

---

## FROM BREXIT TO MEGXIT - LEAVING BRITAIN IN (ROYAL) STYLE

Aleksandra Aleksandrova

Konstantin Preslavski University of Shumen, Shumen, Bulgaria, [aleksandra\\_sa@abv.bg](mailto:aleksandra_sa@abv.bg)

**Abstract:** 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.

The paper deals with the neologisms based on the name of the Duchess of Sussex Meghan Markle. These neologisms were formed in relation with the Duke and Duchess of Sussex decision to leave their duties as royalties. The most frequently used such neologism, *Megxit* is defined by the Macmillan dictionary as “a humorous term for the decision of the Duke and Duchess of Sussex to step back from their royal duties” (<https://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/megxit>). In its turn, it produced other neologisms derived from it.

The structure of *Megxit* is based on the pattern of the neologism *Brexit* (Britain + exit), standing for “the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union” (<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/brexit>). It is formed by blending the personal name *Meghan* and the verb *exit*. After The new coinage *Megxit* became relatively well established, it led to other neologisms related to the Duke and Duchess of Sussex’ withdrawal from their royal duties. Some of them are derived from *Megxit*, such as *Megxitee*, *Mexiteer*, *Megxiter*, while other are a combination from the personal name *Meghan* and another suffix (*Megulators*, *Meghangate*). The neologism *Megxit* appeared as a noun, but later it started being used as a verb. It can be used attributively in some cases. *Megxit* is not only formed in the same way *Brexit* was formed, but it is also often used in phrases *Brexit* is used in. The parallel between the two neologisms is probably due to the extralinguistic context they appear in. Extralinguistic factors are studied by Terzieva [2016]. As she has stated, in the process of integrating new ideas in some area, concepts from another area are borrowed.”<sup>33</sup> [Terzieva 2016:272-273]. In the case of *Megxit*, two extralinguistic factors are observed- temporal and geographical. First, both events, UK’s withdrawal from the European Union and the Duke and Duchess of Sussex’ withdrawal from their royal duties took place close in time, with a period of overlapping. Second, the two events, or rather phenomena, are related to the same geographical region- the United Kingdom. Third, both *Megxit* and *Brexit* refer to some leaving- with *Megxit*, the meaning is “someone (Meghan and Harry) leaves the UK”, while with *Brexit* the meaning is “Britain leaves something else (the European Union)”.

*Megxit* is a name-based neologism. It is formed by blending the first name *Meghan* and the noun *exit*. According to Fowler, first names in the media can be used to promote “feelings of identification, empathy or disapproval” or to effect “a metonymic simplification of complex historical or institutional narrative” [Fowler 1993: 15]. In reference to the Duchess of Sussex, the first name *Meghan* is used to create a feeling of identification and to make the referent of the name more approachable. Royalties are typically addressed and referred to by their first names. Their first names are preceded by the corresponding title: prince, princess, queen, king. However, sometimes the media produce articles in which members of the royal family are mentioned only with their first names without the corresponding title. Moreover, Meghan Markle was a celebrity before her marriage to Prince Harry and being referred to by using her first name even without a title in front of it is not felt awkward.

**Keywords:** name-base neologisms, media texts

*The research leading to these results has been funded by Project RD-08-128/04.02.2020 of the Department of English Studies at the University of Shumen, Bulgaria, entitled “Exploring English Studies: Aspects of Language, Culture and Education”*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Newmark defines neologisms as “newly coined lexical units that acquire a new sense” [Newmark 1988:140]. According to Aitchison, the occurrence of neologisms is justified by three causes: “fashion, foreign influence and social need” [Aitchison 1991:89]. As Tsvetkova [2019] states, the word play (neologisms) and ambiguity are characteristic features that are used in media in order to get creative effectiveness although the meaning of the headline can sometimes be misleading or misinterpreted.

