

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

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This is a test. This is a test.

1 Introduction

Purpose

- Present documentation of and data using *slash*, what I argue is a **new coordinator** in English.
- Investigate the implications for the lexicon

Research 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 What does ‘spoken punctuation’ refer to?

everybody, uses commas, so Ill, use them, too,,,

I can. mix (up all? kinds of punctuation – in, my. writing! There” are lots, of rules; to learn? but. Im’ get’ting them in my head:

Punctuation, is? fun! (Flowers for Algernon. Orion. p.27)

- Interesting, but set aside for now:
 - Most punctuation generally serves to delimit text-organization chunks, and if they have a spoken/phonetic correlate, only in falling intonation or pause: periods, commas, semicolons, colons.
 - Suprasegmental “realization” of clausal punctuation: question marks, exclamation marks, parentheses, correlative m-dashes.

- No possible phonetic correlate: hyphens, apostrophes.
- Names of punctuation that have moved productively into spoken language. Examples are from Spoken COCA:
 - **period / full stop**¹
 - (1) “Esports is the future of competition. **Period**,” UCI’s Acting Director of Esports Mark Deppe says.²
 - (2) No. He sent her out to go get a sandwich, **period**.³
 - (3) There is an official order gone out from the pope that senior Vatican people are not to gossip with the media. **Full stop**.⁴
 - **quote**⁵
 - (4) they have a new, **quote**, “ strategy ” to work with Congress on some things of mutual interest.⁶
 - (5) It reads, **quote**, “ It appears that I am now being unjustly victimized again. ”⁷
 - **slash**
(Here we are.)

3 Meaning

4 Category questions

There are two: What category is *slash*, and what categories does it coordinate?

4.1 Category

- Coordinator is the most reasonable guess.
 - Seems mostly to link two similar, nominal categories (DP, NP, N, A), but there are examples of higher categories (VP).
 - Monosyndetic, like English. (one coordinator per pair of coordinands)
 - 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)
- Preposition is plausible candidate.
 - Takes a DP complement.
 - No: generally English allows P-stranding, but:
*What are those journalists slash _?

- No: absolutely no pied-piping, which P usually allow.
**[Slash what] are those journalists _?*.
- No: Coordinands don't seem to be super-/sub-ordinate.

4.2 Categories selected by it

Mostly nominal (N, A).

- (6) Just a sip of beer... that's what they serve these days at the **home slash beach slash pub**.¹
- (7) Michael Scott: There are four kinds of business: tourism, food service, railroads, and sales.
(pause)
Michael Scott: And **hospitals slash manufacturing**. And air travel.²
- (8) The patient has a **teratoma slash neuroblastoma**.
- (9) He does **American studies slash computational linguistics**.
- (10) Is my **bowl slash spoons** still in the dishwasher?

But also verbal

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

5 Syntactic behavior

People have clear meta-awareness of *slash*.

This newsreporter consciously comments on *slash*:

- (13) GRACE: Welcome back. We are live at the Provo courthouse, bringing you the latest in the trial of Martin MacNeill, a **doctor/lawyer – I've got to add some more slashes – slash Sunday school teacher, slash bishop**, who is accused of murdering his wife.⁸

The transcription is not informative enough to determine whether this is repair or perhaps asyndetic coordination (juxtaposition).

- (14) 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.⁹

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

² *The Office* (US). Season 3, Episode 16

- (15) 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.¹⁰
- (16) a. Kirk and Spock entered the bridge.
b. Kirk or Spock entered the bridge.
c. # Kirk slash Spock entered the bridge.

5.1 Obligatory monosyndeton

Slash appears to allow more than two coordinands. It is *monosyndetic*: for N number of coordinands, there are $N - 1$ number of *slash*.

- (17) 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.¹¹

However, its presence is obligatory. Unlike *and*, *or*, "all but last" omission is degraded.

- (18) I am a magician, contortionist, and performance artist.
(19) ?? I am a magician, contortionist, slash performance artist.

It is further unlike *but*, which never permits more than two coordinands, omission or not.

- (20) * I am a magician, contortionist, but performance artist.
(21) * I am a magician, but contortionist, but performance artist.

5.2 Complies with 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") (Schacter:1977)

For *and*, *or*, category identity is too restrictive.

- (22) Pat is either stupid or a liar.
(23) Pat is a Republican and proud of it. (Sag:1985)

Slash seems generally follow the LCL. Coordinands tend to be of the same category, as the (c) examples show.

- (24) a. Pat is stupid slash obnoxious.
b. Pat is a wreck slash a liar.

- c. * Pat is stupid slash a liar.
- (25) a. Pat is a Republican slash Independent.
- b. ? Pat is sick of his dog slash proud of it.
- c. * Pat is a Republican slash proud of it.³

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

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

5.3 Complies with the Coordinate Structure Constraint

Lakoff, Weisser exceptions to the CSC

Brute replacement of slash yields frightening ungrammaticality.

- (27) 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 _.
- (28) a. How many lakes can you pollute _ and not arouse public furor?
- b. * How many lakes can you pollute _ and note arouse public furor?

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

5.4 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.

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

5.5 No comitative function

- (30) a.
- b.

(31)

³ And this anaphoric *it* really does not work for me.

