Lexical Creativity, Texts and Contexts

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John Benjamins Publishing Company
Amsterdam / Philadelphia
2007
Blendaicious*

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Although blends have been marginalised as a word-forming process, they are now common. Some are completely conventionalised (e.g. workaholic, telethon, cityscape), while most are nonce forms. Blends are compounds consisting of a whole word and a splinter (part of a morpheme) or two splinters. A frequent splinter may become a combining form. Final combining forms like -thon and -holic and initial ones like Mc- (McMansions) and e- (e-tail) have achieved this status. What and how much can be omitted is limited by the need for the hearer or reader to recover what is missing. Word frequency, neighbourhood effects, and semantic plausibility are some of these constraints. I summarise several psycholinguistic experiments on understanding novel blends. Blends occur mostly in media, advertisements, and product names, functioning to gain our attention.

1. Introduction

Neologisms in English and probably all languages use the whole spectrum of word-formation devices. The type of neologism I will discuss in this article, blends, has long been considered marginal. However, in the last few decades it has become increasingly common, so much so that it is losing its marginal status and more linguists are examining the properties of blends. The interesting question for me is why blends and other types of neologisms have become increasingly popular. They generally make comprehension more difficult because the hearer or reader has to figure out their meaning, as they are typically presented without glosses or explanations. Like other neologisms, such as rimes and allusions, blends are often cute and amusing. They work as a form of word play, which Kelly describes as “lexical teases” (1998: 586). My hypothesis about their increasing frequency –

* I wish to thank Judith Munat for her many valuable suggestions.
perhaps it is only a speculation at this time — is that we are surrounded by stimuli varying for our attention (newspapers, magazines, radio, TV) and thousands of advertisements in all of the above. Therefore, using a novel clever word is likely to catch our attention and get us to read or listen to what is being presented. Then when a word-formation device like blending becomes common, other speakers and writers create similar forms by analogy simply because it is fashionable to do so; they want to show that they, too, are trendy, creative, and cool.

In this article I will first provide a characterisation of blends, discuss their structure, and examine the development of their constituent parts (splinters) into new morphemes. I will consider how novel blends are processed, and finally, the kinds of contexts in which they tend to occur.

2. What are blends?

Blends are underlying compounds which are composed of one word and part of another, or parts of two (and occasionally three) other words (Algeo 1977: 48).\(^1\) The word part is called a splinter. Although a splinter is a clipping, it cannot occur alone as a word. For example, in *dramedy* < *drama* + *comedy*, neither *dram-* nor *-edy* may be used independently. One cannot say *I saw a really gripping dram on TV last night.* In *infotainment* < *information* + *entertainment*, *info* is a clipping and can stand as an independent word, but *-tainment* must be attached to something else, like *info* or *winter* in *wintertainment*, the name of a winter festival.

A few blends were recorded as early as the 15th century,\(^2\) but they are now obsolete. However, some current blends originated in the 19th century,\(^3\) such as *brunch* < *breakfast* + *lunch* (1886, OED, MW); *slanguage* < *slang* + *language* (1879) and *soliloquacity* < *soliloquy* + *loquacity* (1895). Blends became more common in the 20th century: *motel* < *motor* + *hotel* (1925), *transceiver* < *transmitter* + *receiver* (1934), and *permafrost* (1943). Many of these have entered the lexicon as conventional words and some speakers are no longer aware of their underlying complex sources.

New blends are sometimes introduced with a full account of their source words, that is, the underlying compound and its meaning, especially if this is not

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1. Some scholars (e.g. Plag 2003; Kubozono 1990) use a more restricted definition, dealing only with blends in which both elements are abbreviated.

2. Adams (2001: 141) lists *foolosopher* (OED, 1592), *miniversity* (OED 1590), and *knavigation* (OED, 1613).

3. Dates are taken from Merriam-Webster Online (MW) or the Oxford English Dictionary.
obvious. The blend *vog*, < *volcano* + *smog*, the emission of gases from smoking volcanoes which produce air pollution, is often glossed as 'volcanic smog'. When I entered this word on Google, the examples that appeared on the first screen generally provided definitions. Another example is *Craisins<sup>®</sup>* < *cranberries* + *raisins*, a brand name for dried cranberries, defined on the package. Sometimes the source words are recognisable, but the interpretation is not. A university newsletter described some people as *negaholics*, which is easy to identify as coming from *negative* + *-holic* (the latter being a splinter from *alcoholic*). However, since the meaning is unclear, a definition was provided: 'Negaholics are people who always think the worst of themselves, and others, and of outcomes'. Another example is a blend coined spontaneously by a news commentator who was reporting the weather. She said that it would snow or maybe drizzle and then laughingly said to her colleagues at the news desk that it would *snizzle*.

