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Blending and Compounding in English Coroneologisms

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Abstract

This article focuses on English coroneologisms coined during the COVID-19 pandemic. In order to contextualise two of the main morphological mechanisms underlying the coinage of coroneologisms in non-specialised terminology, namely blending and compounding, I will discuss the whole spectrum of lexical items traditionally ascribed to these word-formation processes and their relation to other lexicogenetic mechanisms. The rapid shift in the status of the word *corona* from having its primary sense, "crown", in Romance languages prior to the pandemic, to being automatically perceived as a clipping of *coronavirus* in Romance and Germanic languages alike is illustrated, as well as the high frequency of *COVID*, among other base forms, in the coinage of numerous words in a matter of months. References will be made to the use of these neologisms in English and their adoption and adaptation into other languages.

Key words
English word-formation; COVID-19 neologisms; blending; compounding; lexicography

1. Introduction

The Oxford English Corpus evidences a dramatic rise in the use of such terms as *coronavirus* and *COVID-19* in the English language over the last few months: in December 2019, *coronavirus* started to be found in the corpus and progressively increased its frequency until March 2020, when it became, by far, one of the most frequent nouns in recent times, overtaking other words related to news topics like *climate*, *Brexit*, *impeachment*, and one of the most widely employed nouns in English, *time*. *COVID-19* was coined in February 2020, and despite its increasing frequency, it did not overtake the already existing term, *coronavirus* (compare the frequency per million tokens of *coronavirus* (over 1,800), *COVID-19* (less than 1,200), and other less frequent words denoting the disease, including *SARS-CoV-2* and *nCoV* "novel coronavirus" (see *OED* (2020) for details)).

These figures neatly illustrate how coronavirus has had a tremendous impact not only on our everyday lives but also on our vocabulary. Roig-Marín's short note (2020) surveys how English-based coroneologisms beyond scientific discourse have been a very fertile area in the word-stocks of languages beyond English,

including French, Italian, or Spanish, among many others with a Latinate base.[1] For English alone, Thorne (2020) recorded more than 1,000 new words in technical and non-specialised terminology. The present article gives a theoretical account of popular, non-specialised *corona*-related lexical items which have been retrieved from online newspapers and articles from March to August 2020. The data analysis is preceded by a conceptualisation of blending and the grey areas between blending and other word-formation mechanisms including compounding. The aim of this article is to illustrate how blending and compounding in English continue to be widely employed in the coinage of new words in everyday speech.[2] I will focus my attention on tentatively labelled *compounds* and blends – the latter provisionally defined as combinations of splinters (see Lehrer 1996; 2007 and Bauer, Lieber and Plag 2013 and my discussion below) from two source words into one – that denote newly arisen realities related to COVID-19, and I will delve into discussing why the neologisms selected are blends and compounds and not the result of other word-formation mechanisms. Some notes on the adoption and adaptation of this new COVID-19-related vocabulary into other languages conclude the data analysis.

2. Some notes on blending in relation to compounding and other word-formation mechanisms

This section briefly overviews the fuzzy dividing-lines between blending, compounding – including clipped compounding – and acronymy, in order to contextualise the data discussed in the following section of this article: mostly blends and some compound formations. As will be discussed and López Rúa (2004) points out, compounds, blends, and abbreviations can be placed on a continuum according to the extent to which the source words undergo truncation.

Lexical blending has usually been described as "irregular" (Connolly 2013: 3), and the definitions of *blending* and *blends* in the literature differ considerably. Blending has been considered to be one of the "non-grammatical" (Marchand 1969: 2) or "non-morphematic" (Fandrych 2004) word-formation processes. Apart from blending, somewhat peripheral word-formation mechanisms generally include clipping, acronymy, ablaut gemination, and sound symbolism. The status of blends as formations that are not based on morphemes becomes patent by analysing their structural constituents: they tend to be made up of smaller constituent units than morphemes. That unit, which is apparently devoid of meaning and unpredictable in terms of structure, was traditionally known as a "splinter" in the literature (Berman 1961; Adams 1973; Bauer 2006; Fandrych 2008; Bauer, Lieber and Plag 2013) or, less frequently, as a "fracto-lexeme" (Renner and Lalić-Krstin 2011: 270). Lehrer (1996: 361) defines splinters as "parts of words in blends which are intended to be recognized as belonging to a target word, but which are not independent formatives". Their frequency of use and subsequent creation of a paradigm arguably leads to the morphemisation of the form, which "would be endowed with semantic autonomy" (Frath 2005: 6). This phenomenon is described to happen in the so-called H-types (hamburger-type blends), in which the meaning of the first

