

“Gotta Blend ‘Em All” Morphological Blending in Pokémon Names

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The European Conference on Language Learning 2024
Official Conference Proceedings

Abstract

Games are one of the most enjoyable entertainments because they can amuse people's eyes, ears, and minds. All these entertainments always keep the novelty by providing intriguing stories, design, and 'namings'. Pokémon is one game that always provides its fans with new names of new Pokémon. In this research, the writer would like to investigate word-formation theory limited to Blending theory. The study investigates Blending theory morphotactically, morphonologically, and morphosemantically by Mattiello (2013). The object of this research is Pokémon names. This is chosen because many word formations are used to create Pokémon names. This research aims to find the kinds of Blending used in Pokémon names and how significant blending is used for naming the Pokémon. The data are collected from a webpage called Pokémon database. The data collected are the 3 latest generations of Pokémon games based on 'Complete Pokémon Pokédex' on said webpage. The analysis uses qualitative methods to answer the research questions. Pokemon names were collected, identified, classified, and then described. The findings found that there are many variants of Morphonological Blending used in naming the Pokémon. This research is expected to contribute to language research development and encourage other researchers to have a greater sense of literacy even when enjoying entertainment.

Keywords: Blending, Linguistics, Morphology, Pokémon

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1. Introduction

Language is essential in human life. Language is not only used as means of communication, but it has become one of the major roles in entertainment. There are songs, novels, movies, and even games with their own distinctive language use. With the development of technology and the ease of having game consoles, more people know about the existence of games. Now people can play trending games even on their own mobile phones.

Pokémon is one of the most famous games that can be found since decades ago. It has become one of the biggest companies with its ever-changing development since the release of its first game. Until now, there have been countless franchises of this company that release more spin-offs (non-official Pokémon-related games, anime, movies, etc. such as Detective Pikachu movie). Even after decades, it is still growing and creating new features and characters.

Pokémon was initially released as a computer game (*Bulbapedia*, n.d.). However, nowadays there are many things related to Pokemon because the developer has created a full story and a whole world of Pokémon along with the rules in it (Bainbridge, 2014). Moreover, the developer of Pokémon games always comes with new names, new regions, and new features in each update. This game is only one example of how the development of technology has successfully brought so many new terms and names (Rini & Moehkardi, 2016). Pokémon names are somewhat similar to the reference to some creatures or things that we already recognize in real life. Some names are easy to understand whilst others need some research and are even arguable because of the ambiguous word used.

Many people or parents argue that games can cause gaming disorder (Lemmens & Weergang, 2023). It is true that many bad effects can be made because of addictions to games. However, there are even games that can help people for example for evacuation; i.e. Shelter Go Game (Mitsuhara & Shishibori, 2023). There was even research that shows the impact on health of one spinoff of Pokémon called Pokémon Go games (Khamzina et al., 2020).

One research analyzes the relevance of Pokémon naming to its physical characteristics (Cipta et al., n.d.); and even the sound and symbols have been analyzed (Shih et al., 2018). Other renowned games such as Dota (Dallmann et al., 2021); and Genshin Impact (Cai et al., 2023) have also been analyzed. This is because games are not solely an entertainment. It is factually even more delicate than movies, songs, and books. It is because recent games, moreover some genres like RPG (Role-Playing Game), MMORPG (Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Game), or adventure games include not only a story but a whole new world in it. The story, language translations, game features, songs/ music, characterizations, and even the impact on players or the developer (economically, in terms of health, etc.) can be analyzed in research. Games are also challenging to players because, unlike books nor movies, a game needs to be ‘played’ and ‘understood’ to continue to the next chapter/ story. Some stories even need more effort such as defeating strong enemies that cannot be completed in a day or two. On the contrary, books can easily be continued by opening each page and movies can be finished in one sitting.

Similar research related to Blending using the theory of Mattiello (2013) had already been written with data taken from Children’s Programs on BBC News (Arifah & Moehkardi, 2021); and Indonesian advertisements that merge Indonesian and English words as Blends

(Moehkardi, 2019). There was also research comparing the frequency of Blendings used in English and French (Grlj, 2022).

