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A Corpus-based Study of the *What about* and *How about* Constructions

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ABSTRACT

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This paper investigates real life uses of the so-called *what about* and *how about* constructions on the basis of large, balanced contemporary American English corpus data. Previous literature has paid little attention to irregular *wh*-question constructions including the two as compared to typical *wh*-question constructions and has mainly discussed similarities between the two constructions based on individual researchers' informal judgments with no surrounding context information for their *what about* and *how about* construction examples. The results of this corpus-based research first show that the two constructions exhibit similar behavior in that both of them occur frequently in informal, dialogue situations and that they take an NP as the most dominant dependent category. However, the results also show that when we explore their grammatical properties with regard to subtypes for each dependent category and their preferred illocutionary functions, the two are more similar than different when they combine with minor category dependents while they are more different than similar when they take proposition-denoting categories and NPs as their dependents. Taken together, our findings suggest that it is important to look into authentic properties of the *what about* and *how about* constructions depending on their dependent categories.

1. Introduction

In English, several types of irregular *wh*-question constructions as in (1) are used frequently mainly in daily conversation (Quirk et al. 1985):

(1) a. How come you're so late? (= 'How does it come about (that) you're so late?') (*how come* construction)
    b. Why (not) listen to him? (= 'Why should(n't)/do(n't)/did(n't) you listen to him?') (*why* (*not*) directive construction)
    c. Why no classes today? (= 'Why are there no classes today?') (verbless *why*-existential construction)
    d. What to do next?/Who to see?/Which way to go? (subjectless infinitival *wh*-question construction)
    e. What if it rains?/What if you join us for lunch?/What if you don't join us for lunch just this once? (*what if* construction)
    f. How about another kiss?/What about following us in your car? (*what about/how about* constructions)

Each of these irregular *wh*-question constructions exhibits its peculiar grammatical properties. For example, the *how come* construction as in (1a) induces a causal interpretation like the *why*-question construction, but it does not show subject auxiliary inversion (SAI) as opposed to typical *wh*-questions in matrix environments. The *why (not)* directive construction as in (1b), taking a base form verb phrase (VP[base]) as its dependent, triggers an imperative interpretation. The verbless *why*-existential construction as in (1c), consisting of the specific *wh*-expression *why* and a noun phrase (NP) dependent, gives rise to an existential interpretation. The subjectless infinitival *wh*-question construction as in (1d) contains a *wh*-expression and an infinitival VP (VP[inf]) without its subject, and asks for some opinion from the addressee. The *what if* construction as in (1e) is composed of the specific *wh*-expression *what* and an *if*-clause dependent and it is used to ask a hypothetical question, to make a suggestion, etc. The *what about* and *how about* constructions as in (1f) are characterized as being introduced by *what about* and *how about*, typically followed by a noun phrase (NP) or an *-ing* verb phrase (VP[*-ing*]) and being interchangeably used to make suggestions, requests, and invitations (Malá 2000, Quirk et al. 1985, Shopen 1974, Sonoda 2009).

Among these various irregular *wh*-question constructions in English, this paper aims to investigate how the *what about* and *how about* constructions as in (1f) are actually used in real life situations. In previous literature, irregular *wh*-question constructions illustrated in (1) have received little attention as compared to typical *wh*-question constructions. In addition, previous literature on the *what about* and *how about* constructions, in general, has mainly focused on the similarities of the two constructions (Malá 2000, Quirk et al. 1985, Shopen 1974) and this is true even for traditional descriptive English grammar books (Huddleston and Pullum 2002), although some differences have been observed as well, with respect to their illocutionary functions and the grammatical forms they preferably occur with (Gottschalk 1992). Furthermore, the *what about* and *how about* construction examples provided in previous literature came from researchers' own informal judgments with no surrounding context.[1]

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[1] An anonymous reviewer asked whether there has been any theoretical work on this topic. As far as we are aware, there has been no theoretical research on the *what about* and *how about* constructions. As mentioned above, irregular *wh*-question constructions have not gained much attention in previous literature as opposed to regular *wh*-question constructions. The observations made in this paper would thus serve as the foundation for theoretical research on the two constructions and we leave it to future research. Note, nevertheless, that some theoretical approaches have been proposed to account for grammatical properties of the so-called *how come* construction as in (1a) (Collins 1991, Kim and Kim 2011, Ochi 2004, Radford 2018, Zwicky and Zwicky 1971).

Noting the idiosyncratic grammatical properties of the *what about* and *how about* constructions as opposed to typical *wh*-questions and recognizing the research gap about them, this paper attempts to examine their authentic uses in real life contexts on the basis of large and balanced corpus data, focusing on in what respects they show similar and different behavior. In particular, this paper explores their similarities and differences in terms of register distributions, general/detailed dependent category distribution patterns, and their associated illocutionary function preference patterns. The findings here shed light on the better understanding of authentic uses of the *what about* and *how about* constructions and can serve as a pioneer corpus-based research on the two constructions which invites subsequent theoretical and empirical research on the two constructions and other related constructions.

2. Some Key Properties

As noted in Section 1, the two expressions *what about* and *how about*, taking an NP or a VP[-*ing*] dependent, are commonly and frequently used with a suggestion function. However, they can take other syntactic categories as their dependent as well, as illustrated below (Blendin and Rawlins 2019, Gottschalk 1992, Huddleston and Pullum 2002, Sonoda 2009, Wierzbicka 1986, 2003):[2]

> (2) a. How about [at my place]? (PP dependent)
>   b. How about [we leave the others until next week]? (S dependent)
>   c. A: John is coming to the party?
>   B: What about [if Mary is there]? (Subordinate clause dependent)

These examples show that the dependent of *what about* and *how about* can be of a variety of syntactic categories, although the major categories may be NP and VP[-*ing*].

Note then that these two constructions are taken to be irregular *wh*-questions since they exhibit different grammatical properties from canonical *wh*-questions (Quirk et al. 1985: 839-840). For instance, although the two constructions can also be used to function as pure inquiries, their answers are different from the answers to typical *wh*-questions introduced by *what* and *how* (Malá 2000, Quirk et al. 1985). Consider the following examples:

> (3) a. A: What did you eat for lunch?
>   B: Pho.
>   b. A: How did you do on the exam?
>   B: Very well.

> (4) a. A: North Korea is in danger. What about South Korea?
>   B: It is all right.
>   b. A: How about your parents? Are they well?
>   B: Yes, they are doing fine.

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[2] Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 909) note that unlike *how about*, *what about* cannot take an S dependent.

As demonstrated in (3), typical *wh*-questions introduced by *what* and *how* need a value for them as their licit answer (i.e., an NP answer to a *what*-question and a manner AdvP to a *how*-question). On the other hand, the *what about* and *how about* construction examples with a pure inquiry function as in (4) do not require a value for the *wh*-expressions, *what* and *how*, as their appropriate answer.

In addition, unlike canonical *wh*-questions, the *what about* and *how about* constructions cannot occur in embedded environments (Gottschalk 1992, Huddleston and Pullum 2002, Sonoda 2009, Wierzbicka 2003):

    (5) a. John wondered what you ate for lunch.
        b. John wondered how you did on the exam.
        c. *North Korea is in danger and I wonder [what about South Korea].
        d. *My parents are well and I wonder [how about your parents].