initial blend was transferred to the final constituent of the word (e.g. *-burger* in *tofuburger* or *-capade* in *boozecapade* or *sexcapade*) and what started as initially blend creations (the prototypical example quoted is *cheeseburger* < *cheese + hamburger*) began to function as stems of regular compounds (Frath 2005; Lehrer 2007).

The status of blending as an independent lexicogenetic mechanism is still subject to discussion (see, e.g., the recent contributions by Beliaeva 2019a; 2019b). Bauer (1983: 236) rightly noted that "blending tends to shade off into compounding, neo-classical compounding, affixation, clipping, and [...] acronyming". I will consider how blending fits into the general picture of traditional morphematic and non-morphematic processes and in what ways it may interact or overlap. One of the most conflicting categories is arguably compounding. A *compound* can be broadly described as the creation of a new lexeme by putting two or more stems together, but like all methods of word-formation, there is no general agreement on issues such as its definition, terminology, cross-linguistic typology, or even its description in languages like English (Bauer 2017). Nevertheless, this mechanism is widely attested crosslinguistically (see Lieber and Štekauer 2009 and Fromkin, Rodman, and Hyams 2012, among many others), and criteria relying on orthography, phonology, morphology, and semantics were devised to try to pinpoint their defining features. Donalies (2004: 76), for instance, posit ten criteria: compounds are complex formations, conceptual units, are formed without word-formation affixes, spelled together, have a specific stress pattern, include linking elements, are right-headed, are inflected as a whole, are syntactically inseparable, and are syntactic-semantic islands. These were based on specific language groups and languages (Germanic, Romance, Slavic, Finno-Ugric, and Modern Greek), so they are not able to accommodate compounds across all languages or even all types of compounds within a language. Because the new lexical formations related to the pandemic are rather new and sometimes restricted to the written medium, parameters like the prototypical stress distinctions between compounds, associated with forestress, and phrases with endstress (see Chomsky and Halle 1968)[3] are somewhat problematic. Yet, we could invoke the syntactic inseparability and behaviour as complex lexico-semantic units of such complex lexical units as *coronababy* or *coronaboom* (see my discussion of these words below) to argue that they are compounds. How well they fit the pattern of canonical compounds is, nevertheless, open to debate.

Earlier proposals defined blends as a subtype of compounds (Marchand 1969; Adams 1973), while others emphasised that in blends part of the morphological material involved has undergone a process of truncation (Devereux 1984; Cannon 1986). Blends have been described as shortened/clipped forms of compounds (see Lehrer 2007: 117; Miller 2014: 187), "quasi-compounds" (see, e.g., Hamans 2010: 455) and as "extra-grammatical formations which syntactically and semantically resemble appositional or copulative compounds, except that their constituents are obscured" (Mattiello 2013: 115). Yet, as Bauer (1983: 234) states, on many occasions "at least one of the elements is transparently recoverable". This is particularly noticeable in overlapping blends and in those in which either the first or the second element is kept intact. Both SWs may, in fact, be recognisable in such blends as *bromance* (*bro + romance*). The recognisability and similarity of

the source words are two aspects that are singled out by Gries (2006; 2012) and Beliaeva (2014; 2016), among others, as defining features of blends. Similarly, the notion of phonemic or graphemic overlap also plays a prominent role when distinguishing blends from compounds: blends take advantage of phonological similarity with their source words (either partially or totally), which increases their recognisability, or to use Kemmer's (2003: 75) words, "likelihood or felicity". Consequently, Kelly's (1998: 579) understanding of a blend as "formed by [...] stitching the components together either through simple concatenation or through concatenation coupled with overlap of shared phonological segments" could, in this view, be in conflict with this alleged separation between a sub-type of compounds, clipped compounds, and blends.

