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## Semantic headedness and categorisation of *-cum-* compounds

Ramón Martí Solano

### Abstract

Compounds such as *actress-cum-model*, *pub-cum-hotel* or *military-cum-religious* represent mainly an alternative construction to coordinative compounds of the *singer-songwriter* type. Although most of them are double-headed, some can show semantic left-headedness. We have detected six main semantic groups out of a corpus of 300 types of *-cum-* nominal compounds. They correspond, in descending order of frequency, to people's professional or leisure activities; buildings, rooms, and other places; literary and audio-visual genres; pieces of furniture, clothes, and other objects; abstract nouns; and toponyms, and anthroponyms. Under the heading "People", we consider two main subheadings: team-sports players and antonymous occupations or functions.

Key words: bound morpheme, headedness, coordination, referentiality, semantic selection

### *Introduction*

The origin of *cum* as a combining form in English is related to its use in toponymy, as described in its entry in the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) and exemplified by the English place names *Chorlton-cum-Hardy* and *Stow-cum-Quy*.

The first recorded example in the OED of a compound noun dates back to 1871: "He greatly preferred coffee cum chicory to coffee pure and simply.", whereas the first recorded example of a compound adjective is to be found

much later, in 1939: “The fervent mediaevalism... developed a philosophic-cum-economic tinge.”

The difficult-to-grasp linguistic nature of this ‘element’ has given rise to several contradictory classifications by grammarians, lexicologists and lexicographers and has been described as a preposition, as a combining form or as a bound morpheme. In what follows we adhere to the standpoint of Stein (2000: 281) in that *-cum-*, in its synchronic use, should be taken as a bound lexical morpheme.

It can link *a priori* nouns or adjectives from any semantic field but it seems to select a certain number of fields and subfields where it is quite productive. We claim that the recurrence and the productivity of this morphological pattern are the results of a greater need to designate more complex and multi-faceted personalities, realities, functions, relations, concepts and objects.

### **1. Research methodology and corpora**

In order to account for its presence in different types of register and language varieties we have used several general corpora, namely the *British National Corpus* (BNC), the *Corpus of Contemporary American English* (CoCA), the *Corpus of Historical American English* (CHA) and the *Time Corpus* (TC) as well as the online archives of *The Guardian*, *The Independent*, *The New York Times*, *The New Zealand Herald*, *The Irish Times*, *The Economist* and *The New Statesman*. Thus we created a corpus of 335 types chosen at random from all the tokens of the *-cum-* compounds in the above-mentioned sources.

The online archives of *The New York Times* have been chosen as the main reference for the simple reason that they allow searches from 1851 to date. If we do not consider the Latin phrases *summa cum laude* and *magna cum*

*laude*, instances of this construction are frequent and abundant, which seems to contradict the statement according to which “This *cum* is rare in American English, but fairly common in British.” (Algeo 1999: 416). It must be stated that Algeo’s analysis is based on the scrutiny of the British component of the International Corpus of English and that he classifies *cum* as a Britishism. A quick survey in the archives of the main broadsheets in the USA, Ireland, Australia and New Zealand gives a totally different overview of the phenomenon. Examples of *-cum-* compounds are numerous and recurrent and fairly well established in all these language varieties.

## **2. Coordinative compounds and *-cum-* compounds**

Compounds with *-cum-* represent an alternative construction to copulative compounds which are endocentric, made of two elements belonging to the same lexical category, co-hyponyms and having the same denotatum (Renner 2008: 607). The examples of coordinative compounds discussed by Plag, *singer-songwriter*, *scientist-explorer*, *poet-translator* and *hero-martyr*, have all “two semantic heads, neither of them being subordinate to the other.” (Plag 2003: 146). Coordinative compounds such as these are practically absent in general corpora. The only exception is *singer-songwriter*, which has a meagre 19 occurrences in the CoCA. Interestingly enough, and although we are dealing with two independent semantic heads, the alternative *songwriter-singer* is non-existent, which shows the high degree of lexicalisation of the former combination. It has been suggested that the preference for *singer-songwriter* against *songwriter-singer*—or in the case which concerns us, i.e. their equivalent syndectic compounds *singer-cum-songwriter* and *songwriter-cum-singer*—may mirror the preference for the shorter of the two constituents to occupy the first place, thus marking a “syllable number constraint” (Renner, forthcoming).