More often, however, new blends are introduced in a context where the hearer or reader is left to figure out the underlying compound, and a plausible interpretation must be found for that context. The first step is to parse the blend so that the two source words may be identified. If one part consists of a whole word such as *oiddraulic* or *deskercise*, the parse is fairly easy, and the next task is to identify the source of the splinter (*-draulic* < *hydraulic*, and *-ercise* < *exercise*). If the blend consists of two splinters, the parse may be more difficult, depending in part on the phonology of the blend. For example, two blends which subjects in my experiments (described below) found difficult to understand are *snizzle* < *snow* + *drizzle* and *swacket* < *sweater* + *jacket*. The problem for the hearer or reader is that the new word may be divided in more than one place. In *burbclave* < *suburb* + *enclave*, however, the cut will most naturally be made between *b* and *c* because *bc* is not a possible syllable internal combination in English.<sup>4</sup> (This example is particularly unusual because *burb* is a clipping which deletes the first syllable.)

After the source words have been identified, a plausible meaning must still be found, but this is the same problem that exists in interpreting novel compounds, since blends are shortened forms of compounds.

3. **The structure of blends**

The commonest type of blend in my corpus is a full word followed by a splinter: *wintertainment* < *winter* + *entertainment*; *chatire* < *chat* + *satire*; *vodka+* *martini*. Blends can also begin with a splinter, followed by a full word: *narcoma*

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<sup>4</sup> I am indebted to Jen Hay, personal communication, for pointing this out.
< narcotic + coma, cinemenace < cinema + menace; squangle < square + angle (a type of tool); Amerindian < American Indian; administrivia < administration + trivia.

Also common are blends consisting of two splinters. Two types are possible: (1) the beginning of one word is followed by the end of another: psychergy < psych + energy; hurricoon < hurricane + typhoon or monsoon; cheriodical < cheery + periodical or (2) both splinters are the beginning of words: biopic < biographical + picture; sitcom < situation + comedy, and cabsat < cable + satellite. If the spline precedes a full word or another spline, it must be the first part of a word. One cannot have a blend like *glyson < ugly + person or *ictionblem < addition + problem. (Blog < web + log is a major exception.)

A fourth type of blend involves complete overlap of one or more phonemes, often of whole syllables. Some part of the word has to be counted twice, as belonging to both source words. (English spelling may require deleting some letters, like the silent e, and other minor spelling changes may occur which do not affect pronunciation.) This blend type has become increasingly common. The examples I found some 15 years ago were sexploitation > sex + exploitation; sexpert < sex + expert; palimony pal + alimony 'money paid to an unmarried partner after separation' and cocacolonization < Coca Cola + colonization. (Lehrer 1996). More recently I have found: clandestiny < clandestine + destiny; cashmiracle < cashmere + miracle; netiquette < (Inter)net + etiquette; airoics < air + aerobics (exercises during air travel); Wheatables® < wheat + eatable (a cracker); snappetizer < snap + appetizer 'easy-to prepare appetizers', faddition < fad + addition; cattitude < cat + attitude; cinnamincredible < cinnamon + incredible; teleelectorate < tele (British clipping for television) + electorate; blobjets < blob + object (art exhibit featuring functional objects with amorphous shapes);5 cutensils < cute + utensils; (items from the blobjets exhibition); Yahooiligans! < Yahoo + hooligans, a Web site guide for kids, and Freakonomics, a book title.

A less common type of blend involves a discontinuous element. A word or clipping is embedded in part of another source word as an infix. Examples are entreporeneur < entrepreneur + porn(ography); chortle < chuckle + snort, created by Lewis Carroll; delinguancy < delinquency + lingual 'misusing language'; and enshocklopedia < encyclopedia + shock 'knowledge of scary films'.

In addition to complete overlap, blends often present partial overlap when letters or phonemes occur in both source words. For example, in wintertainment, the letters in bold belong to both source words: winter and entertainment. In cinemenace, the m belongs to both words and in communostolga < communism +

5. This blend also has a philosophical meaning involving the totality of being.
nostalgia the n belongs to both words. Sometimes the overlap is not simply of contiguous letters or sounds but occurs in various places in both parts. Examples are astrocite < astronaut + atrocity, flustrated < flustered + frustrated and woofle < woof + waffle 'a waffle-shaped dog biscuit', which all distribute overlapping letters (and sounds) noncontiguously.

A semantic distinction that cuts across the above classifications is that between syntactic compounds (also called abbreviated or exocentric compounds) and coordinate compounds (also called copulative compounds). In syntactic compounds the last source word is the semantic head and the first is a modifier, as in sci-fi and motel. Semantically a motel is a kind of hotel (Plag 2003: 123). (Qualifications are discussed below). In these blends the second splinter can be from either the first or last source word. Coordinate compounds such as beefalo denote semantic elements from both entities. With relatively few exceptions, the two splinters consist of an initial splinter from the first source word and the final splinter from the last part of the second source word.