One of the most self-evident and prototypical characteristics of compounds is that they combine whole lexemes rather than parts of lexemes (Kemmer 2003: 75). However, clipped compounds make use of identifiable clipped syllables. This begs the question of the differences between *clipped compounds* and *blends*. In order to make such a distinction, it is generally pointed out that blends merge two SWs which do not originally represent a semantic unit (e.g. *hangry* < *hungry* + *angry*), while the elements of clipped compounds exist as compounds before being clipped (*sitcom* "situational comedy") (see Plag 2003: 122; Mattiello 2008). Similarly, the general blending rule (AB+CD=AD) rarely applies to clipped compounding, which exhibits an AC combination. It is assumed that a blend involves the combination or "telescoping" (Cannon 1986: 730) of two base forms – exceptionally three – into one.[4] These base forms or source words do not contribute in the same way to the final product. As Gries (2004: 204) expounds,

> Shorter words contribute more to the resulting blends [...] and there is a clear tendency for source word 2 to contribute more to the blend [...] The two source words usually contribute different portions of themselves: typically, the first word contributes its beginning whereas the second word its end.

Regarding the classification of blends according to their structure, Lehrer's (2007: 117-119) draws on structuralist classification of blends and distinguishes the following types:

(1) full word + splinter (e.g. *chatire* < *chat* + *satire* or *vodkatini* < *vodka* + *martini*);
(2) splinter + full word (e.g. *cinemenace* < *cinema* + *menace* or *squangle* < *square* + *angle*);
(3) splinter + splinter, which can be further subdivided into: beginning of the word + end of the other one (e.g. *psychergy* < *psychic* + *energy*) or both the beginnings of word (e.g. *biopic* < *biographical* + *picture* or *cabsat* < *cable* + *satellite*); and
(4) complete overlap of one or multiples phonemes, and often of entire syllables (e.g. *clandestiny* < *clandestine* + *destiny* or *airobics* < *air* + *aerobics*).

Attention is also drawn to a less frequent class of blends involving a discontinuous element in which a word or clipped form is embedded "as an infix" (Lehrer

2007: 118) (e.g. *delinguancy < delinquency + lingual*). This latter group is also known as "intercalative blends" (Kemmer 2003: 72), which, in Kemmer's (2003) classification, are opposed to "nonintercalative" or "sequential blends". Furthermore, Lehrer devotes a specific section of her article to "orthographic blends" (2007: 120), even though they are not part of the classification quoted above. Similarly to López Rúa (2004: 65), she declares that the medium in which blends are found (i.e. written or oral) plays a role in determining their processing. Lehrer illustrates her point by referring to blends such as *shampagne* (< *sham + champagne*), *buyography* (< *buy + biography*) or *pursonality* (< *purse + personality*), which can be only recognised when they are seen in writing, as opposed to others like *eracism* (< *erace + racism*) in which pronunciation takes priority over spelling.

According to Plag (2003: 123), "proper blends" are semantically comparable to copulative – also known as *dvandva* or coordinating – compounds. That is to say, the resulting referent shares traits of both entities denoted by the (two) source words (e.g. *brunch*). In contrast, the neighbouring clipped compounds or "compounds of clipped elements" (Adams 1973) are usually right-headed (e.g. *webcam*).[5] This syntactic-semantic criterion can be helpful to a certain extent, although it does not seem to set a definite distinction between blends and compounds. Instead, the degree of sound integration between constituents, apart from their morphological make-up (see above), seems to be more helpful: whereas in blends there is phonological overlap, this does not happen in clipped compounds (cf. López Rúa 2007: 152). Typically, clipped compounds tend to use apocopated base forms (i.e. their beginning (e.g. *telco*)). López Rúa (2007: 153) provides a detailed account of possible patterns and their corresponding examples:

1. Hind clipping + hind clipping: *telco* (< *telecommunication + company*) or *Wi-Fi* (< *wireless + fidelity*).
2. Fore clipping + word: *blog* (< *web + log*).
3. Hind clipping + word: *digicash* (< *digital + cash*) or *favicon* (< *favourite + icon*).
4. Word + fore clipping: *chatfly* (<*chat + barfly*) or *geekosphere* (< *geek + biosphere*).
5. Word + hind clipping: *webcam* (i.e. "web camera") or *newsadmin* (<*news + administrator*).

