

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

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Plan

1. Introduction
2. Other examples of ‘spoken punctuation’
3. Meaning
4. Category questions
 - 4.1 slash is a coordinator
 - 4.2 slash coordinates nominal ‘heads’ (mostly)
5. Behavior
6. Summary and conclusion
7. A link to the lexicon
8. Research agenda

1. Introduction

- ▶ Describe *slash*, a new coordinator in English:
 - (1) Orange County cities are blocking projects because of **NIMBYism slash selfishness**.
 - (2) she was also my **receptionist slash research assistant** who was darned near becoming a fantastic skiptracer.
 - (3) He's a part-time **bartender slash ski instructor slash mountain guide**.
- ▶ 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

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 stop

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

quote

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

slash

[Examples from Spoken COCA]

- (9) Drew and I have shared **clients slash patients** countless times and there is kind of a tug-of-war.
- (10) PALIN: I think it's funny that the **cocktail circuit slash circuit** gives me a hard time for eating elk and moose.
- (11) 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.
- (12) 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 writing
- (13) 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?

3. Meaning

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 and 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 and 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.

slash is not compounding; this is not a contradiction:

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

4.1 *slash* is a coordinator

1. **Surface distribution.** Links two similar (usually) nominal ‘heads’.
2. **Monosyndetic**, like English. (one coordinator per pair of coordinands).
 - (23) David Blaine is a **magician slash showman slash entertainer slash musician.**

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3. Distributed modifiers.

(25) Is my **bowl slash spoons** still in the dishwasher?.

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- └ 4. Category questions
 - └ 4.1 slash is a coordinator

4. **Argument by definition.** “A construction [A B] is considered coordinate if the two parts A and B have the same status” (Haspelmath 2004)

5. **Meta-awareness of slash as a word.**

(27) 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 SLASHES – slash **Sunday school teacher, slash bishop**, who is accused of murdering his wife.

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4.2 slash coordinates nominal 'heads' (mostly)

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

└ 4. Category questions

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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

Comparing *slash* to other contexts where coordinators show up.

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.)

b. Alex is not a lawyer slash judge. (... He is ONLY a (mere) lawyer.)

$$\neg(L \wedge J)$$

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.

$$\neg M \wedge \neg R$$

No exception to the Coordinate Structure Constraint

(a) examples show Lakoff exceptions. (b) - *slash* doesn't work

- (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

“more and more” reading of *and*

- (52) a. Garraty walked faster and faster.
(Gleitman 1965)
- 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.

No comitative or collective meaning

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

(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.

(?) milling?

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.

Adjectives

When *slash*-ing adjectives, *slash* seems closer to *or* in allowing something bordering on disjunctive uncertainty. Consider these examples (adapted from Troseth 2009), 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.

Note this property likely subsumes many previous examples...

Strict binarity

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.

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.

Bare noun coordination

- ▶ Gazdar 1980: generalized intersection for conjunction (and)
- ▶ Bergmann 1982: intersection doesn't account for collective readings of bare noun coordination:

(66) A cat and dog ran in. (collective only; $|animals| = 2$)¹

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

¹cf. That liar and cheat was licensed.

(intersective)

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Bare noun coordination

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

Semantics of bare noun coordination

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

6. Summary and conclusion

	and	or	slash
Interaction with negation	α	β	α, β
No exception to the LCL			?
No exception to the CSC		+	+
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		+	+
No proper names			+
Strict binarity			+
Bare noun coordinands	coll./ inters.	disjunc.	inters. only

+ means the property holds for that coordinator.

- ▶ ***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 and 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) $[_{DP} D [_{CoordP} NP_{sg} \text{ and } NP_{sg}]]$

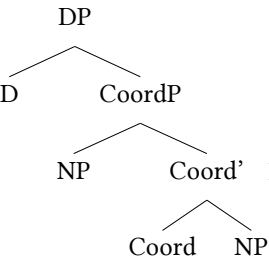
(74) $[_{CoordP} [_{DP} D NP] \text{ and } [_{DP} \emptyset NP]]$

(75) $[_{CoordP} [_{DP} D NP] \text{ and } [_{NP} NP]]$

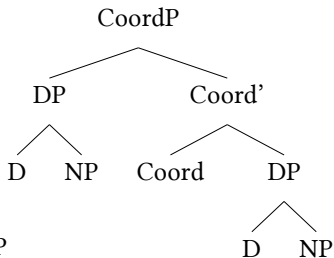
Bruyn and de Swart (2012) structures for bare coordination

- (73) $[_{DP} D [_{Co}$ (BdS give brackets, not trees
 My interpretation is asymmetric but could
 (74) $[_{CoordP} [_{D}$ be flat -BW)
 (75) $[_{CoordP} [_{DP} D NP]$ and $[_{NP} NP]$]

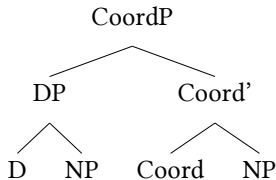
(73)



(74)



(75)



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**.

(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)

8. Research agenda

- ▶ **Processing.** Conjunction is easier to process than disjunction. How do speakers react to *slash* ?
- ▶ **Social index.** Does the use of *slash* index any social variables? **Some responses to a 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. точка /totʃka/ ‘period’ has a similar use and function.)
- ▶ **Other coordinators? *and/or*!**

References on handout.