The present paper deals with neologisms based on the first name of the Duchess of Sussex Meghan Markle. These neologisms were formed in relation with the Duke and Duchess of Sussex decision to leave their duties as royalties.

---

<sup>33</sup> Translation mine

The linguistic mechanism those neologisms are formed with is blending. Algeo defines blending as “the process of simultaneously combining and shortening” [Algeo 1993: 10]. In *Megxit*, the personal name *Meghan* and the word *exit* are blended. The choice of the personal name *Meghan* can be interpreted as presupposing that it is the Duchess of Sussex, *Meghan Markle*, who has initiated the couple’s withdrawal, and not the Duke of Sussex.

The neologism *Megxit* can function as a noun, as a verb, or attributively to characterize a noun. It is used with phrases and in structures typically used with the neologism *Brexit*.

## 2. MEGXIT USED AS A NOUN, A VERB, OR ATTRIBUTIVELY.

### 2.1. MEGXIT AS A NOUN

In most cases, the neologism *Megxit* functions as a noun, as in the next excerpt:

#### **Prince Harry and Meghan Markle make first public appearance since Megxit**

Prince Harry and Meghan Markle were the keynote speakers at an exclusive JPMorgan event — in their first public appearance since leaving the royal family. (<https://pagesix.com/2020/02/07/prince-harry-and-meghan-markle-make-first-public-appearance-since-megxit>)

In the above headline, *Megxit* is a noun that refers to an event, mainly the royal couple leaving the royal family.

### 2.2. ATTRIBUTIVE USE

Although typically used as a noun, *Megxit* can be used attributively, as in the following excerpt:

#### **Megxit deal reached: Queen strikes agreement with Meghan Markle and Prince Harry**

THE Queen and the Duke and Duchess of Sussex have reached an agreement on their future, with Meghan Markle and Prince Harry reported to be giving up their royal titles and paying back the £2.4million of tax payer money spent on Frogmore Cottage. (<https://www.express.co.uk/news/royal/1230254/meghan-markle-prince-harry-megxit-the-queen-statement-royal-latest>)

### 2.3. MEGXIT AS A VERB

The use of *Megxit* as a verb is not rare. In the next excerpt, *Megxit* is used as a verb in the present participle:

#### **They’re fully Megxiting.**

Meghan Markle and Prince Harry will give up their royal titles, Buckingham Palace announced Saturday. The two will no longer receive royal funding and will cease to function as acting members of Britain's most famous family, effective this spring, (<https://www.adn.com/nation-world/2020/01/18/prince-harry-and-meghan-markle-to-give-up-their-titles-buckingham-palace-says/#>)

As evident in the text above, the verb *Megxit* has the meaning “to stop using royal titles and receiving royal funding”.

The neologism *Megxit* can be used in the past participle as well, as evident in the following excerpt:

But will it have an appearance from Prince William and Meghan Markle? Rumors swirled that the now-*Megxited* royals had been asked to make an appearance at the Oscars, but Iger would neither confirm nor deny: “I have no idea whether they’re showing up or not,” he laughed. (<https://www.etonline.com/2020-oscars-academy-awards-et-live-red-carpet-backstage-coverage-2020-02-09-live-updates>)

“*The now-Megxited royals*” stands for “the royal members, who withdrew from their duties”. The lack of inverted commas around *Megxited* signifies that the expression has been already relatively established in media discourse.

## 3. USE IN PHRASES, TYPICALLY USED WITH BREXIT

The parallel between the two neologisms, *Brexit* and *Megxit* is observed in the analogical structures they are both used in. The phrase “Hard Brexit” is defined by the Macmillan dictionary as “an arrangement on leaving the EU that does not include full access to the single market or membership of the customs union” (<https://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/hard-brexit>). The Cambridge dictionary defines the phrase “soft Brexit” as “a Brexit in which the United Kingdom's relationship with the European Union is a close as possible to what it was before Brexit” (<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/soft-brexit>). By analogy, the neologism *Megxit* is used in such phrases, substituting the neologism *Brexit*, hence *hard Megxit* refers to the harsh conditions on which they will have to leave the royal family, while *soft Megxit* stands for a more favourable outcome of the withdrawal.

