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On Italian Lexical Blends: Borrowings, Hybridity, Adaptations, and Native Word Formations

Abstract: This paper addresses intentional lexical blending in Italian as conscious wordplay (cf. e.g. Renner 2015; Sablayrolles 2015a; Zirker and Winter-Froemel 2015). Working on the assumption that the obvious increase in lexical blends in Italian suggests ongoing processes of language change, which, at least partly, appear to be contact-induced, we address the transfer of lexical blends from English, including borrowings, adaptations, and hybrid blends. To this purpose, a preliminary exploration of native blends and lexical blending techniques and the scalar notion of morphotactic (non-)transparency (or opacity) (Dressler 1987; Ronneberger-Sibold 2010, 2012; Cacchiani 2011), will make it possible to discuss types of wordplay – not only formal complexity, transgression, or semantic play on words (Renner 2015) but also graphic play in hybrid blends, pseudo-anglicisms and foreign-sounding word formations. Based on the assumption that discourse mode and genre conventions interact with the selection of blending technique, type of wordplay and pragmatic purpose of the lexical blend – from maximally descriptive to maximally ludic (cf. e.g. Sablayrolles 2015a) – we will suggest some preliminary equations between these dimensions grounded in qualitative analysis of examples from journalese, advertising, names of brands, companies, events, etc., children and nonsense literature. Crucially, where making meta-sense from phonological motivation and play with sound shapes is the goal (e.g. in Lewis Carroll's "The Jabberwocky"), choosing to render more transparent ST techniques by means of more morphotactically opaque types in the Italian TT demonstrates the remarkable ability of Italian to exploit lexical blending – if only in specific contexts.

Keywords: adaptations, anglicisms / English borrowings, description, hybrid, Italian, lexical blending, ludicity, metalinguistic reflection, naming, native word formations, wordplay

1 Introduction¹

This paper is about intentional lexical blends as ingenious though often ephemeral wordplay in Italian vis à vis English. In line with Zirker and Winter-Froemel (2015: 6), we describe wordplay as “playfully question[ing] the functioning of language and mak[ing] creative use of its limits.” Second, we understand the joyous, ludic dimension of wordplay as grounded in language competence: the addresser takes delight in clever manipulation of form-meaning relations; the addressee enjoys decoding signs in the successful search for (hidden) meaning(s).² Certainly, wordplay may result from unusual semantic associations in the output of rule-governed processes such as derivation (1) and compounding (2). And yet, extra-grammatical word formations in general (abbreviations and reduplicatives, back-formations, infixation and phonestemes; cf. Mattiello 2012) and lexical blending in particular (3–6), form an important part of wordplay (Sablayrolles 2015a). It may be noted at this point that Renner (2015) goes as far as narrowing down the notion of wordplay to lexical blends (3), metaphoronymic echo compounds (4) and backronyms (5–6). They account for “ingenious way[s] of associating the semantics of two or more words in a new morphological object” (Renner 2015: 119).³

- (1) En: *muppetational* < *Muppet* + *-ation* + *-al* → It. *muppetissimo* < *Muppet* + *-issimo* ‘elative-M.S’ (comedy show: 1976)

1 I would like to thank the anonymous reviewers, Sebastian Knospe, and Alexander Onysko, for their invaluable feedback on earlier versions of this paper. Needless to say, the usual disclaimers apply.

2 In that sense, wordplay can be seen as grounded in the language user’s pretheoretical and most often implicit metalinguistic knowledge and competence, which Lecolle (2015) labels “linguistic sentiment” or, with Culoli (1990), “epilinguistic competence.”

3 English examples come with the date of first attestation in the *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, 2nd and 3rd editions (*OED*: <http://oed.com>). If not recorded in *OED*, the respective word formations were looked up in online dictionaries such as the *MacMillan Dictionary online* (*MD*: www.macmillandictionary.com) or the *Oxford Dictionaries* (*OD*) at www.oxforddictionaries.com, the *WordSpy* database (*WS*: “The word lover’s guide to new words”: <https://wordspy.com>) and the English Wikipedia website (<https://en.wikipedia.org/>); pages retrieved via Google web queries. For the date of first attestation of Italian lexical blends, the following reference tools and websites were consulted: *DISC: Dizionario Sabatini Coletti* (2008); De Mauro’s (1999–2007) *Grande Dizionario Italiano dell’Uso* (*GRADIT*); *Neologismi Treccani online* (*NT*), the Italian word lover’s guide to new words from the quality press maintained by Treccani at *T.it/Lingua italiana magazine* (http://www.treccani.it/lingua_italiana/neologismi/), as well as the Italian Wikipedia website (<https://it.wikipedia.org>); pages searched through the Google engine.

- (2) Engl. *handfish* → It. *pescemano* (nonsense children's literature: 1988 / 1990; transl. 2013)
- (3) Engl. *globesity* 'global obesity epidemic' < *global* + *obesity* (WS: 2001) → It. *globesity* (quality press; NT: 2011), *globesità* (quality press)
- (4) Engl. *Blackjack* 'B.J.; Twentyone; gambling card game' (OED: 1899) → It. *blackjack*; *Ventuno* (DISC: 1992)
- (5) Engl. *ALICE* < *All-purpose Lightweight Individual Carrying Equipment* 'a soldier's field-pack for carrying weapons and other essential items' (OED: 1973; Renner 2015: 221)
- (6) It. *MARE* 'sea' < *molto amata residenza estiva* 'much loved summer holiday house' (word game: 2000)⁴

Intentional lexical blends are formed in extragrammatical, non-rule-based morphology (Dressler 2000; Mattiello 2012) and grounded in phonological and semantic motivation. As subtractive word formations, they fuse source words via clipping, overlapping, or both. This ties in with reduced morphotactic transparency in the output (Cacchiani 2011), which in turn correlates with an increase in wordplayfulness. To be sure, these facts probe Lecercle's (1994) strong association of nonsense literature with lexical blending and lexical blends. If lexical blending is the “playful inverse of immediate constituent analysis”, it does indeed qualify as an act of wordplay and an especially significant part of nonsense literature (Lecercle 1994: 71): with lexical blending, “lack” of form, or departure from grammatical rules, invites the reader to consciously reflect on language, thus correlating positively with an “excess” (Lecercle 1994: 3).⁵

Crucially, it has generally been noted that lexical blending is a relatively productive process in Late Modern English, the outcomes of which proliferate in the twentieth century (Renner, Maniez and Arnaud 2012: 1). Conversely, the

⁴ (1) is taken from Jim Hanson's *The Muppet Show*, a humorous comedy show first broadcast in the UK 1976–1981. The terms in (2) name new concepts in the fictional world of Roger McGough's (1988, 1990) *An Imaginary Menagerie* and Franco Nasi's Italian translation, *Bestiario immaginario*. (6) is taken from Stefano Bartezzaghi's *Lessico e Nuvole*, formerly a language game feature and currently a blog of *ilVenerdì*, the Friday magazine of *laRepubblica*.

⁵ In nonsense texts, “the non-sense is also meta-sense”, which reflects on sense via apparently erratic “joyous subversion” and clever paradoxical over-structuring and de-structuring of rules in “a dialectics of excess and lack” (Lecercle 1994: 2–3).

widely held assumption about Italian is that lexical blending is a marginal yet attested phenomenon (Bertinetto 2001); nevertheless, it is reasonable to assume that in the globalizing world and, specifically, in the post-Cold-War era of An-globalization borrowing lexical blends from English has significantly boosted the chances of this word formation process and of some blending techniques in particular. We assume, in other words, that the obvious increase in lexical blends in Italian suggests ongoing processes of language change, which, at least partly, appear to be contact-induced.

