

Blending in a Zabrockian way

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Traditionally blending is considered to be an irregular process.

(1) <i>brunch</i>	from	<i>breakfast</i>	+	<i>lunch</i>
(2) <i>stagflation</i>	from	<i>stagnation</i>	+	<i>inflation</i>
(3) <i>franglais</i> (French)	from	<i>français</i>	+	<i>anglais</i>
(4) <i>Ostalgie</i> (German)	from	<i>Ost</i>	+	<i>Nostalgie</i>

In the first example only the first cluster of ‘source word I’ is taken and it replaces the onset of ‘source word II’.

In example (2) ‘source word I’ seems to be truncated after the first syllable, whereas the first syllable/morpheme of ‘source word II’ has been skipped, so as to combine the two remaining parts, *stag* and *flation*.

In (3) the whole word *anglais* remains unaffected. Only the first consonantal cluster of *français* has been added to form a new onset. However, the first vowel of the resulting word is homophonous to the first vowel of both source words. This might be significant as well.

The resulting form in (4) can be described as a clipped form of ‘source word II’, *Nostalgie* minus onset, although a description in terms of a combination of full first source word + last part of ‘source word II’ is also possible.

As these examples show it is really unpredictable which part combines with which part.

Recently some research has been done on blends. Plag (2003) comes to a formation rule

(5) AB+CD → AD

Except for the first description of *Ostalgie* this rule seems to be correct, but it does not explain the length of A and D.

Zabrocki’s theory of diacrisis or distinctive morphology can be helpful in this respect.

Zabrocki compares word forms and distinguishes between similar and different parts, the so called *confusiva* and *diffusiva*:

(6)	tak	tak	tak	tak	tam
	dak	dal	plak	tok	tal
	plak	ham	smak	tik	tap

Here the *confusiva* are in bold.

“The relation of diacrisis binds words which are heterophonous and signify different meanings.” (Bańcerowski 2002:295) The effect of this ‘inter-word paradigmatic relation’ (idem: 296) is that there might be felt a kind of similarity between the identical parts.

This notion of *confusivum*, which is very fruitful in explaining suffix reinterpretation, can be used to explain the process of blending as well. Zabrocki’s theory implies aspects of recognizability or identifiability. This notion, which is not very precise and formal, offers exactly that kind of semantic information which is needed to interpret the meaning of blends correctly.

References

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