The examples in (5a) and (5b) tell us that typical *wh*-questions introduced by *what* and *how* can serve as indirect *wh*-interrogative complements; however, as in (5c) and (5d), the *what about* and *how about* constructions even with a pure inquiry function cannot be used as indirect *wh*-interrogative complements.

Moreover, typical *wh*-questions and the *what about* and *how about* constructions also show different behavior with respect to the possibility to have two-clause readings, as can be seen from the following:

    (6) a. What did you say would happen here?
        b. How did you guess that John fixed the car?
        c. *{What/How} did you say [about another kiss]?
        d. *{What about/How about} did you say [another kiss]?

The example in (6a) illustrates that in a typical *wh*-question construction, the *wh*-phrase can be associated with an embedded clause. The example in (6b) further shows us that an adjunct *wh*-phrase like *how* can be related to either a matrix clause or an embedded clause. In the meantime, the *what about* and *how about* constructions as in (6c) and (6d) cannot be legitimately used to induce an intended two-clause reading.

We have thus far seen that the *what about* and *how about* constructions behave similarly in several respects, commonly showing different grammatical properties from canonical *wh*-question constructions. However, based on college students' answers to slot and filler type questions, Gottschalk (1992) argues that the two constructions differ in some respects and the main differences lie in their inferred illocutionary functions. In particular, Gottschalk (1992) shows that in general the *what about* construction is frequently used as a reminder of something known to all interlocutors and thus concerns old information. In this regard, its basic function is to elicit comments and opinions and ask for further information. On the other hand, the *how about* construction is preferably used to provide new information, conveying suggestions, requests, and invitations.

Related to this, Gottschalk (1992) also demonstrates that the main functions of the *what about* and *how about* constructions are closely associated with the grammatical forms they occur with. For instance, *what about* tends to occur with NPs with a definite determiner (e.g., definite article *the*, possessive pronouns *my, your,* and *his*, and demonstrative pronouns *this, that, these, those*) and proper nouns, while *how about* tends to occur with NPs with an indefinite determiner (e.g., *a/an, some*) and non-finite clauses (e.g., VP[-*ing*]).

As discussed so far, the *what about* and *how about* constructions show several intriguing syntactic and pragmatic properties, which distinguish them from typical *wh*-question constructions and the two exhibit some notable differences as well. In what follows, we discuss the corpus findings for their uses in real life situations.

3. Methods

In order to investigate authentic uses and grammatical properties of the *what about* and *how about* constructions, we performed a corpus investigation using COCA (Corpus of Contemporary American English).[3] To extract *what about* and *how about* construction examples from COCA, we first used the simple string searches *what about* and *how about*. These string searches provided 26,810 instances of *what about* and 12,131 instances of *how about*. We then drew 1,000 random sample examples from each, making use of the built-in sample extraction option available in the COCA webpage. After a sample extraction, we manually excluded irrelevant examples as in (7):

> (7) a. SWEET: ... There was no particular buzz one way or the other within the press corps that I heard about.
>   SCOTT: What about the –
>   SWEET: And also, actions – ask him about the White House's reaction to FOX, actions speak louder than words. He had the interview. (COCA 2011 SPOK)
> b. How about, what is the tip on a $400-haircut? (COCA 2007 SPOK)
> c. Most nights before I go to sleep, I tell my mom about school, and boys, and who said what about whom. (COCA 2007 FIC)
> d. CECILIA She came to speak to me.
>   ROBBIE Oh, yes? What about? (COCA 2007 FIC)
> e. But, like so many basketball observers, I can't help wondering what about the author himself is true. (COCA 2005 NEWS)

In (7a) and (7b) the *what about* and *how about* construction examples are incomplete. In (7c) *what* and *about whom* are parts of a multiple *wh*-question, having nothing to do with the *what about* construction while in (7d) *what about* is an instance of the swiping construction, having an equivalent meaning of *about what* in the given context (Hartman and Ai 2009, Kim and Kim 2020, Merchant 2002, Radford and Iwasaki 2015, Rosen 1976). Meanwhile, in (7e) *what about the author* as a whole forms a constituent, serving as the subject of an indirect *wh*-question. After manually filtering out such irrelevant examples, we have finally identified 961 instances of the *what about* construction and 956 instances of the *how about* construction, for which we carried out both quantitative and qualitative investigations.

4. Corpus Findings and Discussion

4.1 Overall Corpus-based Observations

In this section, we discuss the general uses of the *what about* and *how about* constructions on the basis of 961 tokens of the *what about* construction and 956 tokens of the *how about* construction extracted from COCA. We

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[3] COCA, freely available online at https://www.english-corpora.org/coca/, is the largest structured corpus of Contemporary American English that continues to be updated. When the corpus searches were carried out for this research in 2019, the corpus contained 600 million words of text from 1990 to 2019 and it was divided into five different registers (i.e., spoken, fiction, magazines, newspapers, and academic) in a balanced manner.

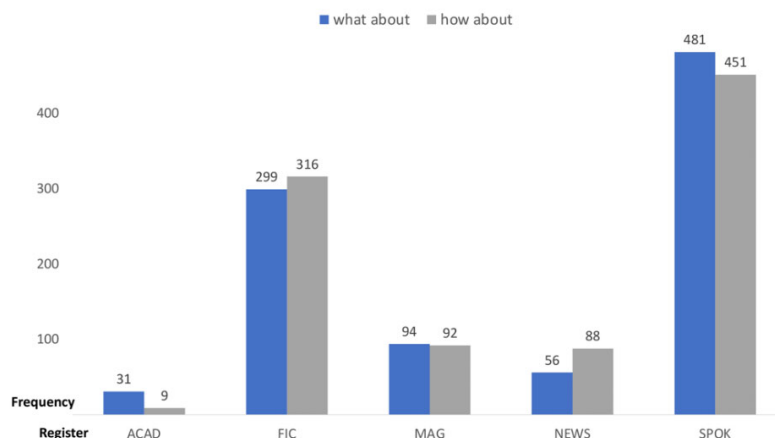first classified the *what about* and *how about* construction examples by registers, as demonstrated in Figure 1 below: [4]

Figure 1. Distributions of *what about* and *how about* Examples from COCA by Registers

The identified *what about* and *how about* examples show the same distribution pattern in terms of their preferred registers. Both the constructions occur most frequently in the spoken register followed by the fiction register, as in (8a) and (8b) while their occurrences in the magazine, newspaper, and academic registers as in (8c)-(8e) are much less frequent.

(8) a. BOLLING: "*What about* you?"
      GUILFOYLE: "Remember the Limoncello thing?" (COCA 2016 SPOK)
   b. "*How about* Eagle?" Sam suggested. (COCA 2018 FIC)
   c. *What about* the cruise to the Galpagos to witness evolutionary theory in action? (COCA 2011 MAG)
   d. Kerry: "*How about* a black woman president?" (COCA 1998 NEWS)
   e. But *what about* the history spirit? (COCA 2007 ACAD)

This register distribution pattern indicates that the two constructions are preferably used in rather informal dialogue contexts, as noted in Quirk et al. (1985).[5]

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[4] An anonymous reviewer pointed out that lumping *what about* and *how about* construction examples from five different registers may impact the analysis provided in this paper, mentioning that previous corpus-based register studies have demonstrated that linguistic patterns can vary across different registers. We aimed at exploring authentic uses of the two constructions and we believed that it would be better to look at examples from all these five registers together and we indeed observed that the two constructions are favorably used in informal, dialogue contexts, regardless of different registers. We acknowledge that there can be confounding factors in our analysis of the two constructions on the basis of data from different registers. However, our own data analysis has certain merits and we leave it to future research to examine the two constructions based on data from a specific, designated register (e.g., SPOK register which has the highest frequency number for both the constructions).