In this context, the paper investigates lexical blending in Italian as the most complex of word formation games and a phenomenon on the rise. To this purpose, Section 2 will give a brief outline of lexical blending in Italian. More precisely, after introducing commonly held assumptions about the category, we shall move on to address the transfer of lexical blends from English. This will lead us to a discussion of hybrid blends built out of English and Italian source words, borrowings and adaptations, and the challenging task of finding equivalents for English blends. All these issues are part of the larger question of how lexical blends are formed and to what purposes. Solving this question requires two separate steps in the analysis. The first is an exploration of lexical blending techniques and the scalar notion of morphotactic (non-) transparency (or opacity) (Ronneberger-Sibold 2010, 2012; Cacchiani 2011), which will be developed in Section 3. As a second step, Section 4 will turn to types of wordplay and the pragmatic purposes of lexical blends. Lexical blends are coined for a number of reasons, from describing and naming (Kripke 1981 [1972]; Anderson 2007) through attention-seeking and memorability (Lehrer 2003) to ludicity and language gaming. In Section 5, we will thus briefly address lexical blending as primarily ludic and metalinguistic wordplay in nonsense literature. Our question is whether and to what extent the genre conventions of Victorian nonsense fiction allow for recourse to some instances of lexical blending in Lewis Carroll's *Alice* books and morphotactically and morphosemantically opaque (Dressler 1987) word formation in "The Jabberwocky", as well as in their older and new Italian translations.

Although the analysis is strictly qualitative, it is still possible to address the transfer of lexical blends from English into Italian, the morphotactic (non-) transparency and lexical blending techniques in Italian, their relation to wordplayfulness, the pragmatic purposes of the blend (from descriptive to ludic), and the use of particular techniques in particular communicative situations, discourse modes and genres.

2 About Italian Lexical Blends

For the purposes of this paper, we adopt Gries's oft-quoted definition of lexical blends:

An intentional fusion [though not a speech error or contamination] of typically two (but potentially more) words where a part of a first source word (sw_1) – usually this part includes the beginning of sw_1 – is combined with a part of a second source word (sw_2) – usually this part includes the end of sw_2 – where at least one source word is shortened and / or the fusion may involve overlap of sw_1 and sw_2 [at the *crossover point* (cf. Bauer 2012)].⁶

(Gries 2012:146)

Gries's (2012) definition holds for prototypical blends (Algeo 1977: *portman-teaus*; Ronneberger-Sibold 2010, 2012: *contour blends*), but excludes *complex clippings*. Examples of prototypical blends are *brunch* (7), without overlap at the crossover point, *motel* (8), with overlap at the crossover point, and *guesstimate* (9) as a *telescope word* or *complete blend* (Ronneberger-Sibold 2010, 2012) with overlap at the crossover point and both words present in full. On the other hand, we rule out *sitcom* (10), a complex clipping with shortening at word ends. However, between these extremes there are other, neighboring types. For instance, *semi-complete blends* (Ronneberger-Sibold 2010, 2012) like the recently coined *Grexit* (11), which combine beginning of sw_1 and full sw_2 , or *Brexit* (12), formed via local analogy (Booij 2010) on the model word *Grexit*; and the latest *Czexit* (13), with overlap at crossover point. (See Section 3 for more on lexical blending techniques.)

It is no accident that one of the category labels used in the Italian specialized literature is *parole macedonia* (Lit., ‘fruit-salad words’; cf. Thornton 1993, 2004a, 2004b, based on Migliorini 1949). Lexical blends are among a cluster of non-discrete phenomena that exhibit family resemblance (Brdar-Szabó and Brdar 2008). They are phonetically reduced compounds (Bauer 2012), or subtractive word formations consciously formed in extra-grammatical morphology (Ronneberger-Sibold 2010, 2012).⁷ Contrary to the innovative potential of their English counterparts (cf. e.g. Mattiello 2012), Italian contour blends are generally seen as the poor relation of a more substantial and central part of phonetical-

⁶ Parts of words are also called *splinters* (Lehrer 2003), or segments and strings that may involve truncation between syllables or within syllables (between syllable onset and nucleus or rime or, within rime, between nucleus and coda).

⁷ See also López-Rúa (2002): *shortenings*. Notice that Ronneberger-Sibold (2015a) uses *word creation* for all conscious extra-grammatical word formations.

ly reduced compounds which combine source word beginnings or sw_1 beginning and a fully represented sw_2 , respectively: complex clippings like *Polfer* (14) and semi-complete blends like *pantacollant* (15) (Thornton 2004a, 2004b; Gaeta 2011):

- (14) *Polfer* ‘Italian Transport Police; name’ < *polizia* ‘police’ + *ferroviaria* ‘railway’ (1945; Gaeta 2011)
- (15) *pantacollant* ‘leggings’ < *pantalone* ‘trousers’ + *collant* ‘tights’ (DISC: 1991; Gaeta 2011)

This is hardly surprising if we recognize that Italian favors derivation over compounding, while lexical blending displays a positive correlation with compounding and clipping (Brdar-Szabó and Brdar 2008). But combinations of sw_1 beginnings and sw_2 ends are still attested. Classic examples are names and classificatory nouns based on coordinate compounds (Scalise and Bisetto 2009). These comprise classificatory nouns for animal or vegetal hybrids: *tigone* (16), *ligre* (17); names of languages in contact and mixed ethnic groups: *italiolo* (18), *italiese* (19); personal names: *Marilena* and *Malena* (20); nouns describing jobs and professional sectors: *cantautore* (21), *metalmeccanico* (22):

- (16) *tigone* ‘tigon, the offspring of a tiger and a lioness’ < *tigre* ‘tiger’ + *leone* ‘lion’ (GRADIT: 1984; Gaeta 2011)
- (17) *ligre* ‘liger, the offspring of a lion and a tigress’ < *leone* ‘lion’ + *tigre* ‘tiger’ (GRADIT: LIGRE; Gaeta 2011)
- (18) *italiolo* ‘Italo-Spanish’ < *italiano* ‘Italian’ + *spagnolo* ‘Spanish’ (quality press; NT: 2010)
- (19) *italiese* ‘Italo-English’ < *italiano* ‘Italian’ + *inglese* ‘English’ (Dardano 1986)
- (20) *Marilena / Malena* ‘Marilyn’ < *Maria* ‘Mary’ + *Maddalena* ‘Magdalene’ (Thornton 2004b)
- (21) *cantautore* ‘singer-songwriter’ < *cantante* ‘singer’ + *autore* ‘song writer’ (DISC: 1960; Gaeta 2011)

- (22) *metalmeccanico* ‘automotive, steel and engineering worker and sector’
 < *metallurgico* ‘steel worker’ + *meccanico* ‘engineering worker’ (DISC: 1942; Gaeta 2011)

Further, the question of lexical blending in Italian is also a matter of transfer from English. Consider the anglicisms *smog* (23) and *motel* (24), which do not form a minimal prosodic word in Italian: they were borrowed into Italian in the mid-fifties. Where maximally isomorphic morphological translation equivalence is possible, the prospects for its use are greatly diminished by a number of factors, including lexical competition of the native form with a borrowing. For instance, Engl. *smog* might translate into It. *fubbia*, a new word coined and discussed by the late Arrigo Castellani (1987). Both are well-formed contour blends of two monosyllabic source words. However, Italian speakers prefer the loan over the ‘constructed’ equivalent – a learned occasionalism which has never left purist circles to enter the standard. One reason for this is that *smog* has been institutionalized as naming a new referent in Italian, whereas It. *fubbia* did not come with a new referent.

- (23) Engl. *smog* < *smoke* + *fog* (OED: 1905) → It. *smog* (DISC: 1955) as against
fubbia < *fumo* ‘smoke’ + *nebbia* ‘fog’ (learned occasionalism; Castellani: 1987)

Other successful blends in Italian did not go through this form of lexical competition. Take It. *tigone* (16) and *ligre* (17), and their English cognates and dictionary equivalents *tigon* and *liger*. One possible explanation for the dictionary equivalents is that they are specific instantiations of a well entrenched schema in zoology and in the two languages in general: they conflate reduced names of male and female species to classify and describe cross-breeds. Orthographically similar cognates of Latin origin, therefore, merge into isomorphic lexical blends.

Taking a huge leap forward, the dominant role of English as an international Lingua Franca has significantly facilitated the borrowing of blends such as *famillionaire* (25), *flexicurity* (26; GRADIT: 2005), and *globesity* (3; NT: 2011) around the turn of the century. However, alternates like *familionario* (NT: 2011), *flessicurezza* (GRADIT: 2005) and *globesità* are also used in Italian. The reason for this is fairly clear: the English borrowings are formed from orthographically similar cognates of Latin origin and consequently readily adapted to fit into Italian.