This research refers to the original game released by Pokémon Company in Nintendo games. The newest games always come first in the form of a turn-based, RPG (Role Playing Game) game in a game console called the Nintendo series. Even though games have been seen as contradictory with academic studies, as academic students we need to be sensible to our surroundings that games have been an inevitable phenomenon in this era. This research is expected to find the variants of blends by Mattiello found in the generation 7th – 9th of Pokémon Nintendo games. The research can be used as a reference to future researches related to blending.

The theoretical approach applied in this research is a theory of Morphological process, especially Blending (Mattiello, 2013). According to her, Blending is a way of creating a new word by merging two or more words. The word part can be in the complete form or only in parts. In her book, there are some categories of Blending such as Total blends, Partial blends, Overlapping blends, Non-overlapping Blends, Attributive Blends, and Coordinate Blends.

The idea of this research comes from the following research questions:

1. How is Blending used in Pokémon naming from the data used?
2. How frequent is the kinds of blending used according to the data investigated?

2. Theoretical Framework

In creating novel things such as a character in literary works, creating a new word is essential. It is what people call a ‘word-formation’. A word can be formed by using a theory called the Morphological process. In this study, the researcher investigates one of the Morphological processes called ‘Blending’. Blending according to Meyer (2009) means two shortened words that are merged into one. Blending is useful since it can be used to create a word using more than one existing or known word which in the end will create one word with multiple ideas.

The world of Pokémon is widely known for its abundance of Pokémon names and terms. They are all new words coined by the developer in order to show their novelty and distinction with other works. In this study, the writer investigates the names of Pokémon and excludes the other technical terms found in the data source.

This study uses the Blending theory by Mattiello (2013). In her book, she explains that there are three kinds of Blending. Blending can be done Morphotactically, Morphonologically, and Morphosemantically. Morphotactically, a Blend can consist of all splinters combined which is called a Total Blend, or only part of the splinter found from the words used that is called a Partial Blend. In addition, there are Blends that can be formed Morphonologically. Phonologically, a Blend can be made of two or more words that overlap in terms of their sound or even alphabetically. This is called an Overlapping Blend. The other kinds of Blending made up of random words are not considered an Overlapping Blend which in the end is called a Non-Overlapping Blend. The last kind of Blending according to Mattiello (2013) is a kind of Blending made up of words that may explain or give attributes to the other words. Blendings made this way is called a Morphosemantic Blend. It can be defined that the head word is described or given an attribute by the other words/ splinters. This kind of Blending is called an Attributive Blend. The other kind of Morphosemantic Blending is

called a Coordinate Blend since they are not attributing the other word because they are in equal positions.

3. Methods

This research took all the data from a webpage (Pokemondb, n.d.). the data collected were only taken from the latest 3 generations of Pokémon primary Nintendo games. This should be differentiated because there are many spin-offs of Pokémon caused by the number of franchises it owns. This 3 last generations of Pokémon games taken as data were also only the generation that provides a whole new region and whole new starters as well as new legendary Pokémon.

The names provided are all available to be analyzed from said webpage. The names taken were Pokémon from number #722 (Rowlet) to number #1000 (Gholdengo). The maximum number for new Pokémon released has reached up to number #1010 (Iron Leaves). Even so, the next names after number #1000 do not show some sign of names that can be analyzed using English nor its form not even in a 'word', yet in the form of a 'phrase'. The researcher excluded them from the data collection. The data chosen are from generations 7 – 9 to avoid similarities in analysis from another unknown researcher.

The method of research is started by documenting all the names said in the data collection provided by the pokemondatabase.com webpage. The analysis will be done using a mixed method (Qual-Quan) by (Dörnyei 2007). In his book, he argues that instead of using solely Qualitative or Quantitative methodology, one can use both because they may be in contrast, yet they can complete each other. The names are then unblended if they are categorized as blends. The type of blending used is then categorized. Pokémon names here are the variables. Based on (Hatch & Lazaraton, 1991) variables are the units used in the analysis. The variables are then categorized into levels of Blending types. Levels here according to (Hatch & Lazaraton, 1991) means the further division of the variable to categorize them into more specific groups.

After all the data had been categorized, the researcher took the 'critical case sampling'. (Dörnyei, 2007) suggested that critical case sampling is a type of sampling that intentionally chooses the most significant and the most special from all similar samples. From each of the Blending categories, the researcher took sufficient data to be analyzed.

