Slash: A new coordinator in English and its behavior slash structure

Brent Woo
University of Washington
bwoo@uw.edu
brentwoo.com/research

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1 Introduction

1.1 Goals

- Describe slash, a new coordinator in English:
 - (1) Orange County cities are blocking projects because of **NIMBYism slash** selfishness.¹
 - (2) she was also my **receptionist slash research assistant** who was darned near becoming a fantastic skiptracer.²
 - (3) He's a part-time bartender slash ski instructor slash mountain guide.³
- Present documentation of, and data using, *slash*: which is what I argue is a **new** coordinator in Spoken English.
- Investigate the implications for the lexicon

1.2 Main questions

- · What does it mean?
- What is the category of *slash*?
- What is the syntactic behavior of slash?

Examples with endnote superscript are from the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA), mostly retrieved in September 2016.

2 Other examples of 'Spoken punctuation'?

"Names" of punctuation have moved productively into spoken language.

period / full stop⁴

- (4) "Esports is the future of competition. **Period**," UCI's Acting Director of Esports Mark Deppe says.⁵
- (5) No. He sent her out to go get a sandwich, **period**.⁶
- (6) There is an official order gone out from the pope that senior Vatican people are not to gossip with the media. **Full stop**.⁷

• quote 8

- (7) they have a new, **quote**, "strategy" to work with Congress on some things of mutual interest.⁹
- (8) It reads, **quote**, "It appears that I am now being unjustly victimized again." ¹⁰

• slash (New!)

[Examples from Spoken COCA]

- (9) Drew and I have shared **clients slash patients** countless times and there is kind of a tug-of-war.¹¹
- (10) PALIN: I think it's funny that the **cocktail circuit slash circuit** gives me a hard time for eating elk and moose.¹²
- (11) the thing that has fueled me more than anything in my career is being a **Canadian slash British** actor¹³
- (12) we're going to get an exclusive look inside the small box off which **magician slash contortionist slash performance artist** David Blaine is going to step tomorrow for 44 days.¹⁴
- (13) I'm going to, for, for my money, for my **entertainment slash education** dollar, I'm probably going to spend a little bit more time writing¹⁵
- (14) This is the kitchen slash washroom. 16
- (15) CHRIS-CUOMO-1-ABC: (Off-camera) I hear that a 20-something-year-old is having some kind of **friendship**, **slash**, **sexual relationship** with another man, what do I think?¹⁷

slash differs substantially from the 'mere' punctuation (that is, </>), and a good number of corpus examples are from published (print) media.

3 Meaning

The meaning of *slash* is most usefully compared to the meaning of *and*. *and*, when coordinating two N, is sometimes ambiguous between an INTERSECTIVE reading and a COLLECTIVE reading.

- (16) Intersective and = denotes one individual
 - a. That liar and cheat cannot be trusted.

(Champollion 2016)

b. **My friend and colleague** always sang too loudly.

(Heycock & Zamparelli 2005)

- (17) Collective *and* = denotes multiple individuals
 - a. The farmer and X-ray technician both claimed the right to asylum.
 - b. **My mom and dad** were always shouting at each other.

(Heycock & Zamparelli 2005)

slash can appear in only the intersective contexts, denoting one and the same individual.

- (18) Intersective slash = denotes one individual
 - a. That liar slash cheat cannot be trusted.
 - b. **My friend slash colleague** always sang too loudly.
- (19) * Collective slash = denotes multiple individuals
 - a. * The farmer slash X-ray technician both claimed the right to asylum.
 - b. * My mom slash dad were always shouting at each other.

Corpus examples support this interpretation.

- (20) This is the **kitchen slash washroom**.
- (21) the thing that has fueled me more than anything in my career is being a **Canadian** slash British actor

Additionally, there is a distinction between simple compounding / nominal juxtaposition and the use of *slash*, as shown in (22). Coordinated complex don't seem to be headed in the way that the compound is.

(22) I'm not a student-athlete, I'm an **athlete slash student**.

4 Category questions

4.1 slash is a coordinator

Coordinator is the most reasonable guess.