Lexical blends like non-institutionalized *Grexit* (11) and its analogues receive a different type of analysis. Following *Grexit* (WS: 2012), *Brexit* (12; WS:

2012), *Spexit* (27) and the less frequent *Czexit* (13) were coined in the international press as semi-complete subordinate blends (Scalise and Bisetto 2009) that merge a national label and *exit* to describe the possible departure of some EU member states from the Eurozone. Because the anglicism *exit* is fully accepted in Italian and *Grexit* has been around since 2012, the average Italian speaker can re-analyze *Grexit* and other borrowings in its analogical set as hybrids that merge an Italian adjective of nationality and the anglicism *exit* based on simple indicators such as the recognition of the initial consonant cluster.

Several borrowings enter Italian as new concepts. When a native counterpart is already in place for the denoted referent, however, lexical insertion and borrowing can be a dispreferred option. So, whereas cross-linguistic equivalence is not to be expected with Engl. *guesstimate* (28; OED: 1936) because of the different structures of English and Italian, It. *stima approssimativa* ‘rough guess’ can obstruct the lexical insertion of Engl. *guesstimate*.

At this point, it is interesting to consider Engl. *starchitect* and institutionalized It. *archistar* (29; GRADIT: 2007). Engl. *starchitect* is a lexical blend with overlap of a segment at crossover points. *Sw₁* and *sw₂* are present in full, and the blend shows similarity to the syllable structure and stress pattern of *sw₂*. Because *star* in itself is an accepted lexical anglicism in Italian, It. *archistar* has taken down the maximally isomorphic translation equivalent *starchitetto* – a possible word in Italian, but perhaps inappropriate to the situational context (de Beaugrande and Dressler 1981). Unlike *starchitetto*, the hybrid creation *archistar* can stand a chance to turn into a buzzword in the international architectural community, on a par with *iconic architect*.⁸ One example here is (30), from an interview with the world-famous architect Daniel Libeskind:

- (30) “We’ve got pop-stars, movie stars, why shouldn’t we have archistars?”
(specialized magazine: 2008)⁹

⁸ Interestingly, En. *starchitect* is recorded in the *MacMillan Dictionary* (MD) but not in the OED yet. The English Wikipedia devotes an article to En. *starchitect*, which links up to its dictionary equivalent, It. *archistar*, in the Italian Wikipedia. It. *archistar* has also served as the model analogue for *ArchiPanic* (< Comb. form *archi-* + *panic*), the architecture and design magazine held by Italy-based architect Enrico Zilli at <http://www.archipanic.com>. With its model analogue *archistar*, *ArchiPanic* clearly matches the coiners’ intent to go international rather than restricting the communicative interaction to the smaller Italian architectural community.

⁹ (30) is taken from *House Living and Business*, 8 January 2008 (<http://www.immobilia-re.eu/>).

3 The (Non-)Transparency Continuum

Thus far, we have seen that lexical blends are formed in extra-grammatical morphology. Furthermore, we have given some insight into lexical blending in Italian. Rather than one word formation process, we have briefly introduced different word formation techniques applying to native source words, foreign material in borrowings, cognates in adaptations, and a combination of anglicisms and native words in hybrid creations.

Some irregularities that set blends apart from grammatical word formations comprise unpredictable and alternative outputs – e.g. *Marilena* and *Malena* (20), both outputs from *Maria* and *Maddalena* – and non-morphematic analysis into segments of various size. On the other hand, *morphotactic transparency* works towards (sub-)regularity (Dressler 1999; Ronneberger-Sibold 2010, 2012; Cacchiani 2011, 2015; Mattiello 2012). Natural Morphology (Dressler 1999) understands morphotactic transparency as the gradable semiotic parameter that specifies the morphological constituency of morphs. Importantly, perceptual salience (Dressler 1987: 117) gives precedence to word beginnings and word ends over word-internal segments. In like manner, perceptual salience motivates preference for syllable-initial over syllable-final segments and precludes maximally opaque end-end concatenations, e.g. *morbistenza* (31) as against non-words **dezzaresi* and **dezzastenza*, all with accent on the penultimate syllable.

- (31) It. *morbistenza*; **dezzaresi*; **dezzastenza* ‘softness and strength; feature of toilet tissue’ < *morbidezza* ‘softness’ + *resistenza* ‘strength’ (advert: 2011)

Interestingly, significant parameters of (sub-)regularity and tendencies that work towards morphotactic transparency comprise similarity of the blend to source word structure and recognizability of the source words through the blend (in the sense of Gries 2012). That is to say, stress assignment in blends plays a key role. More specifically, with Bauer (2012), we give precedence to the position-based view of stress assignment. While the size-based view holds that size (i.e. a larger number of syllables) overrules the order of constituents in determining stress assignment (Cannon 1986), we minimally assume the replication of the phonetic structure of sw_2 in the blend with regard to stress assignment. However, left-edge alignment of a shorter monosyllabic sw_1 , along with the stressed syllable of sw_2 neutralizes the distinction between the two views, as in the phonotactically adapted *Billary* (32), which instantiates the English ‘Name [+MALE] – Name [+FEMALE]’ schema for couples (cf. also Cacchiani 2011):

- (32) *Billary* /bil'lari/ ‘Bill and Hillary Clinton; nickname for the presidential couple’ < *Bill (Clinton)* /'bill/ + *Hillary (Rodham Clinton)* /il'lari/ (quality press: 1993)

The point of this section is that morphotactic (non-)transparency can be used to partition blending techniques.¹⁰ This already introduces the conditions that make a blending technique appropriate (de Beaugrande and Dressler 1981) to the type of wordplay (Ronneberger-Sibold 2010; Renner 2015) and the pragmatic purpose of the blend as well as the specific communicative situations, genre conventions and discourse modes (Section 4).

3.1 Telescopes

At the upper end of the transparency continuum, *telescopes* (Algeo 1977) or *complete blends* (Ronneberger-Sibold 2010, 2012) are polysyllabic blends that represent both source words in full and equal the sum of syllables from sw_1 and sw_2 minus the overlapping string. They are generated just as compounds and phrases (hence Algeo’s 1977 *syntagmatic blends*) but blended at converging ends. Haplogy defines that the crossover point and stress assignment is position-based (Bauer 2012). That is, the stressed syllable of the blend matches the stressed syllable of sw_2 illustrating overlap of phonemic and orthographic strings, e.g. *-all-* /al'l/ in *farfallegre* (33):

- (33) It. *farfallegre* /farfal'legre/ ‘happy butterflies; product name of butterfly-shaped biscuits’ < *farfalle* /far'falle/ ‘butterfly-F.PL’ + *allegre* /al'legre/ ‘happy-F.PL’ (name of biscuits: 2014)

An analogous, though not identical, situation holds for primarily descriptive (Kripke 1981 [1972]) and, therefore, maximally transparent identificatory names (Anderson 2007). *RavennAntica* (34), Ravenna’s (annual) antique’s fair, is coined in similarity to the model analogue *città antica* ‘old town’. *Casarreda* (35) illustrates the case of constituent inversion. In a slightly different manner, *Portarredo* (36), or ‘door as furnishing’, comes with deletion of functional words (*porta da arredo* ‘home furnishing door’); additionally, primary stress is position-based and the overlap of segments can be understood as a case of coales-

¹⁰ On the uncertain limits and definition of the category as well as on recent classifications of lexical blends, see Bauer (2012), Renner (2015) and Sablayrolles (2015b).

cence (i.e., merging) of two vowel segments (/a/) or, alternatively, as the result of a truncation of the word-final vowel, which is much akin to vowel shortening (from /a:/ to /a/) in rapid speech.

- (34) *RavennAntica* /ravennan'tika/ 'historical Ravenna, name of the annual antique's fair in Ravenna; also the name of a foundation and the archeological park they operate' <*Ravenna* /ra'venna/ + *antica* /an'tika/ 'historical-F.SG' (institutional name: 2002)
- (35) *Casarreda* /kasar'reda/ 'refurbish your home; name of furniture shop' <*casa* /'kasa/ 'home' + *arreda* /ar'reda/ 'refurbish-IMP.2SG' (business name)
- (36) *Portarredo* /portar'redo/ 'home furnishing door; name of a shop selling interior doors, exterior doors and door furniture' <*porta* /'porta/ 'door' + *arredo* /ar'rēdo/ 'furniture' (business name)

3.2 Contour Blends

Contour blends (Ronneberger-Sibold 2010: *associative overlap blends*; Algeo 1977: *portmanteaus*) represent a relatively less transparent category. They retain metrical structure and the stressed syllable (or, minimally, the rime) of one word (Ronneberger-Sibold 2010, 2012) or of both source words. Factors that can be taken into account in yielding some degree of transparency are position-based stress assignment on the less perceptually salient sw_2 as well as maximization of sw_1 - sw_2 graphemic, phonemic and phonological similarity. These are at least as important as sw_1 - sw_2 alignment at syllable boundary and word edges, the truncation of sw_1 beginning at syllable onset and in pretonic segments, and the beginning of sw_2 segment at stressed syllable rime.