The analysis was different for each of the level. In the Morphotactical analysis, the data are only categorized whether they were included into Total or Partial Blends. In this study, the Total Blends are symbolized using (A1), and Partial Blends were symbolized using (A2). Morphologically, the data were categorized into Overlapping Blends with symbol (B1) and Non-overlapping Blends using (B2). Finally, Morphosemantically the attributive Blends were symbolized with (C1) and coordinative Blends were symbolized with (C2).

After categorizing all of the data in the data source, they were quantitatively analyzed and provided into narration qualitatively. By finding all the Morphotactical Blendings, it was also a sign of finding all the Blending contained in the data source. It means that all the Morphotactical Blendings data not included in Overlapping or Attributive Blendings are all Non-overlapping and Coordinating Blendings. However, to determine whether a datum is overlapping or not, the researcher applied rule such as: 'must be overlapping phonemically, graphically or conceptually. Because some words use different languages that have different

concepts of phonetic and alphabetic rules. The analysis of Morphosemantic Blending is more delicate because in order to determine whether a datum is a morphosemantic Blending or not, the datum need to have the word as the head and the modifier. The head and modifier here are using these formulations:

- A) The head is Noun + (that is) Adjective
This can be seen in a word for example: Watermelon (that is) red.
- B) The head is Noun + (that) Verb + (s)
This can be seen in a word for example: Cat (that) run(s)
- C) The head is Noun + Noun (Compound word)
This can be seen in a word for example: Waterbird

All the data found were then counted in terms of amount and frequency.

4. Results and Discussion

From the analysis, it is found that out of 278 Pokémon names (#722 - #1000), 195 Pokémon names are made with Blending. The analyses start from the first category of Blending which is Morphotactical Blends. The analysis can be seen from the explanations below:

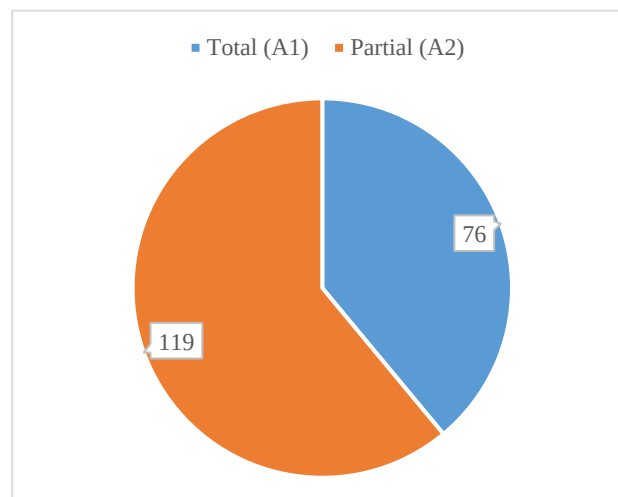


Figure 1: Morphotactical Blends

From the chart, it can be seen that there are 76 Total Blends found in the data source. The Partial Blends are found to be more frequently appearing in the making of Pokémon names which are 119 times from the total 195 Blending. The number of Partial Blends found in the data source might be caused by the rule of creating the Blends. As long as one of the words used is a splinter, the word can already be considered a Blending. Examples of names using this kind of Blending can be found in the tables below:

Table 1: Examples of Total Blends (A1)

No	Pokemon Name	Source Words
#834	Drednaw	Dreadnought + Gnaw
#866	Mr. Rime	Mr. Mime + Rime + Rhyme
#968	Orthworm	Ore +Earthworm
#885	Dreepy	Dragon + Creepy
#891	Kubfu	Cub + Kungfu
#919	Nymble	Nymph + Nimble
#969	Glimmet	Glimmer + Comet

From the above examples of it can be seen that each word is reduced into splinters in order to make a Blend. The arrangement is random because there is no rule of how a Total Blend should be made. The next table shows the Partial Blends that contain Blends created from a splinter + a full word.

Table 2: Examples of Partial Blends (A2)

No	Pokemon Name	Source Words
#724	Decidueye	Deciduous + Eye
#727	Incineroar	Incenerate + Roar
#733	Toucannon	Toucan + Cannon
#803	Poipole	Poison + Pole
#816	Sobble	Sob + Bubble
#822	Corvisquire	Corvine + Squire
#854	Sinistea	Sinister + Tea

These are the examples of Partial Blends found in the data source. One intriguing example is in the name ‘Toucannon’. This word looks very similar to a non-blending word because the two words used are already complete words and there seem to be no splinter from the two words used. However, there is actually a splinter seen from these words because the word Toucan and Cannon has similar syllable ‘can’ that needs one more ‘n’ in order not to be a Blend. Because there are only found 2 ‘n(s)’ in the word, thus this word is considered to be a Blend because one of the words lacks one ‘n’.

