

Football blending in Modern Greek: morphophonological patterns and evaluative expression

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Abstract

This paper examines blending in written digital football discourse in Modern Greek as a structurally constrained and evaluatively loaded word-formation pattern. It argues that the attested formations are not instances of unconstrained wordplay, but morphophonologically patterned outputs integrating two lexical sources in a single form. The analysis distinguishes between linear blends and frame-preserving blends with embedded source material. Within the linear group, the material includes overlap-mediated and boundary-clear realizations, alongside more peripheral cases with only minimal overlap. These configurations are analysed as different morphophonological routes for evaluative expression rather than as formations with categorically distinct discourse functions. The attested blends allow the target to remain accessible in context while compactly introducing evaluation. Their expressive force appears to derive not only from the meanings of their sources, but also from the blending process itself, insofar as fusion into a single form may heighten evaluative salience.

1 Introduction

Football discourse is a particularly revealing environment for the study of evaluative language. It is shaped by rivalry, alignment, public judgment, and recurrent stance-taking toward players, teams, coaches, referees, and match events. More generally, football generates rich and socially salient discourse, spanning media commentary, fan interaction, chants, emotional expression, and identity-marking practices (cf. Lavric et al. 2008). In digital writing, these tendencies are especially visible, as expression is often rapid, affectively charged, and oriented toward public uptake (cf. Pérez-Sabater/Maguelouk Moffo 2019).

In this environment, lexical innovation does not merely identify referents; it also packages stance. Blending is particularly well suited to this function because it allows evaluative meaning to be packaged compactly while the target remains accessible in context. Its expressive force appears to depend not only on the meanings of the source elements, but also on their morphophonological integration. In the present material, truncation, overlap, and source embedding can be treated not as incidental surface effects, but as formal properties that may contribute to evaluative salience.

The present study builds on earlier work on blending in Greek football discourse (cf. Papanagiotou 2016), but shifts the analytical focus. Whereas the earlier article emphasized the structural properties of football blends, their relation to compounding, and their place within the grammar,

the present study concentrates more specifically on their morphophonological organization and on its interaction with evaluative expression in discourse.

Adopting a synchronic, qualitative, and type-based perspective, this article examines attested formations drawn from written digital football discourse in Modern Greek. The study has two closely related aims: first, to identify and characterize the principal morphophonological configurations attested in the dataset; and second, to examine their role in evaluative expression in football discourse. More specifically, the paper addresses two research questions. First, what broad morphophonological organization do the data support, and what analytical roles do recoverability, phonological similarity, and morphosyntactic frame alignment play within it? Second, how do the identified configurations provide different morphophonological routes for packaging evaluative meaning in football discourse? The article does not, however, seek to measure the frequency or productivity of blending in this domain.

Against this background, the paper argues that the football blends examined here are structurally constrained formations in which morphophonological organization contributes to evaluative expression. The analysis distinguishes two broad configurations – linear blends and frame-preserving blends with embedded source material – while treating their differences as formal rather than as evidence of categorically distinct discourse functions.

2 Blending: structural constraints and analytical parameters

2.1 Blending as an expressive but constrained process

Blending has long occupied an unstable position in morphological theory. Because it is strongly associated with playfulness, stylistic markedness, and context-dependent innovation, it has often been treated as peripheral or extragrammatical morphology (cf. Dressler 2000; Bauer 2001; Mattiello 2013). At the same time, previous work has identified recurrent regularities in truncation, overlap, output shape, and source recognizability, suggesting that blending is better approached as an expressive but structurally constrained mode of lexical formation (cf. Kubozono 1990; Bat-El 1996: 284–285; Gries 2004a; Ronneberger-Sibold 2006; Bauer 2012; Renner/Maniez/Arnaud 2012; Beliaeva 2019a; Mattiello 2019; Renner 2019).

For the purposes of the present study, blending is treated as a form of lexical formation in which material associated with two independently identifiable lexical sources is brought together within a single output. This working characterization does not presuppose a single rigid template for all blends, nor does it reduce blendhood to any one formal property such as truncation or overlap. In this respect, it remains compatible with approaches that treat blends as a structurally variable category rather than as a class defined by a single invariant formal pattern (cf. Kemmer 2003; Renner/Maniez/Arnaud 2012). The point is not to propose a general theory of blending, but to establish a constrained basis for analysing how source material is integrated and how the resulting output remains interpretable as a single expressive lexical form.

2.2 Recoverability and phonological similarity

Two factors are especially central to the analysis developed in this paper: recoverability and phonological similarity. Prosodic well-formedness remains a background consideration, since truncation and fusion may be shaped by syllable structure, stress, and general output well-

formedness (cf. Kubozono 1990; Bat-El 1996: 284–285). Recoverability is necessary for establishing the two-source relation operationalized in Section 4, whereas phonological similarity is treated as a facilitating factor rather than as a defining criterion of blendhood.

Recoverability is central because blends must preserve enough information for addressees to reconstruct the relation between the sources and the output. In the present material, recoverability matters not only for source recognition but also for evaluative interpretation, since the target of evaluation must remain sufficiently recognizable in context. It therefore bears directly on the balance between compactness and interpretability that characterizes football blends (cf. Ronneberger-Sibold 2006; Beliaeva 2014). More generally, work on blend identification and interpretation suggests that successful blend processing depends on the recoverability of source relations rather than on formal resemblance alone (cf. Lehrer 1996: 366). In the present material, however, recoverability is also partly discourse-community-specific: some formations are likely to remain highly legible to insiders familiar with Greek football discourse, while requiring outsiders to draw on substantially more pragmatic background knowledge. This does not weaken their status as blends; rather, it shows that source recovery and evaluative interpretation may depend to different degrees on formal cues and community-specific knowledge. This context dependence is consistent with the observation that the degree of transparency required in extragrammatical creations varies with their pragmatic function: full transparency may be unnecessary in specialized or in-group contexts and may even run counter to intended playful effects (cf. Ronneberger-Sibold/Dressler 2026: 437f.).