4. The phonology of blends

Kubozono (1990), Kelly (1998) Plag (2003), Gries (2004a), López Rúa (2004) and others have examined some of the phonological and prosodic characteristics of blends. One problem for the hearer or reader is where to divide the blend in order to identify the source word(s), while from the creator's perspective, the issue is what to omit from the source word(s).

Plag (2003), who deals only with blends consisting of splinters, analyses the syllable (as do others) into the onset, nucleus (or peak) and coda, the last two forming the rime. In the case of monosyllabic blends, the onset of the first word combines with the rimes of the second. E.g., goat + sheep yields geep and smoke + fog yields smog.6

Polysyllabic blends can follow the same patterns, but in addition, syllables can be deleted or combined (Plag 2003: 123–124). In Plag's examples, the number of syllables in the blend tends to be the same as the number of syllables in each source word. If there is a difference, the blend has the same number of syllables as the second word. Gries (2004a), using a more inclusive corpus, found that if

6. Others have found the same patterns. Kubozono (1990) found that in speech error blends, the division is between the onset and rime in about 75% of the corpus, and in word formation blends in 71% of the items. In Gries' corpora (2004a) the division between the onset and the rime is 4 times more common than between the peak (nucleus) and the coda. See also Kelly (1998).
the number of syllables in the first and second source word differs, the number of syllables in the blend equals that of the second source word in only 55.7% of the items.

5. **Orthographic blends**

One important distinction in classifying blends is whether they are spoken or written. Although most blends are identical in speech and writing, some can be processed as blends only when seen in written form. Examples are *shampagne* < `sham + champagne`; *buyography* < `buy + biography`; *pursonality* < `purse + personality`; *awkword* < `awkward + word`; *fantsea* < `fantasy + sea`; *boysterous* < `boy + boisterous`. Conversely, in a blend like *eracism* < `erase + racism` the pronunciation takes precedence over the orthography.

Sometimes typographic devices are used to call attention to a part of the blend, which also solves the problem of division, as in *ARTstravaganza* < `art + extravagana` and *Eggs-quisite* < `eggs + exquisite` (headline for an article on a restaurant specialising in omelets). Occasionally symbols other than letters are used: *3-peat* < `three + repeat` 'repeat three times'.

6. **Blends with more than two splinters**

Although most blends consist of two source words, as in the examples above, I have found a few with three source words: *Japornimation* < `Japan + porn + animation`; *skafrocuban* < `ska + Afro + Cuban` (music); *Intetelevisionary* < `Intel + television + visionary` (headline from an article in *The Economist*, where complete overlap is used twice).

7. **More on splinters**

Once a blend is created, the splinter may be reused. *Frankfurter* gave rise to the blend *turkeyfurter* (something like a frankfurter made with turkey) by resegmenting the etymon *Frankfort + er* (in the style of Frankfurt). Subsequent blends include *chickenfurter* and *shrimpfurter*. In addition to *deskercize* we can find *jazercize* < `jazz + exercise`. In fact, it may be impossible to tell when a blend is used by analogy with another blend or created anew.

Splinters often occur in groups. Shortly after Bill Clinton was elected president of the United States and brought in staff and advisors from Arkansas, a series
of blends based on his former state were created: Arkanauts, Arkeology, Arkan-siana. Blends created by analogy with Spanglish < Spanish + English are Japlish, Czechlish, Yidlish for code-switching styles based on Japanese, Czech, or Yiddish plus English, and recently globlish or, more frequently, globish from < global + English. Coffee shops sell mochaccino < mocha + cappuccino and frappuccino < frappé + cappuccino. This last word also gives rise to cappuchillo < cappuccino + chill and macchichillo < macchiato + chill (cold coffee drinks). Examples from Adams (2001:139) are –ar < star in pulsar ‘pulsating star’, spinnar ‘spinning star’, and collapsar ‘collapsing star’.

8. Splinters as bound morphemes

When a splinter becomes so common that people start using it frequently, it may lose its connection with the source word and can be considered as a morpheme in its own right. Of course, since there is a scale from a completely novel splinter to a completely conventional morpheme, the transition from splinter to independent morphemehood is a diachronic process. However, some clear candidates for morpheme status are gate < Watergate, (a)holic < alcoholic, and thon < marathon. These elements always appear in final position.

