

PUNS AND BLENDING: THE CASE OF PRINT ADVERTISEMENTS

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Abstract

In this paper, the connection between metaphor, metonymy, blending and humour is discussed against an analysis of puns in print advertisements featuring both visual and verbal elements. The analysis is based on the theory of conceptual blending (Fauconnier and Turner 1994, 1996 etc.) and on analyses of humour within that framework made by Coulson (1996, 2001, in press), but it also draws on observations made by Pollio (1996), Attardo (1994) and Nerhardt (1977) concerning incongruity and humour.

The issues being addressed are: (i) whether Pollio's observations can explain the difference between metaphorical and humorous blends, (ii) in what ways conventional metaphors can serve as inputs to humorous blends and (iii) assuming that humour is a graded phenomenon, how degrees of humour in metaphorical and non-metaphorical blends can be explained.

In this analysis, the interplay between these mechanisms is handled within the framework of blending theory and Pollio's findings are to some extent applied, showing that the degree of humour is partly related to the type of incongruity between the two spaces. The presence of visual elements and the amount of elaboration in the blended space also seem to be of importance to the degree of humour in metaphorical blends.

1. Blending, metaphor and humour

Some interesting cognitive linguistic analyses of humour have been made by Coulson according to the theory of blending or conceptual integration (1996, in press) and in terms of the related process of frame-shifting (2001). In this paper, the focus will be on conceptual blending and the way it is manifested in relation to puns in print advertisements. However, before dealing with humour, we will briefly discuss the basic elements of blending and see how it relates to the

traditional theory of conceptual metaphor as proposed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980).

The theory of conceptual integration was originally devised by Fauconnier and Turner (1994, 1996, etc.) and builds on the notion of mental spaces (Fauconnier 1994). The fundamentals of blending as described below can be found in most works on the subject, including Fauconnier and Turner (1994: 3-5), Grady et al. (1997: 101-105), Turner (1996: 60-62) etc. Blending is described as a general and basic cognitive process that operates in a wide variety of conceptual activities, including categorisation, counterfactual reasoning, analogy, metonymy and metaphor. There are typically four mental spaces involved in a blend, namely two input spaces, a generic space and a blended space. Selected information is projected from both input spaces to the blended space where it is integrated and where novel structure can emerge. The blended space does not simply involve the combination or mixing of the two inputs, comparable to the contents of two jars being poured into a third, but forms a middle space set up for cognitive purposes. The input spaces are still there after the blend has been constructed, so that all four spaces are active at the same time. The generic space contains structure shared by the two inputs, and thus represents what the two inputs have in common, which is a requirement for them to be involved in a blend in the first place. It can be seen as problematic considering its rather abstract status, but as Turner points out (1996: 86-87) there is ample evidence not only for its existence, but also for its own conceptual structure, despite the fact that it lacks its own vocabulary (Fauconnier and Turner 1994: 24).

It is possible for the two input spaces to be related as source and target, and the four-space model can in that respect be said to subsume the two-domain model in conceptual metaphor theory. One important difference, though, is that whereas metaphor involves a mapping across two domains, blending operates across mental spaces, which are temporary mental constructs that rely on conceptual domains for their structure. Despite this difference, the capacity for blending forms the basis for the process that allows us to structure one domain in terms of another. In the words of Fauconnier and Turner, "projection from source to target is only a special aspect of a more robust, dynamic, variable and wide-ranging assortment of processes" (1994:4). Turner (1996) argues that conventional metaphorical expressions have arisen through blending processes, but both the

generic space and the blended space have become invisible to us in these cases. This is said to happen when projections occur repeatedly, to the point where fixed counterparts are established between two inputs and the vocabulary of the source space is employed by the generic space as well. In combination with conventional blending, we can now end up with what seems like a direct projection between only two spaces. To illustrate this point, Turner compares the phrases *intellectual progress* and *mental journey*. The conceptual projection is the same in both phrases, involving the source space of JOURNEY and the target space of MIND, but the language of the latter phrase is less conventional. This makes the generic and the blended spaces easier to recognise compared to the former phrase, which can be seen as reflecting a direct projection from source to target. It might also seem like an enlarged category (i.e. as a type of progress) rather than a blend (1996: 87-90). Similar examples discussed by Turner and Fauconnier (1995: 5) include *dolphin-safe* and *red pencil*, which are the result of the same kind of processes, but where the former strikes us as imaginative and the second as extremely conventional.

As regards the relation between metaphor theory and blending theory, the position taken here follows that of Grady et al. (1997: 120-122), who claim that blending theory and metaphor theory can be seen as complementary in the sense that the former addresses novel, short-lived and often unique cases, whereas the later focuses on conventional, regular and more stable patterns. Metaphor theory can thus be seen as handling a subset or specific aspect of the type of processes handled by blending theory, which also allows us to see the connection between conventional metaphors and conceptual blending. In addition, this means that we can explain why novel, creative metaphorical expressions are often based on conventional mappings. They are simply results of blends that rely on conceptual metaphor for their input spaces and then elaborate on that material to create a richer blended space (cf. Turner and Fauconnier 1995: 187). Whether we use metaphor theory or blending theory depends on the type of data we are analysing and what type of results we are trying to establish. One clear advantage of blending theory when analysing puns in advertisements is the ability to handle metaphorical, non-metaphorical and humorous examples (and different combinations between the three) within one and the same framework.

Moving on to the issue of humour, jokes are often brought forward as typical examples of cases where blending processes are highlighted (Fauconnier and Turner 1996:115; Coulson 1996: 79). The occurrence of blended spaces in humour is also discussed by Coulson, who goes as far as to speculate about it being "an inherent feature of humour" (in press: 2). The following familiar joke is one of the examples she discusses:

(1) *Why did the chicken cross the road?*
To get to the other side.