This classification, however, may also be somewhat problematic: for instance, *emoticon* is classified as a blend (López Rúa 2007: 152), although *favicon*, which seems to be built upon the same pattern of *emoticon*, is included within the third category of clipped compounds. Hence, this strictly morphological taxonomy also causes difficulties. Even acronyms have been described (see Plag 2003: 13) as "blends based on orthography", which are "coined by combining the initial letters of compounds or phrases into a pronounceable new word (*NATO*, *UNESCO*, etc.)". This approach is not adopted in the present paper. Hence, for instance, the acronym *COVID* is not treated as a blend in itself.

Finally, Bauer (1983) points out that there is a type of blend that could be analysed as an instance of neo-classical compounding in such cases as *arcology* (< *architectural ecology*), *autocide* (< *automobile + suicide*) or *stagflation* (<*stagnation + inflation*). He discusses the peculiarities of this type of compounds, namely the recursive use

of elements coming from Greek or Latin in English word-formation. These were labelled by the *OED* as "combining forms", but some authors indicate that this use is "not necessary" (Kastovsky 2009: 12), asserting that, "the categories of "word", "stem", "affix", "affixoid", "clipping" and "blending" necessary in word-formation for independent reasons are sufficient to deal with the formations in question."

An alternative proposal is to devise a "categorical continuum" (López Rúa 2004: 63) based on a "scale of increasing abbreviation along which [Bauer] locates compounds (*houseboat*), blends (*guestimate*), and even alphabetisms as a 'possible end-point' of maximum abbreviation" (López Rúa 2004: 73). This will presuppose the suppression of the dividing lines between morphemic and non-morphemic word-formation processes discussed above but seems to better accommodate a number of cases whose classification is less clear-cut, as will be discussed in Section 3.

Besides structural or formal studies on lexical blending, there is also an increasing interest in this lexicogenetic mechanism from a psycholinguistic or cognitive viewpoint. Along these lines, it has been contended that the complex nature of blends and their categorisation may have a deeper cognitive basis, which is best accounted for by referring to a mental operation known as "conceptual blending" (Fauconnier and Turner 2003: 57).[6] According to Fauconnier and Turner (2003: 57–58), "the essence of the operation is to construct a partial match between two input mental spaces, to project selectively from those inputs into a novel 'blended' mental space." Lehrer (2007) provides the parameters on which the speaker's identification and processing of source forms are based: (1) context, (2) the number of percentage of letters (or phonemes) of the source words present in the splinter, (3) the frequency of the source words of the splinter, (4) the number of neighbours of the source words, and (5) the semantics of the blend. Similar parameters were used in Connolly's (2013) study, which centred on how speakers assign meaning to innovative blends.

Likewise, Kelly (1998) analysed the order of word components in blends, particularly in those that function as "contractions of conjunctive phrases" (1998: 580) (e.g. *smog*) and found out certain predictable patterns: "the first word represented in blends tends to be higher in frequency, contain fewer syllables, and denote more prototypical category members than the second word" (Kelly 1998: 579). Because of his combined methodology, which drew on both linguistics and psycholinguistics, his analysis was twofold: he examined the boundaries between the components of blends and sound similarities among them and studied lexical retrieval and semantic storage of words. His most revealing findings are certainly in the latter field: the blends that he studied could be considered to be arbitrary as there are no heads of any sort, but rather they function as the aforementioned copulative compounds. It is important to clarify that in cases such as *brunch*, which have preserved the temporal order of the source words, the explanation of their order seems self-evident, but the majority of them did not accomplish this condition. He showed that the first elements of blends were more easily retrieved in the speaker's mind than the second ones, and they were higher frequency items. Despite the insightful views that psycholinguistics can provide into how our mental lexicon is arranged and how it intervenes in the conscious coinage of

blends, for the purposes of this paper, blends and compounds will be analysed from a strictly lexical viewpoint.