[5] Quirk et al. (1985) note that this register preference holds true for irregular *wh*-question constructions in general, as in (1).

We then checked their distributions by dependent categories. Figure 2 below presents the frequency numbers of the *what about* and *how about* construction examples with respect to the dependent categories and representative examples based on this classification are given in (9):
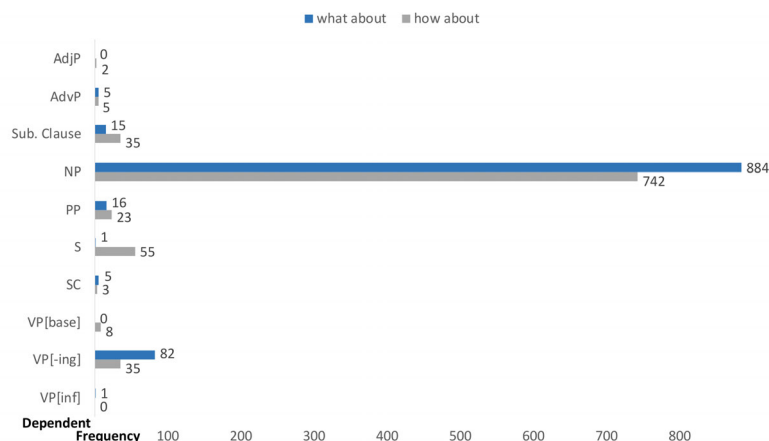

Figure 2. Distributions of *what about* and *how about* Examples from COCA by Dependent Categories

(9) a. Oh yeah, *how about* [drunk and disorderly], and an order of protection against you? (COCA 2007 FIC)
       (AdjP dependent)
   b. "*What about* [unofficially]?" (COCA 2000 FIC) (AdvP dependent)
   c. *What about* [if you're a parent]? (COCA 2001 SPOK) (Subordinate clause dependent)
   d. "*How about* [Jennifer]?" said the man. (COCA 1995 FIC) (NP dependent)
   e. *How about* [in South Carolina]? (COCA 2009 SPOK) (PP dependent)
   f. *How about* [you let Santa bring you one]. (COCA 2005 FIC) (S dependent)
   g. *How about* [you and me taking a drive down the coast]? (COCA 1997 FIC) (SC dependent)
   h. Maybe we don't, *how about* [stay off people's things]? (COCA 2015 SPOK) (VP[base] dependent)
   i. "*How about* [spending some time with your other babies]?" (COCA 1991 FIC) (VP[-*ing*] dependent)
   j. *How about* [to speak or not to speak]? (COCA 2017 SPOK) (VP[inf] dependent)

The distributions of the identified *what about* and *how about* construction examples show us several interesting properties about their real life uses in terms of their dependent categories. First, the most dominant dependent category is NP, followed by VP[-*ing*], in both the constructions, confirming the claim made in previous literature (Malá 2000, Quirk et al. 1985, Shopen 1974, Sonoda 2009).

Observe at this point that although NP is the most dominant dependent category in the two constructions under investigation, their prominence is different. A Fisher's exact test reveals that the number of *what about* construction examples with an NP dependent is statistically higher than that of *how about* construction examples with an NP dependent (p-value < 0.0001).[6]

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[6] As one anonymous reviewer pointed out, one could use other statistical methods such as regression and/or mixed-effects modeling to analyze the same data presented in this paper. We acknowledge that it may be true; however, it is the easiest to construct a 2 x 2 frequency table for each type of analysis (CONSTRUCTION TYPE: *what about* vs. *how about*; DEPENDENT CATEGORY: X vs. non-X or ILLOCUTIONARY FUNCTION: pure inquiry vs. suggestion). To deal with this type of

Next, the distributions in Figure 2 also show that the *how about* construction can take a wider variety of dependent categories than the *what about* construction. To be more specific, certain dependent categories such as AdjP, VP[inf], and VP[base] are only found with the *how about* construction, but not with the *what about* construction, although their frequency numbers are not statically significantly different for the first two dependent categories (p-value = 0.2486 for AdjP; p-value = 0.4987 for VP[inf]; p-value = 0.0038 for VP[base]).

Another intriguing observation we can make from the distributions in Figure 2 is that some dependent categories occur more frequently with the *how about* construction than the *what about* construction. In particular, dependent categories like subordinate clause, S, VP[base], and VP[-*ing*] show such a tendency and their frequency numbers are statistically significantly higher with the *how about* construction than with the *what about* construction (p-value = 0.0018 for subordinate clause; p-value < 0.0001 for S; p-value = 0.0037 for VP[base]; p-value < 0.0001 for VP[-*ing*]). Note here that one important commonality about these dependent categories is that they all denote a proposition, containing a verb.[7]

We also investigated the illocutionary functions of the *what about* and *how about* construction examples extracted from COCA, making a broad dichotomy between the pure inquiry function on the one hand as in (4) and the suggestion function on the other as in (1f). Figure 3 shows us these patterns of the identified *what about* and *how about* construction examples and representative examples are given in (10) and (11):[8]
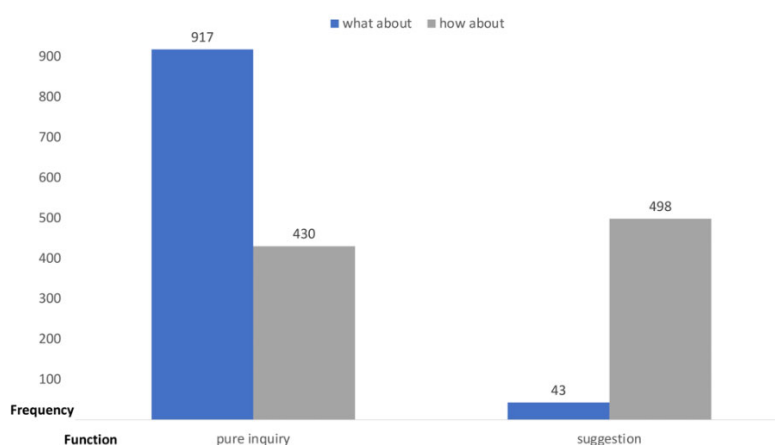

Figure 3. Distributions of *what about* and *how about* Examples from COCA by Illocutionary Functions

(10) a. And who had just been with the baby? John Pudelski. But *what about* [the ER doctor who had diagnosed the baby with SIDS, even written it on her death certificate]? (COCA 2001 SPOK) (*what about* with a pure inquiry function)

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frequency data distribution, Fisher's exact test is the simplest but still powerful enough. We leave it to future research to examine the data with other more complicated statistical analyses.