Gate < Watergate is used for political scandals involving a cover-up. Gate can be added to names of individuals involved (Monicagate,), a place (Irangate), or a common noun rategate ‘an attack on a major telephone company’. The etymology, based on the scandal during the Nixon administration, springs from the Republican party spying on the Democratic offices at the Watergate apartment complex in Washington, DC in 1972. Hundreds of -gate neologisms have since been coined, often referring to local scandals, and the words are forgotten as soon as the event blows over. A few examples are Irangate, Contragate (scandals under Reagan), Whitewatergate, Monicagate (scandals during the Clinton administration), and some more recent ones, Fajitagate and Memogate. Fajitagate refers to an episode when some undercover policemen beat up two men outside a bar, demanding their take-out fajitas. Criminal charges were brought against several high ranking San Francisco police officers for allegations of a conspiracy to obstruct justice. Memogate involved a story on the TV program 60 Minutes questioning George Bush’s service records. The memos on which the program were based were apparently fake. Other languages have borrowed gate for their political scandals:
Pascuagate in French for an incident involving Charles Pascua and Donaugate in Hungary for a scandal concerning the Danube River.

(A)holic,\(^7\) a resegmentation of alcohol-ic can be added to a noun or verb to refer to people who overindulge in a substance or in the activity named to the extent that they can be considered addicts.\(^8\) Early blends include workaholic and chocoholic, which are listed in unabridged dictionaries. Other examples I have collected include foodaholic, drugaholic, readaholic, shopaholic, drivaholic, spendahtic, milkaholic, writaholic, reggaeholic and typeaholic. Patrick Hanks from the OED kindly supplied me with many more examples, a few of which are: aquaholic, controlaholic, faxaholic, golfaholic, helpaholic, hockeyholic, holidayholic, huntsaholic, leisureholic, operaholic, plasticsurgic-holic, rageaholic, sexaholic, smokaholic, soapaholic, social-holic, sportsaholic, videoholic, vodkaholic, votaholic, waste-aholic and wordaholic.

Thon is used to refer to events that last a long time, imply some difficulty, and may also involve fund-raising for a good cause. The etymon is drawn from Marathon, the place in Greece from where a messenger ran to Athens with news that the Greeks had defeated the Persians. However, the most salient meaning today is for a foot race of 42 kilometers (26 miles). The earliest use of thon was telethon, recorded by Merriam-Webster and the OED in 1949. Other examples are walkathon, bikathon, jogathon, thrashathon, roackathon, dancethon, paint-a-thon, performanceathon, pianathon, poolathon, rockerthon (jobless contestants compete for cash prizes that will be awarded to the person who can keep a rocker going the longest), and swimathon. As with holic, an a is sometimes inserted for prosodic reasons and hyphens may be added to clarify the segmentation. This form has also spread to other languages. In France a four-hour long TV program on AIDS (the French acronym is SIDA) was called a SIDAthon.

Some other examples of splinters that reappear in several blends follow, but it is debatable whether these deserve morpheme status (and in fact it may not be theoretically important).

-Licious < delicious: applicious;ubblicious (from a bubble gum ad); piglicious (item on a menu at a restaurant called Hog Heaven); gobblicious (a cat food flavor from Meow Mix\(^\text{®}\)); berry-licious (on a fresh strawberry package); Hoge Day-licious (an exhibit by artist Hoge Day). In cerealitious spelling predicts< cereal + nutritious, but the pronunciation evokes delicious as well.

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7. The OED lists both -holic and -aholic, while Merriam-Webster lists only -aholic.

8. An extended use of addict is used in glosses. The X-holic is not physically dependent on the substance or activity, but he or she devotes an unhealthy amount of time, energy, and importance to X, sometimes to the point of ruining or endangering things that other people would consider more important in life. Often the term is used humorously or as an exaggeration.
-Wich < sandwich: bagelwich, croissanwich; Kempswich® (Kemps ice cream sandwich).

-umentary < documentary: mockumentary (satirical play or film in the form of a documentary); rockumentary (documentary about rock music); soapumentary (soap opera documentary).

-Tel occurs in two different sets of blends: 1) < hotel and 2) < telephone. In the first set hotel gave rise to motel, which for many younger speakers is not even perceived as a blend. Other tel blends are boatel (a hotel reached by boat or a hotel on a boat), Homeotel (name of a hotel with home-like suites, and skytel (a hotel near the airport). The splinter often occurs in proper names like Westel, Astrapel, and Sofitel. Members of the second set have provided us with Nextel®, Nortel® and another skytel (telephone via satellite). The Home Telephone Company is listed on the Internet as Home Tel.

-Opoly. When the patent on the popular board game Monopoly expired, the company started making versions of the game for universities, with the name of the Institution or the name of the sports team as the first element: Harvardopoly, Yaleopoly, MITopoly, UCLAppoly, Arizonaopoly, Beaveropoly (Penn State), Sooneropoly (Oklahoma), Irishopoly (Notre Dame).

