

Social and Economic Background of Blending

Olga Kornienko

The article studies the interconnections between new word-building processes in languages and social backgrounds of societies. Such an approach is quite important since it allows revealing the type of interrelations between the changes in social, political and economic spheres of life and new elements of the language that now emerge to reflect such changes. The basis of the analysis is the vocabulary of contemporary English and Russian languages where a new phenomenon of coining new words through blending is actively developing. The shift from a stylistic device towards an active word-formation model is closely connected with new conditions in socio-economic environment of modern societies. Attention is paid to connotational differences between blends in English and in Russian as well as to the innovative spheres where this vocabulary enrichment process is most topical.

Keywords: *blending, social communication, metaphorical and metonymical transfer, socio-economic environment, evolution of technologies, connotations, imposed values, detest of the society.*

A language is a sort of computer, which reflects the changes in society. If a society exists in a closed environment the linguistic changes are petty and occur in a similar way to the invention of new things or phenomena. If a society exists in a less restricted environment or is actively integrating into global developments, we rather witness quick changes in language, such as borrowings and new word formation. If a society achieved outstanding results in its development, it starts using its own linguistic resources and even creates new patterns of enriching the vocabulary. Social, economic and political transformations cause substantial changes in the language of a society (Kornienko 2016: 182–274). The language fixes them in the vocabulary, maintains them for shorter or longer periods of time, and gives green light to the ones that correspond most properly to the people's mentality or the stage of historical development, while pushing others into oblivion.

If a society preserves language only in the form of legends, myths, and ballads, then we can speak about the possibility of coining new words by means of comparison and adaptation in the form of metaphorical or metonymical transfer. Such purely spoken languages of the past experienced their vocabulary 50-percent change within the period of 25–30 years, since the above-mentioned process resulted in a continuous flow. For instance, some Native Americans adopted special customs and traditions in naming which were specific to their tribe. Thus, the Californian tribes of the Miwok choose a baby name on the association of how a stream looked when the baby was born. The Lakota, Nakota, and Dakota tribes used the following comparative basis for choosing names: the characteristic honors, nicknames, secret talents, peculiar deeds, and religious spirits. Furthermore, they used the associations with animals, physical abilities, the sky and clouds, day/light

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and night as well as various birds. For instance, in the Ojibwe tribes people got such temporal names as: Abitagijib (half a sky), Babibinesi (white bird), Macqwa (bear), Wagosu (fox), Babi-Manigo (white spirit), Anacquad (cloud), and Migisi (eagle) (Nicknames...). In the nineteenth century there was taken a picture of native American leaders with the following speaking names: Little Plume from Piegan, Buckskin Charley from Ute, Geronimo from Chiricahua Apache, Quanah Parker from Comanche, Hollow Horn Bear from Brulé Sioux, and American Horse from Oglala Sioux. In fact, during his lifetime a person could get several names.

Later some of such names fused to form compound words. It often resulted in a shift towards the composition of languages, and we adhere to the opinion that compounds are characteristic of a simplified reflection of the phenomena at a definite period of time and are mainly used in situations within a quickly changing environment. On the other hand, in the global world any living language is characterized by a dynamic flow of spoken and written words and nonce-words. When people use the language, they start creating new meanings and patterns to express new or familiar notions, adapting them to their environment. Some of these adaptations turn out to be fruitful for the main bulk of the language, others represent a very fluid layer of the language which momentarily reflects the atmosphere in the society, entailing a specific stage of its development.

At certain periods, a society is more concerned with domestic problems and challenges than at others. This focus on internal development is characteristic of societies at the stage of active economic development and at the linguistic level it results in the emergence of many words coined via blending, metaphorical and metonymical transfer or composition.

Such processes took place in the British society at turning points of economic and social-political development which can be illustrated by the origin of blends in the sixteenth century when Great Britain started an active expansion associated with the period of the Great Geographical discoveries.