- Surface distribution is similar. It always links two similar, nominal terminals (N, A), but there are examples of higher categories (DP, NP), and even possibly verb phrases (VP).
- **Monosyndetic**, like English. (one coordinator per pair of coordinands). Iteration doesn't necessarily create subordinate relations.
 - (23) David Blaine is a magician slash showman slash entertainer slash musician.

(24)

- Distributed modifiers: my modifies both.
 - (25) Is my **bowl slash spoons** still in the dishwasher?.
 - (26) Is my **bowl and spoons** still in the dishwasher?.
- **Argument by definition**: "Coordinating constructions can be identified on the basis of their symmetry: A construction [A B] is considered coordinate if the two parts A and B have the same status, whereas it is not coordinate if it is asymmetrical and one of the parts is clearly more salient or important, while the other part is in some sense subordinate." (Haspelmath 2004: 3)
- **Meta-awareness of** *slash* **as a word** People have clear meta-awareness of *slash*. This newsreporter consciously comments on *slash*, in the context of coordinators:
 - (27) GRACE: Welcome back. We are live at the Provo courthouse, bringing you the latest in the trial of Martin MacNeill, a **doctor slash lawyer I've got to add some more <u>slashes</u> slash Sunday school teacher, slash bishop**, who is accused of murdering his wife. ¹⁸
- **Apparent repair**. Below in (28) and (29), we see examples of *slash* occurring with other coordinators, *or* and *and*, respectively. The discourse context makes it likely that this is repair, and not a type of juxtaposition.
 - (28) KEMAL-KIRISCI: The conflict in Syria that sometimes has been defined in Turkey as a conflict between a regime that is **minority base or, slash**, **Alawite base**, vs. a Sunni majority, has had a spillover effect in Turkey.¹⁹

(29) GROSS: Well Artie, I really want to wish you the best in all ways and thank you so much for coming back to FRESH AIR and talking with us. And I wish you good health and good moods and some happiness. Thank you very much.

Mr-LANGE: Thanks, Terry. And I'll see you at **the NPR and slash Sirius** Christmas party I guess.²⁰

- Obeys constraint on semantic innclusion (Lang 1984). If A and B are coordinated, $A \not\subset B$, as in (30). This constraint doesn't hold for other categories, like prepositions (31).
 - (30) # John likes painting elephants {and | or | slash} animals.
 - (31) John likes painting elephants {beside | on | # with} animals.

Preposition is a plausible alternative.

- Takes a nominal complement.
- No: generally English allows P-stranding, but:
 - (32) a. [What] are those journalists on _? (NyQuil.)
 - b. * [What] are those journalists slash _? (Anchors.)
- No: absolutely no pied-piping, which P usually allow.
 - (33) a. ? [On what] are those journalists _?
 - b. * [Slash what] are those journalists _?
- No: *slash*-coordinands don't seem to be super-/sub-ordinate.

4.2 slash coordinates nominal heads (mostly)

Mostly nominal (N, A).

- (34) Just a sip of beer... that's what they serve these days at the **home slash beach** slash pub.²
- (35) Michael Scott: There are four kinds of business: tourism, food service, railroads, and sales.

(1) John likes painting elephants and animals in general.

¹ This subset constraint seems defeasible by *in general*.

² Mike Birbiglia. *My Girlfriend's Boyfriend*. 1:08:42.

(pause)

Michael Scott: And hospitals slash manufacturing. And air travel.³

- (36) The patient has a **teratoma slash neuroblastoma**.
- (37) He does American studies slash computational linguistics.
- (38) Is my **bowl slash spoons** still in the dishwasher?

But also verbal (These I'll set aside for now.)

- (39) A: What are you doing?
 - B: Office hours slash watching Olympics.
- (40) I forgot that you **lived slash work here**.

5 Behavior

5.1 Interaction with and

INTERACTION WITH NEGATION. Under negation, *slash* is most naturally interpreted just like *and*.