[7] One exception is those *what about* and *how about* construction examples with a small clause (SC) dependent. This may be because such cases are rather rarely used in the two constructions in general in a similar manner to the ones with a VP[inf] dependent.

[8] The total frequency numbers in Figure 3 are lower than the total frequency numbers of the identified *what about* and *how about* construction examples. This is due to the fact that some examples have a third illocutionary function aside from the two, the pure inquiry function and the suggestion function. For the third illocutionary function of the *what about* and *how about* constructions, see the discussion of the constructions with an NP dependent in Section 4.2.3.

b. "*What about* [TV or movies], Heinrich? Or even Nintendo? Just something, you know, to get your mind off itself." (COCA 2006 FIC) (*what about* with a suggestion function)

(11) a. I'm thirsty. *How about* [you]? Want to get something to drink? (COCA 2002 FIC) (*how about* with a pure inquiry function)

b. Hey, girlie. Woooo baby, *how about* [a kiss]? (COCA 2010 FIC) (*how about* with a suggestion function)

The results in Figure 3 show that the *what about* construction has an overwhelming preference for the pure inquiry function as in (10a) over the suggestion function as in (10b) but the *how about* construction does not exhibit such a tendency and it rather favors the suggestion function as in (11b) slightly more than the pure inquiry function as in (11a). Their distributional difference is statistically significant (*p*-value < 0.0001), indicating that the frequency number of pure inquiry function examples is higher for the *what about* construction than for the *how about* construction and conversely, the frequency number of suggestion function examples is higher for the *how about* construction than for the *what about* construction. This observation is then inconsistent with the previous claim that both the constructions are frequently and interchangeably used, in particular, with a suggestion function (Malá 2000, Quirk et al. 1985, Shopen 1974, Sonoda 2009).

Thus far, we have discussed the overall distributions of a total of 961 *what about* construction examples and 956 *how about* construction examples extracted from COCA with respect to registers, dependent categories, and illocutionary functions. The corpus-based observations we have made here indicate that the two constructions show similar or the same behavior in terms of register preferences and dominant dependent categories for NP and VP[-*ing*] while they display different behavior with regard to their preference tendency for NP and other proposition-denoting dependent categories, and their overall illocutionary function distributions. In what follows, we explore authentic uses of the *what about* and *how about* constructions with each dependent category type, providing a more detailed analysis of their similarities and differences.

4.2 Corpus-based Observations by Dependent Category Types

In discussing the detailed authentic uses of the *what about* and *how about* constructions on the basis of dependent categories, we begin with examples selecting minor dependent categories whose frequency numbers are comparatively low. We then move on to the discussion of examples with proposition-denoting categories as their dependents and finally those with NP dependents whose frequency numbers are the highest.

4.2.1 Minor Types

The minor types include AdjP, AdvP, and PP dependents. These syntactic categories do not denote propositions and their occurrences are rather infrequent.

AdjP dependent: With no *what about* construction example taking an AdjP dependent, there are only two *how about* construction examples with an AdjP dependent, as shown in (12):

(12) a. STEVE: Forget it Dwight, you've always got somebody else to blame. It's about running a business. I took a gamble hiring you.
DWIGHT: Gamble? Harvard Law school. Boston's best law firm.

STEVE: Oh yeah, *how about* [drunk and disorderly], and an order of protection against you? (COCA 2007 FIC)

b. Mr. WILL: How I explain that? There's an old saying in baseball. "Good pitching beats good hitting and vice-versa." In fact, they were outhit, outfielded and outpitched over four games.
Mr. DONALDSON: But they were the-
Mr. CARTER: But *how about* [outmanaged]?
Mr. WILL: No. (COCA 1990 SPOK)

In each of these *how about* construction examples, the AdjP dependent has a predicative use, not an attributive use, and both of the examples involve a pure inquiry function, not a suggestion function. For instance, in (12a), Steve uses the *how about* construction to ask the addressee, Dwight, for an opinion about when he was drunk and disorderly given the preceding context where he brags about himself. In (12b), Mr. Carter asks Mr.Will for additional information as to whether they were outmanaged given the statement that they were outhit, outfielded, and outpitched over four games in the preceding context.

AdvP dependent: When the *what about* and *how about* constructions occur with an AdvP dependent, the AdvP describes a time, location, or manner, as illustrated in the following:

(13) a. He had a Helix event this morning, but *how about* [later]? Any time this week? (COCA 2013 FIC)
b. LYLE: Where are you going?
KAREN: Away.
LYLE: *How about* [far, far away]?
KAREN: The farther the better. (COCA 2003 FIC)
c. "... But the possible homicide is secondary, as far as we're officially concerned." "*What about* [unofficially]?" (COCA 2000 FIC)

Out of five *what about* construction examples with an AdvP dependent, two take a temporal AdvP, another two take a manner AdvP, and one takes a locative AdvP. Similarly, out of five *how about* construction examples with an AdvP dependent, three combine with a temporal AdvP while the rest two involve a locative AdvP and a manner AdvP, respectively.

One apparent difference between the *what about* and *how about* construction examples with an AdvP dependent, however, is observed in terms of their preferred functions. Consider the examples below:

(14) a. Although she hadn't had any noticeable deficits earlier, *what about* [now]? (COCA 2003 FIC) (*what about* with a pure inquiry function)
b. PRESIDENT: I'm sorry, I just can't hear you.
DR. EVIL: (louder) *How about* [now]? (COCA 1999 FIC) (*how about* with a pure inquiry function)
c. We'll pick a direction. *How about* [counterclock wise]? (COCA 2015 FIC) (*how about* with a suggestion function)

The *what about* construction example in (14a) is used to make a question with respect to her situation about noticeable deficits at the utterance time. All five *what about* construction examples involve this type of pure inquiry function. In a similar vein, the *how about* construction example in (14b) is used to make a question in terms of the hearing situation at the utterance time, exhibiting a pure inquiry function. On the other hand, the *how about*

construction example in (14c) is used to make a suggestion about picking a counterclockwise direction. Out of five *how about* construction examples, two have a pure inquiry function whereas three have a suggestion function. Nevertheless, the frequency difference between the *what about* and *how about* constructions with an AdvP dependent in terms of illocutionary functions does not reach statistical significance or it can be taken to be marginal at most (*p*-value = 0.0833).

PP dependent: The *what about* and *how about* construction examples with a PP dependent can be classified into several different types based on the meaning of the PP dependent, as demonstrated below:

(15) a. Epstein answers the first time with a question, "Again?" He is asked a second time and again answers with a question, "While I was a teacher?" The attorney says, "Yes, let's start with that question" and Epstein gives a solid "no." The attorney presses "*How about* [after]?" and Epstein says, "Not that I remember." (COCA 2019 MAG)

b. Who gets the most attention in your family? The girls or the boys? And *what about* [in school]? (COCA 1996 SPOK)

c. "For a case of beer, I'll get you to town." # "*How about* [for a six-pack]?" Carla says. (COCA 2019 FIC)

d. ... So in the individual rights area, I think what happened was it was more of a consolidation of what's already gone before, rather than striking out in new directions.
MARGARET-WARNER: And *what about* [on the issue], staying with you John Yoo, for a minute, of the separation of church and state? (COCA 2000 SPOK)

For both the *what about* and *how about* constructions, when they combine with a PP dependent, the most dominant PP type is of a locative one as in (15b). In 10 out of 16 *what about* construction examples and 14 out of 23 *how about* construction examples, the PP dependent denotes a location. A Fisher's exact test confirms that the frequency number of *what about* construction examples with a locative PP is not statistically significantly different from that of *how about* construction examples with a locative PP in relation to the examples with other types of PP dependent (*p*-value = 1; *what about* with a locative PP: 10 instances vs. *what about* with other types of PP: 6 instances; *how about* with a locative PP: 14 instances vs. *how about* with other types of PP: 9 instances). The next prevalent type of PP dependent is the one where the non-temporal/locative preposition has its own meaning for both the *what about* and *how about* constructions. For instance, as in (15c), the preposition *for*, introducing the PP dependent in the *how about* construction example, has a purpose meaning, which is specified to the preposition. Such a PP dependent type is seen in three *what about* construction examples and six *how about* construction examples. The rest include examples as in (15d) where the preposition bears no meaning on its own and one example with a temporal PP dependent as in (15a).