5.6 No internal reading of relational modifiers

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

6 Origin story

- Source: my argument is **orthographical source**.^{4,5}
- As orthography, </> only really works with N or A.
- 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)

7 Research agenda

- **Paradigm of coordinators.** Horn’s square of possible logical operators. Where does *slash* fit, and do we expect the other coordinators to semantically adjust to accomodate it?
- **Processing coordinators.** 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.
- **Other coordinators?** *and/or*!

Appendix

- (33) Spoken
- a. Drew and I have shared **clients slash patients** countless times and there is kind of a tug-of-war.¹²

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.

- b. PALIN: I think it's funny that the **cocktail circuit slash circuit** gives me a hard time for eating elk and moose.¹³
- c. the thing that has fueled me more than anything in my career is being a **Canadian slash British** actor¹⁴
- d. 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.¹⁵
- e. 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 writing¹⁶
- f. This is the kitchen slash washroom.¹⁷
- g. 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?¹⁸

(34) Print media

- a. Orange County cities are blocking projects because of **NIMBYism slash selfishness**.¹⁹
- b. she was also my **receptionist slash research assistant** who was darned near becoming a fantastic skiptracer.²⁰
- c. He's a part-time **bartender slash ski instructor slash mountain guide**, whose most valuable possession is a motorcycle.²¹
- d. I'm not a student-athlete, I'm an **athlete slash student**.²²
- e. This may well have been my first taste of **interracial slash bestial** humor,²³

Notes

¹An 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:

- (35) 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>)

²Retrieved from <https://www.engadget.com/2016/09/14/esports-arena-college-uc-irvine-leage-of-legends/?s=9/15/16>

³Tags: 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

⁴Tags: 2005 (20050306) Critique of Worldwide Media Coverage SPOK: CNN_Intl, URL: <http://corpus.byu.edu/coca/x4.asp?t=4125698&ID=697031023>

⁵*Quote* 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 (4); its meaning of derision in (4); its meaning of

verbatim but not necessarily spoken in (5). *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.

- (36) 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)
- (37) 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.

- (38) The last words in one of his emails was, **quote, unquote**, “ You are not getting off that easy. ”
- (39) “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.

- ⁶Tags: 2015 (150104) Interview With Delaware Senator Chris Coons; SPOK: CBS, URL: corpus.byu.edu/coca/x4.asp?t=
- ⁷Tags: 2015 Royal Sex Scandal: Prince Andrew SPOK: CNN, URL: corpus.byu.edu/coca/x4.asp?t=4125774&ID=6957366
- ⁸Tags: 2013 (131022) Facelift Murder Trial Day Five SPOK: CNN; URL: http://corpus.byu.edu/coca/x4.asp?t=412389
- ⁹Tags: 2012 (121121) PBS NewsHour For November 21, 2012 SPOK: PBS; URL: http://corpus.byu.edu/coca/x4.asp?t=
- ¹⁰Tags: 2009 (090612) Comic Artie Lange On Being Too Fat To Fish SPOK: NPR_FreshAir; URL: http://corpus.byu.edu/c
- ¹¹Tags: 2003 SPOK ABC_GMA; URL: http://corpus.byu.edu/coca/x4.asp?t=65391&ID=547613660
- ¹²Tags: 2014 SPOK CNN; URL: http://corpus.byu.edu/coca/x4.asp?t=4124907&ID=695011767
- ¹³Tags: 2012 SPOK Fox_OReilly; URL: http://corpus.byu.edu/coca/x4.asp?t=4104129&ID=660307479
- ¹⁴Tags: 2006 SPOK CBS_Morning; URL: http://corpus.byu.edu/coca/x4.asp?t=56186&ID=546789256
- ¹⁵Tags: 2003 SPOK ABC_GMA; URL: http://corpus.byu.edu/coca/x4.asp?t=65391&ID=547613660
- ¹⁶Tags: 1997 SPOK NPR_Sunday; URL: http://corpus.byu.edu/coca/x4.asp?t=248688&ID=626851374
- ¹⁷Tags: 2007 SPOK ABC_20/20; URL: http://corpus.byu.edu/coca/x4.asp?t=235116&ID=603515948
- ¹⁸Tags: 2010 (100521) THE MAN WHO HAD ENOUGH; MURDER ROCKS SMALL CALIFORNIA TOWN
SPOK: ABC_20/20; URL: corpus.byu.edu/coca/x4.asp?t=4072898&ID=688401248
- ¹⁹Tags: 2015 NEWS OrangeCR; URL: http://corpus.byu.edu/coca/x4.asp?t=4137622&ID=731859341
- ²⁰Tags: 2014 FIC Bk:SeventhGraveNo; URL: http://corpus.byu.edu/coca/x4.asp?t=4160521&ID=768181274
- ²¹Tags: 2013 FIC Bk:MountainBetween; URL: http://corpus.byu.edu/coca/x4.asp?t=4160988&ID=767294356
- ²²Tags: 2003 NEWS Denver; URL: http://corpus.byu.edu/coca/x4.asp?t=3069798&ID=221240607
- ²³Tags: 2013 FIC LiteraryRev; URL: http://corpus.byu.edu/coca/x4.asp?t=4162603&ID=756050365

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