(41) Alex is not a lawyer or judge. (... He is an accountant.)

$$\neg L \wedge \neg J$$

(42) a. Alex is not a lawyer and judge. (... He is ONLY a lawyer.) $\neg(L \land J)$

b. Alex is not a lawyer slash judge. (... He is ONLY a (mere) lawyer.)
$$\neg(L \land J)$$

But there are some examples where distributivity is the more natural reading.:

(43) When you're not **married slash in a relationship**, it's incumbent on you to be proud of yourself for things.

$$\neg M \land \neg R$$

³ The Office (US). Season 3, Episode 16

5.2 Behavior like or

NO EXCEPTION TO THE LAW OF COORDINATION OF LIKES. The Law of Coordination of Likes is the name for the requirement that coordinands be of the same category (or "type") (Schachter 1977)

For and, or, category identity is too restrictive.

- (44) Pat is either stupid or a liar. \overline{ADJ} \overline{DP}
- (45) Pat is <u>a Republican</u> and <u>proud of it</u>.

 DP ADJ (Sag et al. 1985: 117)

Slash does not allow these exact exceptions to the LCL (but see below). Coordinands must be the same category, as the (b) examples show.

(46) a. Pat is stupid and a liar.

ADJ DP

b. * Pat is stupid slash a liar.

ADJ DP

- (47) a. Pat is a Republican and proud of it. \overline{DP} ADJP
 - b. * Pat is <u>a Republican</u> slash <u>proud of it</u>.

 DP ADJP
- (48) a. Svidrigailov brushed the question aside, gruffly and with loathing.

 ADV PP
 - b. * Svidrigailov brushed the question aside, gruffly slash with loathing.

 ADV PP

But there are some examples where violations of LCL are seen:

(49) When you're not married slash in a relationship, it's incumbent on you to be ADJ PP proud of yourself for things.

NO EXCEPTIONS TO THE COORDINATE STRUCTURE CONSTRAINTS.. Considering Lakoff-Weisser exceptions to the CSC, brute replacement of slash yields frightening ungrammaticality.

- (50) a. Here's the whiskey that John [went to the store] **and** [bought _].
 - b. * Here's the whiskey that John [went to the store] **slash** [bought _].
- (51) a. How many lakes can you [pollute _] **and** [not arouse public furor]?
 - b. * How many lakes can you [pollute _] slash [not arouse public furor]?

But, in these examples, (non-)grammaticality is bled by the fact that *slash* doesn't coordinate anything larger than VPs.

NO ITERATIVE INTENSIFICATION.

With adjectives, *and* allows total coordinand identity. This construction is a somewhat idiomatic but nevertheless productive use of *and*, and yields a particular "intensifying" reading. (Gleitman 1965) *slash* does not.

- (52) a. Garraty walked faster and faster.
 - b. * Garraty walked faster or faster.
 - c. * Garraty walked faster slash faster.

NO COMITATIVE OR COLLECTIVE MEANING.

There is no 'summative' property of *slash* that will license a collective, reciprocal, or similar predicates.

- (53) No comitative
 - a. James and Maria went to the wedding together.
 - b. * James or Maria went to the wedding together.
 - c. * James slash Maria went to the wedding together.
- (54) No collective (proper names)
 - a. Ethan and Laura met (each other) in semantics class.
 - b. * Ethan or Laura met (each other) in semantics class.
 - c. * Ethan slash Laura met (each other) in semantics class.
- (55) No collective (bare nouns)
 - a. A doctor and lawyer met.
 - b. * A doctor or lawyer met.
 - c. * A doctor slash lawyer met.
- (56) No swarm predicates
 - a. * John and Mary swarmed the garden.
 - b. * John slash Mary swarmed the garden.
 but
 - c. * The bees slash locusts swarmed the garden.

NO INTERNAL READINGS OF RELATIONAL MODIFIERS.. The internal reading of relational modifiers like *same*, *different*, which is the reading where the two agents are singing the same song *as each other*, is unavailable. The external reading is unaffected.

- (57) a. John and Mary sang the same song.
 - b. # John or Mary sang the same song.
 - c. # John slash Mary sang the same song.

5.3 Unique behavior

<u>ADJECTIVES</u>. When *slash*-ing adjectives, *slash* seems closer to *or* in allowing something bordering on disjunctive uncertainty. Consider these examples (adapted from Troseth 2009: 41), highlighted by sluicing:

- (58) a. * Mercury is a shiny and dangerous substance...
 - b. Mercury is a shiny or dangerous substance...
 - c. ? Mercury is a shiny slash dangerous substance... ...but I don't know which.