In the first input space we find chickens, which live in barnyards and, like other birds and animals, have instinctive behaviour. In the other input space there are humans who live in cities and behave according to their wishes and intentions. The humour occurs in the blended space, where, due to selective projections from the two input spaces, we find town-dwelling chickens with a mind of their own. What constitutes the emergent structure in the blended space is the humorous tension, which is not present in either of the input spaces. This can be compared to the ironic tension found in the blended space in the example from Shakespeare's *King John* (Turner 1996: 64-67), the element of stupidity in the blended space which gives rise to humour in the joke about George Bush on third base (Fauconnier and Turner 1994: 18), and the notion of incompetence which emerges in the popular example of the surgeon referred to as a butcher (Grady et al. 1997: 103-106). Coulson (in press) focuses on analyses of blending in political cartoons. Here, yet another aspect of blending is introduced, namely the possibility for blends to be manifested visually as well as verbally. One political cartoon she discusses has a drawing of Bill Clinton, with lipstick marks around his mouth, saying "Read my lips...". The visual element i.e. the lipstick marks, point to Clinton's affair with Monica Lewinsky and the truth of his account of the relationship, whereas the verbal content is a reference to an earlier unkept promise made by George Bush in relation to taxes (in press: 4-5). Fauconnier and Turner (1994: 16,17) also discuss visual manifestations of blending, for example cartoons in which a conventional metaphor is made literal. In sections 6-7, we will discuss some ways in which this can occur in print advertisements.

2. Incongruity and resolution

The idea that humour involves blended spaces is compatible with earlier semiotic or structuralist theories of humour, but also with work carried out in the area of psychology. Coulson refers to Koestler's (1964) bisociation theory of humour which, according to her, is concerned with humour involving "the unlikely combination of related structures" (in press: 2). The same view is held by Nash, who describes humour as involving "the happy confusion of a double vision" (1985: 137). Moreover, humour is often seen as crucially relying on the presence of incongruity, which Coulson (in press: 2) clearly illustrates by providing an alternative, non-humorous version of the chicken joke where there is no clash between the behaviour of people and that of chickens.

(2) *Why did the chicken cross the barnyard?
To get some scraps.*

These so-called incongruity theories of humour are classified by Attardo as cognitive (compared to social or psychoanalytical theories), and are often associated with linguistic theories of humour (1994: 47, 49).

Discussing humour in relation to metaphor, Pollio's (1996) view is that both "have something to do with split reference; that is, to refer to two different but related images or ideas that take place in proximity to one another" (1996: 248). The difference is taken to depend on whether the boundary between the two items referred to is emphasised or erased. The latter holds in the case of metaphor, where there is a fusion between the two items in order to create a novel perspective or new insight. In humour, on the other hand, the tension cannot be resolved and results in laughter (1996: 48, 50-51). One problem with this account is that it seems to give the impression that an utterance is either metaphorical or humorous, but never both at the same time. Perhaps the difference is better thought of as a scale with humour found at one end and metaphor at the other instead of there being a strict boundary. This can better reflect the results of a study by Mawardi (1959), referred to by Pollio (1996: 231), in which people found it difficult to decide what was supposed to be a metaphor and what was supposed to be a joke.

However, the idea that metaphor is found at one end of the scale and humour at the other still poses a problem, in that this prevents utterances from simultaneously containing a high degree of metaphoricity and being very funny. Instances like these clearly exist, since Pollio, again referring to Mawardi (1959), reports that laughter often occurred when "a really apt figure of speech summarized the group's current understanding of the problem" (1996: 232). Apt figures of speech are taken here to involve novel creative mappings, perhaps even in the form of blends, where the semantic distance between the elements could be quite significant. According to Grady et al. (1997:117), psycholinguistic results indicate that these are the cases where people are most likely to recognise a metaphor, i.e. they contain a high degree of metaphoricity. Yet another problem is that if we see the difference in terms of a scale, it means that an incongruity that is not humorous has to be metaphorical. As we will see in section 7, this does not have to be the case.

One way of getting around this problem would be to see Pollio's claims in terms of two scales, one indicating degree of humour and the other indicating degree of metaphoricity. The settings would then represent the extent to which the incongruity is seen as both resolvable and unresolvable (Pollio's use of the term) at the same time, since it should be plausible for an utterance to provide new understanding while still involving some unresolvable tension. A single utterance could thus be perceived as both containing a high degree of resolvable incongruity (metaphor) and a high degree of unresolvable incongruity (humour). Returning to the first Mawardi example, the focus could either be on what is perceived as unresolvable tension, which would result in the utterance being interpreted as a joke, or on resolvable tension, which would result in a metaphorical interpretation, but both types of tension could also be perceived at the same time. In that case, it would be quite natural to wonder what the intention of the speaker really was.

Attardo also addresses the issue of incongruity (1994:143-144), but in contrast to Pollio he claims that it has to be resolved. However, Attardo's view can essentially be considered compatible with that of Pollio, since he goes on to explain that resolution can be understood in several ways, and his stance is that it does not remove the incongruity, but stays present alongside it, so that "any humorous text will contain an element of incongruity *and* an element of resolution" (1994: 144). In other words, it makes it possible to see the cause or the

basis of the incongruity and thereby recognising and understanding it, even though it may not be realistic. From now on, this is what will be referred to as resolution, and it can still be seen as different from metaphor, where new meaning and understanding are created.

Nerhardt (1977) bases his model of humour on the traditional view that it involves "a discrepancy between two mental representations" (1977: 32). He sees incongruity in humour as involving similarity and dissimilarity in the following way:

When two events are perceived or thought of together or in close succession, each will actualize respective classes [...]. If one of the events is perceived as similar to the types in the other event's classes [...], they will become reference classes for the former event. If an event in this manner becomes a member of a certain class actualized by another event and at the same time diverges enough in unidimensional similarity from a typical quality in that class, it will be found funny (Nerhardt 1977: 33).

Although no mention is made of any existence of more than two events, there are still some parallels between this account and that in which blending is seen as inextricably linked to humour. First of all, the humorous scenario described above can be compared to a blend in that some similarity exists between the two events/spaces, namely that which is present in the generic space. Second, there is also an element of dissimilarity involved, which in Nerhardt's model is represented by a divergence from typical qualities and in blending theory by a clash or tension in the blended space between elements from the two inputs. If there were to be increased similarity, i.e. less divergence, it would correspond to those instances of blending where the source category is extended and the blend becomes invisible. No humour would be present in this case. Likewise, if there is not enough similarity perceived between the events, one event will not be expected to become a member of a class actualised by the other event in the first place, just like the absence of shared abstract structure will prevent a blend from being constructed, and thereby also preventing humour (cf. Nerhardt 1977: 33-34, Turner 1996: 87, 89). This can be compared to the view held by Ross (1998:8), who says that when we do not think a joke is funny, it either depends on our inability to recognise the ambiguity or on finding the double meaning laboured. In

terms of blending theory, this would correspond to an inability to access the second input in the former case, and to the two senses having very little in common (no generic space available) or too much in common (they seem to belong to the same category) in the latter case.