The *what about* and *how about* construction examples with a PP dependent also show similar tendency for their preference for the pure inquiry function over the suggestion function.

(16) a. Ted Elmore: ... We want to prevent something bad from happening, if we can.
JUDY-WOODRUFF: Ted Elmore, *what about* [in your community in Texas]? I mean, are you going so far as to make sure there are armed guards around the church? (COCA 2019 SPOK) (*what about* with a pure inquiry function)

b. VAN-SUSTEREN: Any idea how many people were at the two tea parties you attended? I mean, we tried to do some crowd guessing, but we were painfully unable to do it here. *How about* [in South

Carolina]? Can you estimate your numbers there? (COCA 2009 SPOK) (*how about* with a pure inquiry function)

c. Let's eat. # You're hungry? # No, but you should eat. You need your strength. # He puts his hand on my arm. # *How about* [over there]? He points to a single - wide trailer painted with sea creatures and coral. (COCA 2011 FIC) (*how about* with a suggestion function)

16 *what about* construction examples with a PP dependent are all used with a pure inquiry function as in (16a). Out of 23 *how about* construction examples, 18 are used with a pure inquiry function as in (16b) and the rest 5 are used with a suggestion function as in (16c). Once again, although their preference patterns may look different at first glance, a Fisher's exact test reveals that their frequency difference is not statistically significant or it is just marginal at most (*p*-value = 0.0660).

The observations about the *what about* and *how about* construction examples with minor dependent categories overall show that the two constructions are more similar than different with respect to the preferred subtype(s) for each dependent category and the preference for the pure inquiry function over the suggestion function. They also indicate that their superficial differences are not statistically significant or marginal at best.

4.2.2 Proposition-denoting Types

The *what about* and *how about* constructions also occur with some dependents whose syntactic categories denote propositions and they include subordinate clause, sentence, small clause (SC), VP[base], and VP[-*ing*]. As noted earlier, one interesting observation about these examples concerns their overall preference for the *how about* construction over the *what about* construction, except for the ones with an SC dependent.

Subordinate clause dependent: The *what about* and *how about* construction examples contain several types of subordinate clauses as in (17):

(17) a. "*How about* [if I personally handle all your paperwork from now on]?" (COCA 2011 FIC)

b. "He's been afraid of you for years, Eric, too afraid to kill you, and too afraid to really do anything to me when you were around." # "When I was around? *What about* [when I wasn't around]?" I yelled. "What then?" (COCA 2009 FIC)

c. "... I want different things." # "*What about* [what I want]?" (COCA 2018 FIC)

d. ANSWERS WOULD SEEM TO come readily enough. *How about* [because the score is marked "Slowly and languishingly" ("Langsam und schmachtend")]? (COCA 1996 NEWS)

The two constructions take a conditional *if*-clause as in (17a), a temporal subordinate clause introduced by *when* or *after* as in (17b), a free relative clause as in (17c), or a reason *because*-clause as in (17d). Although each of the two constructions occurs with diverse types of subordinate clause dependents, they display different preference patterns. Out of 15 *what about* construction examples with a subordinate clause dependent, the most frequent type involves the temporal one (six instances), followed by the conditional *if*-clause (four instances). On the other hand, out of 35 *how about* construction examples with a subordinate clause dependent, the most frequent type is the conditional *if*-clause dependent (26 instances), followed by the temporal one (six instances). The distribution of *what about* and *how about* construction examples with a subordinate clause dependent by subordinate clause types then indicates that there is no dominant subordinate clause dependent type in the *what about* construction whereas the conditional *if*-clause is the most dominant type in the *how about* construction. Statistical analysis with a

Fisher's exact test reveals that the conditional *if*-clause occurs statistically significantly more frequently in the *how about* construction than in the *what about* construction (*p*-value = 0.0023).

The two constructions with a subordinate clause dependent also show different behavior with respect to their preferred illocutionary functions. Observe the following examples:

(18) a. GAU: Well, April Fools Day is a day for pranks online, just like in the real world. The thing is, though, they're not so funny online because they can really cause some damage, viruses, e-mail scams, Internet hoaxes. In the case of viruses, they could potentially delete files on your computer or steal information from you.
PHILLIPS: *What about* [if you're a parent]? Will you tell me about this filtering software that you can get now? (COCA 2001 SPOK) (*what about* with a pure inquiry function)
b. UNIDENTIFIED-MALE: Were you crying when you were stabbing him?
ARIAS: I don't remember!
UNIDENTIFIED-MALE: *How about* [when you cut his throat], were you crying then?
ARIAS: I don't know! (COCA 2013 SPOK) (*how about* with a pure inquiry function)
c. FRANCESCA: Actually, no. I've got everything under control. I'd like to clean up myself a bit. I'm going to take a bath. Dinner'll be ready in about a half hour.
ROBERT: *How about* [if I set the table]?
FRANCESCA: Sure. (COCA 1995 FIC) (*how about* with a suggestion function)

15 *what about* construction examples with a subordinate clause dependent are all used with a pure inquiry function as in (18a). In contrast, out of 35 *how about* construction examples with a subordinate clause dependent, 25 have a suggestion function while the rest 10 have a pure inquiry function. This suggests that when the two constructions select a subordinate clause dependent, the *what about* construction is dominantly used with a pure inquiry function whereas the *how about* construction is preferably used with a suggestion function. Statistical analysis with a Fisher's exact test supports for this tendency difference in terms of their preferred functions (*p*-value < 0.0001).

Sentence dependent: As observed earlier, the sentence dependent favors the *how about* construction over the *what about* construction with 55 instances for the former and only one instance for the latter.