Turning to blends whose size equals the size of one source word, position-based stress assignment, overlap at the crossover point and preservation of longer strings from both source words (including the onset of the stressed syllable of sw_1 and rime of sw_2) account for increased transparency. This holds, for example, for It. *Britaliano* (37), with paronymic insertion of a consonant cluster (*br-* /br/) at the word-initial syllable onset. It seems to be a borrowing (Engl. *Britishian*) that is fit into the phonological and morphological conditions of Italian.

- (37) *Britaliano* /brīta'ljano/ < *British* /'brɪtɪʃ*/ + *Italiano* /ita'ljano/ (quality press; NT: 2010)

If we want to put transparency into the centre of contour blending, however, we will need paronymy (Cacchiani 2015). Paronymy involves word-internal alienation that forms members of minimal pairs across the blend and sw_1 or sw_2 ; in Italian, it creates blends via phonemic substitution and overlap of entire words at left edges. Consider, in this respect, *Aforitmi* (38), a descriptive, identificatory name. It is a reduced subordinate compound (Scalise and Bisetto 2009) with right-edge alignment and substitution of the voiceless dental stop /t/ for the voiced alveolar fricative /z/:

- (38) *Aforitmi* /afo'ritmi/ ‘rhythmic aphorisms; name of a word-game feature’ < *aforismi* /afo'rizmi/ ‘aphorism-M.PL’ + *ritmi* /afo'ritmi/ ‘rhythm-M.PL’ (name of word-game feature)¹¹

Another mechanism is alignment at the right edge and the substitution of word-internal segment(s). Examples here are *schifofrenia* (39), with substitution of the voiceless labiodental fricative /f/ for the alveolar affricate /dʒ/, and *tenager* (40), a classificatory noun coined via substitution in the pretonic syllable of a high vowel /i/ for a mid-open /ɛ/:

- (39) *schifofrenia* /skifofre'nia/ ‘excessive disgust-motivated reactions and behaviour’ < *schifo* ‘disgust’ /'skifo/ + *schizofrenia* /skidzofre'nia/ ‘schizophrenia’ (coinage from adult word-game: 2010)
- (40) *tenager* /tən'edʒər/ ‘kid aged 10’ < *ten* /tən/ + *teenager* /tin'edʒər/ (8-year old girl playing with a schoolmate: 2015)
- (41) *Happyfania* /ɛppifa'nia/ ‘Happy (chocolaty) Twelfth Night’ < *happy* /'ɛppi/ + *Epifania* /epifa'nia/ ‘Twelfth Night’ (chocolate advert: 2011)

Homonymic contour blends with alignment at word edges and graphemic overlap of source words are called *inclusive blends* (Ronneberger-Sibold 2010, 2012). In Italian, they associate one native word with anglicisms or internationalisms that are integrated into the phonotactics of the language and are established in

¹¹ (38) is the name of an adult word-feature published 2012–2015 by *ilVenerdì*, *laRepubblica*'s Friday magazine.

reference tools or, minimally, have ample currency in standard Italian. Take the hybrid *Happyfania* (41), from a chocolate advert broadcast on Italian TV channels in 2011. The shift from *Epifania* to *Happyfania* involves a change from tense to lax of the mid vowels in the pretonic segment, gemination of the labial stop, and the silent segment *h* at syllable onset.

3.3 Semi-Complete Blends

Our third type are *semi-complete blends* (Ronneberger-Sibold 2010, 2012) or relatively less prototypical blends that juxtapose a splinter (syllable or string) from the beginning of *sw₁* and full *sw₂* (matrix word), with position-based stress assignment. Consider *DevItalia* (42) and *eletopo* (43). *Devitalia* /devi'talja/ ‘software development in Italy’ is a hybrid descriptive name based on a reduced N-N compound. The word order and the splinter from an internationalism (*software development*), which is further truncated at the consonant onset of a pretonic syllable (*dev-* /dev/), are used for forming a word which evokes expertise in IT. The frequency of *sw₁* and the inclusion of material at or beyond the selection point (Gries 2012) explain why *DevItalia* is less transparent than *eletopo*.

- (42) *DevItalia* /devi'talja/ ‘software development in Italy; name of an IT company’ < (*software*) *development* /de'velō(p)ment/ + *Italia* /i'talja/ ‘Italy’ (company name)
- (43) *eletopo* /ele'topo/ ‘elemouse; imaginary animal hybrid’ < *ele(fante)* /ele'fante/ ‘elephant’ + *topo* /'tɔpo/ ‘mouse’ (classificatory noun)
- (44) *Findomestic* /findo'mestik/ ‘consumer credit provider; name’ < *finanzria* /finan'tsjarja/, comb. form *fin-* /fin-/ ‘credit provider’ + *domestica* /do'mestika/ ‘personal/small credit’ (company name: 1984)
- (45) *Diclorem* /diklo'reum/ ‘diclofenac sodium that treats rheumatic or rheumatoid conditions; name of a non-prescription drug’ < *diclofenac sodico* /diklo'fenak 'sɔdiko/ ‘diclofenac sodium’ + *reumatismo* /reuma'tizmo/ ‘rheumatism’ (drug name: 1992)

As argued in Ronneberger-Sibold (2010, 2012), it is a small step from semi-complete blending to complex clipping (Ronneberger-Sibold 2010, 2012: *fragment blending*) of the type illustrated by attributive *Findomestic* (44), which names a consumer credit provider, or *Diclorem* (45), used for non-prescription drug that

helps relieve the pain and swelling caused by rheumatoid arthritis. *Findomestic* retains the stressed pattern of sw₂ and deletes the nucleus of the final post-tonic syllable to sound more up-to-date and ‘international’. Given that English is the language of international banking and finance, this should generate trust in prospective consumers. Moving further away from semi-complete blending, *Diclorem* only retains the stressed syllable of sw₂. It is a reduced coordinate compound formed from clippings of free morphs from sw₁, the active ingredient, and sw₂, the rheumatic or rheumatoid condition. Again, deletion of the final vowel evokes Latinate inflectional morphology and therefore, professional expertise and biomedical detail for purposes of trust generation.

4 Wordplay

Taking the perspective of word lovers and language gamers (e.g. Dossena 2004), (de)coding new lexical blends involves establishing a plausible meaning relation between source words that merge based on some kind of similarity. Within the tradition of Natural Morphology, we have seen that similarity between the blend and the source words can be fleshed out in terms of morphotactic (non-) transparency. With Ronneberger-Sibold (2010), we can also move one step further and relate word formation technique and type and degree of morphotactic (non-)transparency with two major types of wordplay: play with grammar and play with sound shapes. Adapting Renner (2015) to our analysis, types of wordplay can be fleshed out in more detail (Section 4.1). Furthermore, the pragmatic purpose of the lexical blend and the rationale for the genre can also be used as a diagnostics for the type of wordplay and ludicity (Section 4.2).

4.1 Types of Wordplay

All blends show some degree of morphotactic opacity. From the perspective of wordplay, this is comparable to Renner’s (2015) *formal complexity*. However, complete blends like *RavennAntica* (33) – where the coalescence of vowel segments at converging ends is very much akin to vowel shortening in rapid speech – are maximally transparent.

Wordplay reveals itself in the ability to coin reduced compounds that are at the same time phonotactically grammatical and retain the stress pattern of sw₂. With Ronneberger-Sibold (2010), therefore, we contend that *playing with sound shapes* (alias, phonological motivation) is primarily a feature of contour blends

which replicate the stress pattern and syllable structure of *sw₂*. This sets contour blends apart from inclusive blends, which rely on *graphic play on words* (Renner 2015), as in the hybrid blend *Happyfania* (41).

Additionally, *structural transgression* (Renner 2015) may occur in the phonotactics. For instance, foreign-sounding *Findomestic* (44) and *Dicloreum* (45) allow a word-final consonant following vowel deletion in the coda. Examples of transgression in the grammar (Ronneberger-Sibold 2010: *play with grammar*) are right-headed *Casarreda* (35), coined from a left-headed V-N, and *Portarredo* (36), with reduction of the underlying phrase.