Phonological similarity is likewise recurrently relevant. Shared strings, partial overlap, and broader phonological correspondences can facilitate blending by providing natural contact points between lexical sources, limiting the amount of source reduction required, and enhancing formal cohesion (cf. Gries 2004a; Ronneberger-Sibold 2006). Here phonological similarity helps explain how a blend is realized once the presence of two independently identifiable lexical sources has been established. It is therefore best treated as a facilitating factor, not as a sufficient criterion for classifying a formation as a blend. It may also matter at an earlier stage, since phonological affinity can favour some semantically plausible source pairings over others by making the resulting blend more cohesive, more recoverable, and formally more plausible (cf. Gries 2004b: 427; Gries 2012; Beliaeva 2019b).

Taken together, these factors help explain how blends achieve formal economy without collapsing into opacity.

2.3 Blending in Modern Greek

For Modern Greek, blending has been approached from several complementary perspectives. Earlier work has examined blends in dialectal material, addressed the terminological and analytical distinction between blending and related phenomena such as contamination, and investigated the structural relation between blends and compounds (cf. Koutita-Kaimaki/Fliatouras 2001; Katsouda 2009; Ralli/Xydopoulos 2012). Research has also extended to so-called visual blends, whose interpretation exploits properties of their written representation (cf. Katsouda/Kritikou 2010). A broader treatment is provided by Katsouda/Nakas (2013), while the typological framework is developed in detail by Nakas/Katsouda (2013, 2014).

A central distinction in this typology is that between total blends, formed through the clipping and combination of two existing lexical sources, and partial blends, which are treated as outcomes of etymological reanalysis. Within total blending, Nakas/Katsouda (2014: 1165–1169) distinguish four mechanisms according to the location and extent of source reduction: antegrading, retrograding, back-forth-grading, and intrograding blending. In antegrading, final material from the first source is removed; in retrograding, initial material from the second source is removed; and in back-forth-grading, both operations apply simultaneously. Intrograding differs in that medial material in the first source is replaced by all or part of the second source. Nakas/Katsouda (2014: 1171) also emphasize the role of homophony in the creation of blend formations. Under the working definition adopted here, however, reanalysis-based partial blends are treated as a related class of formations and fall outside the retained dataset, which requires the integration of material from two independently identifiable lexical sources (see Section 3).

For illustration, comparable mechanisms are also attested outside football discourse. Katsouda/Nakas (2018: 168–169) discuss formations such as *λεμοναδική* (*lemonadiki*) < *λεμονάδα* (*lemonada*) ‘lemonade’ + *μοναδική* (*monadiki*) ‘unique’ as an example of antegrading blending, and *γραμματυρική* (*grammatyriki*) < *γραμματική* (*grammatiki*) ‘grammar’ + *τυρί* (*tyri*) ‘cheese’ as an example of intrograding blending. A salient feature of the football dataset is functional rather than strictly structural: many formations are organized around football-related proper names, club names, or other salient targets and are used for situated praise, ridicule, criticism, or partisan positioning. Since the present study does not include a matched sample from general vocabulary, however, the comparison remains qualitative and does not provide evidence of a categorical or quantitative difference between football blending and blending elsewhere in Modern Greek.

A partly different strand of research has emphasized the grammatical properties of Greek blends. Ralli/Xydopoulos (2012: 36, 38, 42) analyse them as deliberate formations structurally related to Greek compounds and argue that Greek blends display headedness restrictions, with headed structures generally showing stronger form reduction of the non-head. This account provides relevant background for the morphosyntactic frame-alignment diagnostic operationalized in Section 4, without implying that all Greek blends instantiate a single headedness pattern.

Building on these strands of research, the present study organizes the football data along a different, output-oriented descriptive axis. Rather than classifying formations primarily according to the location and direction of source reduction, it distinguishes between outputs in which retained material from the two sources is organized sequentially and outputs in which retained material from one source occurs on both sides of material associated with the other. From this perspective, antegrading, retrograding, and back-forth-grading can be related to different patterns of linear integration, whereas intrograding provides the closest precedent for the frame-preserving configurations discussed here. The distinction proposed in the present study is therefore not intended to replace the earlier typology, but to reorganize the data in a way suited to the morphophonological and discourse-functional questions pursued here. Overlap is treated separately as a dimension that may characterize different realizations within this organization.

3 Data and analytical procedure

The empirical basis of this study is a dataset of 30 blend types drawn from written digital football discourse in Modern Greek. The study adopts a qualitative, type-based approach to their morphophonological organization and evaluative use.

The dataset was assembled between 2015 and 2025 from publicly accessible Greek football-related digital texts, including sports news websites, fan forums, blogs, and comment sections. From an initial archive of several hundred potential lexical innovations, 30 formations were retained for in-depth analysis based on the following inclusion criteria: (a) the item integrates material associated with two independently identifiable lexical sources into a single output; (b) the formation is clearly embedded in football discourse; and (c) its formal organization is more adequately analysed as two-source fusion than as the output of a regular morphological process, such as compounding or derivation, or as another type of lexical or graphic manipulation.