The compatibility between Nerhardt's model and blending theory is also apparent in his comments on resolution in humour. The example he discusses is one originally used by Shultz (1972) consisting of a cartoon in which an angry little girl carrying an empty bucket walks away from a cow, which bears a sign that says "out of order". Here, it is pointed out that the incongruity lies in the relation between cows and machines, and recognising this discrepancy provides the resolution (1977: 37). The similarities between the incongruity between cows and machines in this example and that between chicken and people in Coulson's example above, together with the subsequent resolution of that incongruity, are obvious.

Finally, a few words must be said about different degrees of humour. We can perhaps all intuitively feel that what is perceived as humorous can vary from person to person, and what a single person perceives as funny can vary from day to day. If we take blending to be an integral part of humour, then one explanation that can be given to this is provided by Turner (1996: 92), who states that the degree of blending often is up to the reader. Nerhardt also points out that the incongruity in humour is always a perceived incongruity, and it can therefore differ from person to person, as can to some extent the perception of similarity and dissimilarity. In addition, we must remember that incongruities can be perceived as irrelevant and therefore not linked to humour (1977: 32). This can in some respects be connected to the issue of expectation. By expectation I do not only mean knowing that what is about to be said will be humorous, but also rating the likelihood that something already uttered was supposed to be humorous. Let us look at an example to illustrate this. Imagine a situation in which a person has been in shower for a very long time, causing other people to wait for their turn. When finally emerging from the bathroom, this person says: "Sorry. I had a lot of maintenance work to do". Now, this utterance could be taken as a joke, based on the incongruities between maintenance work in the sense of involving the upkeep of buildings and railway lines, for example, which is a large-scale task involving the effort of usually more than one person, and maintenance work in the sense of

involving such things as shaving, peeling, washing, shampooing and so on. It could also be seen as metaphoric, in that it helps us understand some of what went on in the bathroom, while at the same time serving a euphemistic function in that it saves the speaker from having to divulge all the details. It is also perfectly possible that the utterance is seen as both humorous and metaphorical at the same time. However, if the person who uttered this apology is not a native speaker, the expectation that it was intended as humorous and/or metaphorical might be lacking. Even though the incongruities are observed, they are not associated with humour. Instead, it is possible that the recognised incongruity leads us to think that it was a mistake. If so, there is then the further possibility that this mistake in turn can be seen as humorous. What is most striking here is that the utterance reflects a fairly elaborated blended space, in which all these interpretations or effects are possible.

3. Puns

In accordance with the general account of humour given above, puns are usually described as two meanings being incongruously combined in one and the same utterance. Due to ambiguity, a conflict arises between the two senses and is then subsequently resolved (Ross 1998: 8, Chiaro 1992: 34). According to Attardo (1994: 133-136), the two senses of a pun must be present at the same time and be in conflict with each other, although one is usually introduced before the other. The resolution consists of a disambiguation process, in which both the first expected sense and the second hidden sense must be involved. This process can have three different outcomes. The first interpretation can be discarded and the second interpretation kept, the first kept and the second discarded, or the two senses can continue to coexist.

If the senses of a pun coexist, different types of connections might hold between them. Referring to Guiraud (1976), Attardo lists four such types, namely those where there is no relation between the senses, those where both senses coexist, those where the second sense forces connotation on the first and those where the first sense forces connotation on the second (1994:136-137). The three last cases can be considered in the light of conceptual blending, where both input spaces can be activated "while we do cognitive work over them to construct meaning" (Turner 1996: 61). Attardo also discusses Heller (1974: 271), who

touches on the idea that puns might have something to do with conceptual blending:

The structure of the pun holds implications basic to an *understanding* of many psychological problems and a knowledge of its *dynamic processes* offers important insights into *the nature of reasoning* itself. (qtd. by Attardo 1994: 141, my emphasis)

This statement brings to mind the characteristics of blends as mental networks handling dynamic, on-line processes of meaning construction and blended spaces as sites for cognitive work such as reasoning. Analyses of puns in terms of blending might be a concrete manifestation of Heller's ideas, which Attardo refers to as "optimistic" (1994: 141).

Nash (1985: 137) defends the pun against accusations that it constitutes a simple and less sophisticated form of humour. He then proceeds to list different types of puns, one of them being pun-metaphors, which he claims are "deliberately sloppy" as opposed to poetic metaphors which are "precise" (1985: 146). Pun-metaphors are said to be common in the language of journalism and the following example is provided (Nash 1985: 146):

(3) *Council puts brake on progress of cycle path scheme.*

It is clear that this example in fact constitutes a metaphorical blend, which at the linguistic level is signalled by the two senses of the word *brake*. The first input space relates to the source MOTION FORWARD and the second input space to the target PROGRESS, elements of which are then projected to and elaborated on in the blended space. In the next section we will discuss how puns in print advertising can signal the presence of blends in a similar way.

4. Blending signalled by advertising puns

The occurrence of blending in advertisements is mentioned by Fauconnier and Turner (1994), Turner and Fauconnier (1995) and Turner (1996). This should come as no surprise considering the tendency in advertising for establishing links between the advertised item and other domains seen as representing positive ideas and values (Ungerer 2000: 321). Another positive aspect of blending from the perspective of the ad maker is the fact that blending is underspecified, in that

projections can take place in many different ways and the degree and type of emergent structure of the blend is not fixed, but up to the reader or addressee to interpret (Fauconnier and Turner 1999: 78). This of course means that the responsibility is shifted from the ad makers to their audience. Blending is also found reflected in advertisements in relation to puns, and here the motivation probably lies in the ability to attract attention and to achieve a humorous effect, but even in the case of puns the motivation might be to avoid indecency claims (Tanaka 1994: 65). The analysis of advertising puns in terms of blending rather than frame-shifting is based on the fact that both frames are present at the same time. Although one frame might be introduced slightly ahead of the other, for example in the head, they are still there to be noticed simultaneously and it is the co-occurrence and tension between the two that causes the humour. There is no reliance on the sudden emergence of a second viewpoint as in other types of jokes, which fail if it is revealed too soon. In addition, the elements in the two frames are often quite distinct.

