huge fan , nice guy , fucking idiot , bad person
he BE such ART N	asshole , jerk , dick , baby , genius
he BE such ART ADJ N	good man , nice man , nice boy , good boy , great guy
she BE such ART N	bitch , slut , darling , liar , kidder
she BE such ART ADJ N	sweet girl , nice girl , pretty girl , good girl , lovely girl
it BE such ART N	shame , pleasure , relief , honor , waste
it BE such ART ADJ N	good idea , beautiful day , long time , lovely day , big deal

Table 9: Most frequent instantiations in the Movie Corpus. Accessed March 17, 2021.

Appendix 3: Lexical Material (Nouns and Adjectives)

Nouns in [you BE such ART N]						Adjectives in [you BE such ART ADJ N]						Adjectives in [you BE such ART ADJ]					
COCA		TV Corpus		Movie Corpus		COCA		TV Corpus		Movie Corpus		COCA		TV Corpus		Movie Corpus	
ass(hole)	122	liar	137	ass(hole)	197	good	186	good	333	good	159	good	317	good	486	good	273
liar	89	ass/arse(hole)	122	liar	107	big	37	big	48	fucking	50	great	82	great	108	fucking	105
jerk	79	idiot	112	idiot	96	beautiful	23	nice	35	big	32	big	65	big	90	big	78
bitch	61	jerk	104	dick	85	fucking	22	great	29	little (?)	21	fucking	58	fucking	62	little (?)	65
idiot	59	bitch	75	jerk	85	great	19	fucking	23	nice	17	little (?)	55	romantic	51	great	54
dick	52	hypocrite	63	bitch	61	nice	18	bad	20	sweet	12	beautiful	42	sweet	50	nice	48
loser	51	dick	62	loser	51	bad	13	beautiful	17	great	11	nice	42	nice	49	sweet	32
baby	45	baby	54	baby	40	amazing	10	sweet	15	pretty	8	bad	31	little (?)	47	beautiful	27
inspiration	43	loser	52	fool	35	tough (?)	8	pretty	11	bad	7	amazing	26	bad	42	romantic	27
child	29	child	43	pussy	34	little (?)	7	little (?)	10	beautiful	7	sweet	24	beautiful	32	bad	22
gentleman	23	gentleman	40	dork	31	sweet	7	amazing	8	tough (?)	7	romantic	23	amazing	23	pretty	16
expert	21	girl	37	child	28		350	cute	7	lovely	6	wonderful	21	smart	22	wonderful	16
doll	20	expert	33	gentleman	26				556		337	smart	19	pretty	20	smart	15
hypocrite	20	doll	24	pig	23							incredible	11	cute	16	clever	10
pussy	17	sweetheart/ sweetie	24	prick	21							pretty	11	wonderful	16	lovely	10
slut	17	man	23	freak	20							tough (?)	11	special (?)	13		798
fool	16	disappointment	22	pain	20								838	strong	11		
coward	15	dork	21		960									brilliant	10		
	779	pain	21											funny	10		
		pig	21											natural	10		
		prick	21											terrible	10		
		tease	21												1178		
		pussy	20														
			1152														

negative	598	negative	874	negative	866	positive	263	positive	455	positive	220	positive	618	positive	914	positive	528
coercion	74	coercion	157	coercion	68	intens.	59	intens.	71	intens.	82	intens.	123	intens.	152	intens.	183
total neg.	672	total neg.	1031	total neg.	934	negative	13	negative	20	negative	7	negative	31	negative	52	negative	22
positive	107	positive	121	positive	26	unclear	15	unclear	10	unclear	28	unclear	66	unclear	60	unclear	65
In Percent (rounded, except for .5 results):																	
negative	77%	negative	76%	negative	90%	positive	75%	positive	82%	positive	65%	positive	74%	positive	78%	positive	66%
coercion	9%	coercion	14%	coercion	7%	intens.	17%	intens.	13%	intens.	24%	intens.	15%	intens.	13%	intens.	23%
total neg.	86%	total neg.	89.5%	total neg.	97%	negative	4%	negative	4%	negative	2%	negative	4%	negative	4%	negative	3%
positive	14%	positive	10.5%	positive	3%	unclear	4%	unclear	2%	unclear	8%	unclear	8%	unclear	5%	unclear	8%

Table 10: Lexical material (nouns and adjectives). Accessed February 13, 2021 (COCA and TV Corpus) and March 18, 2021 (Movie Corpus).

Honor Pledge

I declare that I have read and understood the material exemplifying and explaining cases of plagiarism included in the Studienführer ('Genius borrows nobly': Understanding and Avoiding Plagiarism), and that my paper contains no plagiarized material and is solely my own work. I am aware of the fact that should my paper be found to contain plagiarized material or to have been written in part or whole by someone else, this will entail serious consequences. These include the following:

1. The reason for my failure will be recorded by the department.
2. I will not be given credit for the course.
3. The Honor Board may review my paper and suggest additional sanctions, including expulsion.

Furthermore I am aware that submitting the same or a revised paper in two separate courses without the instructors' explicit consent will result in similar consequences.

Heidelberg, April 29, 2021