3. Data analysis

The data here analysed was collected manually from online articles and newspapers from March 2020 to August 2020. A prerequisite for the vocabulary to be considered was that it had to be attested outside of (metalinguistic) compilations of neologisms which do not necessarily reflect the words' usage, but they may simply represent lists of nonce-formations coined by journalists or individuals and never used outside their immediate milieus. Some illustrations of their actual use in, for instance, newspapers will also be provided.

Blending seems to be a very common mechanism in the formation of new non-specialised words related to the pandemic, largely making use of the stems *corona* and *COVID*.[7] The question of why blends continue to be so popular is, thus, very much relevant. A number of extralinguistic and linguistic factors have played a part in their ongoing success: from a linguistic perspective, it could be argued that blends are used to convey information more effectively than with two – or, more rarely, three – different words. This explanation would work well if all blends were semantically transparent. Unfortunately, it is often the case that "they don't increase efficiency. In fact, they create more effort to interpret – at least at first, until readers and hearers have figured out what the source words are and what they mean" (Lehrer 2007: 371). Therefore, the reasons behind their coinage must be pragmatically conditioned rather than relying on simply performing one communicative function. Kelly (1998: 586) calls blends "lexical teases", pointing out their similarity with word plays and their concomitant witticism. Yet, the main underlying motivations go far beyond playfulness and also aim to capture our attention in a world surrounded by constant stimuli (cf. Lehrer 2007: 116).

Word-formations considered to be secure blends, that is, those in which there was a merger, are here based on two criteria: (1) the existence of non-paradigmatic morphological resegmentation of the components of the source words (henceforth, SWs); and (2) the presence of overlap, which can be phonological, graphemic or even can affect both spelling and phonology. These include *blursday* (*blur* + *Thursday*)[8] "any day of the week which feels exactly the same as the previous ones during lockdown" because all of them blur,[9] *locktail* (*lockdown* + *cocktail*) "a cocktail drunk during lockdown," *Skumping* (*Skype* + *dumping*) "dumping someone over Skype," *FaceTumping* (*FaceTime* + *dumping*), *quaranteens* (*quarantine* + *teen*), which is an orthographic blend, since it can only be identified as a blend visually (*quarantine* has exactly the same pronunciation as *quaranteen*), *quarintini* (*quarantine* + *martini*) "a cocktail drunk during lockdown," *morona* (*moron* + *corona*), and *moronavirus* (*moron* + *coronavirus*), "virus-like idiocy that represents a risk to public health," all of which involve morphological and phonological overlap.[10]

As discussed below, source word 2 contributes the most to the blend in terms of syllabic structure and prosody, although the morphological parallels between the two forms in *morona* and *moronavirus* mean that they fuse together in every

aspect. These two last neologisms playing with *moron* are semantically analogous to *covidiots* (*Covid* + *idiot*) "inept people who disregard safety and health guidelines." However, from a morphological perspective, there is a slight difference: in *covidiots* we have a harmonious fusion (overlap) of the two words with a deletion of the repeated material (*id*) but none of the graphemes need to be replaced. The same applies to *covideoparty* (*covid* + *videoparty*) "a video party during lockdown;" in *covidivorces* (*covid* + *divorces*) "divorces resulting from lockdown" and *covidictionary* (*covid* + *dictionary*) "a dictionary which records COVID-19-related words," however, there is only overlap of the letter <d>. The environment <vid(i)> allows multiple graphemic combinations involving words starting with <di> or <vid>, which is why these words have proven very popular and have been successfully adopted either as direct Anglicisms or have been calqued in languages whose common Latinate word-stocks favour this kind of phonological and morphological merger (e.g. Spanish *covidivorcio*, Spanish/Italian *covidiota*, French *covidivorce* and *covidiot(s)*, German *Coviditiotien*).