The distinction from other forms of lexical or graphic manipulation is particularly relevant to formations based on the deliberate reanalysis of an existing word. Such cases were excluded when the effect resulted from assigning a new interpretation to part of an existing form rather than from integrating material from two lexical sources. For example, *X-αμένοι* (*X-amenoí*) exploits the existing word *χαμένοι* (*chamenoí*) ‘losers’. It was coined in a context in which a draw was an unfavourable result for both opposing teams, allowing both sides to be presented as, in effect, ‘losers because of the X’. The initial Greek letter <χ> is capitalized and graphically isolated as <X->, visually identical to the symbol *X* conventionally used for a draw in football pools. The wordplay thus depends on the contextual reinterpretation and graphic resegmentation of material already present in *χαμένοι*, rather than on the morphophonological integration of two lexical sources, and was consequently excluded from the present dataset (cf. Katsouda/Nakas 2013; Nakas/Katsouda 2014: 1172–1175 on reanalysis in relation to Modern Greek blending).

The resulting dataset therefore reflects the application of these inclusion criteria rather than selection designed to fit the structural classification proposed below. It substantially overlaps with the material discussed in Papanagiotou (2016), and many of the formations discussed there are re-examined here from a more specific morphophonological and discourse-functional perspective.

Evaluative function is interpreted from the attested discourse context rather than from source semantics alone. Each retained formation is supported by at least one documented written attestation. The Appendix provides information on source material, structural configuration, and, where recoverable, contextual evaluative orientation. The evaluative labels are descriptive and context-sensitive rather than inherent properties of the blends.

4 Operational criteria for blendhood in football discourse

Building on the working characterization in Section 2.1 and the inclusion criteria presented in Section 3, this section specifies how recoverable two-source fusion is established in the football material and how the retained formations are assigned to their major structural configurations. The evaluative dimension is central to the discourse under investigation, but is treated as a functional characteristic rather than as a defining criterion of blendhood.

A recoverable relation to two lexical sources is necessary but not by itself sufficient to establish blendhood, since regular morphological formations may also combine independently identifiable lexical material. Formal resemblance alone is likewise insufficient, as it may be accidental. What is decisive is whether the output supports a well-grounded analysis as two-source fusion whose formal organization cannot be fully accounted for by regular compounding or derivation. Formations are therefore excluded if two adequately identifiable lexical sources cannot be established, if the dual-source interpretation remains largely impressionistic, or if another morphological, lexical, or graphic analysis provides a more adequate account. This treatment is consistent with approaches that distinguish deliberate blending from accidental contamination (cf. Ronneberger-Sibold 2006: 155; Ralli/Xydopoulos 2012; Renner 2015).

The structural analysis distinguishes between supporting diagnostics that may identify a target-bearing source, where applicable, and parameters used to characterize the organization of source material in the output. Referential anchoring concerns whether one source supplies the discourse referent of the output while the other contributes an additional evaluative or expressive characterization. A useful test is whether replacing the blend with one of its sources preserves the discourse referent while removing the expressive contribution associated with the other source. Thus, replacing *Εργοπαστέλης* with *Εργοτέλης* preserves reference to the team, whereas replacing it with *παστέλι* does not. Referential asymmetry may also occur in linear formations such as *Απεργοτέλης*. Where such referential asymmetry is available, referential anchoring helps identify the target-bearing source but does not by itself determine structural configuration.

Structural configuration is determined primarily by the formal organization of source material in the output. Linear formations are those in which retained material from the two sources is organized sequentially, whether the transition between them is overlap-mediated, boundary-clear and non-overlapping, or, in more peripheral cases, characterized by only minimal overlap. Frame-preserving formations, by contrast, are those in which retained material from one source occurs on both sides of material associated with the second source. The two source contributions are therefore not organized as a simple linear sequence of material from Source A followed by material from Source B; instead, the retained material from one source provides a discontinuous frame within which material from the other is inserted or substituted. Where contrastive grammatical evidence is available, morphosyntactic frame alignment provides an additional diagnostic: preservation of the category, gender, or inflectional behaviour associated with one source supports its analysis as the frame-providing source. This diagnostic is corroborative rather than obligatory, since the two sources do not necessarily contrast in a relevant grammatical property in every formation. The notion of frame alignment is used here descriptively and does not imply a general claim about headedness in blending (cf. Ralli/Xydopoulos 2012: 38; Ralli 2013).

Overlap and the extent and location of source reduction are treated as further descriptive parameters. The extent of phonological overlap is not itself used to distinguish linear from frame-preserving formations. Where the two sources share phonological material, the precise segmentation of the output may admit more than one analysis. For descriptive consistency, once the formal organization of the output supports an analysis in which material from one source occurs on both sides of material associated with the other, phonologically shared material is assigned

to the discontinuously represented source. The resulting segmentation is therefore a representational convention rather than an independent diagnostic for classification. In *Εργοπαστέλης*, for example, the phonologically shared [teli] material is treated as part of the *Εργοτέλης* frame, yielding the descriptive segmentation *Εργο-πασ-τέλης*.

The diagnostics need not converge equally clearly in every formation. Where the formal evidence permits more than one plausible structural analysis, referential anchoring may help identify the target-bearing source without necessarily resolving the structural ambiguity, and such cases are treated explicitly as borderline in the discussion.

The distinction between linear and frame-preserving formations is output-oriented and descriptive: it is based on the organization of source material in the attested forms. It is not intended as a claim about the existence of two categorically distinct word-formation mechanisms. These diagnostics and descriptive parameters provide the framework for the structural analysis presented in Section 5.