The semantic relation between each nominal constituent is typically coordinative (two independent heads) but can at times be subordinative, in which case these compounds show left-headedness and a semantic relation that can be glossed as ‘combined with’ or ‘incorporating’ as illustrated in the following examples:

- (1) Eazy-E’s LA collective were at the forefront, thanks to their aggressive sound and the song-cum-slogan, Fuck tha Police, that made clear the antipathy young urban black people felt towards law enforcement. (*The Guardian*, 13 June 2011)
  
- (2) In the minds of design junkies, at least, the trio are synonymous with their award-winning coffee table-cum-magazine rack, Mind The Gap (pounds 240). (*The Independent*, 22 May 1999)

A *song-cum-slogan* is primarily a song bearing a slogan and a *coffee-table-cum-magazine-rack* is essentially a coffee-table to which a magazine-rack has been added or joined, so that the right constituent in each case is interpreted as dependent on the first one.

Excepting the examples above and other that will be discussed further down, the coordinative status of most of these compounds is perfectly evident: they belong to the same lexical category—they are both nouns or adjectives—, the constituents have the same denotatum and they can be schematised as follows:  $X \text{ cum } Y (\text{cum } Z) = X \text{ and } Y (\text{and } Z)$ .

### **3. Referentiality**

As with other endocentric coordinative compounds *-cum-* compounds tend to be homoreferential, i.e. they refer to one single entity, either human or non-human, in the extralinguistic world. Although this is mostly true when dealing with combinations of nouns, combinations of adjectives seem to behave rather differently. Adjectives are usually embedded in a noun phrase and can be either homoreferential (*Byzantine-cum-Romanesque*) or heteroreferential (*American-cum-Iraqi*):

- (3) Last week the Rt. Rev. Horace Donegan, Episcopal Bishop of New York, announced that the diocese was scrapping the ambitious Gothic plan drawn up in 1911 by Architect Ralph Adams Cram. He in turn had drastically revised the original Byzantine-cum-Romanesque church whose cornerstone was laid in 1892. (*Time*, 12 February 1966)
- (4) In the precinct of Nazal—one of Falluja’s nine, each with a joint American-cum-Iraqi police station—locals watch warily as a dozen helmeted young American marines, their guns pointed at [...] (*The Economist*, 13 December 2007)

The compound in (3) can be analysed as an appositional coordinative compound, whereas the compound in (4) would take the label of participative coordinative compound (Bauer 2006: 496).

One of the most salient traits of these compounds is the fact that in general corpora types are rather numerous if one compares them to the number of tokens that amount just to one or two at the most. This observation leads us to the question of monoreferentiality or compounds having a number of tokens corresponding all to the same denotatum. Compounds are said to be monoreferential when they are exclusively used in relation to one and the same person, usually a well-known public figure, although in some cases

they may refer to institutions or political parties. All the tokens of *postman-cum-politician* or *media magnate-cum-premier* refer respectively to Olivier Besancenot and Silvio Berlusconi.<sup>1</sup> *Party-cum-militia* is a compound systematically applied to Hezbollah. In this sense, monoreferentiality is particularly closely related to *hapax legomena* or nonce-forms.

#### **4. Headedness and semantic relations of constituents**

As a general rule, nominal *-cum-* compounds are double-headed and constitute a unique referential unit, as is the case with their asyndetic counterparts (Bisetto & Scalise 2005: 10). This double-headedness has also been referred to as hybridization, “whereby the compounded concept is understood as a cross (or a conjunction) between its two constituent concepts” (Baroni *et al.* 2007: 265).

However, several compounds in our corpus cannot be analysed as double-headed but rather as left-headed since the second coordinand is semantically subordinate to the first one. This is the case of *of airplanes-cum-missiles* in (5). The combination acquires an idiosyncratic meaning and the interpretation necessarily depends on the context:

- (5) Dozens of other structures in Lower Manhattan had also been damaged by debris from the twin towers and the **airplanes-cum-missiles** that had destroyed them. (*The New York Times*, 21 March 2011)

The range of possible meanings is relatively small with this type of compounds if one compares them with, for instance, exocentric compounds. Nevertheless, in order to understand *airplanes-cum-missiles* not only does one need linguistic information but also contextual information as to be able

to exclude other possible interpretations such as ‘airplanes carrying missiles’.

Other instances of a left semantic head in *-cum-* compounds correspond to people or places interpreted as having a major function (head) and an ancillary one (non-head).

Notice, however, that not all coordinative compounds are clearly dvandva. In the Italian *prete-operaio* ‘priest worker’, the semantic head seems to be solely the first constituent, since the usual interpretation of the word is a priest who, in addition to being a priest, has another occupation. (Scalise & Fabregas 2010: 121)

Examples in our corpus of the ‘*prete-operaio*’ type include *cook-cum-writer*, *factory-cum-showroom*, *lawyer-cum-fitness enthusiast*, *school-cum-camp*, *soap opera-cum-sex* and *lounge-cum-television*.