Two initial splinters that have acquired bound morpheme status are Mc- and e-. Mc < McDonald’s was used in many of the corporation’s own products, such as McMuffin, McNuggets, and McParking (for a McDonald’s parking lot). But it is also used to indicate “inexpensive, convenient, or easy but usually low quality or commercialized version of something” (MW Online). Most neologisms with Mc- have unfavorable connotations. McMansions are large assembly-line houses in new developments; McJobs refers to low-paying employment, no or few benefits, and little hope of advancement. Environmentalists Helen Steele and Dave Morris created McGreedy, McDanger, and McGarbage and were then sued by the McDonald Corporation for libel. An article describing that lawsuit was titled McLibel (Gettunplan 1996), which became the title of a movie about the event. Other recorded words are McDoctor, McBook, and McTherapy.


An initial splinter that occurs in more than one blend is docu-, which appears in docudrama and docu-opera < documentary + soap opera (a variant of soapumentary, cited above). However, this does not yet appear to be productive enough to count as a morpheme. A variation is jockudrama in the title of a review of Spike Lee’s film ‘He Got Game’.
9. What kind of morphemes are these splinters?

There is some disagreement in labeling splinters like *Mc-* and *-thon*. The OED-Online classifies *-gate*, *-holic*, and *-thon* as suffixes, but *Mc-* and *e-* as combining forms. The Merriam Webster Online labels *e-* as a prefix and the other four as combining forms. There are compelling reasons for considering them to be combining forms and not affixes. Since this issue has been discussed in depth elsewhere (Bauer 1983, 1998; Marchand 1969; Adams 1973; Stein 1977; Warren 1990; and Lehrer 1998), I will not go into the criteria for distinguishing affixes from combining forms. What is critical for the discussion here is that combining forms are bound bases that combine with full words or with other combining forms. The most common and typical combining forms are those appearing in neo-classical compounds like *psychology* or *sociopath* which consist of two combining forms. Bauer (1983) classifies combining forms as either first or last elements, but some can function in both positions. For example, *path* occurs initially in *pathology* and finally in *psychopath*; *anthrop* is initial in *anthropology* and final in *misanthrope*. A few neoclassical combining forms have become clipped in certain contexts, such as university jargon (*psych, bio, antho*).

Some combining forms are derived from the Germanic part the of English vocabulary, such as *scape*, from *landscape*. Examples include specific kinds of landscapes such as *mountainscape*, *forestscape*, *moonscape*, *bridgescape*, *citscape*, and *streetscape*. Many *-scape* words are names of paintings or kinds of paintings, such as *abscape* < *abstract* + *landscape*. There are further semantic extensions beyond visual phenomena which have produced neologisms such as *mindscape* and *soundscape*.

Besides the combining forms that occur only in combination with words or other combining forms, there are some that are homonyms of independent words and are semantically and etymologically related to them, but which have a special meaning. Some examples are *speak, fare, cast*, and *quake*.

*Speak* refers to a kind of jargon, derived from *newspeak*, coined by George Orwell in 1984. Neologisms that have been formed include *doublespeak*, *geek-speak*, *nounspeak*, *sportspeak*, *blendspeak*, *computerspeak*, and *blogspeak* (*blog* < *web* + *log*). A couple of dated items are *Haigspeak* (based on Alexander Haig's language) and *Valspeak* < *Valley Girl* (a song whose slang e.g., *grody to the max*, has also disappeared).

*Fare*, meaning 'public assistance to the poor', comes from *welfare* but has generated *workfare* and *learnfare* (recipients must work or be enrolled in learn-

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9. Keith Lehrer uses this term. See [www.u.arizona.edu/~lehrer/ga.htm](http://www.u.arizona.edu/~lehrer/ga.htm).
ing programs to receive benefits). Cast < broadcast has provided us with telecast, sportscast, colorcast, simulcast, narrowcast (broadcast to a small audience), dogcast (broadcast information about dogs) and recently podcast, < i-pod + broadcast. Quake < earthquake has led to moonquake, sequake, and Timequake (a novel by Kurt Vonnegaut).

10. Burgers

Burger is a resegmentation of hamburger, named after the German city of Hamburg, just as frankfurter is named after Frankfurt and wiener after Wien (Vienna). It has given rise to dozens of blends: cheeseburger, chiliburger, baconburger, Californiaburger (all of which are hamburger plus something else served on a bun) and fishburger, chickenburger, or veggieburger, where the meat is replaced by other ingredients. Burger is unusual in that it has become an independent word, not just a combining form like the other items cited above. Since -thon, -holic, and -gate have definite meanings, they could in principle become free forms, too, but this has not happened. It appears that most splinters tend to remain bound morphemes.

11. A note on the semantics of combining forms

Plag (2003:122) notes that in the type of blends he classifies as shortened or abbreviated compounds, the first element modifies the second. Thus a mocamp < motor + camp is a kind of camp, and a breathalyzer is a kind of analyzer. In many cases the original source word for the second element of a blend serves as the hyponym for new blends with the same head (Lehrer 1998). Therefore subjects accept definitions like: 11

(1) a. A mountainscape is a kind of landscape.
   b. Carjacking is a kind of hijacking.
   c. A croissanwich is a kind of sandwich.
   d. A swimathon is a kind of marathon.