5 Structural configurations in the dataset

The 30 retained types comprise 21 linear blends and 9 frame-preserving blends with embedded source material.

5.1 Linear blends

In linear blends, source material is organized sequentially. The attested types include overlap-mediated and boundary-clear realizations, as well as more peripheral cases in which immediate overlap is minimal and cohesion is reinforced by broader phonological correspondences beyond the fusion site. Comparable mechanisms of source reduction and integration have also been described in Modern Greek material outside football discourse (cf. Katsouda/Nakas 2013; Nakas/Katsouda 2014: 1166–1169; see Section 2.3).

A representative overlap-mediated realization is:

- (1) *α.περ.γί.α* (*apergia*) + *Ερ.γο.τέ.λης* (*Ergotelis*) → *α.περ.γο.τέ.λης* (*apergotelis*)
 [aper'jia] + [eryo'telis] → [aperyo'telis]
 'strike' + 'Ergotelis' → occasion-specific blend presenting Ergotelis as combative and defiant

Here the sequence *-εργ-* is available in both inputs and functions as the fusion site, allowing the two sources to be integrated without duplication of the shared material.

For readers unfamiliar with Greek football, *Εργοτέλης* is the name of a football club, and the blend appears to have been coined in an occasion-specific context, on a day when major strike mobilizations in Greece coincided with an *Εργοτέλης* victory. In that immediate setting, the formation frames the team as combative, defiant, and collectively energized, drawing its effect not only from the semantics of *απεργία* but also from the situational alignment between public protest and sporting success. This overlap enables integration with relatively limited source reduction while preserving enough of the club name for target recovery in context. Comparable cases include *βο.θύ.λος* (*vothrylos*) [vo'thɪlos] < *βό.θρος* (*vothros*) 'cesspit' + *θύ.λος* (*thrylos*) 'legend; nickname of Olympiacos' and *γκο.λέ.μπας* (*gkolempas*) [go'lebas] < *γκολ* (*gkol*) 'goal' + *Χο.λέ.μπας* (*Cholempas*) 'Holebas', where localized overlap likewise supports source integration while leaving sufficient material for the football-related target to remain

identifiable in context. Further examples and their analytical classification are provided in the Appendix.

The material also includes boundary-clear linear blends, in which the contributing sources remain more transparently segmentable and no segmental overlap mediates the transition between them. A representative case is:

- (2) *παλ.τό (palto) + Ντι.ό.γκο (Ntiogko) → παλ.ντι.ό.γκο (palntiogko)*
 [pal'to] + [di'ogo] → [paldi'ogo]
 'flop/bad player' + 'Diogo' → pejorative blend presenting the player as a flop or disappointing signing

Formally, the evaluative noun *παλτό* is reduced to *παλ-*, while *Ντιόγκο* supplies the name material on the right-hand side of the output, preserving enough material for the target name to remain recoverable in context. In Greek football slang, *παλτό* is used pejoratively for a player who is considered a flop or a disappointing signing, especially one whose performance has failed to justify prior expectations or the financial investment involved. *Παλντιόγκο* is analysed here as a boundary-clear linear blend because the transition between the contributing materials does not involve a segment shared by the two sources and realized only once in the output. The /t/ following *παλ-* in the unreduced source *παλτό* and the initial /d/ of *Ντιόγκο* are homorganic stops differing in voicing. Their correspondence may therefore motivate the location of the source boundary, but it does not constitute segmental overlap in the sense adopted here, since /t/ itself is not retained in the output.¹

More peripheral linear blends show only limited immediate overlap. A representative example is:

- (3) *θρύ.λος (thrylos) + Νι.κο.πο.λί.δης (Nikopolidis) → θρυ.λο.πο.λί.δης (thrylopolidis)*
 ['θrilos] + [nikopo'lidis] → [θrilopo'lidis]
 'legend; nickname of Olympiacos' + 'Nikopolidis' → laudatory blend associating the player with Olympiacos and the notion of a 'legend'

Here the immediate fusion site offers only limited shared material, so local overlap alone does not fully account for the phonological cohesion of the formation. Beyond the limited correspondence at *-o-*, however, a looser correspondence in the [i–o] vowel pattern of the two sources may provide additional phonological cohesion without amounting to fuller segmental overlap. The output retains sufficient right-hand material for the target expression to be identified in context, while the left-hand cue introduces a laudatory evaluative effect through association with *Θρύλος*, that is, Olympiacos and the notion of 'legend'. This case illustrates the more peripheral end of the linear group, where minimal overlap may be reinforced by broader phonological correspondences.

5.2 Frame-preserving blends with embedded source material

In frame-preserving blends with embedded source material, retained material from one source occurs discontinuously on both sides of material associated with the second source. This configuration corresponds broadly to formations described by Bauer (2012: 17) as *infix blends*

¹ No comparable recurrent voicing-based correspondence was identified elsewhere in the retained dataset.

and by Kemmer (2003) and Gries (2004b) as *intercalative blends*, as well as to related patterns of internal embedding discussed by Lehrer (2007). The label *frame-preserving* is used here descriptively to foreground the distribution of retained source material in the output and does not imply that the embedded material constitutes a morphological infix. As discussed in Section 2.3, the closest precedent in previous work on Modern Greek is *intrograding blending* (cf. Nakas/Katsouda 2014: 1168–1169). A representative case from the present dataset is *Εργοπαστέλης*, analysed in (4) below.