It is worth noting that the writing of *covid* in small capital letters in these *covid*-based blends may strike as odd. Indeed, initially, *COVID-19* tended to be written only in capital letters (acknowledging that it stands for *Coronavirus Disease 2019*). However, owing to its widespread and recurrent use, it soon came to be written in lower case as well. A similar development can be found in other originally technical terms which made their way into everyday language such as *laser* (*light amplification (by) stimulated emission (of) radiation*) and *radar* (*radio detection and ranging*). Their spelling in lower or upper case was originally subject to variation, conditioned, to an extent, by the technical/non-technical medium of dissemination of the word (compare, e.g., 'laser' in 1960 *N.Y. Times* 8 July 7/6 vs LASER in 1961 in the *Journal of Applied Physics* 32 1960). Nowadays these acronyms would rarely be spelt in capital letters because the source words are no longer transparent; a similar scenario might be extrapolated to *COVID*, especially in its use as an Anglicism in other languages (see Roig-Marín (2020) for a brief account of the gender variation associated with this term in French, Italian, and Spanish, and how the term was reprocessed as *Coronavirus December 19* by the President of the Community of Madrid, Spain, Isabel Díaz Ayuso).

There are also blends in which their haplologic components could be argued to correspond to syllabic breakpoints: *drivecation* (*drive* + *-cation*) "time spent in your caravan or camper van parked at home during lockdown," (*Macmillan Dictionary*, s.v. *drivecation*), *coronacation* (*corona* + *-cation* (< *vacation*)) "time spent at home owing to the pandemic", *coronapocalypse* (*corona* + (*a*)*pocalypse* (< *apocalypse*))[11] used to describe the situation of chaos during the pandemic (see "America's Coronapocalypse" (Haque 2020) and "The Coronapocalypse and Sanitation Workers in India" (Meshram and Bisht 2020)). *Quaranteams* (*quaran-* (< *quarantine*) + *teams*) "teams created during the quarantine" or *quaranteens* (*quaran-* (< *quarantine*) + *teens*) "teens during the COVID-19 quarantine period" could exemplify a process of hind clipping + word, typically associated with clipped compounds, if a complete merger of the two elements (see, e.g., the mirroring phonological structure of *tine* in *quarantine* and *teen*) were not present and the compounds (*quarantine teen* and the *quarantine teams*) existed before being clipped.

Other terms are more problematic from a taxonomic viewpoint: *coronials* (*corona* + *millennial*) – which could be analysed as *coro* + *nial*, *coron* + *ial* or *coron(a)* + *(millen)nials* – and *covidials* (*covid* + *ials*). These terms might refer to the young generation who experiences the pandemic in several ways (see, e.g., the title of the journal article "*Coronials*: Nurses who graduated during the COVID-19 pandemic. Will they be better nurses?" (Monforte-Royo and Fuster 2020)) and be also a synonym for *coronababies*, babies conceived during the COVID-19 pandemic, as in "Kareena Kapoor and Saif Ali Khan to have a 'coronial' baby. Here's what it means" (*Times of India* 2020). A plausible morphological analysis involves taking *-ial* – as well as *-cation* in *coronacation* or *drivecation* –, as what have traditionally been called *splinters*, which would be attached to the several SWs of blends, functioning in the fashion of other splinters like *-holic*.[12] *Holic* (< *alcoholic*), for instance, was reanalysed as *alco+holic* without taking into account the original morpheme boundary (*alcohol+ic*), by a process known as "secretion" (Jespersen 1950; Warren 1990; Callies 2016), which could also result from an abbreviation process, as in *workaholic* (< *work alcoholic*). According to Schmid (2011: 94), secretion "gradually turns non-morphemic parts of words into productive morphemes", which would explain the formation of some or paradigms based on the formatives *gate* ("scandal") or *holic* ("addict");[13] both elements (*-ial* (not to be confused with the adjective-forming suffix *-ial* "of or relating to X") and *-cation*) would fall under Bauer, Lieber, and Plag's (2013) definition of *formatives*, so the possibility of being classified as such cannot be fully ruled out.