PROPER NAMES. While names readily combine with other coordinators, *slash* is not so permissive:

- (59) a. Kirk and Spock entered the bridge.
 - b. Kirk or Spock entered the bridge.
 - c. ? Kirk slash Spock entered the bridge.

<u>OBLIGATORY MONOSYNDETON / STRICT BINARITY</u>. Slash does allow more than two coordinands, but **unlike** and, or, it requires additional instances of slash. It is obligatorily monosyndetic: for N number of coordinands, there are N-1 number of slash.

(60) we're going to get an exclusive look inside the small box off which **magician slash contortionist slash performance artist** David Blaine is going to step tomorrow for 44 days.²¹

Unlike and, or, "all but last" omission is degraded. Prosody is stilted.

- (61) You are a magician, contortionist, **and** performance artist.
- (62) You are a magician, contortionist, **or** performance artist.
- (63) ?? You are a magician, contortionist, slash performance artist.

Consider *but*: similar to *slash* in the just-mentioned property (64). However, *but* in general does not allow many terms (65) – and cf. (60):

- (64) * You are a magician, contortionist, but performance artist.
- (65) * You are a magician, but contortionist, but performance artist.

BARE NOUN COORDINATION.

In an early stab at the semantics for coordination, Gazdar (1980) proposed straightforward generalized intersection and union for conjunction (*and*) and disjunction (*or*). Bergmann (1982) noted the intersection analysis of conjunction doesn't account for the collective reading (multiple individuals) that obtains with bare noun coordination (66).

- (66) A cat and dog ran in. (collective only; |animals| = 2)
- (67) That liar and cheat was licensed. (intersective)

or has only a disjunctive reading.

(68) A cat or dog ran in. (disjunctive only; |animals| = 1)

But *slash* acts like neither of these. With *slash*, we see a forced (potentially gruesome) intersective reading, likely unavailable in (66).

(69) A cat slash dog ran in. (intersective only; |animals| = 1)

The contrast is even clearer with this pair of examples. While (70) is ambiguous between meeting with two individuals or one, (71) is NOT ambiguous.

- (70) Meeting with your advisor **and** therapist can be therapeutic. [ambiguous]
- (71) Meeting with your advisor **slash** therapist can be therapeutic. [unambiguous]

slash is playing only intersective role, as opposed to the polysemous *and*. There is some work on the semantics of bare noun coordination, which could be explored using *slash* data.

- Heycock & Zamparelli (2005) noticed this ambiguity of conjunction of (bare) nominals as "joint" (= intersective) and "split" (= collective). Cross-linguistic evidence.
- Bruyn & de Swart (2012) propose a semantics for similar *split coordination structures*, and argue for a structure like:
 - a. $[_{CoordP} [_{DP} D NP]]$ and $[_{NP} NP]$
- Champollion (2016) gives a new semantic analysis of intersective bare nouns.

6 Summary and conclusion

Summary of the observations above. + means the property holds for that coordinator.

	and	or	slash
Interaction with negation	α	β	α , β
No exception to the Law of Coordination of Likes		+	+
No exception to the Coordinate Structure Constraint			+
No iterative intensification		+	+
No comitative meaning		+	+
No collective meaning (proper names)		+	+
No collective meaning (bare nouns)		+	+
No swarm predicates (sg. coordinands)	+	+	+
No internal readings of relational modifiers		+	+
Adjectives plus sluicing		+	+
Proper names			+
Strict binarity			+
Bare noun coordinands	collective/	disjunc.	intersec.
	intersective		only

- slash syntactically behaves more like or, yet has the semantics of intersective and.
- What seems to unify these observations is a constraint on reference: *slash* prefers strongly not to coordinate multiple referents.
- How do we represent this constraint in the grammar? Is this a syntactic or semantic constraint? Does *slash* prefer to connect N, over full DP noun phrase?
- The data show speakers prefer to connect small heads (N, A) to connecting full referential noun phrases (DP).
 - (72) a. A doctor slash lawyer entered the room.
 - b. * A doctor slash a lawyer entered the room.
- Toward proposing a syntax, we could evaluate the analyses in Bruyn & de Swart (2012). Is the structure of something like (72a) a full DP structure, a Coordination Phrase (CoordP) with ellipsis, or simply coordination of unlike constituents:
 - (73) $\left[_{DP} D \left[_{CoordP} NP_{\mathit{sg}} \text{ and } NP_{\mathit{sg}}\right]\right]$
 - (74) $[_{CoordP} [_{DP} D NP]$ and $[_{DP} \varnothing NP]]$
 - (75) $\left[_{\text{CoordP}}\right]_{\text{DP}}$ D NP] and $\left[_{\text{NP}}\right]$ NP]