- (4) *Ερ.γο.τέ.λης* (*Ergotelis*) + *πασ.τέ.λι* (*pasteli*) → *Ερ.γο.πασ.τέ.λης* (*Ergopastelis*)
 [eryo'telis] + [pas'teli] → [eryopas'telis]
 'Ergotelis' (football club name) + 'pasteli' (literally a sesame-and-honey sweet; also used informally for a goal in football discourse) → positive blend presenting Ergotelis as a team that scores goals

In this case, the formal organization of the output supports the analysis of *Εργοτέλης* as the frame-providing source. Referentially, the blend denotes the football club *Εργοτέλης*, identifying the club name as the target-bearing source. Formally, material associated with *Εργοτέλης* occurs on both sides of the internally integrated contribution from *παστέλι*, producing a non-sequential distribution of the two source contributions. Morphosyntactically, *παστέλι* is neuter, whereas both *Εργοτέλης* and *Εργοπαστέλης* are masculine, further supporting the association of the framing material with *Εργοτέλης*. Following the segmentation convention defined in Section 4, the formation is represented descriptively as *Εργο-πασ-τέλης*, with *πασ-* treated as the internally integrated cue; this representation is not itself the basis for its classification. In football discourse, *παστέλι* is also used informally for a goal, and the blend thus reframes *Εργοτέλης* positively as a team that scores goals.

Within this grouping, the data show two modes of internal intervention: insertion/addition and substitution. *Εργοπαστέλης* illustrates insertion/addition, since the material *πασ-* from *παστέλι* is inserted within the frame of *Εργοτέλης*. By contrast, *Αδραχμίδης* (*Adrachmidis*) < *Αδαμίδης* (*Adamidis*) + *δραχμή* (*drachmi* 'drachma') illustrates substitution, with material from *δραχμή* replacing medial material within the surname frame. Referentially, *Αδραχμίδης* refers to *Αδαμίδης*, not to *δραχμή*, and retains the masculine nominal properties of the surname rather than the feminine gender of *δραχμή*. Referential anchoring and morphosyntactic alignment therefore converge with the discontinuous distribution of material associated with the proper-name source.

Not all formations show the same degree of diagnostic convergence. *Σπανάθας* (*Spanathas*) < *Σπάθας* (*Spathas*) + *Πανάθας* (*Panathas*) represents a borderline case. Formally, both sources are highly recoverable: the output can be interpreted as *Σπα-νά-θας*, with *να-* occurring between initial and final material attributable to *Σπάθας*, but it also contains *Πανάθας* as a continuous string preceded only by an initial *σ-*. Morphophonological structure therefore does not provide an unequivocal basis for assigning the formation to one configuration. Referential evidence, however, clearly identifies *Σπάθας* as the target-bearing source: replacing the blend with *Σπάθας* preserves the discourse referent, whereas replacing it with *Πανάθας* changes the referent altogether. Although this establishes the referential anchor, it does not resolve the structural ambiguity. *Σπανάθας* is therefore included provisionally among the frame-preserving formations on the basis of a possible analysis in which the initial and final portions attributable to

Σπάθας surround the internally integrated segment, while an alternative linear analysis remains descriptively available.

6 Evaluative packaging and discourse function

The structural distinctions established in Section 5 are analytically relevant because they clarify the different ways in which evaluative meaning is packaged in the attested formations. Across the material, three analytical dimensions recur: contextual target accessibility, evaluative cueing, and formal compression.

These dimensions are balanced differently across the structural configurations. In an overlap-mediated blend such as *απεργοτέλης* (*apergotelis*; see (1)), shared phonological material increases cohesion while preserving cues to the club name. In a boundary-clear blend such as *παλντιόγκο* (see (2)), the evaluative cue and the target name remain transparently segmentable. In a frame-preserving blend such as *Εργοπαστέλης* (see (4)), evaluative material is integrated between retained portions of the target expression. More peripheral linear formations such as *θρυλοπολίδης* (see (3)) rely more heavily on broader phonological correspondences and contextual recoverability. These differences reflect different formal balances among transparency, cohesion, and accessibility rather than sharply distinct discourse functions.

The contextual target and the evaluative contribution do not, however, map uniformly onto the two lexical sources. This is particularly clear in *σουβλάτσιο* (*souvlatzio*) < *σουβλάκι* (*souvlaki*) ‘souvlaki’ + *Λάτσιο* (*Latsio*) ‘Lazio’. In its narrower use, the blend refers directly to Lazio, so that the club name supplies the referential anchor. In broader contextual uses, however, it may characterize another poorly performing team whose players are presented as lacking the physical condition required for competitive play. In such cases, the contextual target is not supplied by either lexical source, while the *souvlaki* association cues physical unfitness or lack of match fitness. Conversely, in *ιντανικός* (*intanikos*) < *ιδανικός* (*idanikos*) ‘ideal’ + *Ντάνι* (*Ntani*) ‘Dani’, the embedded proper name identifies the target, while the frame supplies the positive evaluative characterization. Target accessibility and evaluative cueing may therefore be distributed differently across the contributing sources and may vary contextually even for the same formation.

In the present material, part of the rhetorical force of these formations appears to depend not only on the meanings of their source elements, but also on morphophonological integration itself. In an evaluatively charged discourse environment, such formally salient manipulation of recognizable source material may contribute to the playful and rhetorical effect of the blend. The mode of integration therefore matters analytically: although comparable evaluative content could be expressed paraphrastically, a phrasal paraphrase would not achieve the same compact integration of source material and contextually anchored evaluation.