The next result will show the number of Morphonological Blends found in the data source. Morphonological Blends need to have similar sounds or letters. The result can be seen in the figure below:

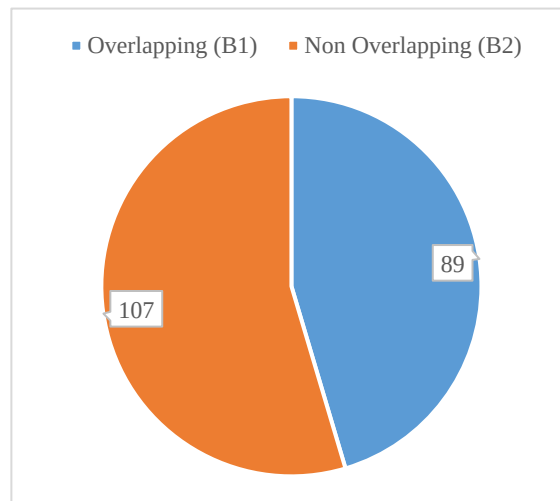


Figure 2: Morphonological Blends

From this chart it is visible that there is no significant difference between the overlapping or non-overlapping blends. This might be caused by the use of overlapping blends need more work than non-overlapping ones. However, because the result of the names looks and sounds better than non-overlapping, these kinds of names must have been put more effort into. Hence, the names created will have more sense in terms of its name and characteristics can help people in remembering names.

Table 3: Examples of Overlapping Blends (B1)

No	Pokemon Name	Source Words
#734	Yungoos	Young + Mongoose
#739	Crabrawler	Crab + Brawler
#750	Mudsdale	Mud + Clydesdale
#784	Kommo'o	Commotion + Mo'o
#797	Celesteela	Celestial + Steel
#800	Necrozma	Necros+ Prisma
#956	Espathra	Esp + Telepathic + Cleopatra

From the result above, there are some examples of Overlapping Blends. The first overlapping blend can be seen in the name 'Yungoos'. This word is made of the word 'young' and 'mongoose' which is one kind of small mammal. This word is overlapping in the sound /ŋ/. The next word is Crabrawler which easily overlaps in the letter 'b'. There is also the word Kommo'o which consists of the words 'commotion' and 'mo'o' which refers to the Hawaiian word for 'dragon'. It overlaps in the syllable 'mo'.

The interesting blend is found in the names Celesteela, Necrozma, and Espathra. The first word is overlapping in the sound /sti:/. The sound /i:/ is still considered an overlap because to produce the sound of the word ‘celestial’ /sɪˈles.ti.əl/, the vowel sound is still essential. The next name is Necrozma. Looking at it phonetically and graphically, this name should not be included in this category because the researcher decided that the overlapping is in the sound or letter /z/ which cannot be found in both words. People may say that it should be the letter /s/ in order to be considered for this kind of blend. Nevertheless, it should be understood that both /s, z/ are Alveolar Fricative sounds. They are only different in terms of their Voicings. It means that they still have a dominantly similar hissing sound concept. The final intriguing example is seen in the name Espathra. This name is special because it contains three words in one name. The first word ‘ESP’ refers to an acronym (Extra Sensory Perception: psychic power), telepathic, and Cleopatra. The overlapping is found in the letter ‘p – a – t’ because the letter ‘p’ overlaps among the three words. The next two letters ‘a – t’ are overlapping only between the word telepathic and Cleopatra. This can be inferred that overlapping cannot only be determined by the sound or the alphabet but must also be determined if it overlaps conceptually.

