
Ada BÖHMEROVÁ, *Blending As Lexical Amalgamation and Its Onomatological and Lexicographical Status in English and in Slovak*

ŠEVT, 2010, 152 pages

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REFERENCES

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- 1 As a fascinating linguistic phenomenon that unites the principle of economy with creativity, playfulness and expressiveness, blending has been investigated from various perspectives for more than a century now (cf. Pound [1914]). Given that it verges upon compounding and clipping, this area of morphological research remains vaguely defined and requires further study. Moreover, the rise of English as a lingua franca has affected various languages the world over, so much so that blends are nowadays not only imported from English but also created from native lexical material (cf. Halupka-Rešetar & Lalić-Krstin [2009]; Winters [2017]). Nevertheless, cross-linguistic explorations of blending remain scarce (cf. Renner [2019]). Bearing this in mind, Ada Böhmerová's monograph *Blending As Lexical Amalgamation and Its Onomatological and Lexicographical Status in English and in Slovak* represents a welcome contribution to the growing body of knowledge on blending in that it focuses on the onomatological and lexicographical status of blends in English and Slovak.
- 2 In a brief introduction, the author states the objectives of her work: to show (a) that lexical blending has deeper, non-linguistic roots, (b) that this type of word-formation

can be expected to exist or arise in languages in general, (c) that the international role played by English increases the potential for blending in other languages, Slovak included, and (d) that blending can be defined much more concisely and transparently than it has been done to date.

- 3 The book is divided into three chapters. Chapter One is dedicated to the underlying cognitive and linguistic principles of lexical blending. It is theoretically grounded in Fauconnier's [1994] theory of mental spaces and Donald's [2006] framework of artistic features. As Böhmerová puts it, "resorting to cognitive science is indispensable for trying to explain the principles initiating and governing lexical blending" (p. 21). Lexical blending can thus be regarded as an outcome of a broader cognitive process of *conceptual blending* or *conceptual integration*. At its root lies *cognitive engineering* which accounts for the intentionality and non-conventionality of blends, their attention-controlling intention and impact, as well as their relative non-predictability.
- 4 The central and most extensive part of the book (Chapter Two) explores blending in English. It covers a range of topics, including the origin of blending in English, a diachronic survey of investigations concerning blending, typological categorizations of blends (e.g. regarding their structure, number of bases, origin of the bases, syntactic relationships between the bases, etc.) and their lexicographical status in a selection of English dictionaries: *The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary* (1991) with its latest edition (still in progress in 2010), *The Longman Register of New Words* (1990), *The Oxford Dictionary Of New Words* (1997) and *Merriam-Webster Open Dictionary New Entries* (2009-2010).
- 5 Having examined a number of conflicting definitions of blending, including those offered in lexicographical resources, the author discusses their limitations and consequences. Since there is no consensus on the exact delineation of the concept of blends, dictionaries differ in terms of the scope of their inclusion and description. In Böhmerová's opinion, blending is a process of forming a new naming unit from existing words which can be joined, reduced and coalesced in a relatively unpredictable way. In order to define the concepts involved in the formation of blends more clearly, she introduces the term *matrix*, i.e. a structural abstraction of the individual phonological, phonotactic and semantic features of the motivating bases. A resulting, more precise definition of blending would then be that of "a process of simultaneous joining, reduction and amalgamation of the matrices of the bases within the selected combinatory possibilities of the joint matrix and the boundaries of the (relative) recognizability of the residues of the motivating bases of the new naming unit" (p. 64). She maintains that blending invariably entails a structural overlap of the matrices, even when the unreduced motivating base suppresses the superimposed section of the other motivating base (e.g. *jazzercise*).
- 6 Unlike other structural classifications, hers draws a distinction between telescoped and fused blends. Telescoped blends are further subdivided into those with (a) mutually overlapping contacting segments, (b) intrusion and (c) mixed bases. Fused blends, on the other hand, are subdivided into (a) those with a single reduced base, (b) those with both bases reduced, (c) mirroring blends and (d) special cases.
- 7 With regard to the lexicographical status of blends in English, Böhmerová concludes that the number of blends in Oxford editions of standard English is on the rise, possibly due to their being systematically labelled, most noticeably in the semantic fields of computer technology, electronic communication, science, media, lifestyle, activities,

attitudes and professional or social status. In dictionaries of neologisms, the frequency of occurrence of blends is rather high (1 in 15 entries). Nevertheless, the most remarkable figures were observed in the *Merriam Webster Open Dictionary* where 1 in 5 new entries was a blend. This testifies to the pervasiveness of blending as a vehicle for lexical creativity and experimentation.

- 8 The final chapter investigates blending in Slovak by identifying blends borrowed from English (i.e. European Anglicisms, according to Görlach [2005]), expanding this corpus with lexical items collected from a variety of sources, and then checking the presence of both of these in Slovak lexicographical resources. The results of her survey suggest that blending has yet to become a legitimate onomatological process in Slovak linguistics. Although few English blends have been incorporated into dictionaries, in several orthographic variants and mostly without proper labels, they indicate that Slovak is open to borrowings from English, so this process might gain momentum in the future. More importantly, the author's analysis of occasionalisms in Slovak (Liptakova [2000]), as well as her own corpus of Slovak blends, has proved that blending has established itself as a viable word-formation mechanism in the media, product names, advertisements, literary works, toponyms, child language and informal, colloquial speech. The majority of blends identified in Slovak are nouns, telescopically formed, with their first base functioning as an adjective.
- 9 The concluding section summarizes the findings of the target research by postulating similarities and differences observed concerning English and Slovak blends as well as their respective lexicographical statuses.
- 10 As a relatively recent addition to the ever-increasing number of studies concentrating on blending in English, with a contrastive view on Slovak, Böhmerová's monograph will be a useful read to anyone interested in the origins of blending, its underlying principles, possible classifications, and its lexicographical status in English and/or Slovak. It raises intriguing questions and provides sound argumentation, supported by two datasets. What could have significantly improved its practical value is the addition of a complete list of blends collected in English and Slovak. Such a list would have benefited both laypersons and linguists alike as the data could be utilized in new ways (e.g. cross-linguistic comparisons, further analysis of blends in lexicographical resources, and the like).

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