Conceptual blending and semantic creativity

1 Jokes
Humorous effects conveyed by jokes typically involve blending.

a. Diagram an annotated conceptual integration network for this joke; don’t include the ‘generic’ space in your diagram. (Note: a model answer is provided as a separate file for this question.)
   Q. What do you get if cross a vampire with a teacher?
   A. Homework that’s a pain in the neck.

b. Explain how the humorous effect is achieved, with reference to the integration network you have just diagrammed.

c. Now provide the same analysis, with an integration network, for the following joke:
   Q. What do you get if cross an elephant with a kangaroo?
   A. Holes all over Australia.

2 Formal blends and jokes
Sometimes jokes use formal blends to derive their humorous effect, by playing on words. Consider the following joke:

Q. What do you get if you cross two elephants and a fish?
A. A pair of swimming trunks.

a. In your own words, explain what a formal blend is.

b. Identify the formal blend in this joke.

c. Now diagram an integration network for the joke, and use it to explain how the formal blend, and hence humorous effect, arises. There’s no need to diagram the generic space.
3 Formal blends

In the early 2000s, British tabloid newspapers used newly coined compound nouns in sensationalist coverage concerning the prospect of economic migrants arriving in the UK from relatively poorer central and eastern European countries. For instance, in February 2004, the *Daily Express* claimed that 1.6 million Gypsies are ‘ready to flood in’ to the UK, when ten new countries joined the European Union on 1 May. An editorial stated that these economic migrants were ‘heading to leech on us’. The tabloid concern was that the UK’s welfare state would be exploited by impoverished eastern Europeans who, the headlines implied, had no intention of actually looking for work.

Consider the following examples, which can be analysed as formal blends:

(1) welfare shopping
(2) welfare tourism

a. Provide an integration network for the example in (1), and explain how formal blend is achieved. There is no need to include the generic space. Hint: you will need to invoke the notion of completion (an important idea in blending theory), by invoking a frame, in your diagram, to account for the blend. (Note: a model answer is provided as a separate file for this question.)

b. Repeat the steps in 3a in order to address example (2).

4 A more complex example

A more complex instance of formal blending involves the following compound:

(1) low carbon diet

This concerns a campaign to provide individuals and individual households with a means of contributing to the fight against climate change, by encouraging people to reduce the carbon footprint of their household. This approach involved putting a household on a low carbon diet, by being more energy efficient with household electricity consumption, by recycling packaging and recycling kitchen waste. An excerpt from the promotion for this low carbon diet campaign explains the approach as follows:

It’s no wonder the scale of climate change can feel overwhelming. An ice sheet the size of Rhode Island melts into the sea off Antarctica. A blizzard of disease carrying insects reaches high-elevation cities for the first time. Whole islands in the Pacific are ready to disappear beneath the waves. But, while there is much to be done, an important part of the solution to global warming may be right in your kitchen. (Fred Krupp 2006, cited in Evans 2015a: 177)
a. Now diagram an integration network for the formal blend in (1). There is no need to include a generic space in your diagram. (Note: a model answer is provided as a separate file for this question.)
b. Explain, with reference to the diagram, how the blend is achieved, and what emergent structure arises as a result.

5 Taxonomy of integration networks

Consider the following examples:

(1) The integration network you devised in response to question 1c.
(2) James is Mary’s uncle.
(3) Emmanuel Macron is President of France.
(4) Bill Clinton was acclaimed by many as the Pelé of politics. (This utterance, adapted from a newspaper report on the former US president, argued that Clinton was the most gifted US politician of his generation.)
(5) If the 1970 Brazilian FIFA World Cup winning team had played the Brazilian World Cup winners of 2002, the team of 1970 would have won.

a. For each of these examples, diagram the network, including generic spaces (use your existing diagram for (1)).
b. State what kind of integration network is involved, and explain why.

6 Vital relations and compressions

Consider the following examples.

(1) Supreme leader Kim Jong- Un (of North Korea).
(2) ‘Drive in the fast lane of the motorway!’
(3) Children provided with a solid primary education in mathematics today are tomorrow’s techno whizz-kids.
(4) ‘That child is bigger every time I see him!’
(5) ‘I used to be Jane’ (uttered by Peter, who used to be departmental secretary; Jane is currently the departmental secretary).
(6) ‘The pronghorn runs as fast as it does because it is being chased by ghosts – the ghosts of predators past … As researchers begin to look, such ghosts appear to be even more in evidence, with studies of other species showing that even when predators have been gone for hundreds of thousands of years, their prey may not have forgotten them’ (cited in Fauconnier and Turner 2000: 299).

a. Say what the outer-space vital relations are in each example.
b. Now say what the compressions are that they give rise to, in the blend.
c. What is the linguistic evidence you can marshal to support your answers?