Conceptual Blending in the Construction of Morphological Blends

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The presentation applies the conceptual blending theoretical framework (Fauconnier & Turner, 1998, 2002) to the analysis of a number of morphological blends that entered the Russian and Ukrainian languages in recent years as a result of the political, social, and military conflict in Ukraine. The study applies the conceptual integration framework to the morphological blends to check whether they can be considered a non-prototypical case of conceptual blending. We study the process of creation of a morphological blend as a cognitive process that maps perceived similarities between the concepts expressed by the 'donor' words, which contribute to the resulting blend, and as a strategic activity that purposefully draws on the available linguistic and extra-linguistic resources of the speaker. Because of the novelty of the items we examine, the mechanisms of the "backstage cognition" allowing the meaning construction to be successful (Fauconnier, 1994), such as background knowledge, general cognitive abilities, and information from the immediate context, are easier to identify and analyze.

Discourse of the Ukrainian conflict gave rise to multiple novel lexical items, including several new insulting nicknames for the Russian and Ukrainian presidents. This study focuses on the morphological blends involving the names of Putin and Poroshenko, such as Putler (Putin + Hiter) and Poproshenko (poproshaika 'beggar' + Poroshenko). A total of six blends of this sort, three each for the respective presidents, were used as 'seed words' to identify texts to comprise a medium-sized specialized corpus of approximately 800,000 words collected from web-based sources using the WebBootCaT tool of the corpus managements system Sketch Engine (Kilgarriff et al., 2004). The contexts of usage of the target words (a total of 290 tokens of blended names with *Putin* as one of the constituents, and 275 tokens of blended names with *Poroshenko* as one of the constituents) were compared to the contexts of non-blended names *Putin* and *Poroshenko* (a sample of 100 out of 5,253 and 416 tokens, respectively).

The results of the study demonstrate clear differences between the contexts of use of blended vs. non-blended names in political media and discussions, in terms of the style and register of the discussion, emotional markers and content, which is consisted with previous findings that blended names are often used in political discussions to add derogatory connotations, or to discredit the political opponent (Gorban, 2016). We propose that the insulting force of the blends we analyse can be viewed as the emergent property of the blended space represented by the blended names in our corpus.

References

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