As in the case of cartoons, it is possible for advertising blends to be reflected both visually and verbally. As pointed out by Turner (1996: 98), we usually understand these visual representations right away, and the effort it takes to interpret them is largely unconscious to us. To some extent, this contradicts Tanaka's claim that puns are used because they require extra processing effort, which attracts and holds the attention of the audience (1994: 65). The attraction of puns and blends in advertising can rather be connected with their ability to create new actions, emotions and understandings (Fauconnier and Turner 1994: 16), either for purposes of delivering a message or for purposes of attracting and holding attention.

In the analyses of puns in the sections below, the ambiguous word or phrase is regarded as signalling a conceptual blend at the level of formal expression (cf. Turner and Fauconnier 1995), and it is seen as providing a clue that leads us to the two input spaces. The identification of a conventional mapping underlying the relation between different senses of a word also guides us in the right direction (Grady et al. 1997: 113). Here we will see whether Pollio's observations can explain the difference between metaphorical and humorous blends (assuming there is one) and in what ways conventional metaphor can serve as input spaces to humorous blends. Also, assuming that both humour and

metaphor are graded phenomena as we have done in previous sections, we will try to explain metaphorical blends which are not as humorous as other metaphorical blends, and their relation to non-metaphorical blends.

5. Advertising puns and formal blending

Although the focus here will be on conceptual blending, we will first discuss puns that occur at a formal level, but not at a conceptual level. These are essentially of the same type as those where the two senses have nothing in common, following Guiraud's classification, which in Attardo's opinion is the worst type of pun (1994: 137-138). The following example, originally from Pepicello and Green (1983: 59), is supplied (Attardo 1994: 128):

- (4) *Why did the cookie cry?*
Its mother had been away for so long. [a wafer]

Here, the humour is said to be based on the two senses invoked by *away for* and *a wafer*, respectively, and since these are very different from each other, the puns is considered to be of low quality. In terms of blending theory, the weak humour in this example could be explained as a result of it involving a blend that only occurs at the level of formal expression. It is comparable to the example given by Turner and Fauconnier (1995: 200), in which the opera title *Amahl and the Night Visitors* is given as a response to a question whether a shopping mall is open at night. In this case, the formal blend takes place between *Amahl* and *a mall*, whereas in example (4) the phrase *away for* is formally blended with *a wafer*. However, we can also see quite clearly that there is a conceptual blend involved as well. As Attardo points out, there is an "impossible match" between cookies and the ability to cry, which means that we have to open up "a possible world where cookies are [+animate] and have the physiological capacity to shed tears" (1994: 129). In other words, cookies have to be framed as people, similar to the blend in example (1), where chickens were framed as people. The humorous tension in this conceptual blend, although still quite weak and mainly popular with young children (Coulson in press: 2), perhaps contributes even more to the overall humorous content than does the formal blend. This is contrary to the account given by Attardo, who claims that readers/hearers who only construct the

conceptual blend "would be missing the humorous nature of the text entirely" (1994: 129).

To mention an example of this type of formal blending from the world of advertising, let us consider two different versions of an ad for Findus frozen peas, which appeared on billboards in Sweden a few years ago. In both versions, the ad contained a large picture of a bag of peas, but in one version the head consisted of the phrase *piece of cake* and in the other the phrase *peace on earth*. Now, the word *peas* is blended with the phrase *piece of cake*, in the first version, and with the phrase *peace on earth* in the second. It is true that the word is not found in the ad in its written form, but it is retrievable from the visual content. Also, among Swedish speakers of English, the distinction in final position between a voiced/lenis consonant in *peas* and a voiceless/fortis consonant in *peace/piece* is often not maintained, thus rendering them homophones. It is clear, however, that there is no conceptual blend at work here between peas on the one hand, and a piece of cake or a situation of peace on earth on the other hand. No generic space can be construed between the two and as a result there can be no conceptual blend (Turner 1996: 87). The fact that the blend only occurs at a formal level might explain the low degree of humour here. Similarly, in relation to Nerhardt's account of humour (see section 2), this could count as an instant in which there is not enough similarity between the two events for humour to be present, and since the similarity at the orthographical or phonological level does not involve mental representations it can only give rise to a small amount of humour. Turning to Pollio's (1996) definition of humour as involving an unresolvable incongruity (see section 2), it is easy to recognise what constitutes that incongruity in this particular example, but it is much more difficult to explain why it is not very funny.

6. Advertising puns and metaphorical blends

Puns have been shown to involve a word or a phrase that has more than one possible meaning, thus giving rise to ambiguity. In the examples discussed in section 6.1, the ambiguous word or phrase consists of a conventional metaphorical expression, whereas in section 6.2 it consists of a polysemous word, where the different senses are metaphorically related to each other (cf. Kövecses 2002: 213 ff). This distinction is not uncontroversial, since polysemy is a very broad

phenomenon that could be seen to also include conventional metaphorical expressions. Nor is it easy to draw a line between the two categories, but the division made here is based on whether the metaphorical relation can be accessed even though the expression is conventional or whether the different senses are so deeply entrenched that the metaphorical mapping is not immediately accessible. Turner (1996: 88) points out that as an expression becomes less conventional, the more noticeable the generic space gets, and even though the expressions in sections 6.1 are conventional, they strike us as more metaphorical than the ones in 6.2.

6.1 Conventional metaphorical expressions

The first example we will discuss is an advertisement for Friskies cat food (see figure 1). The text in the head reads: *Something for you and your cat to chew on.* The phrase *to chew on* is ambiguous in that it has both a metaphorical and a non-metaphorical interpretation. In the context of the ad, this leads us to the two input spaces that form the basis for the blend to be constructed (cf. Grady et al. 1997: 111).

**SOMETHING
FOR YOU
AND YOUR
CAT TO
CHEW ON.**

**Did you know that over 75% of cats have some form of tooth and gum disease?
Friskies Beta LifePlan helps improve dental health and more...**

Unlike ordinary kibbles, which tend to shatter when bitten, Beta LifePlan's unique combination of larger size, shape and texture, allows the tooth to penetrate the kibble before it splits. The clearing effect on the surface of the tooth, and longer chewing action, has been proven to reduce the build up of plaque and tartar by 25%.