'The blends' are new words that are formed from parts of two or more root-words, phonemes or morphemes. The classical example is the word 'smog' which is coined by blending 'smoke + fog'. The blends reveal active social-political processes in the country trying to 'digest' new developmental realities and phenomena. Sometimes it is done with irony, sometimes – with serious attitude (but with evaluative connotations), and sometimes – with indignance.

Blends started to actively appear in the language in the sixteenth century and some of them are still preserved in the English language: blatterature = blatter + literature (1512); niniversity = ninny + university (around 1590); foolosophy = fool + philosophy (1592); fooleosopher = fool + philosopher – (1549); knavigator = knave + navigator (the late sixteenth – early seventeenth century); unisalphabeth = universal + alphabet (at the beginning of the seventeenth century).

The second period that gave an impulse to blending was the nineteenth century, when Great Britain experienced the technological revolution. It was the time when a new wave of blends was fixed in the Daniel Webster Dictionary (Webster 2010): squirl = squiggle + twirl or whirl (1843); flimmer = flicker + glimmer (1880); scribaceous = scribe + loquacious – (1846); cablegram = cable + telegram (1868); catalo = cattle + buffalo (1889); squarson = squire + parson (1876); solemncholy = solemn + melancholy (1772); clantastical = clandestine + fantastical (1803); astronography = astronomy + geography (1856); wiglomeration = wig + conglomeration (1858).

This process of vocabulary enrichment started as a rhetorical device to create comical and a bit ambiguous impression which was favored by some writers and publishing houses, for example: *balloonacy* = balloon + lunacy (Dickens 1864); *needcessity* = need + necessity (Scott 1818); ‘*shamateur*’ = sham + amateur (The Guardian 1896). The English Dialect Dictionary (EDD) fixed the following blends in 1898–1905: *baffound* = baffle + confound; *smothercate* = smother + suffocate; *boldacious* = bold + audacious; *squirearchy* = squire + hierarchy. A very interesting blend was ‘*gerrymander*’, which is a fusion of the Massachusetts governor’s name (Elbridge Gerry) and ‘*salamander*’ (1811).

One of the most popular examples, referring to the period, is the book by Lewis Carroll ‘*Alice in Wonderland*’ whose language is like an iceberg with implicit meanings surpassing in manifold ways the explicit meanings of the language. It was a perfect device to draw the readers’ attention to connotations and not to explicit meaning via creating a very sophisticated context, for example: *rocking-horse-fly* = horse-fly + rocking-horse; *bread-and-butterfly* = bread-and-butter + butterfly; *snap-dragon-fly* = Snapdragon + dragonfly; *slithy* = lithe + slimy.

The third wave of popularity of blends started in the second part of the twentieth century. And again it was prompted by a very dynamic evolution of technology and economy in the Anglo-Saxon world. This period witnessed a lot of discoveries and break-throughs which brought the necessity to somehow assess the phenomena of the world. As we know any blend means more than a combination of what its constituent parts express and always contains an evaluating tint of meaning. A critical connotation is evident in the following blends: *indigomania* = indigo children + mania; *cocacolonization* = coca-cola + colonization; *videot* = video + idiot; *Euroshima* = Europe + Hiroshima.

Nevertheless, blends do not always express irony; they often imply sarcasm, disbelief, and cynical assessment as well. This is especially evident with respect to the references to new discoveries, especially of genetic engineering and new ambiguous inventions: *electret* = electricity + magnet; *windoor* = window + door; *reprography* = reproduce + photography; *stagflation* = stagnation + inflation; *glasphalt* = glass + asphalt; *liger* = lion + tiger; *leopon* = leopard + lion; *wholphin* = whale + dolphin; *tigon* = tiger + lion or *liger* = lion + tiger; *zorse* = zebra + horse; *horbra* = horse + zebra; *cattalo* = cattle + buffalo; *enormouse* = enormous + mouse; *cockapoo* = cocker spaniel + poodle.