One of the most productive bases in neologisms is *corona*: among them are *coronababy* (*corona* + *baby*) "babies conceived during the pandemic and who will be born in late 2020," *coronaboom* (*corona* + *boom*) "an expected baby boom in late 2020," and *coronaparty* (*corona* + *party*) "parties challenging party-goers to be the first to become infected with COVID-19." An initial question would be whether we can interpret *corona* as a clipping of *coronavirus* or not, if we deem *corona* a free morpheme, the policy adopted in the *OED*, which has given it a new separate entry (*OED* (2020), s.v. *corona*, n. 3). It is worth comparing *corona* to *auto*, used both as a free morpheme and as clipped form of *automobile*, and which is classified as a combining form in words like *autobus*, *autocar* (*OED* (2011), s.v. *auto-*, comb. form[2]). Presumably, the use of *auto* on its own is much more limited in English than *corona* meaning coronavirus, but the resemblances between *auto* and *corona* make us wonder whether lexicographical practices are consistent in this regard or whether they have changed over this period of almost ten years. The present-day *OED* editorial decision of considering them lexemes seems, nevertheless, to be the best approach. *Corona*, used in English and many other languages, is also used as a general modifier in numerous formations such as *corona pandemic*, etc., but only in such cases as *coronababy* or *coronaboom* we could make a stronger case for their status as compounds (see the criteria of compounds discussed in Section 2). Many of these word-formations have crossed languages and regions, and they have been adopted (and adapted) into other languages. They can be found as direct Anglicisms, with little adaptation, or as calques: Spanish *coronafiesta* (English *coronaparty*), *coronabebé* (English *coronababy*), *coronabonos* (English *coronabonds*). In terms of functions, Rodríguez González's (1996:

119–124) threefold proposal of functions – i.e. "referential, "expressive", and "textual" functions – applied to Anglicisms may also help to elucidate why new words are incorporated into a language. Particularly, both the referential and expressive functions are relevant to this study, since they can be perceived to be at work in, on the one hand, the naming of new realities and, on the other, in the expression of the writer's or speaker's attitude towards them.

There is also a large number of endogenous lexical creations, some of them looking like English genuine expressions but which are not attested in that language. As pointed out in Roig-Marín (2020), an example of a false Anglicism or "Pseudo-English" (see, e.g., Furiassi 2003; Furiassi and Gottlieb 2015) is *quarenteners* "someone quarantining", only found in Spanish and Portuguese. Other blended formations which might have been modelled on English but using lexical material which was already part of the language's own repertoire such as *pandemial* (< ultimately adopted from Greek *pandēmos* + *-ial* < *millennial*), see, e.g., "El desembarco de la "generación pandemial" en el ecosistema universitario" (Menchero de los Ríos 2020) or *Covidengue* (< the Anglicism *COVID* + Spanish *dengue* (also found in English as a borrowing)), a term coined in Latin American Spanish to denote a person who might have contracted both COVID and dengue (see "COVIDengue: cinco personas contrajeron dengue y COVID al mismo tiempo en México" (Steve, 2020)), *CovidAuto* or *AutoCovid* (*Covid* + *auto*(*mobile*)) in Spanish "a facility that allows users to be tested for COVID without leaving their cars" (see, e.g., "El Covidauto se traslada al Hospital A Coruña", *La voz de Galicia* 2020),[14] *covidianidad* (*covid* + *cotiniadidad*) "our everyday COVID-19 reality" (see also the comments by La Fundéu (2020) on the correctness of this neologism in Spanish), and German *Coronaspeck* "coronavirus fat", referring to the weight gained during lockdown, among many other new terms.

4. Concluding remarks

This article has attempted to showcase how blending and compounding are behind the coinage of many COVID-19-related neologisms within (and even beyond) the English language. Dictionaries like the *OED* are keeping track of well-established words such as *coronavirus* and *corona*, but many other, more informal, terms have not received a similar lexicographical treatment. Nor have they been described from a lexical viewpoint, hence the need of this study to document these new lexemes. Despite efforts to describe *pure blends*, instances of bordering or neighbouring categories – mainly clipped compounds – cannot be neglected and can be better accounted for by placing them on a continuum along which the repertoire of lexicogenetic mechanisms that the speaker uses either consciously or unconsciously can be analysed in terms of degree of subtraction or agglutination. My analysis was primarily grounded on formal criteria such as the presence of non-paradigmatic morphological resegmentation in the source words, as well as graphemic and/or phonological overlap. As I have argued, all of these mechanisms often work conjointly to create a fusion rather than a simple juxtaposition of clipped material. Moreover, the data seems to align with well-established as-

sumptions such as the primordial role of SW2 in segmental and suprasegmental consideration of the blend, which shows that the lexicogenetic mechanism of blending is not as irregular as traditional research advocated.