An additional intriguing fact about these examples concerns the subject forms. The subject is a first or second person pronoun in 49 *what about* and *how about* construction examples as in (19); a third person subject appears only in seven examples as in (20):

(19) a. Hey, *how about* [I swing by Costas on the way home, and pick up some wings for lunch]? (COCA 1995 FIC)
b. "*What about* [we do this]," Minouche said. (COCA 2017 FIC)
c. "*How about* [you join my staff]? Why don't you take a few days and think about it?" (COCA 2017 MAG)

(20) a. They weren't bothered that Obama spending spree caused the CBO to suddenly increase spending projections by $5.3 trillion. *How about* [Obama will more than double the national debt that Bush nearly doubled]? (COCA 2010 SPOK)

b. I'm trying to figure out why we only talk about these things when it's black on white or white on black. Like Al Sharpton said, if it was white on black crime we'll be talking – *how about* [it's a bad thing]? *How about* [it's an evil practice]. People should condemn it across the board. (COCA 2013 SPOK)

Related to this, the distinction of the *what about* and *how about* construction examples with a sentence dependent based on the subject forms has a strong correlation with the illocutionary functions. That is, all those with a first or second person pronoun subject as in (19) are used with a suggestion function. Meanwhile, all those with a third person subject as in (20) are used with a pure inquiry function.[9]

Thus, the *what about* and *how about* construction examples with a sentence dependent show a dichotomy in two important respects: 1) a strong preference for the *how about* construction over the *what about* construction, and 2) their distribution based on illocutionary functions in relation to the subject forms.

Small clause dependent: As noted earlier, unlike the other proposition-denoting dependent types, the small clause dependent occurs more frequently in the *what about* construction (five instances) than in the *how about* construction (three instances).

The two constructions seem to display similar patterns in terms of their preferred illocutionary functions. Observe the examples below:

(21) a. "Do you deny that you've been giving the same lectures for over ten years and that you only make sketchy comments on students' papers?" "Yes, I do deny it." And that wasn't strictly a lie, because it was true that he was making a denial, wasn't it? "I... give each paper the comments it needs. Some papers need a lot and some don't." "*What about* [your not keeping your office hours]?" (COCA 1991 FIC) (*what about* with a pure inquiry function)

b. Quick quiz: Close your eyes and rattle off the first images from this year's movies that pop up. Is there a Bat, a Cat or a Penguin? *How about* [Mel Gibson and Danny Glover opening fire]? Or Wayne and Garth about to hurl? (*how about* with a pure inquiry function)

c. I gesture with my hands for Melanie to remove the earphones. She hesitates slightly but ultimately complies. "Melanie, your father called. He can't get away. *How about* [you and me taking a drive down the coast]? We could even spend the night somewhere if we feel like it." (*how about* with a suggestion function)

All five *what about* construction examples involve a pure inquiry function as in (21a); two *how about* construction examples are used with a pure inquiry function as in (21b) while one *how about* construction example is used with a suggestion function. A Fisher's exact test also shows that their distributions by functions are not statistically different (*p*-value = 0.3750).

VP[base] dependent: The VP[base] dependent is only found in the *how about* construction (eight instances), but not in the *what about* construction. Note first that in typical cases the VP[base] without its overt subject has an imperative mood on its own, which is closely associated with a suggestion function (e.g., *Work harder!/Sleep a little more!*). It is then predicted that *how about* construction examples with a VP[base] dependent are used with

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[9] Another factor that comes into play here is associated with the tense information of the sentence dependent. All the examples with a sentence dependent involving a suggestion function contain a present tense verb; however, it is not necessarily the case for those involving a pure inquiry function.

a suggestion function rather than a pure inquiry function and this prediction is indeed borne out. With this in mind, consider the examples in (22):

(22) a. "*How about* [come here], and then we'll go down to dinner." # "Let's eat up there, then. I don't want to come up and then go down again" (COCA 1998 FIC) (*how about* with a suggestion function)

   b. GUTFELD: ... Kimberly, people thought it was a parody. Isn't that the worst insult you can pay to somebody when you did this on purpose?
   GUILFOYLE: Yes, did on purpose. Yes, exactly. And I don't understand. We still talk about this whole situation. *How about* [keep taxes low]. *How about* [keep regulations low]? Let's stimulate the economy. What about the rising tide? Let the free market operate. That's a proven formula. This other nonsense is just getting us in trouble over time. (COCA 2014 SPOK) (*how about* with a pure inquiry function)

Seven *how about* construction examples with a VP[base] dependent involve a suggestion function as in (22a) and the only exception is the one given in (22b), which has a pure inquiry function. Note, however, that in (22b), the VP[base] dependents in the *how about* construction are quotes, instead of imperatives directed by the speaker to the addressee(s). Therefore, if we exclude exceptional examples like this, the generalization seems to be that the *how about* construction with a VP[base] dependent is used with a suggestion function.

VP[-*ing*] dependent: Once again, with respect to the frequency numbers, we have seen earlier that the *how about* construction with a VP[-*ing*] dependent occurs more frequently than its *what about* construction counterpart.

The two constructions show contrasting preference patterns for illocutionary functions as well, although each of them can be used with two different illocutionary functions, as exemplified in (23) and (24):

(23) a. Opinion: Indexing for retirees' life expectancy could help fix Social Security's finances # We index Social Security benefits for inflation. *What about* [indexing for life expectancy]? # Getty Images # Concerns about Social Security never seem to disappear. (COCA 2019 MAG) (*what about* with a pure inquiry function)

   b. Then a twist on her idea hit me. "Maybe I could make them better hunters," I said, stalling to consider the twist. "But Vic tells us there won't be many animals around to hunt." # "*What about* [making klomus reproduce faster]?" # Vic snorted. "And what would they eat? Rebalancing an ecosystem is no simple matter." (*what about* with a suggestion function)

(24) a. Won't be seeing him until dinner, she thought. Alex had done her best, but there was no denying that resentment had begun to set in. These early-morning departures were getting old. When was the last time we enjoyed coffee in bed? Or *how about* [just sleeping in]? But she felt no anger, more a sense of loss. (COCA 2015 FIC) (*how about* with a pure inquiry function)

   b. Now you've gotten my life history, *how about* [telling me about yourself]? (COCA 1991 FIC) (*how about* with a suggestion function)

Despite the two functions available for each of the constructions with a VP[-*ing*] dependent, the *what about* construction is more frequently used with a pure inquiry function as in (23a) (25 instances) than with a suggestion function as in (23b) (10 instances); in contrast, its *how about* construction counterpart is more frequently used with a suggestion function as in (24b) (71 instances) than with a pure inquiry function as in (24a) (11 instances). Their preference difference is, in fact, statistically supported. A Fisher's exact test reveals that their frequency difference

is statistically significant (p-value < 0.0001). In other words, statistically, the *what about* construction with a VP[-*ing*] dependent and a pure inquiry function occurs more frequently than its *how about* construction counterpart; conversely, statistically, the *how about* construction with a VP[-*ing*] dependent and a suggestion function occurs more frequently than its *what about* construction counterpart.

The facts we have observed about the *what about* and *how about* construction examples with proposition-denoting dependent categories indicate that the two constructions are more different than similar in terms of overall frequency numbers for each dependent category, the favored subtype(s) for each dependent category, and the preference for one illocutionary function over the other. Almost all of their differences are indeed supported from statistical analysis and such behavior is in sharp contrast with the general tendency we noted with minor dependent categories. The observations made so far, therefore, suggest that it is worthwhile to examine the two constructions on the basis of dependent category types, casting doubt on the previous view that they are commonly interchangeably used.