10. Cynthia Allen (personal communication) reported that her child’s school has a fundraising event every year, which is referred to as a thon. One could ask, “What kind of thon should we have this year?” A plant nursery near San Francisco is called Scapes.

11. Subjects were undergraduates in introductory linguistics classes. They were given extra course credit for their (voluntary) participation.
However, they reject definitions like

(2)  a. A skyscape is a kind of landscape  
b. A meatitarian is a kind of vegetarian.  
c. Warnography (< war + pornography) is a kind of pornography.

The difference is that in (1a) the meaning of mountain is included in that of landscape, while in example (2a), sky is in contrast with land. In (1b–d) the first element (hi, sand, mara) has either no semantic content or has a meaning that is totally unrelated. In (2b) and (2c) the contrast between the meanings of the first elements in the new blend (meat and war) are semantically incompatible with the meanings of vege and porn.

12. Experimental data on the processing of novel blends

My past research on blends and combining forms has focussed on the reader’s or speaker’s processing speed and accuracy of identifying and interpreting novel blends. The details of this research are reported in Lehrer (1996) and Lehrer (2003). The following conditions appear to contribute to the identification of the source words making up the blend and to facilitate an interpretation:

1. context  
2. the number and percentage of letters (or phonemes) of the source word present in the splinter  
3. the frequency of the source words of the splinter  
4. the number of neighbours of the source words (explained below)  
5. the semantics of the blend

That context should facilitate identification is no surprise and, in fact, novel blends often occur in contexts which involve graphic as well as linguistic clues. In Lehrer (1996) two examples of contextual clues were taken from advertisements: swacket < sweater + jacket and swingle < swinging single. Both blends were hard to identify in isolation, but when presented in context, subjects identified the sources more easily.

SWACKET:  The way to a Golfer’s Heart. Our all-wool double knit...tailored swacket  
SWINGLE:  Hilton Swingles Week. We created a week for people like you.

The second factor – the amount of material measured in letters or phonemes – seems intuitively obvious. The more elements that are present, the easier identifi-
cation should be. I found a weak correlation between the number and percentage of letters of the source word present in the splinter and the identification of the source word, but this depends on the kind of blend. The positive effect of a greater number of letters is more evident with blends composed of two splinters. In the case of complete overlap, e.g. palimony, there is instead a negative correlation. In fact, nothing has been deleted, but part of the blend has to be counted twice. In my earlier experiments, relatively few blends fit this pattern and subjects apparently did not consider the repetition of letters or syllables. However, since blends with complete overlap have increased in frequency, perhaps results would be different now.

A third factor that contributes to identification is the frequency of the source words, but this interacts with the fourth factor, which is the number of neighbors that the source word has. In the literature on lexical retrieval, a neighbor is defined as a word that differs from the target word by one letter or phoneme. For example, in the word bland, neighboring words are gland, brand, blend, and blank. Words with no or few neighbors are identified more quickly than those with many neighbors. I use neighbor in a slightly different way. A neighbor is any other word that could be a possible source for a splinter because it contains the same letters (or phonemes) as the source. In a blend like applicitous, any word ending with -cious would be a neighbor. Blends are easiest to identify when the frequency of the source word is greater than any of its neighbors.

Finally, the semantic connection of the source words plays a significant role in identification. In applicitous, vicious is a more frequent neighbor than delicious, but vicious apple is much less plausible than delicious apple. Swacket was difficult to identify, but subjects who got jacket could correctly guess sweater because the two words belong to the same semantic field.

Other timed experiments, reported in Lehrer and Veres (2000), were carried out in order to determine whether blends could be identified and interpreted as quickly and automatically as other kinds of compounds. In the first set of experiments the subject had to respond as quickly as possible when a blend was presented on a computer screen. Some of the same correlations were found as in the untimed experiments.

The second set of experiments was a lexical decision task, using a masked prime. A masked prime is a prime that is presented for a very short time (usually 50 ms) before the target to which the subject must respond, the target being a string of letters. The subject is asked to push the YES button if the stimulus is a

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12. See Gries (2004a and 2004b) for quantitative data on much larger corpora.
word and the NO button if it is not. Subjects were presented with the following on the computer screen:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Timing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a string of hatch marks</td>
<td># # # # # #</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a masked prime</td>
<td>fruitopia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a target word</td>
<td># # FRUIT</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The hatch marks call attention to the screen. A masked prime appears for such a short time that most subjects do not even see it and are unable to read it; however, its appearance has a demonstrated effect (Forster 1985). Subjects who are presented with a prime respond significantly faster to a target word that is either identical, morphologically related (work-worker), or semantically related (doctor-nurse). There were three conditions for words. In the first condition, the masked prime was a blend word (as above). In the second condition the masked prime and the target were identical. In the third condition the masked prime was unrelated, such as chair for the target fruit. Subjects saw 126 items, half of which were words and half non-words.