The wittiness and apparent irregularity of blends makes them a rewarding field of lexical enquiry. So does the mechanism of lexical compounding, highly productive in Germanic languages and which has been used in the English language ever since its origins. Some of these COVID-19-related neologisms will become dated and be no longer used in the long run, and others will (hopefully) disappear alongside their associated extralinguistic referents. Nonetheless, the use of all of these words proves how speakers persevere with their linguistic ingenuity regardless of the difficult circumstances experienced globally.

Notes

[1]   The term "neologism" is used in the broad sense of "a novel word", hence, not necessarily recorded in standard dictionaries. Many of these words may represent nonce-formations.

[2]   It is worth clarifying that, diachronically, blending is traditionally described as a novelty of the 19th century.

[3]   See Bauer (2017: 127) and his discussion of how these stress-based distinctions are "systematic or quasi-systematic" since there is variation (see also Fudge 1984: 144–146). Similarly, the factors involved in the stress of N+N sequences in contrast to that of A+N sequences are not the same; there is variability depending on the type of compound analysed.

[4]   The term *base form* is used on purpose since authors like Algeo (1991) uphold that full word forms which are combined without any type of graphemic or phonological overlap are not blends.

[5]   Clipped compounds are classified as blends by authors like Algeo (1991).

[6]   Conceptual blending has also been applied to compounding (see, e.g., Benczes 2011).

[7]   There are also some initialisms which are very much in use nowadays, although they existed pre-COVID-19: *WFH* "working from home" (the first attestation as a noun dates to 1995 and as a verb to 2001) and *PPE* (1977, whose use was restricted to medical professionals); the blend *infodemic* was coined during the SARS epidemic in 2003, so none of these words are neologisms. There is a number of new acronyms related to the coronavirus (apart from *COVID* itself such as *nCoV* (*novel coronavirus*) and *2019-nCoV*), but overall they are more technical than the vocabulary examined in the present article which is why acronyms are not considered beyond the base word *COVID*.

[8]   Thursday matches with the morphological make of *blur* but other names of weekdays apart from *Thursday* (i.e. *Tuesday* and *Wednesday*) also end in *-sday*.

[9]   The definitions are my own unless otherwise specified.

[10]   Since Skype, FaceTime, and other online communication tools were already in use, it could be argued that such words as *Skumping* and *FaceTumping* may be attested before the outbreak of the pandemic. The author has not been able to track any records predating the outbreak of COVID-19, but even if these words had been used in the past, their usage on the Internet over the last months would suggest that their popularity increased once lockdown was imposed. That is why they are included in this article.

[11]   The medial <a> may come from the end of *corona* or the beginning of *apocalypse*, so it is what Ronnesberger-Sibold (2006) called a "complete blend".

[12]   It was argued that a frequently used splinter could transform into an affix or a combining form (Lehrer, 1998: 14) (cf. the treatment of *-aholic* in the *OED* ((2012), s.v. *-aholic*, suffix), but this view will not be pursued here for the terminological conundrums sketched out in this article.

[13]   There is a wide range of names for a formative, from splinter and "unconventional suffix" (Baldi and Dawar 2000) to "secreted affix or combining form" (Fradin 2000; 2015; Mattiello 2013), among many others, which is why the term *formative* understood as an "overarching category that includes both morphemes and elements contributing to the construction of words whose semantic unity or function is obscure or dubious" (Bauer, Lieber and Plag 2013: 16) is here preferred (see also Callies, 2016).

[14]   Rodríguez González (forthcoming) offers a panoramic overview of new terms coined in Spanish, including *coronacoma* and *coronanovio/-a*, to which one could add *coronajeta*, *coronaburro*, *coronacrisis*, *coronafiestas***, *coronapijos***, and *coronabolo*, among others.

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