4.2.3 NP Dependent

The *what about* and *how about* construction examples with an NP dependent deserve special attention, since they account for the majority in each of the constructions and previous literature has mainly focused on such examples. Furthermore, some of these examples have a third illocutionary function in addition to the two we have discussed thus far with examples involving non-NP dependents. The attested corpus examples can be first classified depending on the NP dependent types with a broad distinction between definite and indefinite NP dependents. Figure 4 shows the frequency numbers of the identified *what about* and *how about* construction examples with an NP dependent, depending on the types of the NP dependent, and some representative examples are presented in (25):
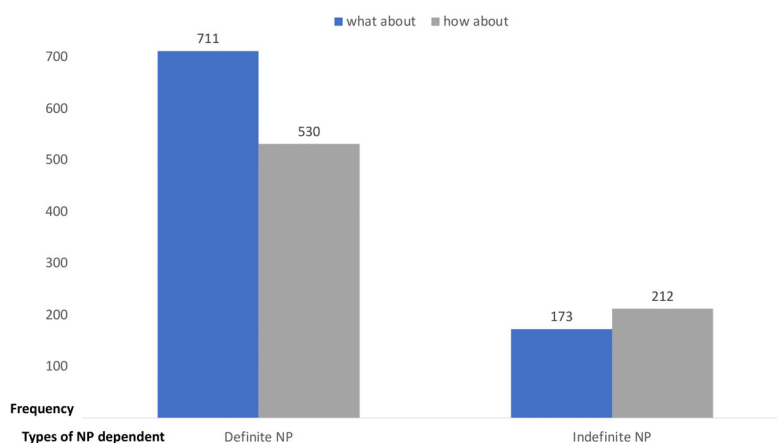

Figure 4. Distributions of *what about* and *how about* Examples with an NP Dependent from COCA by NP Dependent Types

(25) a. "That's impossible. *What about* [the radio signals]? The messages to the stars?" (COCA 1991 MAG)
  b. "Is she your girlfriend?" # "No, I don't have a girlfriend." # "*How about* [a job]?" (COCA 2015 FIC)

Definite NP dependents have subtypes such as canonical definite NPs with the definite article *the* or a possessive pronoun, proper nouns, pronouns, definite NPs with a demonstrative determiner (e.g., *this, that, these,* and *those*),

and other NPs with a definite meaning (e.g., *Monday, tomorrow,* and *noon*). In contrast, indefinite NPs include singular NPs with an indefinite article *a/an* or an indefinite quantifier *some* and plural countable NPs with and without an indefinite quantifier. This classification first shows that both constructions occur with a definite NP dependent much more frequently than with an indefinite NP dependent (*what about* construction: 711 instances vs. 173 instances; *how about* construction: 530 instances vs. 212 instances). Nevertheless, this preference is statistically stronger for the *what about* construction than for the *how about* construction. A Fisher's exact test reveals that the *what about* construction occurs with a definite NP statistically more frequently than the *how about* construction while the *how about* construction occurs with an indefinite NP statistically more frequently than the *what about* construction (*p*-value < 0.0001). This result is then just partially in line with the previous claim by Gottschalk (1992) that the *what about* construction tends to occur with a definite NP while the *how about* construction tends to occur with an indefinite NP.

Next, consider Figure 5, which provides the frequency numbers of the identified *what about* and *how about* construction examples with an NP dependent depending on the illocutionary functions, and representative examples for the types in (26) and (27):
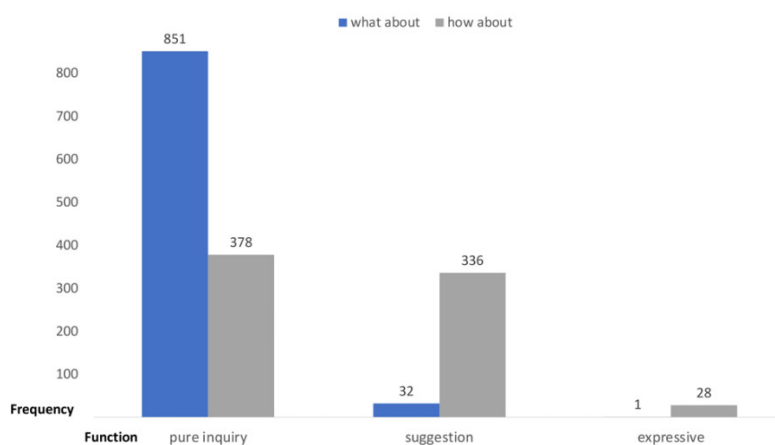

Figure 5. Distributions of *what about* and *how about* Examples with an NP Dependent from COCA by Illocutionary Functions

(26) a. "... He's keeping a brave face but I know he's heartbroken." # Lara Jean nodded sadly, "*What about* [the guy that did this to him]?" (COCA 2019 FIC) (*what about* with a pure inquiry function)

b. I tried to be precise, authoritative. "*What about* [this one] – blue and pink look good on you..." # "Do you think so? But I need one for my sister too.... Ask her how much it is." (COCA 1993 FIC) (*what about* with a suggestion function)

c. He'd say, 'What do you think about this, Meach? *What about* [that]?' I was real impressed. (COCA 1994 NEWS) (*what about* with an expressive function)

(27) a. Will your new computer still be up to the task two years from now? *How about* [one year]? (COCA 2002 MAG) (*how about* with a pure inquiry function)

b. He pulled her feet into his lap. "*How about* [a nap]? We've got a tight schedule ahead." (COCA 2000 FIC) (*how about* with a suggestion function)

    c. "Amanda Freeman has raised five hundred and forty-six dollars and fifty cents!" "*How about* [that]!"
        Smilin' Henry said. (COCA 1993 FIC) (*how about* with an expressive function)

As shown in Figure 5, in both *what about* and *how about* constructions, the pure inquiry function is more salient when they take an NP dependent. Nevertheless, a Fisher's exact test shows that when they take an NP dependent, the frequency number of *what about* construction examples with a pure inquiry function as in (26a) is statistically significantly higher than that of *how about* construction examples with a pure inquiry function as in (27a) (*what about* construction: 851 instances vs. *how about* construction: 378 instances; *p*-value < 0.0001). This further supports for the idea that the pure inquiry function is more dominant for the *what about* construction with an NP dependent than its *how about* construction counterpart.

In contrast, the suggestion function is more dominant for the *how about* construction than for the *what about* construction, when they combine with an NP dependent (*what about* construction: 32 instances vs. *how about* construction: 336 instances). A Fisher's exact test shows that the frequency number of *how about* construction examples with a suggestion function as in (27b) is statistically significantly higher than that of *what about* construction examples with a suggestion function as in (26b), when they take an NP dependent (*p*-value < 0.0001).

In the same manner, the expressive function is more prominent for the *how about* construction than for the *what about* construction, with an NP dependent (*what about* construction: 1 instance vs. *how about* construction: 28 instances). Note here that this illocutionary function is only observed with an NP dependent in these two constructions, in particular, with the demonstrative *that*, as in (26c) and (27c). The two constructions with an expressive function are used to emphasize that the given utterance or situation is impressive, surprising, or interesting. A Fisher's exact test reveals that the frequency number of *how about* construction examples with an expressive function is statistically significantly higher than that of *what about* construction examples with an expressive function (*p*-value < 0.0001).

