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## FROM WATERGATE TO BREMAIN: FORMING NAME-BASED NEOLOGISMS FROM ALREADY EXISTING ONES

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**Abstract:** Neologisms are defined by Newmark as “newly coined lexical units that acquire a new sense” (Newmark 1988:140). The present paper deals with the mechanism in which name-based neologisms are able to continue the process of creating new coinages by forming other neologisms. As stated by Aleksandrova, the process of the creation of neologisms based on proper names is determined by the social and political context as well as by the attitude that texts producers express towards people and situations (see Aleksandrova 2016).

In the process of this research, three mechanisms of creating neologisms from already existing name-based neologisms were noticed. The first is by copying the pattern in which one neologism was coined and applying it to the new coinage. Such is the case with neologisms based on *Watergate*. The meaning of *Watergate* is created through metonymy of the type place-for-the event. Consequently, the suffix - *gate* began to be used to form names of scandals or controversies not only in English, but also in Bulgarian media texts referring to scandals. Other ways of further creation of neologisms based on already existing ones are deriving new expressions from comparatively established neologisms by affixation, and by blending. A well-exploited example of such coinages is the word “Brexit” and the newly coined neologisms based on it. Brexit is defined by the Oxford dictionary as “the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union” ([en.oxforddictionaries.com](http://en.oxforddictionaries.com)). According to The Dictionary.com, the term “Brexit” dates back in 2012 and is formed from “Br(itain) or Br(itish) + exit; probably patterned on Grexit, which dates from earlier that year” (<https://www.dictionary.com>). As the term acquired certain stability, the pattern on which it was formed became a basis for the creation of neologisms of the type *Frexit*, *Oexid*, *Nexit*, which did not reach stability. However, another way of forming new coinages - derived from *Brexit* - turned out to be very productive. Among the popular examples found in media texts are *Brexittee*, *Brexitex*, *Brexitexer*, *anti-Brexitexer*, *Brexitophile*, *Brexit-phobe*, *Bremain*. Those new coinages could be sometimes used in plural form and with variation in their phonological form.

The study aims at tracing the way such name-based neologisms are exploited in British and Bulgarian media texts and the mechanisms in which they were formed.

**Keywords:** name- based neologisms, media texts, affixation

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

Neologisms are defined by Newmark as “newly coined lexical units that acquire a new sense” (Newmark 1988:140). The Longman dictionary defines neologism as “a new word or expression, or a word used with a new meaning”. According to Algeo, a new word “is a form or use of a form not recorded in general dictionaries” (Algeo 1991:3). In his view, “the form of the word may be novel, a shape that has not before been seen or heard in English, or the newness may lie in a novel use of an existing form” (ibid.). According to Algeo, there are six “basic etymological sources for new words: creating, borrowing, combining, shortening, blending, and shifting” (Algeo 1991: 3). Proper names can be a source for the creation of neologisms. This can be done in three different ways: by metonymical shift of meaning, affixation and blending (Aleksandrova, 2016). The present paper deals with the mechanism in which name-based neologisms are able to continue the process of creating new coinages by forming other neologisms. Several mechanisms for that formation were observed- first, by copying the pattern in which one neologism was coined and applying it to the new coinage and second, by deriving new expressions from comparatively established neologisms. A third way of further creation of name-based neologisms is blending. The proper understanding of such new coinages depends on the context of culture (see Halliday, Hasan 1991), on the narrow context, which as stated by Peneva is semantic (Peneva 2018), and on text receivers general knowledge.

### 2. FOLLOWING THE PATTERN OF AN ALREADY EXISTING NEOLOGISM

When a certain expression appears in the media and becomes popular, new expressions copying its sound patterns are formed. This way, the new coinages are associated with the initial expression and acquire something of its

meaning. An example of such way of formation of new coinages is a number of neologisms based on analogy with *Watergate*.