7 A link to the lexicon

- *Slash* is an example of innovation in a "very-closed functional category", with the additional novelty of having an **orthographical source**.^{4,5}
 - (76) "& [the category of coordinators] may constitute the most exclusive of all categories; this thesis will work under the claim that only the so-called coordinating conjunctions (eg 'and' and 'or' in English, and marginally 'but') may head an &P" (Zoerner 1995: 14)
- **History**: "Coordinating conjunctions can thus originate as noun phrase links from comitative constructions, then spread to predicates and clauses." (but there are exceptions) (Mithun 1988: 350)
- Typology: "... many languages have category-sensitive coordinating constructions
 ... about half of the world's languages show different conjunctive constructions for
 nominal and verbal/clausal conjunction." (Haspelmath 2004: 10)
- "Constraints on the lexicalization of logical operators" (Katzir & Singh 2013): the authors discuss Horn (1972)'s generalization, a systematic generalization of what possible logical operators are realized. Connectives (such as *and, or, neither-nor* are fit into this Square of possibilities. If *slash* is a connective, where does it fit in?

8 Research agenda

- **Processing**. Conjunction is easier to process than disjunction. Where does *slash* fit?
- Acquisition of coordinators. (1) When is *slash* acquired? In English, coordination is first observed around 2;0-2;3, with more complex concepts like 'sequence' being expressed later (and the age ranges vary across languages). (Clancy 1976: 72). (2) In English, "reduced (phrasal) coordinations are not acquired productively until full unreduced sentential coordinations are acquired." (Lust 1980: 81) It doesn't seem likely that *slash*-coordinations are derived with coordination reduction at all.
- **Social index.** Does the use of *slash* index any social variables? Some responses to the judgment experiment indicated total rejection of *slash*. Is this age-graded?
- **Cross-linguistic:** are there any examples of this (or other spoken punctuation) in other languages? (e.g., Ru. τογκα /totſka/ 'period' has a similar use and function.)
- Other coordinators? and/or!

⁴ The Commonwealth term for </>, "virgule" has not similarly been adopted into spoken language.

⁵ The actual *cultural* origin is well-documented and very... niche.

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Notes

¹Tags: 2015 NEWS OrangeCR; URL: http://corpus.byu.edu/coca/x4.asp?t=4137622&ID=731859341

²Tags: 2014 FIC Bk:SeventhGraveNo; URL: http://corpus.byu.edu/coca/x4.asp?t=4160521&ID=768181274

³Tags: 2013 FIC Bk:MountainBetween; URL: http://corpus.byu.edu/coca/x4.asp?t=4160988&ID=767294356

⁴An intuition might be that these in spoken language are limited to American / Commonwealth Englishes, respectively, but there is one example shows that both are available to the same speaker and both can be juxtaposed, non-redundantly, for emphasis:

(77) EVANS: Now what you could say is you could compel them if you want to go to a doctor, use a hospital service, you have to have insurance to do that. That – if the law was structured that way, they might have more luck with it, but to say to someone you have to buy this, just **period, full stop**, as far as what can I understand is the essence and the core of the problem here. (Tags: 2012 (120325) New York magazines John Heilemann, CNNs Gloria Borger, New York Times David Leonhardt, CNBCs Kelly Evans discuss current events and politics SPOK: NBC_Matthews; URL: http://corpus.byu.edu/coca/x4.asp?t=4103732&ID=660489195)

⁵Retrieved from https://www.engadget.com/2016/09/14/esports-arena-college-uc-irvine-leage-of-legends/?s 9/15/16