The prediction was that the targets with an identical prime would be identified correctly faster than the others, while those with blend primes would be next, and recognition time for targets with unrelated primes would be the slowest. The order was as predicted, but an analysis of variance showed that the time differences were not significant at the .05 level.

13. In which domains do blends tend to occur?

The commonest places for blends to occur are in product names, advertisements, newspaper and magazine headlines and titles. Blends are found primarily in print, but they can easily be produced in speech, and people do sometimes coin blends when speaking. What these genres and texts in the printed domain have in common is that they are all attempts to catch the attention of the reader. Since those of us in literate societies are surrounded by an excess of stimuli competing for our attention, the media and commercial sectors try to get the reader’s attention through novel and catchy means, one of which is the creation of neologisms that utilise recognisable parts of words, often with intentional spelling errors. When encountering a new blend, we may ‘get it’ immediately or it may require some effort to identify the source words and supply a plausible interpretation in the given context. The creator of such blends wishes to elicit a favorable response in the reader, but ultimately the goal is to call his attention to the product, news item, etc. so that he will respond in the desired way. In the case of a product name or an advertisement for a product, we are supposed to be motivated to buy the
product or at least remember the product name. In the case of news articles, we are expected to read the piece, but there is no expectation that we will remember the blend, and many of these novel creations are (and are intended to be) nonce forms – items produced for a specific context and occasion.

Below I have listed some major categories where blends occur most frequently. This is not intended as a scientific taxonomy. The classes are not mutually incompatible, and many items can be placed in more than one category. Some blends do not fit into any of these categories, and it does not seem productive to establish new ones for a single unclassifiable item.

Hybrids

Many of these are classificatory terms for plants and animals that have been bred or cultivated. They include the items classified by Plag as copulative (2003: 123). In general, the referent denotes something which combines properties of both sources. For example, a broccoflower has some characteristics of broccoli and some of cauliflower.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textit{beefalo} < \textit{beef} + \textit{buffalo}\\
\item \textit{broccoflower} < \textit{broccoli} + \textit{cauliflower}\\
\item \textit{tangelo} < \textit{tangerine} + \textit{pomelo}\\
\item \textit{gasahol} < \textit{gas} + \textit{alcohol}\\
\item \textit{Texmati}\textsuperscript{®} < \textit{Texas} + \textit{Basmati} a hybrid of American long-grain and Indian Basmati rice, mostly grown in Texas\\
\item \textit{dramedy} < \textit{drama} + \textit{comedy}\\
\item \textit{infotainment} < \textit{information} + \textit{entertainment}\\
\item \textit{infomercial} < \textit{information} + \textit{commercial}\\
\item \textit{edutainment} < \textit{education} + \textit{entertainment}\\
\item \textit{walleyball} < \textit{wall} + \textit{volleyball} 'a game like volleyball that uses walls\\
\item \textit{pictionary} < \textit{picture} + \textit{dictionary} 'a dictionary with emphasis on pictures'\\
\item \textit{Kripgenstein} < \textit{Kripke} + \textit{Wittgenstein} 'Wittengenstin's philosophy as interpreted by Sol Kripke'
\end{itemize}

Blends related to places

\begin{itemize}
\item \textit{Mexicali} < \textit{Mexico} + \textit{California}\\
\item \textit{Ameurope} < \textit{America} + \textit{Europe}\\
\item \textit{Afropean} < \textit{Africa} + \textit{European}\\
\item \textit{Floribbean} < \textit{Florida} + \textit{Caribbean} (cuisine)\\
\item \textit{Vansterdam} < \textit{Vancouver} + \textit{Amsterdam} (refers to tolerance for drug use)
\end{itemize}
Proper names of companies, stores, organisations, etc.

Successories® designs, makes, and sells self-improvement products
Preventronics® sells security systems
Shirtique < shirt + boutique a store for shirts
Petcetera < pet + et cetera a pet store
Odditorium < odd + auditorium Ripley's Believe It Not Museums
Avant-Card < avant-garde + card a greeting card shop
Cosmodrome < cosmonaut + hippodrome Russian space center
Massport < Massachusetts + Transport
Exersaucer® < exercise + saucer suspended seat and tray for tots
Felaway® < feline + away a product to stop cats from marking things
 with urine