In the attestations examined, most formations function as locally situated evaluative expressions rather than as stable labels for enduring football concepts.

7 Blending at the morphology–phonology–pragmatics interface

The preceding analysis has broader implications for the study of blending. It supports a view in which formal constraint and expressive motivation are not mutually exclusive properties of

blend formation. Previous research has shown, from different perspectives, that blends may display systematic phonological organization (cf. Bat-El 1996: 284–285), that predictability and playful creativity may jointly shape their formation (cf. Beliaeva 2019a: 1), and that the blending process itself can function as a form of wordplay through the formal manipulation of recognizable source material (cf. Renner 2015: 119–126). Ronneberger-Sibold's (2006: 155) characterization of blending as deliberate extragrammatical compounding is compatible with this perspective: in this account, the label *extragrammatical* distinguishes blending from regular compounding, but does not entail an absence of formal organization. The football material examined here brings this interaction into particularly clear focus, since the formations combine evaluative and often playful effects with recurrent demands on source recoverability and morphophonological integration.

For that reason, written digital football discourse provides a useful domain for an interface approach to blending, since the attested formations combine contextual interpretability, formal compression, and evaluative positioning within a discourse community. Morphology provides the combinatory basis through which material from two lexical sources is integrated into a single output. Phonology constrains the shape of that integration by affecting overlap, truncation, cohesion, and broader output well-formedness. Pragmatics is equally central, since blends of this kind circulate as public acts of evaluative positioning whose interpretation depends partly on discourse-community knowledge.

The connection between proper-name blending and expressive evaluation is also visible beyond football discourse. Beliaeva/Knoblock (2020: 83–88) show that blended political names may function as vehicles of stance and, in particular, of derogatory evaluation in conflict discourse. More directly relevant to the present analysis, Arndt-Lappe/Beliaeva/Martin (2025: 136) distinguish determinative personal-name blends in which the referent of the blend coincides with that of one of its source names, and provide quantitative evidence for the expressive function of name blending. This referential asymmetry is particularly pertinent to the football data: in many formations, a player, club, or other football-related proper name remains the referential anchor of the output, while material from the other source introduces an evaluative characterization. The parallel is functional rather than categorical, since the source types and discourse conditions differ across the studies, but it supports the view that the retention of recognizable name material can provide referential stability while blending simultaneously introduces expressive meaning. In this context, morphosyntactic frame alignment is relevant not as a general claim about headedness in blending, but as an additional descriptive indicator of how output structure may support this referential stability.

Comparable football-related formations outside Modern Greek include *Messidona* < *Messi* + *Maradona*, a determinative personal-name blend referring to Messi through comparison with Maradona (cf. Arndt-Lappe/Beliaeva/Martin 2025: 136), and *Roolette* < *Roo/Rooney* + *roulette*, documented by Chovanec (2008: 229) in British football reporting. These examples provide illustrative parallels to the Greek material by showing how salient football-related names can be incorporated into compact, formally manipulated lexical formations. The comparison is illustrative rather than typological, since no systematic cross-linguistic dataset is examined here. Together, these parallels suggest that the interaction between referential stability and

evaluative reshaping observed in the Greek football blends may also be relevant to proper-name blending more broadly.

8 Conclusions

The present data support analysing blending in written digital football discourse in Modern Greek as a structurally constrained mode of lexical formation. They also support a broad, output-oriented distinction between linear blends and frame-preserving blends with embedded source material, while showing internal variation within the linear group. This distinction is descriptive and does not entail the existence of two categorically distinct word-formation mechanisms.

Recoverability is central to establishing and interpreting the source relations, phonological similarity functions as a facilitating rather than defining factor, and morphosyntactic frame alignment provides corroborative evidence where relevant grammatical contrasts are available.

At the functional level, the attested formations package evaluation compactly while preserving target recognizability in context, using different morphophonological means. In the attestations examined, the blends function primarily as discourse-bound resources of situated evaluative expression rather than as stable labels for enduring football concepts.

More generally, the analysis suggests that the expressive force of these formations may derive not only from the meanings associated with their source elements, but also from the formal way in which those elements are integrated into a single output. Truncation, overlap, discontinuous framing, and internal embedding may thus contribute to evaluative packaging; their relevance is not solely structural.

Given its qualitative, type-based design, the study does not support quantitative claims about the frequency or productivity of blending in Greek football discourse as a whole. Within these limits, it shows that football blending in Modern Greek provides a useful case for examining how morphophonological organization can interact with evaluative expression in discourse.

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Appendix: Retained Blend Types and Analytical Classification

The Appendix presents the analytically retained types, with the Greek forms given in normalized syllabified form. Syllabification is used only to make the relevant phonological material more accessible to readers unfamiliar with Greek. The tables list retained types rather than all raw attestations in the research archive. For each item, they identify the output form, the lexical sources involved, the structural configuration adopted in the analysis and, where relevant, the football-specific role of each source in context (e. g. player surname, club nickname, praise cue, insult cue, partisan cue). Latin-script forms represent transliterations of the Greek spellings used in the data and do not necessarily reproduce the original-language orthography of foreign proper names. The final column gives a brief contextual paraphrase of the evaluative orientation of each formation. Classification criteria are discussed in Sections 4 and 5.

The IPA transcriptions are broad and intended to indicate the relevant output shape. They are not intended to capture fine phonetic detail or allophonic variation.