The next analysis is the non-overlapping blends. This kind of blend is considered ‘the other’ of overlapping Blends. It is because all kinds of Blend are considered non overlapping Blends if they do not overlap. These are examples of non-overlapping blends found in the data source:

Table 4: Examples of Non-Overlapping Blends

No	Pokemon Name	Source Words
#775	Komala	Koala + Comatose
#781	Dhelmise	Helm + Demise
#862	Obstagoon	Obstacle + Raccoon + Goon
#909	Fuecoco	Fuego + Cocodrillo
#963	Finizen	Fin + Citizen

From the above table, it is visible that some words look similar. However, the researcher decided not to put them into overlapping categories. It can be seen from the first name ‘Dhelmise’ that is taken from two words ‘Demise’ and ‘helm’. These two words look as if there is only one word that cancels the overlapping which is the sound ‘l’. However, after taking a closer look, it can be seen that because of that sound, the other sounds like /he/ and /m/ cannot be considered overlapping. Because there is no sound /he/ nor letter ‘he’ in both words. In addition, if the sound /h/ is omitted, it will also be insufficient to consider the sound /e/ and /m/ only can create an overlapping blend because they do not overlap in any ways. Moreover, if the sound /e/ can be considered overlapping, then almost all blending will be considered an overlapping blending because every syllable almost needs a vowel and there must have been similar vowels all over the place. This also happens in the case of the name ‘Finizen’.

The next name is ‘Komala’. This name is created by the words comatose and Koala which do not overlap because the sounds /o/ and /a/ are separated by the sound /m/ and deciding the two sounds as overlapping is impossible. In the next example, there is Obstagoon. It cannot be considered an overlapping blend because it may look like an overlapping in the sound /g/ if the sound /g/ and /k/ are considered similar. However, the researcher finds that the two sounds are different from the case of /s/ and /z/. Both sounds /k/ and /g/ are indeed only different in their voicings. However, they lack important characteristics which is being sonorant sounds. Sonorant sounds can be similar because the sound can be continued non-stop and eventually, they will sound the same. The two sounds /k/ and /g/ are both can called ‘stop’ or ‘plosive’ sounds. When they are seen as ‘stop’ sounds which can be used to stop the air at the end of a syllable, they can be considered very similar. However, when they are seen as ‘plosive’ that needs one push to blow the air after stopping when they are used at the beginning of a syllable, they can be heard to be very distinctive. This is the reason why these two sounds cannot be considered similar and overlapping. This case is similar to the next name ‘Fuecoco’.

The third kind of Blending is the Morphosemantic Blending. There are many rules to consider to decide whether a Pokémon name is a Morphosemantic Blending or not. The following chart shows the frequency of the appearance of Morphosemantic Blendings found in the data source:

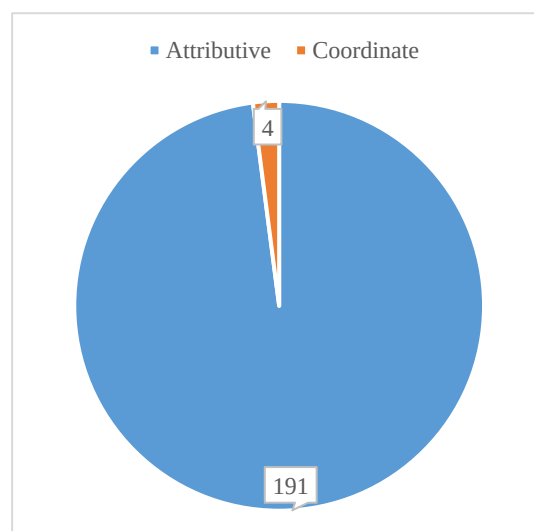


Figure 3: Morphosemantic Blends

The chart shows that Attributive Blends appear very frequently. It might be caused by the need for characteristics for the Pokémon name. It is because Pokémon names are always based on animal or thing names. These nouns are mostly having characteristics like habit, ability, trait, etc. The coordinating Blends appear a few times might be caused by some of the nouns used being coordinated with other similar ideas.

The first analysis is about the Attributive Blends. There are three kinds of Attributive Blends found in the analysis. The first one is the Noun + (that) Verb (s). This can be seen from the names provided in the below table:

Table 5: Examples of Attributive (N + V) Blends

No	Pokemon Name	Source Words
#725	Litten	Kitten + Lit
#758	Salazzle	Salamander + Dazzle
#779	Bruxish	Fish + Brux
#920	Lokix	Locust + Kicks
#946	Bramblin	Bramble + Rambling

Seen from the above table, the names consist of Noun and the Verb that explains what the Noun is doing. The verb is considered as the modifier of the noun because it gives ability to the Nouns as the head. Take one example from the name Sobble. This name consists of the words ‘bubble’ and ‘sob’ which can be created into a clause ‘Bubble (that) sob(s)’.

