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Blending in English

Introduction

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Introduction

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- 1 *Lexis 14* is devoted to the phenomenon of blending in English. Different motivations justify this choice: mainly, and despite the prolific literature on the topic, there are issues that still remain unsolved, but also the productivity of the mechanism as well as the growing number of lexical items created by this process that appear in daily in the world languages. This emergence and increasing appearance of blends is the reason for the **synchronic approach** adopted in the present volume as well as for its special focus on very recent study cases.
- 2 A **lexical blend** is generally defined as a word which cannot be analysed into morphemes (Bauer [1983: 234]; Cannon [1986]), intentionally formed by merging together elements or splinters usually from two source lexical units (sometimes more, e.g. *afflufemza* < affluence + influenza + feminism (example from Bassac [2012: 169]), or the more recent *scinfotainment* < science + information + entertainment). However, despite the recent interest in blending, and as already suggested, it is still a somehow poorly understood and underresearched mechanism, often regarded as “irregular” (Connolly [2013: 3]) and/or “marginal”. For these and other reasons, *Lexis 14* aims at exploring the **linguistic** and even **extralinguistic contexts which affect and motivate the creation and success of blends** in English.
- 3 The 14th issue of *Lexis* focuses on the following **three main areas of research**:
 - The first area of research is centered on **what constitutes a blend** and the difficulties in distinguishing blends from other mechanisms, including problems posed by fuzzy boundaries, such as: the identification and limits of blending as either word creativity or word-formation; the identification of blending as a lexical or a semantic phenomenon or mechanism; or the differences between blending and clipped compounding (complex clipping).
 - The second area of research concentrates on the **different types of blends**: amongst other types, coordinate blends; headed blends; blends with truncation at the inner edge of the constituent words; or blends which do not contain any input word in its entirety.
 - The third area of research tackles **the purposes and motivations for blending** in English. Questions such as whether blends are created with the aim of designating a new referent or

a new concept or to give a new name to an existing referent or concept; the need for an explanation of the varied motivations in different contexts and registers for the creations of blends; or how to measure the weight of the semantic, phonological, graphemic and/or formal motivation of blending in English and compare and contrast the importance of meaning versus shape at the time of creating a blend.

- 4 These three areas of research account for the difficulties in delimiting and clearly defining blending and blends: first, the **definition** depends, on the one hand, on the fuzzy boundaries between word formation and word creativity and, on the other, on the existing controversies and fuzzy limits between blending and compounding, acronymy, etc. Apparently, there is not yet a clear answer to these questions, as lexicologists and morphologists vary in their answers and there is not general agreement as regards this issue. As a consequence of this, the different and **emerging types of blends** (cf., for example, Balteiro [2018]) are still to be explored and analyzed. Furthermore, the **reasons and motivations** behind the emergence, creation and rapid expansion of blending not only in different fields within a language but also in the world languages are also varied and contribute to the difficulties in analysing, defining and delimiting the concept. Blends seem to be everywhere, from the most technical language to the most informal, even in even slang, as will be seen in the following pages. Moreover, some are only created at a given moment and for a very specific purpose, almost at the spur of the moment, and, in this sense, are very close to neologisms (see *Lexis* 12) but probably with an even higher degree of ephemerality, while others are born to stay in the language.
- 5 The papers included in this issue (*Lexis* 14) are primarily based on the study of English blends; they are organized from the most general, dealing with the definition and delimitation of this type of word formation, then addressing questions such as the principles underlying this word formation or word creativity mechanism and its nature, to end with more specific issues and contexts where blends are highly productive such as informal and slang contexts, TV series, but also brand naming.
- 6 The first paper addresses and goes beyond the issue of delimiting the boundaries of blends as a type of word formation. **Natalia Beliaeva**, basing her arguments of both qualitative and quantitative analyses in “Blending creativity and productivity: on the issue of delimiting the boundaries of blends as a type of word formation”, also focuses on blending creativity, productivity and predictability factors that influence blend formation.
- 7 **Stefanie Wulff & Stefan Th. Gries** in the second paper of the volume, “Improving on observational blends research: regression modeling in the study of experimentally-elicited blends”, discuss the results of a blend production experiment and how it relates to previous research that was nearly exclusively based on observational data. They corroborate most of the following principles: (i) the shorter source word contributes more of itself to the blend than the longer source word, (ii) source word2 determines blend stress (more than source word1), and (iii) blending maximizes similarity between source words and blends.
- 8 The third paper of the volume, authored by **Elisa Mattiello**, “A corpus-based analysis of new English blends”, investigates new ‘attributive’ or ‘headed’ blends in English. Mattiello reassesses the importance of blending in terms of 1) its suitability in the coinage of new specialized vocabulary, and 2) its regularity in the creation of words containing frequent splinters. Furthermore, she also contributes to the issue of

whether blending should be considered an extra-grammatical phenomenon of word-creation or a regular process of word-formation.

- 9 In “Variable base-word positioning in English blends”, the fourth paper of the volume, **Aviv Schoenfeld, Evan Gary Cohen & Outi Bat El** explore blend doublets and the conditions and factors that interact to allow variable positions of the blends’ base words.
- 10 **Alejandro Barrena Jurado** in his paper entitled “A study on the ‘wordgasm’: the nature of blends’ splinters”, from the theory of Construction Morphology, studies the ending *-gasm* to decide whether it is a splinter or a combining form and arrives at the conclusion that undoubtedly *-gasm* creates blends of varied types, which are then analysed.
- 11 **Gorica Tomić** in “Headedness in contemporary English slang blends”, the sixth article of the volume, addresses, as the title indicates, the issue of headedness. After carrying out both a qualitative and quantitative analysis, she concludes, amongst other ideas, that the semantic right-headedness is not as prominent as expected in slang blends.
- 12 **Adam Renwick & Vincent Renner** in “New lexical blends in *The Simpsons*: a formal analysis of English nonce formations and their French translations”, concentrate on the conspicuous presence of blends in *The Simpsons* to conclude that nonce blends are preferred to lexical shortening and that segment overlap and phonological headedness prevail in both English and French. Furthermore, against a widely-accepted principle among morphologists, they argue that blends may not constitute a homogeneous class from a formal standpoint.
- 13 The eighth article of the volume, “To blend so as to brand: a study of trademarks and brand names”, written by **Jelena Danilović Jeremić & Jelena Josijević**, explores the phonological, graphological, stylistic and semantic motivations behind the creation of brand names through blending mechanisms.
- 14 Finally, in the last article of the volume, “Gold Punning: studying multistable meaning structures using a systematically collected set of lexical blends”, **Daniel Kjellander** aims at developing systematic approaches to the collection of lexical blends, as a necessary step in the development of blend research.

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