Lexical blends combine the semantics of two source words into one output. For Renner (2015), *semantic play on words* is at work where the association of source words is guided by a salient semantic relation. A case in point is antonymy in jocular Engl. *underwhelm* (46). In a slightly different manner, It. *antivist* (47) is a jocular antonym of *activist*. It plays on the semantic clash between a phonetically similar source word and the paronymic output. Likewise, the humorous blend *Noncyclopedia* (48) describes the intentionally humorous and unreliable Italian counterpart of the *Uncyclopedia*, a satiric version of *Wikipedia*. As for *Aliparti* (49) and *Alitorna* (50), they are ad hoc antonymic coinages associated with *Alitalia*, the national Italian airline (51).

- (46) Engl. *underwhelm* < *overwhelm* (OED: 1953; Renner 2015)
- (47) It. *antivist* ‘contrary to activist militants’ < *anti* ‘against’ + Engl. *Activist* (pacifist leaflet: 2016)
- (48) Engl. *Uncyclopedia* ‘the unreliable encyclopedia; name of the humorous opposite of *Wikipedia*’ < *un-/unreliable* + *encyclopedia* (2005) → It. *Noncyclopedia* < *non-* ‘non-/un-’ + *enciclopedia* ‘encyclopedia’ (name of *encyclopedia*: 2005)
- (49) It. *Aliparti* ‘take off with Alitalia’ < *Alitalia* ‘Alitalia, national Italian airline’ + *parti* ‘take off, leave-IMP.2SG’ (Alitalia advert)
- (50) It. *Alitorna* ‘land with Alitalia’ < *Alitalia* ‘Alitalia, national Italian airline’ + *torna* ‘land, come back-IMP.2SG’ (Alitalia advert)
- (51) “Aliparti e Alitorna con Alitalia.” ‘Ali-take off and Ali-land with Alitalia’ (advert)

The semantic plausibility of the relation between source words in the blend is also significant. For instance, jocular *Noncyclopedia* plays on the etymology of the word (general education and ensuing knowledge) and its current meaning (alphabetically arranged reference work).

4.2 Lexical Blends in Use

Very generally, we have seen that lexical blends nod to ludicity and language play as clever subtractive word formations and less transparent form-meaning pairings. We are now able to address the relation between blending technique, type of wordplay, pragmatic purpose of the blend and communicative situations, genres and discourse modes. Admittedly, no one-to-one correspondence can be drawn (Sablayrolles 2015a). However, these dimensions are related. Following Cacchiani (2015), we thus assume at least some kind of frequent interaction of communicative situation, genre conventions and discourse mode with selection of blending technique, relative degree of morphotactic transparency / opacity and type of language play as well as pragmatic purpose of the complex word.

Wordplay, Zirker and Winter-Froemel (2015) argue, is ubiquitous in everyday communication and in literary texts. It is part of our everyday linguistic experience and may turn up in a vast array of genres, modes and discourse traditions: spontaneous interactions and jokes, digital communication and new media (e.g. twitter), slogans and advertising, brand names, newspaper language, nursery rhymes, etc. At the same time, wordplay is part and parcel of numerous literary genres and, as suggested above, of nonsense literature, which invites metalinguistic reflection on the autoreferentiality of language. To this end, phonetic similarity of linguistic signs, meanings and semantic associations are variously and consciously manipulated in ingenious ways to form new words that are often clever and memorable (Lehrer 2003) but also ephemeral. This may be done for a number of pragmatic purposes, e.g. to (re-)name referents and new referents (Anderson 2007), to describe (in the sense of Kripke 1981 [1972]), to entertain (also comically) but also to mock and ridicule (Sablayrolles 2015a), to seek and catch attention (Hohenhaus 2007), for phatic bonding or to exclude the addressee (Sablayrolles 2015a), and for evocative purposes (Cotticelli Kurras 2013; Ronneberger-Sibold 2015b). In fictional worlds, adapting to new naming needs (Štekauer 2005) is certainly linked to the tensions and dynamics of hyposaturation (Lipka 2000; Hohenhaus 2007).

Very generally, the examples above appear to suggest that genres and discourse modes that put the main emphasis on the descriptive function of the new

word (e.g. journalese, soft and hard sciences, business names and some types of brand names) will make extensive recourse to complete blending (Section 3.1), which is maximally transparent and, therefore, minimally playful (if at all). As shown before, the size of complete blends equals the sum of both words minus overwritten segments, which might only lead to the deletion of one vowel at the converging ends. Overall, the underlying compound or phrase is entirely recognizable, also in case of a transgression in the linear order of words, e.g. *Casarreda* (35). It is fairly clear that transparency detracts from effectiveness (de Beau-grande and Dressler 1981), cleverness and memorability (Lehrer 2003).

An important device for combining descriptive purposes and memorability with the ability to evoke positive connotations is the combination of semi-complete blending (Section 3.3) with word-final shortenings in foreign-sounding outputs in fragment-like blends. Take descriptive brand names like *Findomestic* (44) and *Diclorem* (45): wordplay is first and foremost a concomitant of consonantal codas in word-final syllables, which are reminiscent of specialized terminology in finance and bio-medicine.

More to the point, other examples of foreign branding are hybrid word formations and conflations of fully acceptable foreign materials. Because foreign material associates with the assumed superiority of a brand, foreign source words are used for brand names and adverts intended to evoke international aspirations, superiority, and cutting-edge innovation. The goal is to form memorable, evocative riddles that are able to impress. Take the graphically attractive *EATaly* (52). It plays on orthography in Italian, and on orthography and paronymy in English (*EAT + Italy*: It. /'it/ + /itali/; Engl. /i:t/ + /'itəli/). Overall, it points to the international appeal of this restaurant business in Italy, while also being a highly descriptive brand name for (prospective) customers abroad. If we return now to *Happyfania* (41), however, we get an entirely different picture. Like *EATaly*, *Happyfania* maximizes overlap of homophones via graphic play on words.¹² But the goal of this clever word formation is not to name a service. Rather, it is intended to amuse while describing and evaluating an event (*Epifania*) that can only be happy once we add the advertised chocolate into the picture. *Happyfania* sounds fresh and new, informal and easy-going, relaxed: *happy* clearly selects a young target audience, without excluding adults. This is easy to understand if we consider factors such as the introduction of English in primary

¹² It is important to notice that faithful reproduction of loanword phonology is not demanded in graphic blends. Rather, this associates with a high level of education and prestige, which would lead to tolerance of non-native paronymic vowel length contrast in the antepenultimate syllable of *EATaly* (52).

school curricula, the exposure of young children to English songs, and, not least, the integration of *happy* into (informal) Italian (DISC: HAPPY END, 1961).

Importantly, two factors that correlate positively with ludicity are, on the morphotactic level, maximization of overlap of source words (e.g. in paronymic blends), and, on the morphosemantic level, the computation of relatively plausible but unexpected semantic relations and associations between source words in the blend. One example is *sorrisoffice* (53). Synesthesia is at work in this blend that merges the input phrase into a reduced N-A attributive compound. This type is a favorite of both adult and children's language games. The coiner has clearly found a tradeoff between descriptive purposes, ludicity and memorability.

- (53) *sorrisoffice* /sorri'sɔffitʃe/ < *sorriso* /sor'rizo/ 'smile' + *soffice* /'sɔffitʃe/ 'soft' (word game)¹³

When ludicity, attention seeking and memorability come to the forefront, contour blending allows play with sound shapes that is also clever, witty and amusing. Examples range from brand names and adjectives in advertising and marketing campaigns to occasionalisms in children's TV programmes and children's language games. Take examples (54) to (58), which come from the 'Do you speak micra?' European marketing campaign. To promote and advertise the star quality of the minicar Nissan Micra, blends were created in 'Micra-speak' via oxymoric combinations of a number of desirable properties. Based on cognate source words, the maximally transparent Engl. *simplogic*, with overlap, readily changes into the equally transparent It. *semplogico* (54), again with overlap. Though less transparent, *modtro* (55), is transferred as a foreign-styled combination of sw₁ cognates and a sw₂ Galicism (Engl. *retro* and It. *retro*, shortenings of Fr. *retrospectif*): the foreign-sounding /-dt-/ at the syllable juncture has the potential to evoke stylish modernity, while merging sw₁ *modernity* with sw₂ (*re*)*tro*, which refers to a history of style and sophistication.