Did you know that most dry cat food kibbles can be swallowed whole?
Other types of dry cat food kibbles are too small and are often swallowed whole. Or they are brittle and they shatter when bitten, so there is little cleaning action.

Did you know that chewing stimulates the digestive juices?
Increased chewing time stimulates saliva which in turn aids digestion. BETA LifePlan also contains highly digestible ingredients which provide nutrients, such as fats and proteins, that are easily broken down and readily absorbed for use by your cat's body.

Did you know that antioxidant vitamins help keep your cat healthy?
BETA LifePlan has added antioxidant vitamins, Beta-carotene and Vitamin E for tissue and cell health.

Did you know that the BETA LifePlan range is complete nutrition for cats of all ages?
With an advanced nutritional formulation, BETA LifePlan is a healthy, balanced diet that gives your kitten, adult or senior cat something to chew on.

FOR HEALTH FOR LIFE

Figure 1: Friskies ad. (*She*, July 2000)

In the source space, there is a cat who is eating food, while in the target space we find a person who is considering a piece of information. The conventional metaphorical mapping which these spaces are based on is IDEAS ARE FOOD, which in turn is entailed from the metaphors IDEAS ARE OBJECTS and ABSTRACT IS CONCRETE. IDEAS ARE FOOD further entails CONSIDERING IS CHEWING. The elements and actions together with the relations that hold between them are summarised in table 1 below.

Source	Target	Generic	Blend	
<i>Elements/actions</i>	<i>Elements/actions</i>	<i>Elements/actions</i>	<i>Elements/actions</i>	<i>Relations</i>
a' Cat	a Person	a'' Agent	aa Person	Performs (a'', b'')
b' Eating	b Considering	b'' Activity	bb Eating	
c' Cat food	c Information	c'' Object	cc Cat food	Requires (b'', c'')
				Enters (c'', a'')

Table 1: Friskies blend.

The information in the source space is signalled by the picture next to the head in the advertisement, where a cat's tooth is depicted sunk into a piece of cat food. In contrast, the smaller copy in the bottom half of the advertisement corresponds to the information in the target space. This is an excellent example of what Turner refers to as waking up the generic space (1996: 91), which results in the creation of a blended space in which a person is eating cat food. Turner and Fauconnier (1994: 17) discuss similar cases in terms of making a conventional metaphor literal. The extent to which we find this scenario funny crucially depends on the amount of elaboration that takes place in the blended space. If we stop at the point where there is simply a person eating cat food, we might find the incongruity slightly humorous, but the metaphoric content would still outweigh the humorous content. We can resolve the humorous tension in the sense that we understand what causes it, despite the fact that it is not particularly realistic (cf. Attardo 1994: 144). However, an elaboration of the blended space might increase the humorous tension between the projected elements. Imagine for example an extended scenario in which a person is eating cat food directly off a plate, but at the same time is formally dressed and being served by a waiter.

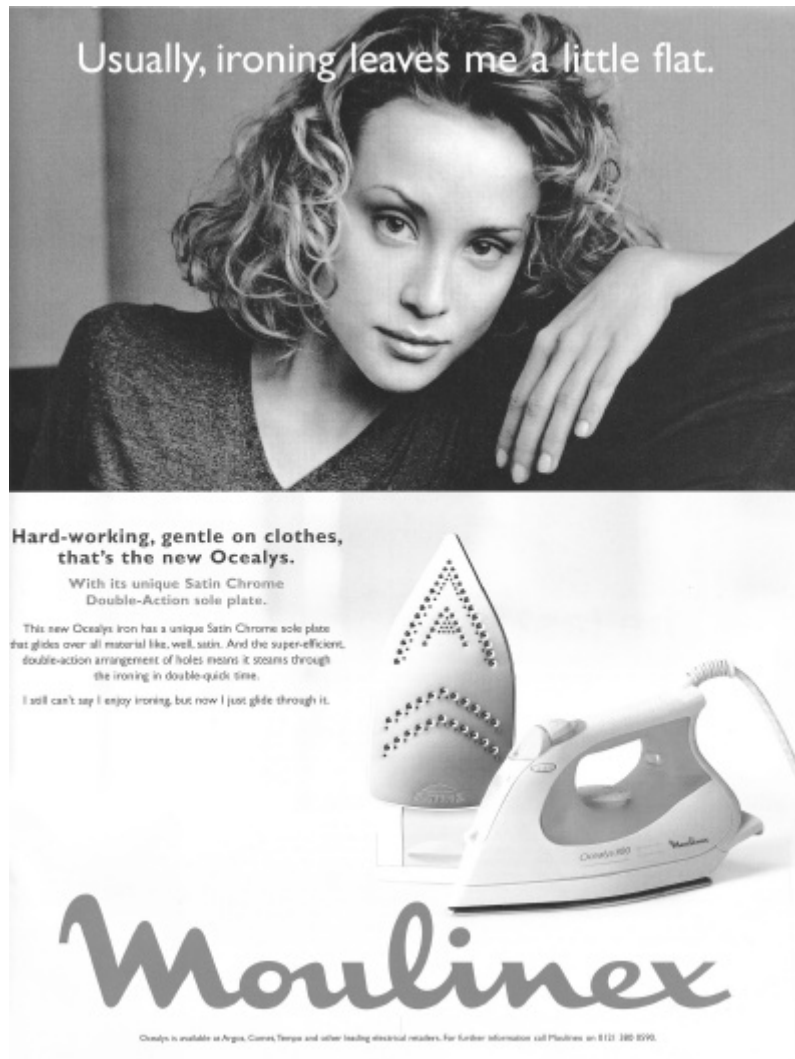


Figure 2: Moulinex ad. (*marie claire*, January 2000, U.K.ed.)