The expression *Watergate* “by metonymy, has come to encompass an array of clandestine and often illegal activities undertaken by members of the Nixon administration” ([www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)). This meaning of *Watergate* is created through metonymy of the type place for the event. Consequently, the suffix - *gate* began to be used to form names of scandals or controversies not only in English, but also in Bulgarian media texts. The words formed this way are typically nonce words - coined for a particular use and unlikely to become a permanent part of the vocabulary (Algeo 1991). As stated by Lehrer, nonce forms are “items produced for a specific context and occasion” (Lehrer 2007: 129).

Yet their use is so widespread that the suffix –*gate* in them tends to have a meaning of its own that could be defined as “a scandal, an affair of a controversial and unclear and suspicious nature”. The expressions formed this way contain a slot in the beginning of the word containing a name and the suffix –*gate* in the end. This way, various names can appear in the name slot, while –*gate* is not changed. Schematically, the process of formation can be presented in the following way:

WATERGATE (metonymy place for the event) → NAME SLOT + -*gate*

The name in the name slot position can be a personal name, or a place name. In the next excerpt, *Panamagate* is formed by the place name Panama and the suffix –*gate* and refers to a scandalous leak of information about offshore entities, some of which turned out to be used for illegal purposes:

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Monday sought ousted premier Nawaz Sharif’s new medical reports after he was admitted to Lahore’s Jinnah Hospital.

The IHC’s division bench, comprising Justice Amir Farooq and Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kiyani, heard the petitions by Nawaz’s counsel Khawaja Haris challenging the earlier verdict and seeking bail on medical grounds.

The verdict had convicted former premier Nawaz Sharif and sentenced him to seven-year imprisonment. The Al Azizia corruption reference was filed by the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) in light of the Supreme Court’s verdict in **Panamagate** case. (<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1913137/1-ihc-seeks-nawazs-medical-reports>)

In the next excerpt, *Obamagate* is formed by the personal name Obama and the suffix –*gate* :

Dan Bongino: **Obamagate** is the ‘most consequential political scandal’ in US history (<https://www.conservativereview.com/news/dan-bongino-obamagate-consequential-political-scandal-us-history>)

*Obamagate* is defined by the Urban Dictionary as “a name given to the collective scandals that President Obama experienced during April and May 2013 involving use of the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) against political enemies of the Democratic Party, what really happened at the Bengazi disaster, and seizure of Affiliated Press (AP) phone records by government operatives” ([www.urbandictionary.com](http://www.urbandictionary.com) ). It could be concluded that the suffix –*gate* does not bring the meaning of any kind of scandal, but a scandal that has something similar with the prototypical *Watergate* scandal– a leak of information and controversial phone records connected to political and economical issues.

In some cases, however, the suffix is used to form name of scandals whose nature is not necessarily related to political or economic affairs. In the next excerpt, *Camillagate* refers to a scandal related to Camilla Parker Bowles and Prince Charles’ relationship and is not connected with economic or governmental issues. The other feature of a “–*gate*- scandal”, leak of phone conversations, still is present:

#### **How the Camillagate tapes exposed the secret bedtime chat between Prince Charles and Camilla Parker Bowles**

As Prince Charles and Princess Diana's marriage crumbled, the publication of the **Camillagate** tapes shed light on the relationship between Prince Charles and Camilla Parker Bowles.

A transcript of a bedtime conversation between Prince Charles and Camilla was published just a month after the heir to the throne and Princess Diana announced their official split. Recorded in 1989 when the Prince and Princess of Wales were still married, the six minute conversation was branded "sick" by Princess Diana. (<https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/how-camillagate-tapes-exposed-secret-10958350>)

The choice of a first name (*Camilla*) in the name slot of the neologism could be seen as a marker of disapproval and depreciation.