As compared to Engl. / It. *modtro* and importantly, Engl. *semplogic* and It. *semplogico*, the acceptability (de Beaugrane and Dressler 1981) and transparency of other pairs are reduced to different degrees: Engl. *spafe* and It. *sigile* (56), Engl. *thractical* and It. *emotica* (57), Engl. *luxurable* and It. *brilliosa* (58), are not readily analyzable into their source words. There are several things to note. It. *sigile*, Engl. *spafe* and Engl. *thractical* are similar to sw₂ but lose most of sw₁:

13 (53) is taken from Stefano Bartezzaghi's *Lessico e Nuvole*. (See Footnote 4.)

because sw_1 is cut before the selection point (Gries 2012), it is not phonologically recognizable. This is slightly different in It. *brilliosa* and It. *emotica*, where no source word is phonologically recognizable. One potential analysis of It. *emotica* might well rely on the use of the suffix *-ica* ‘-ics’ in non-conventional (i.e. agrammatical) derivation. This is also true of Engl. *luxuriable*, where *-able* is not immediately analyzable as a reduction from *affordable* but rather as a non-conventional adjectival derivation in *-able*. These problems detract from jocularity and ludicity; they cannot be easily circumvented by the addressee unless a meaning description is provided.

- (56) Engl. *spafe* /'speɪf/ < *spontaneous* /spɒn'teɪnɪəs/ + *safe* /'seɪf/ → It. *sigile* /'sidʒile/ < *sicura* /si'kura/ + *agile* /'adʒile/ (car advert: 2003)
- (57) Engl. *thractical* /'θræktɪkəl/ < *thrilling* /'θrɪlɪŋ/ + *practical* /'præktɪkəl/ → It. *emotica* /e'motika/ < *emozionante* /emottso'nante/ + *pratica* /'pratikə/ (car advert: 2003)
- (58) Engl. *luxurable* /lʌg'ʒʊəriəbl/ < *luxurious* /lʌg'ʒʊəriəs/ + *affordable* /ə'fɔ:dəbl/ → It. *brilliosa* /'brilljosa/ < *brillante* /bril'lante/ + *vantaggiosa* /vantadʒ'ðosa/ (car advert: 2003)

Delightful blends strike a tradeoff between morphotactic opacity and transparency so as to variously combine features that work towards analyzability: left-alignment of shorter sw_1 and sw_2 , right-alignment of shorter sw_2 , overlap at the crossover point, size-based stress-assignment, and maximization of sw_1 - sw_2 overlap in paronymic outputs and / or at different points in the blend, are reliable cues to ‘solve the riddle’, that is, to decode the blend in a successful search for (hidden) structure and meaning(s). This explains the frequency of lexical blends like *neverno* (59), with overlap, or *Fantabosco* (60), without overlap (if a blend at all), in children’s word games and TV programmes. Other examples are *Melevisione* (61), a paronymic blend, and perhaps *moredì* (62), where overlap at different points (/m/, /r/ and /e/) of sw_1 *more* ‘blackberr y-F.PL’ with sw_2 *marte-dì* ‘Tuesday’ might lead to interpret the output as a blend rather than a compound of *more* ‘blackberry-F.PL’ and *dì* ‘day’. Importantly, the ludicity of these blends is also increased by their association to the same fictional world – in the *Fantabosco* ‘enchanted forest’, naming characters and setting demands that at least part of the input associates with nature. Hence, *mele* ‘apple-F.PL’ replaces its orthographic neighbor *tele* (shortening of *televisione* ‘television’ in informal

registers); *neve* ‘snow’ conflates with *inverno* ‘winter’ as part of the prototypical winter scenario, and *martedì* turns into *moredì* based on sound similarity.

Let us now move from children’s TV programmes to children’s nonsense rhymes and return to the challenges of translation. In *An Imaginary Menagerie*, Roger McGough coins new words for imaginary animal breeds and hybrids, each with a drawing and a descriptive poem (a sort of imaginary definition). One significant example is the animal hybrid *allivator* (63), a contour blend and a paronym of Engl. *alligator* and Engl. *elevator*. Of course, multiple overlap and maximum similarity of the blend to both source words increase ladicity. Turning to its translation into Italian, one viable option initially recommended by the translator but not held up at a later stage is *squala mobile* (64). This is a compound formed by analogy from *scala mobile* ‘escalator, Lit. moving stair’, with insertion of the neighbor *squalo* ‘shark’ and non-conventional agrammatical ending *-a* to mark female gender (hence, *squala* ‘shark-F.SG’), which is motivated as follows: like *alligators*, the *squale mobili* can eat you after letting you ride upon their back to reach the upper floor in shopping malls. A second option, also discarded at a later stage, was *scadrillo* (65), a blend of *scala mobile* and *coccodrillo* ‘crocodile’, which detracts from transparency because the blend is not similar to *sw₂* and the stress contour of *sw₂* is not recognizable in the blend. A third option which was eventually found to be a good translation, was *scaladrillo* /skala'drillo/ (66), from *scala mobile* ‘elevator’ and *coccodrillo* ‘crocodile’, a blend of the clipped compound *scala* (for *scala mobile*) and *drillo* (often used as the hypocoristic of *coccodrillo* ‘crocodile’ in children’s picture books), with position-based stress assignment and maintaining the size of *sw₂*.

5 Probing Lexical Blending: *Alice goes to Italy*

Before we get to the conclusion, a few last words about ladicity are necessary. In Section 2, it is suggested that contour blending represents a marginal operation in Italian. From a cross-linguistic perspective, it is clear that universal cognitive principles (e.g. saliency) interact with the structural features of the language system to allow or favor specific word formation and word creation. On the other hand, Section 4 demonstrates that genre conventions and discourse mode interact with the selection of the word formation technique and the type of wordplay at work. Very broadly, the picture that emerges is one in which multiple pragmatic purposes may combine in the lexical blend, with shifts from primarily descriptive concerns to ladicity.

Naming purposes foreground descriptive concerns. Examples of that are maximally transparent complete blends with the coalescence of vowel segments at converging ends and existent syntagmatic phrases (34: *RavennAntica*) – for which it is indeed doubtful whether or not this is wordplay at all. Descriptive paronymic blends may be close neighbors of the longer source word and only substitute one consonant segment. Maximum overlap increases ludicity, as in *Aforitmi* (38), with a semantically plausible correspondence between source words.

Ludicity is also at play in relatively morphosemantically transparent descriptive homophonic and paronymic blends from foreign words. For instance, graphic hybrids of foreign and native source words such as *Happyfania* (41) and *antivist* (47), foreign sounding word formations like *Findomestic* (44), or borrowings like *satisflying* (67) and *Catisfactions* (68). While *satisflying* was coined to describe and promote the mission of the low-cost carrier Ryanair as ‘flying and satisfying’, the brand name *Catisfactions* (68) describes and promotes cat treats as ‘satisfactions for your cat’.

At the jocular end of the spectrum, ludicity is centered on a combination of formal complexity (complete, contour and semi-complete blending) and semantic play on words. For instance, rather than identifying a salient semantic relation between the lexical blend and one source word (47: It. *antivist*, from Engl. *activist*), the blend demands unusual associations within prototypical scenarios, as in the synesthetic *sorrisoffice* (53) – from adult language games – which merges stimuli from different modalities. Other examples are oxymora like the maximally isomorphic Engl. *simplogic* and It. *semplogico* (54) and *modtro* (55), taken from an advertisement.

In children’s TV programmes and nonsense children’s literature, amusing conflations of words from different scenarios are possible, like Engl. *allibrator* (63) and the Italian translation *scaladrillo* (66), clearly demand a stipulatory definition by the coiner. Last, play on sound shapes motivates blends like *moredì* (62). In like manner, similarity across orthographic neighbors accounts for the shift from *televisione* to *Melevisione* (61), which would again call for a definition. The creation is memorable and effective, but informativity (de Beau-grande and Dressler 1981) is backgrounded.