Let us now turn to our second example, which is an advertisement for Moulinex irons (see figure 2 above). Here, it is the word *flat* that forms the basis of the pun and leads us to the two input spaces. As in the previous example, *flat* has both a metaphorical and a non-metaphorical interpretation. In the source space, we find a scenario in which ironing causes clothes to be "flat" (although we would probably use the word *smooth* instead when talking about clothes that have been ironed). The target space contains a person who is left feeling flat, in the metaphorical sense of lacking energy, as a result of an activity. In the blend, the person is seen as being physically flat in a non-metaphorical sense as a result of having been ironed. The person is no longer the agent as in the target, but has now taken on the role of the clothes in the source space. This is shown in table 2 below.

Source	Target	Generic	Blend	
<i>Elements/actions</i>	<i>Elements/actions</i>	<i>Elements/actions</i>	<i>Elements/actions</i>	<i>Relations</i>
a' Ironing	a Ironing	a" Action	aa Ironing	Affects (a", b")
b' Item of clothing	b Person	b" Patient/Agent	bb Person	Leads to (a", c")
c' Flat(ness) (external physical shape)	c Flat(ness) (internal mental & physical shape)	c" Resulting state	cc Flat(ness) (external physical shape)	Ends up as (b", c")

Table 2: Moulinex blend.

Again, this is a case where the generic space has been opened up in order to create a humorous blend. It is possible to increase the humorous tension by elaborating the blended space, for example by creating a situation in which this person is flattened over a huge ironing board by an enormous iron. This is a scenario which could be turned into a fantastic visual blend in the form of a cartoon with the same caption as in the head of the ad (cf. Fauconnier and Turner 1994: 16). In this case, the degree of humour would drastically increase. The degree of metaphoricity is fairly high, since the blend is also used to understand a situation in which a person is exhausted as a result of some activity in terms of a piece of clothing that has been pressed flat by the help of an iron. These two scenarios are quite different, and again it is worth noticing that the degree of metaphoricity is connected to the semantic distance between the two inputs (Grady et al. 1997: 117).

These two examples show how humorous tension can emerge in a blend where the input spaces rely on a conventional metaphoric mapping. The degree of humour is relatively low and this could be used as evidence for the existence of a single scale, where humour is found at one end and metaphor at the other (as discussed in section 2). However, since there is potential for the degree of humour to increase, without the degree of metaphoricity decreasing, it might still be better to regard humour and metaphor as being measured against different scales. Since the examples in this section involve the generic space being activated, the degree of humour can also depend on how conventional or even lexicalised the metaphor is. On the whole, it would seem that the examples in this section have a lower

degree of humour than those in the following section, due to a slightly more accessible generic space.

6.2 Polysemy based on metaphor

Here, the blend also serves the function of opening up the generic space and making a deeply entrenched metaphorical mapping become literal. In these examples, the generic space is even more invisible than in the examples in the previous section and this seems to lead to an increase in the degree of humour. We will begin by discussing an advertisement for Persil washing powder. (See figure 3.)



Figure 3: Persil ad. (*marie claire*, December 2001, U.K. ed.)

The picture shows a person holding a sleeping baby on his or her outstretched arm, with the baby's head resting in the palm of the hand. The baby is wearing a white outfit and appears to be completely relaxed and safe. In the head we can read the following line: *Clothes may not be the most important thing in the world*. This is accompanied by a second line, further down in the ad, which closely follows the outline of the baby's head. It reads: *But they get very close to it*. The pun in this ad is signalled by the word *close*, which can have at least two different senses, i.e. close in the sense of proximity and close in the sense of similarity. The metaphorical relationship between these two senses is based on the conventional mapping SIMILARITY IS PROXIMITY. This leads us to construct a blend based on two input stories, one in which clothes are physically close to a baby, as shown by the picture, and one in which clothes are not the same as (similar to) the most important thing (whatever that is). The integrated story in the blended space involves clothes that are close in proximity to the most important thing, i.e. it constitutes a contradiction to the claim in the head of the ad. This is summarised in table 3.

Source	Target	Generic	Blend	
<i>Elements</i>	<i>Elements</i>	<i>Elements</i>	<i>Elements</i>	<i>Relations</i>
a' Clothes	a Clothes	a'' Entity 1	aa Clothes	Stands in (a'', b'') Relates to (a'', c'') Measured against (b'', c'')
b' Closeness (proximity)	b Distance (similarity)	b'' Position	bb Closeness (similarity)	
c' Baby	c The most important thing	c'' Entity 2	cc The most important thing	

Table 3: Persil blend.

In the blended space, the most important thing can be related to the baby, and this conforms to our shared cultural beliefs. It also means that the rhetorical purpose cannot be disputed, because if clothes are not important than babies are not important. Moreover, this blended space opens up the possibility for yet another blend. If babies are the most important thing, then it follows that we should be kind to them and take care of them. We also learn from the text under the small picture of a packet of Persil in the bottom right hand corner of the ad, that Persil is

clean, kind and careful, presumably to clothes. Building a blend from these two inputs gives us a blended space in which Persil is kind to babies, and thus another rhetorical goal is reached.

Although we can understand the importance of clothes in terms of their physical proximity to babies, which is the metaphoric content of this blend, we can also recognise incongruities that give rise to humour. The clash between the two senses of the word *close* can have this effect, since the metaphorical relation between them is so deeply entrenched that the generic space is completely invisible to us. Also, the incongruity between clothes and babies both being the most important thing can have the same effect. It is thus possible to focus on both types of incongruity at the same time.

Our second example involves an ad for *The Financial Times Weekend*. In the picture, which covers the entire background of the ad, we can see various objects wrapped in newspaper sheets. We can tell from the pink colour of the paper and the FT logotype that the newspaper that has been used to wrap these items is in fact *The Financial Times Weekend*. The objects include a lobster, a knife, a fork, a bottle of wine or champagne, a steering wheel, a camera, a chair and a watering pot (see figure 4).



Figure 4: Financial Times Weekend ad. (*Decanter*, June 2000)

In the middle of the ad there is a piece of text, which says: *And you thought we only covered business.* This time, the polysemous word is *covered*. In its central physical sense, it refers to one thing being put over or onto something else, as is the case in the picture. It can also have a metaphorically based sense that involves the inclusion of something, or in the case of journalism more specifically reporting something. Needless to say, this prompts us to create a blend in which one input space, the source, presents a scenario in which various objects are covered in newspaper sheets, and the target space contains the newspaper, or journalists to be precise, who include business news in their reports. In the blended space, we find a situation in which the newspaper or the journalists report various types of news (see table 4). It is important to notice that the source space is derived from the picture and the target space from the text.