Restaurants and brand names of food and drink

Kabob-Que < kabob + barbecue 'a restaurant featuring kabobs
veggie-Q < veggie + barbecue barbecued vegetables
Frutopia® < fruit + utopia a beverage
Wheatables® < wheat + eatables crackers
Concept < cone + concept an ice-cream parlor
Count Chocula® < chocolate + Dracula a cereal
N outrageously < nut + outrageous 'a candy bar
Kempswich® < Kemps® (ice cream) + sandwich
Cinnebon® < cinnamon + bon (French for 'good'), but pronounced like bun a cinnamon bun
smoke-tacular, smoke-stonishing < smoke + spectacular, astonishing flyer for a Smokehouse Combo from Round Table Pizza®
Grandscapes < Grand Marnier® + landscape an advertisement with a picture of a bottle of Grand Marnier on an artificial landscape
Coffee drinks based on cappuccino: frappuccino < frappe + cappuccino --> cappuchillo 'chilled cappuccino', macchichilo < macchiato + chill; mochaccino < mocha 'cappuccino with chocolate'
Mixed drinks with Red Bull® beer: Bullgarita < margarita (Red Bull + tequila), chambull < champagne, Bullmeister < Red Bull + Jagermeister
vodkatini, crantini < vodka, cranberry + martini cocktails

Titles, headings, captions and other names

Genethics® < gene or (genetics) + ethics: Technical Intervention in Human Reproduction as a Philosophical Problem by Kurt Bayertz
Volumetrics® < volume + metrics a book on dieting by Barbara Rolls
Adventures of a Verbivore® < verb + carnivore a book about words by Richard Lederer
Affluenza (The Book)® < affluence + influenza by J. de Graff, D. Wann, T. H. Naylor, & D. Horsey
Pornocrates < pornography + Socrates the title of a painting of a blindfolded nude woman; the painting has Greek letters
Ghettoriginal < ghetto + original the name of a dance group. (When pronounced, it is homophonous with get original.)
Basebrawl < baseball + brawl heading of a review of the film Up for Grabs directed by Spike Lee
McLibel < Mc (now a combining form) + libel film about McDonald’s libel suit against Steele and Morris

Blends inspired by the Internet

The Internet and World Wide Web have given rise to numerous blends, some of which appear below.13

blog < web + log ‘, ‘personal website full of commentaries’. This blend has become a verb, which has generated blogger and blogging.
webbiography < web + bibliography
netiquette < (inter)net + etiquette
netizens < net + citizens or denizens

Miscellaneous blends

dogbella < dog + umbrella umbrella for a dog
monokini < bikini swimwear with only a bikini bottom
tankkini < tanktop + bikini swimwear with tank top
snivilization < snivel + civilization a story about Jerry Springer in Rolling Stone (14 May, 1998, p. 43)
zombedy < zombie + comedy a movie genre
communostalgia < communism + nostalgia
administrivia < administrative + trivia
legaldygook < legal + gobbledygook legal jargon, sometimes called legalese
synthespian < synthetic + thespian “an electronic actor ...a 3-D computer animator term for a human form that is used in a virtual reality world” (www.netlingo.com) or vactor < virtual + actor
frenemies < friends + enemies “people you’re sometimes forced to spend time with but heartily dislike”, coined by Jessica Mittford 1977

13. The Internet has given rise to many neologisms. A regular column in American Speech, Among the new words, devoted two issues to computer-related neologisms and the Internet in 1999 (73, 298–323 and 74, 403–425). (See López Rúa’s paper in this volume.)
shrimply delicious < shrimp + simply
nocebo < nocaer (Latin 'to harm') + placebo a placebo that induces a bad feeling when the person taking it [eg. a drug] is told it may have negative side-effects
Art-O-batics < art + acrobatics performance by the Circus Center of San Francisco

14. Summary and conclusions

Novel blends have become increasingly common, so common that they should no longer be considered as a marginal word-forming device. Although most of the examples presented above are from the written medium, I have also picked up several from conversations, ad hoc creations for the occasion. These nonce forms usually disappear. In the case of many brand and product names, the original etymology underlying the blend may be forgotten or ignored, just as the metaphorical origin of a word or expression becomes a dead metaphor over time and is treated as a 'new' entry in the lexicon, losing its underlying metaphorical sense. However, speakers can usually retrieve the etymological source words of a blend, just as they can figure out the connection between the literal and metaphorical meanings of words. When a splinter becomes common, it can take on the status of a morpheme, and it behaves linguistically like a combining form. However, these morphemes tend to remain bound and rarely become free morphemes.

Some of the data I collected a decade ago involved less common kinds of blends such as those with complete overlap and embedded elements, but these have increased in frequency more recently. It would be interesting to replicate the earlier experiments to see if younger speakers, who are more accustomed to encountering blends, respond to novel blends with greater speed and accuracy.

Although blends can be found in many genres, they are most frequently used where the creator wants to call attention to something by using a novel word or a misspelling, as in advertisements, titles, newspaper and magazine captions and headlines, or in product and company names. In advertisements blends are often accompanied by pictures, photographs, or other graphic devices that facilitate identification of the source words, thus allowing the reader to provide a meaning.
References

Merriam-Webster OnLine Dictionary <http://www.m-w.com>