Form	Source A	Source B	Configuration	Contextual evaluative orientation
α.μπα.λο.τέ.λι am-paloteli [abalo'teli]	ά.μπα.λος (ampalos) ‘useless at football/unable to play football’ (insult cue)	Μπα.λο.τέ.λι (Balogteli) proper name (player surname; target)	linear blend (overlap-mediated)	insulting reframing of the player as inept or incompetent at football
α.περ.γο.τέ.λης apergotelis [aperyo'telis]	α.περ.γί.α (apergia) ‘strike’ (occasion-specific cue of militancy/collective resolve)	Ερ.γο.τέ.λης (Ergotelis) club name (target)	linear blend (overlap-mediated)	reframing of the team as combative and defiant; coined in a context where major strike mobilizations in Greece coincided with an Ergotelis victory
α.πο.τυ.χι.μέ.νεθ apotychimeneth [apotiçi'meneθ]	α.πο.τυ.χη.μέ.νος (apotychimenos) ‘failed/unsuccessful’ (insult cue)	Χι.μέ.νεθ (Chimeneth) proper name (coach surname; target)	linear blend (overlap-mediated)	reframing of the coach as a failure
βο.θύ.λος vothylos [vo'thilos]	βό.θος (vothros) ‘cesspit/filth’ (abusive cue)	θύ.λος (thylos) nickname of Olympiacos (target)	linear blend (overlap-mediated)	abusive reframing of Olympiacos through distortion of its nickname

Form	Source A	Source B	Configuration	Contextual evaluative orientation
βου.βου.ζέ.λλη.νες vouvouzellines [vuvu'zelines]	βου.βου.ζέ.λα (vouvouzela) 'vuvuzela' (football crowd/festive-noise cue)	Έ.λλη.νες (Ellines) 'Greeks' (target)	linear blend (overlap-mediated)	celebratory reframing of Greeks/supporters as jubilant football fans after Greece's success
βούρ.λι.γκανς vourligkans ['vurligans]	βουρ.λισ.μέ.νος (vourlismenos) 'gone wild/frenzied' (excitement cue)	χού.λι.γκανς (chouligkans) 'hooligans' (supporter label; target group)	linear blend (minimal overlap; broader phonological correspondences)	reframing of supporters as wildly ecstatic and overexcited, drawing on but softening the more negative associations of hooligans
για.ουρ.τά.δο giaourtado [jaur'taðo]	για.ούρ.τι (giaourti) 'yogurt' (ridicule/humiliation cue)	Ουρ.τά.δο (Ourtado) proper name (player surname; target)	linear blend (overlap-mediated)	reframing of the player as a target of ridicule or public humiliation
γκε.λά.κτι.κος gkelaktikos [je'laktikos]	γκέ.λα (gkela) 'blunder/costly mistake' (negative performance cue)	Γκα.λά.κτι.κος (Gkalaktikos) nickname of Real Madrid ('Galácticos'; target)	linear blend (overlap-mediated)	reframing of the team as blunder-prone despite its prestige
γκο.λέ.μπας gkolempas [go'lebas]	γκολ (gkol) 'goal' (praise cue)	Χο.λέ.μπας (Cholempas) proper name (player surname; target)	linear blend (overlap-mediated)	praise of the player as a scorer/goal-getter
γκε.λα.μί.α gkelamia [jela'mia]	γκέ.λα (gkela) 'slip-up/costly draw or defeat' (cue of an opponent's setback)	Λα.μί.α (Lamia) proper name (team name; target)	linear blend (overlap-mediated)	positive reframing of Lamia as having forced Panathinaikos into a slip-up
θρυ.λο.πο.λί.δης thrylopolidis [θri-lopo'liðis]	θρύ.λος (thrylos) 'legend' (laudatory cue; also nickname of Olympiacos)	Νι.κο.πο.λί.δης (Nikopolidis) proper name (player surname; target)	linear blend (minimal overlap; broader phonological correspondences)	laudatory reframing of the player through association with Θρύλος ('Olympiacos'/'legend')
ι.μπα.γά.σας impagasas [iba'ɣasas]	μπα.γά.σας (mpagasas) 'rascal/crafty fellow' (often half-affectionate praise cue)	Ι.μπα.γά.σα (Impagasa) proper name (player surname; target)	linear blend (overlap-mediated)	affectionate or half-affectionate praise of the player as crafty and street-wise