Source	Target	Generic	Blend	
<i>Elements</i>	<i>Elements</i>	<i>Elements</i>	<i>Elements</i>	<i>Relations</i>
a' Sheets of paper	a Newspaper	a'' Agent	aa Newspaper (reporters)	Employed to perform (a'', b'')
b' Covering (physically)	b Covering (including, reporting)	b'' Activity	bb Covering (including, reporting)	Applied to (b'', c'')
c' Various items	c Business news	c'' Entities (concrete or abstract)	cc Various types of news	Found inside of (c'', a'')

Table 4: FT Weekend blend.

The important role played by metonymy in blending, discussed by for example Fauconnier and Turner (1999) and Turner and Fauconnier (2000), is clearly illustrated in this advertisement, in which the various objects from the source space are metonymically associated with the different news areas in the blend. The watering pot is metonymically associated with gardening news and the chair with interior decoration. There is also a metonymic relation between the lobster and wine bottle, on the one hand, and the area of food and drink on the other. In addition, the sheets of paper used to wrap the items are metonymically linked to the newspaper as a whole. Both a humorous and an informative purpose are served by the blend. The humour consists of the clash caused between the two senses of *covered* which are brought into focus by activating the generic space,

and the visual manifestation of this has a potential for increasing the humorous effect. As far as information and understanding is concerned, by seeing reporting news in terms of covering objects, we learn of the different topics that we can read about in *FT Weekend*, based on the metonymic relationship between the various items and the type of news.

To conclude this section, let us turn to an advertisement for Tampax tampons (figure 5). This ad share many similarities with a cartoon, in that the main picture consists of a drawing of a tampon with certain human qualities, accompanied by a caption which reads: *A real smoothy*. The ambiguity lies in the two possible interpretations of what it means to be a smoothy. If an object of some sort is described as being smooth, we refer to physical surface qualities, but if the topic of discussion is a person, then we typically associate it with a set of personal characteristics, such as being polite, confident, relaxed, able to persuade, but at the same time often insincere. Both references are possible here, the first in relation to the tampon and the second in relation to a man.



Figure 5. Tampax ad. (*Elle*, August 1999, U.K. ed.)

One of the inputs contains a tampon, which is physically smooth and therefore appeals to women. In the other input, we find a man, whose behaviour is attractive to women. Deciding which input serves as source and which input serves as target is somewhat problematic. In the mapping behind the two different senses of *smooth* the physical sense is connected to the source, in that the personal characteristics are seen in terms of the physical ones. In this blend however, the tampon is seen in terms of a smooth, seductive man. The decision made here is therefore to consider the tampon as belonging to the target and the man to the source, despite the concreteness of the physical smoothness, as opposed to the more abstract qualities of a smooth man. Coulson (1996: 75ff) observes that it is possible for the source to be the topic of a metaphorical blend, which could have been seen as an easy solution to this problem, but in her discussion of the Menendez Brothers Virus, the virus in the target is understood in terms of the crime in the source, even though the source is the topic of the blend. The elements and relations in the Tampax blend are shown in table 5 below.

Source	Target	Generic	Blend	
<i>Elements</i>	<i>Elements</i>	<i>Elements</i>	<i>Elements</i>	<i>Relations</i>
a' Man	a Tampon	a'' Agent	aa Tampon	Possesses (a'', b'') Wins over (a', c'') Appeals to (b'', c'')
b' Smoothness (personal)	b Smoothness (physical)	b'' Characteristic	bb Smoothness (personal)	
c' Women	c Women	c'' Goal / target	cc Women	

Table 5. Tampax blend.

This advertisement represents an amazing blended space, which extends and elaborates on a conventional mapping. The tampon is fused with the man, both in the drawing and in the smaller copy right below it. Looking at the drawing, the character in the picture has a body in the shape of a tampon, without any legs, but with arms, hands and a face, which clearly illustrates how only selected material is projected from the inputs. There is also a metonymic element present, in that the rose represents the seductiveness and romantic abilities of the smooth man in the source space. The text in the copy refers to both the tampon and the man at the same time. It talks about "a sleek, silky outfit", which could

refer to the outer layer of the tampon as well as to a well-dressed man. Also, it mentions "a tapered tip", which is language that is connected to the target space, and "its suave touch" which is connected to the source space. Even the section of text that claims that it never fails to impress could have reference both to the personal characteristics of the man and the functional characteristics of the tampon.

Again, this example is both humorous and metaphorical at the same time. The humour is essentially caused by the incongruity between tampons and people, whereas the metaphoric element consists in the understanding we get about the qualities of the tampon. However, there is also a negative element here, which is projected from the source. It involves the aspect of insincerity associated with the personal characteristics of the man, and is brought to our attention in the copy ("Girls, you've been warned"). Despite the apparent negativity, this element still serves a rhetorical function in the ad, since it alludes to the irresistibility of the tampon. We know it is insincere and that we should not give in to it, but we still do, just like we give in to advertisements even though we perhaps try to resist.

Summarising the analyses in this section, it seems that the humorous tension is stronger in examples like these, where the generic space is completely invisible, compared to the examples in the previous section. This could also be due to the fact that the blends are visualised to a higher extent in the advertisements in this section.

7. Advertising puns and non-metaphorical blends

In this section, we will discuss the type of non-metaphorical blend which Turner refers to as a parabolic blend. The input spaces in this network are not related as source and target, but one of them can nonetheless be understood as the topic, and it is even possible for the topicality to shift between the two inputs (1996: 68). Coulson also discusses asymmetric topicality in an example of a counterfactual blend, namely the one concerning what would have happened to Nixon if the Watergate scandal had taken place in France. Here, the blend concerns the French political atmosphere (input 1) rather than the former U.S. president Richard Nixon (2001: 209). This runs contrary to the view seemingly held by Grady et al. (1997: 117) that non-metaphorical blends, such as counterfactuals and parabolic blends, are set apart from metaphorical blends in

that they always have focus on both input stories. The function of the blended space in the example discussed in this section is to explore how the inputs are related to each other and what inferences can be made. There is a similar situation in so-called spotlight counterfactuals (Coulson 2001: 207), where a rhetorical goal is achieved by highlighting relevant aspects of experience. Consider the ad in figure 6 below:



Figure 6: Espio ad. (*Esquire*, August 1999, U.K. ed.)