Exceptionally, *-cum-* compounds may even refer to two concomitant and consecutive events or actions:

- (6) The handover-cum-release of the detainees is a tricky part of the Americans’ exit strategy, stirring strong emotions. (*The Economist*, 7 May 2009)

Unlike in (6), the expected order in the compounds *suicide-cum-murder* and *strike-cum-lock-out* has been inverted as actions are regarded from the perspective of the present point in time.

Furthermore, the constituents may not necessarily be co-hyponyms: they can belong, for instance, to entirely different professional spheres (e.g. *cricketer-cum-politician*) or even be exact or approximate antonyms (e.g. *rival-cum-partner*, *ally-cum-rival*, *adversary-cum-lover*).



## 5. *Semantic categorisation*

Stein establishes four distinct semantic categories in which her 25 *-cum-* compounds are classified. These are places, people, concrete objects and abstract nouns or actions (Stein 2000: 282). Such a small sample, although extremely accurate, can only give a very biased and incomplete picture of the variety of semantic categories under which these compounds may eventually come.

In the present study all of the types in our corpus were manually classified in separate semantic categories and subcategories. We have detected six main semantic groups out of a corpus of 335 types of *-cum-* compounds (300 nouns and 35 adjectives). Nouns correspond, in descending order of frequency of occurrence, to people's professional or leisure activities; buildings, rooms and other places; literary, journalistic and audio-visual genres; machines, pieces of furniture, clothes and other objects; abstract nouns; and finally, toponyms and anthroponyms.

Table 1. Semantic categories of *-cum-* nominal compounds and number of types

Semantic categories	n° of types
People's professional or leisure activities	119
Buildings, rooms and other places	86
Literary / journalistic / music / film / television genres	31
Machines, pieces of furniture, clothes and other objects	25
Abstract nouns	21
Toponyms and anthroponyms	18
TOTAL	300

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Under the heading “People’s professional or leisure activities”, we consider two main subheadings: “team-sports players” and “antonymous occupations or functions”.

### 5.1 *People’s professional or leisure activities*

This bound morpheme is primarily used in our corpus to join together two or more lexemes designating people’s jobs or activities (e.g. *actress-cum-activist*, *model-cum-singer*, *historian-cum-diver*). To a lesser extent, one of the nominal constituents may refer to people performing other non-professional functions (e.g. *father-cum-boss*, *nurse-cum-mother*, *financial advisor-cum-boyfriend*).

#### 5.1.1 *Team-sports players*

Sports journalists and commentators, usually inclined to language innovation and creativity, seem to favour this type of compounding. It is undoubtedly in rugby where *-cum-* compounds are more profuse (e.g. *backrower-cum-lock*, *outhalf-cum-centre*, *fullback-cum-wing*) as well as in football (e.g. *defender-cum-winger*, *centre-half-cum-midfielder*). However, a further research in *The New Zealand Herald* has shown the use of these compounds in other team sports such as netball (*shooter-cum-defender*).

#### 5.1.2 *Antonymous occupations or functions*

A second subgroup in which the nominal constituents have people as referents is particularly apparent. The bound morpheme selects, in this case, antonymous or quasi-antonymous lexemes and marks a semantic relation which could apparently seem contradictory with the internal complementarity inherent in these compounds (e.g. *friend-cum-enemy*,

*rival-cum-ally, adversary-cum-lover*). The recourse to this construction clearly reveals a need to express a complex, double-edged human entity in the form of a composite word.

### 5.2 *Buildings, rooms and other places*

Second to people are compounds referring to places having multiple purposes. All sorts of combinations are theoretically possible but the types in our corpus mainly relate to hotels, bars, restaurants, shops and special types of lodging (e.g. *restaurant-cum-deli, store-cum-gallery, apartment-cum-office*).

A search in *The New York Times* online archives shows that the most frequent combinations of places are those under the template *bar-cum-X*. The next most frequent combinations are those starting with the words *restaurant, store, café, apartment* and *hotel*. These results illustrate the importance of this construction mainly for public places. Combinations of rooms in a house having a double function or a space integrating two traditional separate rooms are less frequent (*kitchen-cum-X* only yields 17 results compared to 173 for *bar-cum-X*).

### 5.3 *Literary / journalistic / music / film / television genres*

One could say that the latest novel by David Lodge *A Man of Parts* is a “novel-cum-biography-cum-interview” and in fact this concatenation of nouns seems to be the tendency when describing or commenting on certain pieces of writing. This way of compounding is clearly favoured for the designation of more multi-layered and complex subgenres that need to be referred to in a more specific and precise manner as a single concept. The examples found in our corpus correspond to several and distinct professional fields ranging from literature to the film and television industry

and extending as far as music or poetry (e.g. *biography-cum-travelogue*, *review-cum-sketch*, *melodrama-cum-farce*, *novel-cum-screenplay*).