The pattern Name + -*zeim* was found in Bulgarian media texts as well. It is not uncommon a scandal related to a public political figure to be dubbed an “*X-gate*”, hence coinages like *Цветановгейт*, *Яневагейт*, *Борисовгейт* are

not exceptional in the media. In the following excerpt, *Борисовгейт* is formed by the personal name *Борисов*, the Bulgarian PM's surname, and the suffix *-гейт*:

Гроби ни евросанкция заради "**Борисовгейт**"

"Ако се окаже, че спецсредствата, които са използвани в изнесените през последните седмици разговори, са използвани неправомерно и са нарушени правата на записаните, Европейската комисия може да наложи финансови санкции на България"...  
(<https://duma.bg/?go=news&p=detail&nodeId=9801>)

We are at risk of receiving an EU sanction because of "**Borisovgate**"

If it turns out that the devices used for phone-tapping the conversations disclosed during the last few weeks are illegal, The European Commission may financially sanction Bulgaria<sup>2</sup>

*Цветановгейт* is formed from the surname *Цветанов* and the suffix *-гейт*, and, like the case with *Борисовгейт* is used to stand for a scandal with illegal phone-tapping:

Рединг и Шулиц запознати със случая "**Цветановгейт**"

Председателят на Европейския парламент Мартин Шулиц и еврокомисар Вивиан Рединг са уведомени за скандала известен като „**Цветановгейт**“, в който става дума за незаконното подслушване в България ( <https://www.actualno.com>)

Redding and Schulz acquainted with the case „Tsvetanovgate”

The President of the European Parliament Martin Schulz and the EU commissioner Viviane Reding are informed of the scandal known as “Tsvetanovgate”, which is about illegal phone-tapping.

The “-гейт” formation of neologisms is so proliferated that it leads to the use of common nouns instead of proper names in the name slot. Hence, expressions like *Суджукгейт*, *ДжуПи-гейт*, *ЦУМгейт* were coined.

“*Суджукгейт*”, for instance, was created in reference to a scandal related to Zhivko Martinov, a former MP, who used his influence to bypass food safety regulations, eliminate competitive companies in the meat sector, and persuade the prosecution against investigating a manslaughter case. It is formed by the common noun *суджук* meaning “sausage” and the suffix *-гейт* :

Делото „**Суджукгейт**”: Бившият депутат от ГЕРБ Живко Мартинов отрича вината си

Адвокатът на подсъдимия все още не е решил дали да призове като свидетел в съда Бойко Борисов  
(<https://btvnovinite.bg/bulgaria/deloto-sudzhukgejt-bivshijat-deputat-ot-gerb-zhivko-martinov-otricha-vinata-si.html>)

The case “Sudzhukgate”: the former MP from GERB Zhivko Martinov pleads innocent.

The defendant's lawyer is still undecided as to whether to summon Boyko Borisov in court

In all the above cases, it is observed that the suffix is a constant always bringing some universal meaning (a scandal related to clandestine actions), while what varies is the stem of the word, which brings the specific meaning the neologism. As a result, all coinages of the type ‘X+ -gate’ produced this way have the meaning “a scandal related to X”, where X is the variable in the name slot.

### 3. FORMING NAME-BASED NEOLOGISMS FROM ALREADY EXISTING ONES BY AFFIXATION.

Another way of forming name-based neologisms from already existing ones, is adding different suffixes to the same word stem, which is a (relatively) established name-based neologism.

A number of such neologisms were coined on the basis of *Brexit*. The Oxford dictionary defines *Brexit* as “The withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union” (<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com> ). By affixation, a number of words were derived from it- *Brexitteer*, *Brexittee*, *Brexitex*, *Brexitophile*, *Brexitophobe*, *Antibrexitex*, etc. They all contain the semantic feature “something related to the withdrawal of the UK from the EU” but it is the suffix that brings the specific meaning. Their structure can be schematically presented in the following way:

*Brexit* + *suffix*

For instance, a *Brexitteer* is defined by the Cambridge Dictionary as “someone who is in favour of the United Kingdom leaving the European Union” (<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/brexitteer>) and in the next excerpt, *Brexitteer* is used with that meaning::

**Brexitteer** Iain Duncan-Smith warns that Britain may face ugly France-style riots if there's a second EU referendum (<https://thesunbest.com/brexitteer-ian-duncan-smith-warns-that-britain-may-face-ugly-france-style-riots-if-theres-a-second-eu-referendum/>)

<sup>2</sup> Translation mine

It is not uncommon for a new coinage to be found in plural, as in the following excerpt:

MAY CALMS **BREXITEERS** WITH PLEDGE TO KEEP THEIR BACKSTOP PLAN ON TABLE

Conservative **Brexiteers** have backed away from a full-scale confrontation with No 10 over the fate of their plan to replace the Irish backstop.