We also examined the surrounding context for the *what about* and *how about* construction examples with an NP dependent, focusing on the conjunction types. The figure below shows the frequency numbers of the three most frequent conjunctions found with the *what about* and *how about* construction examples with an NP dependent.
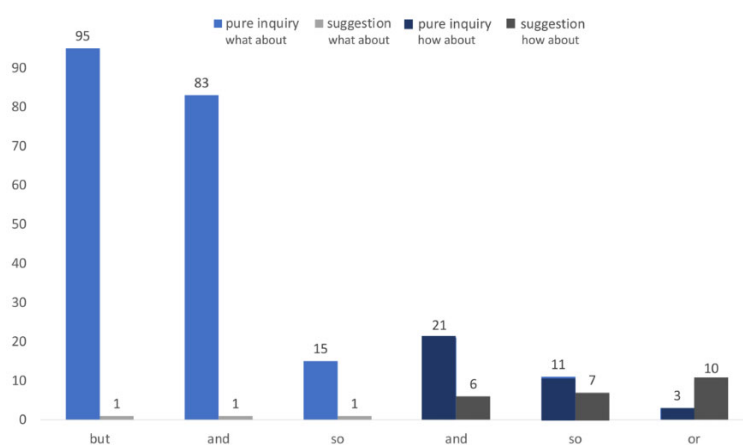

Figure 6. The Three Most Frequent Surrounding Conjunctions for *what about* and *how about*
Construction Examples with an NP Dependent from COCA

A variety of conjunctions are found with the *what about* and *how about* constructions when they select an NP dependent, such as *but, and, or, so,* and *then*. 225 *what about* construction examples with an NP dependent occur with a conjunction, accounting for 25%. However, only 88 *how about* construction examples with an NP dependent appear with a conjunction, taking 11.9%. Statistical analysis with a Fisher's exact test reveals that their difference is significant (p-value < 0.0001), meaning that statistically conjunctions are more frequently found with the *what about* construction with an NP dependent than its *how about* construction counterpart. Among the diverse conjunction types, the two constructions occur frequently with different sets of conjunctions as can be seen in Figure 6. Examples with the three most frequent conjunctions are given below:[10]

(28) a. BERNARD KALB: That's interesting economics, obviously, but *what about* [the charges of elitism, bias, a tilt toward liberalism]? (COCA 1995 SPOK)
b. And *what about* [the swelling grizzly populations in traditional areas]? (COCA 1998 MAG)
c. "So, *what about* [it], Major? Do you really think there is Yankee gold on the train?" (COCA 2006 FIC)

(29) a. And *how about* [those who can not pass the "taste test" but are humble, serving, and morally elegant people]? (COCA 1994 ACAD)
b. "So, *how about* [you]?" Hudge asked. (COCA 2003 FIC)
c. Maybe nuclear power, should we build more reactors? Or *how about* [the latest Supreme Court decision]? (COCA 2005 SPOK)

As shown in Figure 6, first, the *what about* construction examples with an NP dependent that occur with each of the top three conjunctions, *but, and,* and *so*, as in (28), overwhelmingly favor the pure inquiry function. Nevertheless, none of these cases shows an especially skewed preference for the pure inquiry function in comparison with the general distribution of the *what about* construction examples with an NP dependent based on their illocutionary functions, as noted in Figure 5. For instance, the distribution of *what about* construction examples with an NP dependent that occur with the conjunction *but* (i.e., pure inquiry function: 95 instances vs. suggestion function: 1 instance) is not statistically different from that of the rest *what about* construction examples with an NP dependent (i.e., pure inquiry function: 757 instances vs. suggestion function: 31 instances) (p-value = 0.2425). The same applies to the examples with the other two conjunctions (p-value = 0.3531 for the examples with *and*; p-value = 0.4485 for the examples with *so*).

The *how about* construction examples with an NP dependent that occur with the top three conjunctions, *and, so,* and *or*, as in (29), on the other hand, do not show uniform behavior, with regard to their distribution depending on their illocutionary functions. That is, the *how about* construction examples with an NP dependent that occur with the top two conjunctions *and* and *so* prefer the pure inquiry function while those that occur with the third most frequent conjunction *or* prefer the suggestion function. Statistically, the distribution of *how about* construction examples with an NP dependent that appear with these top three conjunctions show different behavior in relation

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[10] An anonymous reviewer found it interesting to observe that the conjunction *but* combines frequently only with the *what about* construction, but not with the *how about* construction. We also find it interesting and what we can observe from relevant data is that when the conjunction *but* appears along with the *what about* construction, the construction is typically used to ask the addressee to provide an opinion about a topic that has been already introduced or about a new but related topic. Once again, this is tightly associated with the preferred illocutionary function with the *what about* construction taking an NP dependent (i.e., pure inquiry function rather than suggestion function).

to the overall distribution of *how about* construction examples with an NP dependent on the basis of their illocutionary functions. To be more specific, the distribution of *how about* construction examples with an NP dependent that occur with the conjunction *and* (i.e., pure inquiry function: 21 instances vs. suggestion function: 6 instances) is statistically different from that of the remaining *how about* construction examples with an NP dependent (i.e., pure inquiry function: 357 instances vs. suggestion function: 330 instances) (*p*-value = 0.0097). This means that the former show a stronger preference for the pure inquiry function over the suggestion function than the latter. By contrast, examples with the conjunction *so* show no statistical difference (*p*-value = 0.6338) while those with the conjunction *or* show the reverse pattern in that they favor the suggestion function (*p*-value = 0.0460).

The authentic uses we have noted about the *what about* and *how about* constructions with an NP dependent indicate that they are rather different and that even when they show similar behavior, preference patterns are statistically stronger for one construction than the other. Taken together, these then suggest that the two constructions should not be regarded as being interchangeably used and lend further support to the view that it is important to investigate the constructions based on dependent category types.

5. Conclusion

In this paper we have examined real life uses of the so-called *what about* and *how about* constructions on the basis of attested corpus data from COCA. The corpus-based observations with statistical analysis we have made point to the conclusion that the two constructions should be distinguished, even though they show some common properties, providing a justification for a more fine-grained analysis of the two constructions depending on dependent category types. For instance, overall, the two constructions show similar behavior in that both are frequently used in informal dialogue situations and take an NP dependent most dominantly. They also behave similarly with minor types of dependent categories in terms of subtypes for each dependent category and the preference for the pure inquiry function over the suggestion function with their superficial differences being statistically marginal at most. On the other hand, in general, they exhibit different behavior with proposition-denoting dependent categories and an NP dependent with respect to subtypes for each dependent category and the (stronger) preference for one illocutionary function over the other even with their apparent similarities being statistically significantly different. These observations do not countenance the claim in previous literature that the two constructions are just interchangeably used frequently with an NP dependent and VP[-*ing*] dependent to make a suggestion. The observations further indicate that in teaching the two constructions for learners of English, we should not just focus on their similar behavior in certain respects, but we should also teach them their different behavior with regard to their preferences depending on dependent categories.

The research presented here constitutes the first empirical study based on large, balanced corpus data to examine authentic uses of the *what about* and *how about* constructions. Our study can serve as a pioneer corpus-based research on the two irregular *wh*-question constructions, inviting further empirical (corpus-based or experimental) studies on diachronic developments of these two constructions, children's acquisition patterns of them, other understudied irregular *wh*-question constructions, and uses by native speakers of English and L2 learners (e.g., Korean learners of English).

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