A special case is exemplified by the compound *documentary-cum-drama*. This combination is clearly preferred to the reversed form *drama-cum-documentary*. The compound noun *drama documentary* and the blend *docudrama* are both registered in dictionaries such as the *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (CALD). Although there are two lexicalised forms for the same denotatum, this does not hinder the development and use of the corresponding *-cum-* compound as a variant form.

#### 5.4 *Machines, pieces of furniture, clothes and other objects*

Disparate and heterogeneous objects are to be found under this category (e.g. *diary-cum-scrapbook*, *jumpsuit-cum-bodystocking*, *guitar-cum-harmonica*). There is as well a tendency for these compounds to refer to newly-designed objects as well as to state-of-the-art technological gadgets (e.g. *identity card-cum-bank card*, *computer-cum-printer*). The dual purpose of these objects is well represented by, for instance, a *walking-stick-cum-seat*. The preferred order of the nominal constituents reveals the fact that we are dealing with a walking stick that can eventually be transformed into a chair when the rambler or the hunter needs to rest for a while. The semantic head is not any walking stick: the non-head constrains the pragmatics and the resulting compound is only to be found in certain contexts, such as rambling, hunting and so forth, showing thus a restricted pattern of usage.

#### 5.5 *Abstract nouns*

These compounds represent either the combination of opposite concepts or principles (e.g. *democracy-cum-socialism*, *innocence-cum-diabolism* or *illusions-cum-sorrows*) or the combination of synonymous or quasi-

synonymous terms (*communism-cum-socialism*<sup>2</sup>, *recession-cum-depression*, *preoccupations-cum-obsessions*). One can state that the bound morpheme serves a double purpose in this category, namely selecting and marking either a synonymous or an antonymous semantic relation between the coordinands.

#### 5.6 *Toponyms and anthroponyms*

Examples from our corpus such as *Chorlton-cum-Hardy*, *Prestwich-cum-Oldham* and *Upton-cum-Chalvey* represent a very small and closed set of toponyms that clearly fall out of the mainstream semantic categorisation. On the contrary, continents, countries and other prominent place names can be potentially constituents of *-cum-* compounds and appear in embedded constructions, as illustrated by the example from our corpus *Northern-Ireland-cum-Great-Britain arrangement*. In this case the compound is heteroreferential and participative.

As far as anthroponyms are concerned, they are all embedded and heteroreferential. (*Marx-cum-Freud*, *Pushkin-cum-Tchaikovsky*, *Whitman-cum-Thomas*):

- (7) Steeped in a Marx-cum-Freud conviction that no man can "resist history, environment, class structure, psychic conditioning," the realists take for granted that all oases which spring from mere individual initiative are sure to be mirages. (*Time*, 15 August 1949)

## 6. *Adjectives*

Adjectives represent 10.4% of the total number of types in our corpus. Compound adjectives with *-cum-* are generally relational (e.g. *national-cum-regional*, *social-cum-political*). The latter can be analysed as a variant form of the corresponding suppletive independent lexeme only used for compounding, i.e. *socio-* in *socio-political* (Montermini 2010: 89).

Instances of embedded relational adjectives such as *corporate-cum-nationalist society*, *fictional-cum-biographical treatment*, *literary-cum-social criticism*, *religious-cum-political discourse* or *scientific-cum-technical expertise* are not scarce and represent a compact morphological solution to syntactic constructions such as, for instance, “a discourse which is both religious and political” or “a literary and social criticism”.

## **Conclusions**

The English bound morpheme *-cum-* is used as a linker of nouns or adjectives. The nominal compounds can be classified under six different categories, being principally used for combining people and places. It serves as a template for innovative creations in such unrelated fields as team sports or literary genres. Although relatively recent in the history of the language this type of compounds is getting more and more pervasive, especially in journalistic discourse. Their expansion is mainly due to their readiness and compactness to refer to increasingly complex realities in a globalised ever-changing world. Juxtaposing heterogeneous, even incompatible, elements is a distinctive trait of some of these compounds. This template is thus a straightforward way of marrying or reconciling two culture-specific different or contradictory concepts such as *democracy* and *socialism*.

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<sup>1</sup> Olivier Besancenot was the former political leader of the *Nouveau Parti Anticapitaliste* (New Anticapitalist Party), a far-left political party in France.

<sup>2</sup> Let us signal that for the vast majority of American citizens, the term 'socialism' is synonymous or, at least, very close semantically to the term 'communism' and therefore irreconcilable with the concept of 'democracy'.