Form	Source A	Source B	Configuration	Contextual evaluative orientation
κον.σο.μα.σά.δο konsomasado [konsoma'saðo]	κον.σο.μα.σιόν (konsomasion) 'consommation'/ hostess-bar cue	Μα.σά.δο (Masado) proper name (player sur- name; target)	linear blend (over- lap-mediated)	ironic or sexualized mockery of the player through a hostess-bar/con- sommation cue
παλ.ντι.ό.γκο pal- ntiogko [paldi'ogo]	παλ.τό (palto) 'flop/ bad player' (foot- ball slang insult cue)	Ντι.ό.γκο (Ntiogko) proper name (player sur- name; target)	linear blend (boundary- clear/non-overlap- ping)	reframing of the player as a flop/ underperformer
παλ.τά.δο paltado [pal'taðo]	παλ.τό (palto) 'flop/ bad player' (football slang in- sult cue)	Μα.σά.δο (Masado) proper name (player sur- name; target)	linear blend (boundary-clear/ non-overlapping)	reframing of the player as a disap- pointing or under- performing signing
Ρι.πά.ντος Ripantos [ri'pados]	Ρι.βάλ.ντο (Ri- valdo) proper name (star-player associ- ation cue)	Πά.ντος (Pantos) proper name (player surname; target)	linear blend (boundary-clear/ non-overlapping)	laudatory compari- son of Pantos to Rivaldo
σουβ.λά.τσιο sou- vlatsio [suv'latsio]	σουβ.λά.κι (sou- vlaki) 'souvlaki' (mocking cue of overeating/poor physical condition)	Λάτσιο (Latsio) proper name (team name; direct target in some uses)	linear blend (over- lap-mediated)	mocking character- ization either of Lazio or, by con- textual extension, of another poorly performing team whose players are presented as physi- cally out of form
τε.τέ.λει.ος teteleios [te'telios]	τέ.λει.ος (teleios) 'perfect/excellent' (positive evaluative cue)	Τε.τέ (Tete) proper name (player name; target)	linear blend (over- lap-mediated)	strong positive re- framing of the player as excellent or outstanding
τσι.γκο.λε.λέ.το tsigkoleleto [tsigole'leto]	τσι.γκο.λε.λέ.τα (tsigkoleleta) 'childish/nursery- rhyme-like expres- sion' (infantilizing ridicule cue)	Λέ.το (Leto) proper name (player surname; target)	linear blend (over- lap-mediated)	infantilizing mock- ery of the player
φλο.ρί.τζι.ναλ floritzinal [flo'ri- dzinal]	φλώ.ρος (floros) 'wimp/coward' (in- sult cue)	Ο.ρί.τζι.ναλ (Oritzinal) support- ers' club name of AEK (target)	linear blend (over- lap-mediated)	insulting reframing of the fan group as weak or cowardly

Form	Source A	Source B	Configuration	Contextual evaluative orientation
χα.χα.βί.το chachavito [xaxa'vito]	χά.χας (chachas) 'fool/clown' (insult cue)	Χα.βί.το (Chavito) proper name (player surname; target)	linear blend (overlap-mediated)	mocking reframing of the player as foolish or clownish

Table 1: Linear blends in the dataset

Form	Frame-providing source	Embedded source	Mode of internal intervention	Embedded segment	Contextual evaluative orientation
Α.δραχ.μί.δης Ad-rachmidis [aðrax'miðis]	Α.δα.μί.δης (Adamidis) proper name (former AEK president; target)	δραχ.μή (drachmi) 'drachma' (money/stinginess cue)	substitution	δραχ- (drach-)	reframing of the referent as miserly or excessively money-minded; he was criticized as stingy
α.νι.νί.κη.τη aninikiti [ani'niciti]	α.νί.κη.τη (anikiti) 'unbeaten' (positive evaluative base; frame-providing source)	Νί.νης (Ninis) proper name (player surname; attribution cue)	insertion/addition	Νι- (Ni-)	positive characterization of Ninis's team as unbeaten, with the achievement attributed to the player
Ερ.γο.πασ.τέ.λης Ergopastelis [eryopas'telis]	Ερ.γο.τέ.λης (Ergotelis) club name (target)	πασ.τέ.λι (pasteli) 'sesame-and-honey sweet; also used informally for a goal in football discourse'	insertion/addition	πασ- (pas-)	positive reframing of the team as one that scores goals
ι.ντα.νι.κός intanikos [idani'kos]	ι.δα.νι.κός (idanikos) 'ideal' (positive evaluative base; frame-providing source)	Ντά.νι Γκαρσία (Ntani Gkarsia) proper name (player name; attribution cue)	substitution	ντα- (nta-)	positive reframing of the player as ideal or highly valuable

Form	Frame-providing source	Embedded source	Mode of internal intervention	Embedded segment	Contextual evaluative orientation
Καυ.ταν.ζό.γρι.ο Kaftanzogrio [kaf-tan'zoyrio]	Καυ.ταν.ζό.γλει.ο (Kaftanzogleio) stadium name (target)	γρι.ά (gria) 'old woman' (pejorative cue; also nickname of Iraklis)	substitution	γρι- (gri-)	partisan mockery of the stadium through association with Iraklis
Κο.στα.ρά.ντζο Kostarantzo [kosta'randzo]	Κο.στά.ντζο (Kostantzo) proper name (player surname; target)	ρά.ντζο (rantzo) 'camp bed' (mockery cue of lying down/passivity/low effort)	insertion/addition	ρα- (ra-)	mockery of the player as passive or as repeatedly ending up on the ground without making an effective contribution
Σαλ.πι.γί.δης Salpigidis [salpi'jiðis]	Σαλ.πι.γί.δης (Salpingidis) proper name (player surname; target)	γίδι (gidi) 'goat' (Greek insult cue for clumsiness/lack of skill)	substitution	γι- (gi-)	insulting re-framing of the player as clumsy or untalented
Σπα.νά.θας Spanathas [spa'naθas]	Σπά.θας (Spathas) proper name (referee surname; target; provisionally analysed as the frame-providing source)	Πα.νά.θας (Panathas) 'Panathinaikos supporter; also the basketball team's mascot' (partisan cue)	provisional insertion/addition (borderline case)	να- (na-)	partisan attack presenting the referee as favouring Panathinaikos
τερ.μα.το.τύφ.λα.κας termatotyflakas [ter-mato'tiflakas]	τερ.μα.το.φύ.λα.κας (termatofylakas) 'goalkeeper' (frame-providing source; target expression)	τυφ.λός (tyflos) 'blind' (criticism cue)	substitution	τυφλ- (tyfl-)	mockery of poor goal-keeping by presenting the goalkeeper as effectively blind

Table 2: Frame-preserving blends with embedded source material