The language also fixes dubious discoveries in hybrid flora: *potamo* = *potato* + *tomato*; *grapear* = grape + pear; *glutose* = glucose + fructose; *garlion* = garlic + onion; *citrange* = citron + orange; *applemon* = apple + lemon; *sexting* = sending text + sexual content; *wall-jack* = fraudulently access Facebook + posts to wall; *complisult* = compliment + insult; *globesity* = global + obesity (from Twitter) (Cook 2016). The new blends include many phenomena that are socially equivocal: *glamping* = glamorous + camping; *sleepiphany* = sleep + epiphany; *Movember* = moustache + November; *entreponeur* = entrepreneur + porn; *subtweet* = subliminal + tweet (Dictionary 2016); *carbage* = car + garbage; *chugger* = charity + mugger, *vortal* = vertical + portal; *glocal* = global + local; *jeggings* = jeans + leggings; and *staycation* (stay-at-home + vacation); *mockumentary* = mock + documentary; *simulcast* = simultaneous + podcast; *Blizzaster* (blizzard + disaster); *textonym* = text + antonym. It is obvious that the language is not ready to include all of them into the vocabulary but the blends make the speech very expressive and attract the readers’ attention. One of such blends, namely, ‘*prestitute*’ was coined by Paul C. Robertson and as such it embodies all the connotations.

Blends often emerge during the periods of active integration of a given society into some new global environment. In the Russian language this process occurred in the nineteenth century when the Russian society made an effort to become a serf-free country and streamed to new democratic values. Nikolay Leskov in his novel 'The Tale of Cross-eyed Lefty from Tula and the Steel Flea' made an extensive use of blends: нимфозория = нимфа + инфузория; мелкоскоп = микроскоп + мелкий; гувернянька = гувернантка + нянька; гульвар = бульвар + гулять; верояции = вариации + вероятность; долбица умножения = долбить + таблица умножения; преламут = перламутр + преломлять свет; бюстра = бюсты + люстра. In our opinion, in the Russian language the blends have a much more critical and sarcastic meaning than in English.

The second wave corresponds to the period of Perestroika and the blends of this time are often verging on vulgar slang in desire to unmask the reality: дуροкраты = дураки + демократы; коммутанты = коммунисты + мутанты; крадоначальник = крадет + градоначальник (Khrushcheva 2011: 143–145); базарник = базар + рыночник, дерьмократы = дерьмо + демократы; выходимец = выйти + проходимец; гениалиссимус = гений + генералиссимус; идеепродавец = идея + христопродавец; кемерунец = Кемерово + камерунец; нуворишки = нувориши + воришки; пропаганец = пропагандист + поганец; трезвятники = трезвость + стервятники; мифописец = миф + летописец; фальшивонапитчик = фальшивомонетчик + напитки; западохульник = Запад + богохульник; кремледворец = Кремль + царедворец; крокодилер = крокодил + дилер; паучеризаторы = от паучий + ваучер + приватизация + организаторы.

From our point of view one can deduce a typical atmosphere in the society at the time when new big waves of blends emerge. For example, in terms of English blends of recent times, compiled with reference to the Neologisms Database of English Words and used in many courses of Rice University, one can present the American society in the following way: firstly, the public is absolutely scared of many things. One can prove this by a great number of blends formed from 'Armageddon': Auckgeddon = Auckland + Armageddon; Bramageddon = bra + donating + Armageddon; Farmageddon = farm + Armageddon (horror park in a countryside); Infogeddon = information + Armageddon (lots of frightening scandals because of mass media leaks); econogeddon/moneygeddon = economy/money + Armageddon (permanent scare of financial crises); jobageddon = job + Armageddon (scary of losing one's job); aquageddon = aqua + Armageddon; snowageddon = snow + Armageddon; starmageddon = star + Armageddon; stormageddon = storm + Armageddon (frights, connected with natural phenomena); stupid-geddon = stupid + Armageddon (low opinion about authorities); disastrophe = disaster + catastrophe; fempire = female + vampire.