⁶Tags: 2015 (150106) Did Princeton Grad Murder Millionaire Dad?; Cops Try To Identify Newborn Left To Die SPOK: CNN; URL: corpus.byu.edu/coca/x4.asp?t=4125698&ID=697031023

⁷Tags: 2005 (20050306) Critique of Worldwide Media Coverage SPOK: CNN_Intl, URL: http://corpus.byu.edu/coca/x²

⁸Quote itself has a basket of interesting properties. To mention a few: it can interrupt very small units, like breaking up an ADJ from its N as demonstrated in (7); its meaning of derision in (7); its meaning of verbatim but not necessarily spoken in (8). *Quote* might be the only kind of correlative spoken punctuation, with the possible correlate *unquote* used to help delimit the scope. Standard, intuitive usage simply flanks the material.

(78) One can not, as war correspondent Michael Herr testifies in dispatches, simply, **quote**, " run the film backwards out of consciousness," **unquote**.

- (Tags: 2015 (150120) In The Evil Hours, A Journalist Shares His Struggle With PTSD SPOK: NPR, URL:corpus.byu.edu/coca/x4.asp?t=4125904&ID=702812798)
- (79) bad topiary is, **quote**, the senseless torture of shrubs, **unquote**; (Tags: 2014 (140125) Not My Job: How Much Does A Former Hedge Fund Manager Know About Hedges? SPOK: NPR; URL: corpus.byu.edu/coca/x4.asp?t=4125017&ID=703922437)

There also exists a kind of Polish notation variant where the entire "quote-unquote" is uttered before the quotation, which is also not uncommon.

- (80) The last words in one of his emails was, quote, unquote, "You are not getting off that easy."
- (81) "That, I think, is much better than being **quote/unquote** 'religious,' " the crow said. (Sedaris, David. 2010 *Squirrel seeks chipmunk*. p.78)

There is no such variant for other correlatives constructions: *either or John Mary, *both and Tim Minh. Note also quote can stand on its own, while unquote cannot.

⁹Tags: 2015 (150104) Interview With Delaware Senator Chris Coons; SPOK: CBS, URL: corpus.byu.edu/coca/x4.asp?t=

¹⁰Tags: 2015 Royal Sex Scandal: Prince Andrew SPOK: CNN, URL:corpus.byu.edu/coca/x4.asp?t=4125774&ID=6957366

¹¹Tags: 2014 SPOK CNN; URL: http://corpus.byu.edu/coca/x4.asp?t=4124907&ID=695011767

¹²Tags: 2012 SPOK Fox OReilly; URL: http://corpus.byu.edu/coca/x4.asp?t=4104129&ID=660307479

¹³Tags: 2006 SPOK CBS_Morning; URL: http://corpus.byu.edu/coca/x4.asp?t=56186&ID=546789256

¹⁴Tags: 2003 SPOK ABC_GMA; URL: http://corpus.byu.edu/coca/x4.asp?t=65391&ID=547613660

¹⁵Tags: 1997 SPOK NPR Sunday; URL: http://corpus.byu.edu/coca/x4.asp?t=248688&ID=626851374

 16 Tags: 2007 SPOK ABC₂0/20; URL: http://corpus.byu.edu/coca/x4.asp?t=235116&ID=603515948

¹⁷Tags: 2010 (100521) THE MAN WHO HAD ENOUGH; MURDER ROCKS SMALL CALIFORNIA TOWN SPOK: ABC₂0/20; URL: corpus.byu.edu/coca/x4.asp?t=4072898&ID=688401248

¹⁸Tags: 2013 (131022) Facelift Murder Trial Day Five SPOK: CNN; URL: http://corpus.byu.edu/coca/x4.asp?t=412389

¹⁹Tags: 2012 (121121) PBS NewsHour For November 21, 2012 SPOK; PBS; URL: http://corpus.byu.edu/coca/x4.asp?t

 20 Tags: 2009 (090612) Comic Artie Lange On Being Too Fat To Fish SPOK: NPR $\,$ FreshAir; URL: <code>http://corpus.byu.edu/c</code>

²¹Tags: 2003 SPOK ABC_GMA; URL: http://corpus.byu.edu/coca/x4.asp?t=65391&ID=547613660

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