Nonsense literature and nonsense rhyme indeed create fertile ground for clever, ludic word formations that are especially intended to surprise and impress the addressee. Of all nonsense authors, Lewis Carroll was a master of wordplay and made lexical blends and lexical blending popular in English. If we invoke the primacy of the literary-stylistic dimension in accounting for language choices within the text, what we would expect, then, is that all three

blending techniques (complete, contour and semicomplete blending) are present in Lewis Carroll's (1875) *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1875) and its (1871) sequel, *Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There*.¹⁴

The *Alice* books are perhaps an obvious choice: Alice gradually learns to master wordplay through metalinguistic awareness and ludic or provocative competence (that is, the ability to tease the addressee). Though never competent enough to produce wordplay herself, she will eventually be able to take turns with Humpty Dumpty in a conversation about morphotactically and morphosemantically opaque (Dressler 1987) blends and complex clippings in the poem "The Jabberwocky", from *Through the Looking-Glass* (Kullmann 2015).

In this context, we proceed on the assumption that, though generally a marginal phenomenon, lexical blending carries over from the *Alice* books to their Italian translations. Their lasting reception is indeed reflected in several older and new translations. Accordingly, eight translations and the Disney adaptation are considered for *Alice's Adventures*,¹⁵ seven editions are used for *Through the Looking-Glass*.¹⁶ Our question is not about the frequency of lexical blending but

14 The source text examples were manually retrieved from:

- A: Lewis Carroll, 1953, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. Parallel text: 1993, Feltrinelli;
- TLG: Lewis Carroll, 1871, *Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There*. Parallel text: 1992, Rizzoli.

15 Though sometimes reprinted in new editions or other series over time, Italian translations are tagged based on the year of first publication and author. For *Alice's Adventures*, the following versions were used:

- A1: 1953, trans. by Tommaso Giglio (1995, Universale Economica);
- A2: 1967, trans. by Ranieri Carano (1978, Einaudi);
- A3: 1978, trans. by Masolino D'Amico (2007, Mondadori);
- A4: 1988, trans. by Aldo Busi (1993, Feltrinelli);
- A5: 1989, trans. by Milli Graffi, Garzanti;
- A6: 1993, trans. by Ruggero Bianchi, Mursia;
- A7: 2002, trans. by Alessandro Serpieri, Marsilio;
- A8: 2003, transl. by Alessandro Ceni, Einaudi;
- A9: 1952, Disney adaptation.

(See Cammarata 2011, 2015 for an outline and illustration of Italian translations and adaptations of *Alice's Adventures*.)

16 Italian translations are tagged based on the year of their first publication and the translators. For *Through the Looking-Glass* and "The Jabberwocky", seven editions were considered. (Information about new editions of older translations is given in round brackets.)

- TLG1: 1947, trans. by Giuliana Pozzo (1978, Einaudi);
- TLG2: 1952, trans. by Tommaso Giglio (1972, Rizzoli);
- TLG3: 1966, trans. by Attilio Brilli (1992, Rizzoli);
- TGL4: 1971, trans. by Masolino D'Amico;

rather about the possibility of contour blending in Italian and its ability to naturally occur in nonsense fiction and rhymes. Intuitively, one should predict semi-complete blending in *Alice's Adventures* and a significant move towards contour blending in *Through the Looking-Glass* and, particularly, in the poem “The Jabberwocky.” Here, we shall see, the poetic function (Jakobson 1960) conflates with the paradox of making (meta-)sense from a word formation process that in this one case is not able to derive heightened sense from the integration of unfamiliar (that is, semantically opaque) source words. Of course, there is certainly a lot more to be said about the *Alice* books. However, a comparison of some lexical blends across the source and target texts will probe our working assumptions. Lexical blending techniques that play with sound shapes and are grounded in phonological motivation are indeed peculiar to “The Jabberwocky” rather than to *Alice's Adventures*.

We would suggest that in *Alice's Adventures* this claim is substantiated by the translation of *yer honor* (69) and some names of Wonderland creatures. Interestingly, TT telescope blends are occasionally found to translate other ST types.

Take non-standard *yer honor* and Alice's immediately following comment on *arrum*, its non-standard pronunciation in rapid speech (70). This licenses *vostrodore* ‘your perfume’ (71), which is rather humorous in the situational context; it is a sign of courtly (in)adequacy. Morphonotactically, *Vostodore* is a relatively transparent telescope blend that involves vowel shortening at converging ends and paronymy – from an alveolar nasal in the fixed expression *Vostro Onore* ‘Your Honour’ (72) to dental stop. In a slightly different manner, It. *vostrore* (73) appears to be a univerbation of *Vostro Re* ‘Your King’ – formed as a humorous, low-key variant of the fixed expression *Sua Maestà* ‘Your Majesty’ – rather than an example of a contour blend.

(69) Engl. *yer honor* “*arrum*.” (A: 58)

(70) “He pronounced it ‘*arrum*’.” (A: 58)

(71) Engl. *yer honor* → It. *vostrodore* ‘your perfume’ < *vostro* ‘your’ + *odore* ‘smell’ (A4: 59)

— TLG5: 1989, trans. by Milli Graffi;
 — TLG6: 1996, trans. by Guido Almansi, Laterza;
 — TLG7: 2003, trans. by Alessandro Ceni, Einaudi.

- (72) Engl. *yer honor* → It. *Vostro Onore* ‘Your Honour’ (A1, A3, A5, A6, A7, A8, A9)
- (73) Engl. *yer honor* → It. *Vostrore* ‘Your Honour’ < *Vostro Re* ‘Your King’; *Vostro* ‘Your’ + *Onore* ‘Honour’ (A2: 45)

Let us now consider the translations of *Mock Turtle* (74), *White Rabbit* (78) and *Cheshire Cat* (81). These are meant to be names with a descriptive, classificatory function. Because the source names fully retain their constituents, we would predict literal TT translations: *Finta Tartaruga* (75), *Coniglio Bianco* (79), and *Gatto del Cheshire* or *Gatto dello Cheshire* (82). However, *Mock Turtle* is also rendered by *Fintartaruga* (76), a telescope blend, or else affixation in *Pseudotartaruga* (77). One second example from the Disney movie is *Stregatto* (83), a telescope blend for which we can suggest recourse to paronymy. Unlike *Gatto del Cheshire* or *Gatto dello Cheshire* (82), it fails to identify the distinctive sneer of the Cheshire Cat. As for *White Rabbit*, the telescope *Bianconiglio* (80) is only found in the Disney movie.

Nevertheless, it is important to notice that, rather than challenging our claim, using general noun phrases appears to compensate and substitute for the absence and uselessness of identifying and individualizing (personal and family) names (Sutherland 1970: 135). The alleged freedom to create new blends is constrained by what might be understood as part of Carroll’s reflection on the arbitrariness of naming.

- (74) Engl. *Mock Turtle*
- (75) Engl. *Mock Turtle* → It. *Finta Tartaruga* ‘Mock Turtle’; It. *finta tartaruga* (A1, A2, A4, A5, A7, A8, A9)
- (76) Engl. *Mock Turtle* → It. *Fintartaruga* ‘Mock Turtle’ < *Finta* ‘mock’ + *Tartaruga* ‘turtle’ (A6: 87)
- (77) Engl. *Mock Turtle* → It. *Pseudotartaruga* < *Pseudo-* + *Tartaruga* ‘turtle’ (A3: 97)
- (78) Engl. *White Rabbit* (A: 14)
- (79) Engl. *White Rabbit* → It. *Coniglio Bianco*; *coniglio bianco* ‘White Rabbit’ (A1, A2, A3, A4, A5, A6, A7, A8)

- (80) Engl. *White Rabbit* → It. *Bianconiglio* ‘White Rabbit’ < *Bianco* ‘White’ + *Coniglio* ‘Rabbit’ (A9)
- (81) Engl. *Cheshire Cat* (A: 68)
- (82) Engl. *Cheshire Cat* → It. *Gatto del / dello Cheshire*; *gatto del / dello Cheshire* ‘Cheshire cat’ (A1, A2, A3, A4, A5, A6, A7, A8)
- (83) Engl. *Cheshire Cat* → It. *Stregatto* ‘Bewitched cat’ < *Strega* ‘Bewitched’; *Stregato* ‘Bewitched’ + *gatto* ‘cat’ (A9)

A similar example is *tulgey* (TLG) (84), rendered by the semi-complete blend *tenebrumido* ‘dark, gloomy and humid’ (85).