Stephen Barclay, the Brexit secretary, told the cabinet yesterday that the Malthouse compromise could not be negotiated with the EU in time for March 29, when Britain is due to leave.

(<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/edition/news/malthouse-plan-for-brexit-is-dead-ministers-admit-2gzfkq7h0>)

Another form of *Brexiteer*- *Brexiter* was found to be used with identical meaning:

**Brexiters** feel the heat as prospect grows of delay to EU departure

(<https://www.ft.com/content/2e488214-1d9f-11e9-b126-46fc3ad87c65> )

Yet another form, *Brexitee*, is used with the same meaning:

Torys MP Maria Caulfield, another **Brexitee**, said: "Labor has shown once again that they have no intention of giving away the outcome of the Brexit referendum. ([https://newsbeezer.com/uk/news-from-brexit-nigel-farage-furious-after-coward-corbbyn-supports-new-eu-vote-politics-news](https://newsbeezer.com/uk/news-from-brexit-nigel Farage-furious-after-coward-corbbyn-supports-new-eu-vote-politics-news))

As evident from the above examples, the term is exploited in both the tabloids and the serious papers. **The stability and proliferation of certain neologisms is evident in the fact that there are variations in their form.** For instance, there is a variation in the way someone who supports the idea of the UK leaving the EU is called.: *Brexiteer*, *Brexiter*, and *Brexitee*. The variants in the form of a neologism could be considered doublets, or etymological twins.

A variation in form is found in expressions with the meaning “someone who is against UK leaving the EU”. In the next excerpt, the expression used is *anti-Brexiteer*:

**Anti-Brexiteer** Lord Adonis to speak in Oxford (<https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/16372039.anti-brexiteer-lord-adonis-to-speak-in-oxford>)

In another text, however, a different term for the same notion is used- **Brexit-phobe**:

I’ve repeatedly traded around my UK and US bank positions as they’ve waxed and waned, for instance, and while emerging markets have come good, I was optimistic too early. Energy has been strong in 2016, but 2015 was carnage. However this year did provide one great buying opportunity – at least in retrospect. The market was chaotic in the hours and days that followed the Leave win in the EU Referendum, as terrified investors raced to dump their UK shares. I should know, because as an avowed **Brexit-phobe** I was among the dumpers. In the weeks afterwards I felt I’d done okay getting through Brexit intact, especially considering how surprised I was by the result. I saw my portfolio rally like everyone else, and I tried to forget about the two or three holdings I’d sold at steep discount in the aftermath. (<https://monevator.com/is-london-commercial-property-an-opportunity-2016> )

#### 4. FORMING NAME-BASED NEOLOGISMS FROM ALREADY EXISTING ONES BY BLENDING.

A name-based neologism created by blending lead to the coinage of another name-based neologism, also coined by blending, by changing one of the words it consists of. For instance, on an analogy of *Brexit*, a term with the opposite meaning (UK staying in the EU) was coined- *Bremain* (from *Britain* + *remain*):

Brexit or **Bremain**? Readers share the one argument that made up their mind

To stay or not to stay, that is the question. Here, people talk about the big issue that has swayed them on which way to vote in the EU referendum later this month (<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/jun/07/brexit-or-bremain-readers-eu-referendum>)

#### CONCLUSION

Name-based neologisms can continue the process of creating new coinages by forming other neologisms. This is done by copying the pattern in which one neologism was coined and applying it to the new coinage, by deriving new expressions from comparatively established neologisms, or by blending two words. In the process of copying the pattern of an already existing neologism, the name in the name slot position can be of any type: a first name, a surname, or a place name. When neologisms are formed by affixation, variations in their structures can be found. When formed by blending, one of the words it consists of is substituted with another.

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