Another characteristic feature is the American public's significant dependence on social communication through mobiles and internet and a substantial number of dangers awaiting people in this sphere: sexting = sending text + sexual content; wall-jack = fraudulently access Facebook + posts to wall; Neature = neat + nature (nature exploration through video); twatch = Twitter + watch and twatching = Twitter + watching; Mocial = mobile + social (many-faced social media); (shift register error which can give a word 'good' instead of 4663) (Carey 2016); Twiple = Twitter + people (parties for Twitter subscribers, mainly, virtual ones); Twittership = Twitter + friendship/relationship; eppraise = electronic + appraisal (via Net assessment of real estate).

If we add new blends from innovative discoveries sphere (glasphalt, liger, leopon, wholphin, tigon, zorse, horbra, cattalo, enor-mouse, cockapoo, potamo, grapear, glutose, garlion, citrange, applemon, humalin, complimagra *etc.*) we will get quite a surrealistic picture, weighing on an average American (of 10–35 years old).

The situation with Russian blends is quite different. There are no virtual otherworldly, or extramundane threats. Everything is realistic, imposed from outside world with the help of dishonest politicians and greatly detested by the society. First of all, people are disillusioned and reject the so-called liberal values, forming new blends: *попозиционерка* = *поползновения* + *оппозиционер*, *либераст* = *либеральный* + *педераст*; *оппозаст* = *оппозиционный* + *педераст*; *толераст* = *толерантный* + *педераст*; *майдауны* = *майдан* + *дауны*; *крестоповал* = *повалить* + *кресты*; *секстремистки* из FEMEN = *секс* + *экстремистки*; *гейропеец* = *гей* + *Европа*; *человолк* = *человек* + *волк*; *собакалипсис* = *собака* + *апокалипсис*; *экономикадзе* = *экономика* + *камикадзе*; *путанесса* = *путана* + *поэтесса*; *незагармоничный* = *заграничный* + *негармоничный*.

Secondly, people are quite cynical about the state of the Russian (former Soviet) society. Alexander Zinoviev, an outstanding Russian philosopher and logician, created some very expressive blends, reflecting the emotions in the USSR and during the time of *Perestroika* as well as the reaction to the social and economic situation in the country. Let us give just a few examples: *Гомо советикус* (*Homo Soveticus*) = *гомо сапиенс* + *советский*; *горбачевизм* = *Горбачев* + *капитализм*; *глобальный человекник* = *человек* + *муравейник*; *катастройка* = *катастрофа* + *перестройка*; «*несовершенно-взрослые*» = *несовершеннолетние* + *взрослые*.

Thirdly, they reflect the realities of a bleak period in the country's development in a very straightforward way: *отсиденты* = *отсидеть* + *диссиденты*; *свободоносчик* = *свободоно* + *доносчик*; *дурократы* = *дураки* + *бюрократы*; *мапулечка* = *мама* + *папулечка*; *хрущоба* = *Хрущев* + *трущоба*; *алконавт* = *алкоголик* + *космонавт*; *стрекозел* = *стрекоза* + *козел*; *выходимец* = *выйти* + *проходимец*; *трезвятники* = *трезвость* + *стервятники*; *фальшивонапитчик* = *фальшивомонетчик* + *напитки*; *гомерзик* = *гомик* + *мерзкий*; *демозавр* = *демократ* + *динозавр*; *досидент* = *досидеть* в *тюрьме* + *диссидент*.

Taking into account the above-mentioned information we can conclude that the vocabulary of a language reflects changes in social and economic environment. The new linguistic word-building model, such as blending, reflects the shifts in the attitude towards modern values, laws, and social environment as well as the general atmosphere in the society and the attitude towards imposed values and laws.

Moreover, the changes in the vocabulary indirectly correspond to the cyclic pattern of changes in the technological and socio-political spheres of a country. The quick development and integration into a new world environment gives an impulse to new word-formation models as it is obvious in case of blends.

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