- (84) Engl. *tulgey* (TLG; OED: TULGEY: ‘thick, dense and dark’)
- (85) Engl. *tulgey* → It. *tenebrumido* ‘dark, gloomy and humid’ < *tenebroso* ‘dark, gloomy’ + *umido* ‘humid’ (TLG7)

Importantly, because in “The Jabberwocky” playing with sound shapes has priority over playing with meaning and phonological motivation overrules semantic motivation, contour blends are used to translate other types of word formations as well as different lexical blending techniques in the TT. For instance, *brillig* (86) is a non-word formed from *to grill* and / or *to broil* (87) and a transgression via recourse to fantastic, agrammatical derivation in -ig. Among others, *brillig* is rendered by the contour blend *brillosto* (88), with no overlap at the crossover point: it describes a ‘roast that benefits from the 4 p.m. sunshine’ (87). One second example is *cuociglia* (89), which plays with syntax by reducing the univerbation of a verb phrase and independent clause (*cuoci alla griglia* ‘barbecue-IMP.2SG’).

- (86) Engl. *brillig* < *grill* + -ig / *broil* + -ig; *grill* + *broil* + -ig
- (87) “Brillig means four o’clock in the afternoon – the time when you start broiling things for dinner.”
- (88) Engl. *brillig* → It. *brillosto* ‘roasted and shiny’ < *brillare* ‘to shine’ + *arrosto* ‘roasted / roast’ (TLG6)

- (89) Engl. *brillig* → It. *cuociglia* ‘grill’ < *cuoci* ‘cook-IMP.2SG’ + *griglia* ‘grill, N’
 < *cuoci alla griglia* ‘barbeque-IMP.2SG’

When the blend is explicitly defined as a portmanteau by Humpty Dumpty (91, 95), it is actually rendered by a contour blend in the TT, but relatively more opaque complex clippings are also possible. An example of that is *slithy* (90), which conflates *slimy* and *lithe* into a paronymic contour blend. One interesting translation is *vivacciosi* (92), a paronymic contour blend that conflates *vivaci* ‘vivid-M.PL’ and *limacciosi* ‘muddy-M.PL’. Similarly, *fanghilosi* (93) can be analyzed as a contour blend rather than a derivation involving the non-conventional interfix *-il-*. Crucially, derivation is ruled out by the need to pack two meanings into one (semantic motivation).

- (90) Engl. *slithy* < *lithe* + *slimy* (TLG)
- (91) “Well, ‘slithy’ means ‘lithe and slimy’. ‘Lithe’ is the same as ‘active’. You see, it’s like a portmanteau – there are two meanings packed up into one word.” (TLG)
- (92) Engl. *slithy* → It. *vivacciosi* < *vivaci* ‘vivid-M.PL’ + *limacciosi* ‘muddy-M.PL’ (TLG7)
- (93) Engl. *slithy* → It. *fanghilosi* < *fanghi* ‘mud-M.PL’ + *oleosi* ‘greasy-M.PL’; *fango* ‘mud’ + interfix *-il-* + *-si* ‘-y-M.PL’ (TLG1)

Another classic example is *mimsy* (94), which merges *miserable* and *flimsy* (95) into a contour blend. In much the same way as *slithy*, it is rendered by *mélacri* (96), a contour blend of *melancolici* ‘sad-M.PL’ and *alacri* ‘flimsy-M.PL’. The blend is relatively opaque because *melancolico* is reduced before the selection point and neither *melancolico* nor *alacre* are widely used in Italian. Opacity is also an issue in *stantri* (97): as a complex clipping, it is not phonologically similar to the contour blend of *sw₂*.

- (94) Engl. *mimsy* < *miserable* + *flimsy* (TLG)
- (95) “‘Mimsy’ is ‘flimsy and miserable’ (there’s another portmanteau for you).” (TLG)

- (96) Engl. *mimsy* → It. *mélacri* ‘mimsy-M.PL’ < *melancolici* ‘sad-M.PL’ + *alaci* ‘flimsy-M.PL’ (TLG4)
- (97) Engl. *mimsy* → It. *stantri* ‘tired and sad-M.PL’ < *stanchi* ‘tired-M.PL’ + *tristi* ‘sad-M.PL’ (TLG2)

Even more opaque are complex words like *mome* (98), a portmanteau of the non-perceptually salient syllable coda (-*m* /m/, from *from*) and the end of *sw₂* (*me*, from *home*). It. *Fuasa* ‘out of the house’ (99), and *vidasa* ‘away from home’ (100) are maximally opaque. Irrespective of the word formation technique, another reason for this is that reduction of prepositional phrases is not a typical feature of lexical blending. Further down the transparency spectrum are only complex clippings like Engl. *wabe* (101), from *way before*, *way behind* or *way beyond*, and It. *civa* (102), from *ci vanno* ‘there go-PR.3PL’, *ci vagano* ‘there wander-PR.3PL’, *ci vacillano* ‘there stagger-PR.3PL’, or else a classic language game with combination of shortening and syllable inversion from *vacillano* ‘there stagger-PR.3PL’.

- (98) Engl. *mome* < *from* + *home* (TLG)
- (99) Engl. *mome* → It. *fuasa* ‘out of the house’ < *fuori* ‘outside’ + *casa* ‘house’ (TLG3)
- (100) Engl. *mome* → It. *vidasa* ‘away from home’ < *via di* ‘away from’ + *casa* ‘house’ / *via* ‘away’ + *di* ‘from’ + *casa* ‘house’ (TLG4)
- (101) Engl. *wabe* < *way* + *before*; *way* + *behind*; *way* + *beyond* (TLG)
- (102) Engl. *wabe* → It. *civa* < *ci* ‘there’ + *vanno* ‘go-PR.3PL’; *ci* ‘there’ + *vagano* ‘wander-PR.3PL’; *ci* ‘there’ + *vacillano* ‘stagger-PR.3PL’; *vacillano* ‘stagger-pr.3pl’ (TLG3)

6 Conclusion

This study can be seen as a descriptive contribution to the growing literature on the dynamics of lexical blending as wordplay in Italian. While only intending to shed some light on the issue, we hope to have brought home two important points.

It is generally accepted that lexical blending is a rare word formation process in Italian. An understanding of lexical blending in Italian should be focused on facts from genres, discourse modes, subject fields and knowledge domains that are in constant need of new naming devices, but also on genres that put emphasis on the coiner's metalinguistic reflection on the capabilities and limits of the language system and its morphology. Very broadly, media language and journalese, radio and TV programmes, marketing and advertising of products and events, belong to the former; nonsense and children literature belong to the latter.

In this context, we have assumed that the addresser's communicative goals and intentions, processing capacities and ability to reflect on language, and the intended addressee's ability to analyze the blend merit consideration when we address lexical blending as wordplay. In other words, genre conventions and discourse mode interact with the selection of a blending technique, relative degree of morphotactic transparency / opacity and the pragmatic purpose of the complex word. More specifically, descriptive and identificatory purposes correlate positively with maximal morphotactic transparency (e.g. in telescopes with vowel shortening at the crossover point). To be sure, borrowings may enter Italian as complex descriptive terms. However, they may be perceived as simplex words if they are shorter than or of the same size as the minimal word in Italian. Longer borrowings are generally perceived as complex and adapted into isomorphic equivalents in case of cognate source words. Foreign branding relies on the prestige of the foreign language and might account for pseudo-anglicisms (conflations of foreign source words), hybrid blends and foreign-sounding blends. All instances strike a balance between descriptive and ludic purposes.

Ludicity, attention-seeking and metalinguistic reflexivity tend to lean towards opacity, but morphotactic opacity is modulated via a number of devices, including a tendency towards polysyllabic blending, alignment of source words at the left or right edge, position-based stress assignment, and paronymy in contour blends.

Finally, extending the operations of blend formation to the limit of acceptability was only possible in "The Jabberwocky", which aims at making meta-sense from phonological motivation and play with sound shapes. Importantly, Humpty-Dumpty's stipulatory definitions are highly opaque but phonotactically well-formed contour blends (in his words, portmanteaus). The extreme positive end of ludicity and the limits of morphotactic and morphosemantic transparency are reached first and foremost due to the selection of unfamiliar, manufactured source words that demand ad hoc definitions. By contrast, choosing to

render more transparent ST techniques by means of more opaque types in the Italian TT demonstrates the remarkable ability of Italian to exploit lexical blending in specific contexts.

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