The next discussion is about the Noun + (that is) Adjective. This attributive blend is the most dominating in the data. This must have been caused by the characteristic given by the modifier that is in the form of an adjective. This can give many characteristics of a Noun. The examples can be seen in the below table:

Table 6: Examples of Attributive (N + Adj) Blends

No	Pokemon Name	Source Words
#818	Inteleon	Intelligent + Chameleon
#877	Morpeko	Morumotto + Harapeko
#910	Crocalor	Crocodrillo + Calor
#928	Smoliv	Smol + Olive
#942	Maschiff	Mastiff + Mischief

The table shows only very little examples of Noun + Adjective Attributive Blends. The first example shows the *crocodrillo* (crocodile) + *calor* (hot) which are taken from Spanish words. The name Morpeko is taken from Japanese words which means *Morumotto* (Marmot) and *harapeko* (hungry). For the third word, it is taken from slang word for ‘small’ and the word ‘olive’.

Table 7: Examples of Attributive (N + N) Blends

No	Pokemon Name	Source Words
#745	Lycanroc	Lycanthrope + Rock
#751	Dewpider	Dew + Spider
#765	Oranguru	Orangutan + Guru
#803	Poipole	Poison + Pole
#878	Cufant	Cu + Elephant

This kind of Attributive Blending uses two or more nouns to give an attribute to the headword. This can be seen for example in the name Dewpider which simply talks about Dew Spider. It can either be a spider that lives in a dew or a spider that looks like dew or a spider that is made of dew. The dew here is always giving an attribute to the headword 'spider'. The next similar example is the name 'Cufant'. This word is made from the word Cu which is a chemistry symbol that can be found in the periodic table for copper. Even though they are in the same word class (Noun), one of the words can become the head. This is because the head has more versatile use than the other and doing the vice versa will make illogical results.

Moving on to the Coordinate Blends, there are also blends that have similar or equal status which makes them cannot be put into the preceding category. However, they do not simply have to be in the same word class. Even in different word classes, as long as they are not attributing the head, they can be called coordinate blends because they have the same equal status that is to merge different ideas into one word. The examples can be seen in the table below:

Table 8: Examples of Coordinate Blends

No	Pokemon Name	Source Words
#741	Oricorio	Oriole + Choreography + Oratorio
#743	Ribombee	Ribbon + Bombyliidae + Bee
#746	Wishi-Washi	Weak + Watery
#763	Tsareena	Tsarina + Queen

From the examples, it can be seen that the two words used do not give attributes. Instead, they are similar words that show two equal qualities of the name. For example, the first name 'Oricorio' is taken from 3 nouns 'oriole, choreography, and oratorio'. These names do not give attributes to one another because they are 3 different words that create 1 Pokémon name. It can be concluded that the name 'Oricorio' is made up of 3 nouns; i.e. Oriole, Choreography, and Oratorio.

In addition, the Pokémon with serial number #763 namely Tsareena is also one of the names created by using Coordinative Blending. The splinters are taken from the Russian word 'Tsarina' meaning 'Queen' and the English word 'Queen'. Both splinters used are of the same word but in different languages. Thus, they are considered Coordinative Blends because they do not give attributes to the headword.

5. Conclusion

The analysis shows that from the 3 latest generations of Pokemon games. There are 195 Blending used to create Pokemon names from Pokemon number #722 to #1000. All kinds of Blending by Mattiello (2013) can be found in the data source. The clearest difference can be seen from the Morphosemantic Blends between Attributive and Coordinative Blends. This is because of the nature of Blending itself which is mostly used to give attribute/ identification to simplify complicated and long phrases/ words. This can be found in Attributive Blends. On the other hand, Coordinative Blends are only merging two splinters of similar words that cannot modify one another.

From the analysis, it can be concluded that Blends are made in order to merge more than one idea to create one simple word. In addition, the words are at least using one word to characterize the others. It is needed so the speaker of the word can easily remember the characterization of each of the words. It will make people easier to remember even when there are so many new words invented. The result of this research is contradictive with the result brought by (Arifah & Moehkardi, 2021). It is said in the conclusion that some morphosemantic blends may shift the connotations which could not be found in this analysis.

It is also found that in creating many new Pokémon names. Attributive Blends are used the most because it is the easiest way of telling what kind of thing represents the Pokémon and what attribute it owns.

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