The linguistic content of the head, *I just can't stop fiddling with it*, is connected to both input spaces. The visual information in the main picture belongs to the first input, where a baby is fiddling with her nose (I assume it is a girl), while the smaller picture at the top of the ad forms part of the second input space. As in the

first input, fiddling is the action that takes place, but it is not immediately clear who the agent is. However, based on shared background knowledge, we might assume that an adult is fiddling with the camera rather than a baby. The two input stories are related to each other as a parable, and one reason why this blend strikes us as non-metaphorical might be that both input stories involve a person fiddling with something. Thus, they are on the whole rather similar, even though the patients in the two different spaces, the nose and the camera, are quite different, and as pointed out by Grady et al. (1997: 119), the perceived degree of metaphoricity can be related to the perceived difference between the stories. In addition, Coulson suggests that the best analogies are those where the stories are "identical [...] in all but one key aspect" (2001:219), and this can perhaps be seen to apply to parables as well. We can see that this is the case in the Espio ad, illustrated in table 6 below, where element (c) constitutes the key aspect in the respective spaces. The ambiguity behind the pun is signalled by the word *it* at the level of language and visually in the two pictures.

Input 1	Input 2	Generic	Blend	
<i>Elements</i>	<i>Elements</i>	<i>Elements</i>	<i>Elements</i>	<i>Relations</i>
a' Baby	a Adult	a'' Agent	aa Adult	Performs (a'', b'') Possesses (a'', c'') Affects (b'', c'')
b' Fiddling	b Fiddling	b'' Activity	bb Fiddling	
c' Nose	c Camera	c'' Patient	cc Nose	

Table 6: Espio blend.

Let us take a closer look at the two input spaces and see how the two sets of information correspond to each other. First, babies who fiddle with their noses typically do this as a result of an urgent impulse. It is normally an uncontrollable, largely unconscious move that is not driven by anything of interest in the nose. Thus, the sense of the verb *fiddle*, which is polysemous, here involves aimlessly touching something with your finger(s), in this case the inside of your nostril. This is a more acceptable thing to do if you are a baby than if you are an adult, but even so it would probably be strongly discouraged by your parents. Moreover, the relation between the baby and the nose is one of possession in the strongest sense

– the nose comes with the baby and is attached to her. In the second input space, however, we find a number of aspects that do not correspond to those in the first input space. An adult who fiddles with a camera performs a conscious act that is usually driven by an interest in the camera. The action is perfectly controllable, at least if a certain amount of willpower is applied. It then follows that the act of fiddling is not completely aimless here, and involves touching and moving small objects, such as pressing buttons and turning knobs in order to get the camera to do different things. In the ad, these features of the camera are listed next to it and include for example a power zoom, an autofocus system, an integral flash and a self-timer. In contrast to the situation in the first input space, fiddling with the camera does not involve putting our index finger into an opening somewhere in the camera for no reason. Also, the relation between the person and the camera is different from the relation between the baby and the nose. Possessing a camera does not mean that it is attached to you physically, but that it is something you own and keep in your house or close to you when you go out.

Turning our attention to the blended space, we can first of all recognise the humour that stems from the clash between the behaviour of adults and that of babies. Adults are supposed to be able to control themselves and to behave according to social norms, i.e. not give in to an urge to pick their noses, especially not in the company of other people. If this clash had been manifested visually in the form of a picture of an adult picking his or her nose, the degree of humour might have been even stronger. In addition, there is a humorous effect caused by the dissimilarity and tension between sticking a finger inside the nose, on the one hand, and trying out various functions of the camera on the other. Apart from the humorous effect, there is also a rhetorical purpose to this blend, in that certain inferences in the blend are projected to the second input space, where it leads to a certain construal of what it entails to own the camera. Among the inferences that can be made, there is for example the element of uncontrollability and the notion of an urgent need that has to be instantly gratified. Wanting the camera is put forward as a basic physical need and as a result you cannot control your urge to get it, and once you own it you are completely attached to it and unable to put it away. The inference in the blend that adults picking their noses severely violate social norms can, despite its apparent negativity, be projected to the target where it helps portray the camera as forbidden fruit, which in turn increases its appeal.

This then points to the second space being considered the topic space, despite the high visual prominence of the first input space.

Again considering Pollio's (1996) view in terms of two scales (see section 2), the degree of humour would depend on the extent to which we find unresolvable incongruities, and whether we focus on these rather than on other similarities and dissimilarities. It is also clear that there are other types of incongruities present here, which do not merge into a single unit as in the case of metaphor, but have a rhetorical function. We do not understand and conceptualise fiddling with cameras in terms of fiddling with noses, but the latter activity can highlight aspects of the former activity that are important to the message we want to give. In relation to Nerhardt's model (1977: 32-33), the humour can be explained in terms of tension between similarity and dissimilarity, in that the two events share some similarity, but also diverge in important respects.

8. Conclusion

In this paper, we have seen that blending is often involved in both metaphor and humour. What is considered humorous and what is considered metaphorical depends on the type of tension or incongruity that is found in the resulting blend. Both metaphor and humour can occur at the same time and they are both graded phenomena. Pollio's (1996) observations can be used to explain this, if we assume the following:

- Metaphor involves a tension that is completely resolved in order to create a new understanding of a problem or a novel conceptualisation.
- Humour involves a tension that, following Attardo (1994: 144), is partly emphasised and partly resolved, in the sense that we recognise the incongruity and understand the cause of it.
- Metaphor and humour do not constitute end points on the same scale. Instead, they belong to two different scales, since it is possible for a pun or a joke to have a high degree of metaphoricity and a high degree of humour at the same time.

Metonymic projections between mental spaces can increase the humorous effect, especially when the elements are manifested visually. The extent to which different people find different puns and advertisements funny can vary

considerably, since the degree of blending often depends on what the reader does with the minimal clues that are provided in the text and the picture(s) of the advertisement. However, puns that rely on activating the generic space in a conventional metaphorical mapping tend to show a generally low degree of humour, unless it is manifested visually.

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