In the next excerpt, the phrase ‘hard Megxit’ refers to unfavourable conditions of Prince Harry and Meghan Markle’s withdrawal:

#### **'Hard Megxit': UK papers revel in Harry and Meghan's royal dismissal**

Press see deal between Queen and couple as unsentimental move by monarch

The news that Prince Harry and Meghan will give up their royal titles, repay the £2.4m it cost to refurbish their Windsor home and stop receiving money from the state-funded sovereign grant was met with triumphalism by much of the British press on Sunday.

“Queen orders a hard Megxit,” read the Sunday Mirror’s front-page headline. “Harry and Meghan Out in the Cold,” said the Sunday People.

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/jan/19/hard-megxit-uk-papers-revel-in-harry-and-meghans-royal-dismissal>

In the following excerpt from *The Times*, the expression ‘Hard or soft Megxit’ is not surrounded by quotation marks, which suggests that not only the word Megxit, but the whole phrase is felt as well established:

**Hard or soft Megxit? What’s on the table**

Will it be a hard Megxit or a soft Megxit? The Canada option or the Frogmore option?

As the Queen, Prince Charles, Prince William and Prince Harry gather at Sandringham today to work out a future for Harry and Meghan that is acceptable to all, they face a series of inter-related options.

One extreme is that Harry and Meghan quit all royal duties, lose their titles, move out of Frogmore Cottage and go and live in Canada. This has the advantage of being a clean break, meaning that they no longer have to put up with what they regard as the oppressive Palace machine. It is also highly unlikely. Harry is bound up with loyalty to the family, especially the Queen. <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/hard-or-soft-megxit-whats-on-the-table-ckw079zwc>

The relation between the source domain concepts and the target domain concept are presented in the table below:

Source	Target
hard Megxit	quitting all royal duties, losing royal titles
soft Megxit	Leaving without losing their privileges

Apart from *Hard Brexit* and *soft Megxit*, other *Brexit*-phrases that are used with Megxit. In the next excerpt from the *Daily Mirror*, *Megxit deal* copies the pattern of *Brexit deal* and stands for the conditions of Prince Harry and Meghan Markle’s withdrawal:

**Meghan Markle and Harry 'disappointed' with Megxit deal as Queen 'sticks to her guns'**

New details of Meghan Markle and Prince Harry’s future as they step back from the Royal Family have been announced, but many experts believe the couple won’t be happy with the deal

Meghan Markle and Prince Harry are likely to be 'disappointed' by the terms of their split from the Royal Family, an expert has claimed. (<https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/meghan-markle-harry-disappointed-megxit-21540139>)

Just as in the case of Brexit, the withdrawal of the royal couple from their royal duties is connected with money and expenditure. In media, this was called ‘the Brexit bill’. Analogically, the financial matters related with the royal couple withdrawal is called ‘Megxit bill’, as in the next excerpt:

**Taxpayers to reportedly fund \$1.9 million Megxit bill**

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has reportedly offered to fund the Duke and Duchess of Sussex’s £1 million (AU\$1.9 million) annual bill if they were to move to Canada. (<https://au.finance.yahoo.com/news>)

The observed Brexit-Megxit counterparts are presented in the following table:

Phrases, containing Brexit	Analogical phrases with Megxit
hard Brexit	hard Megxit
soft Brexit	soft Megxit
Brexit deal	Megxit deal
Brexit bill	Megxit bill

**4. MEGXIT DERIVATIVES**

After the new coinage *Megxit* became relatively well established, it led to other neologisms related to the Duke and Duchess of Sussex’ withdrawal from their royal duties, such as *Mexiteer* or *Megxiter*.

A *Mexiteer* is used to stand for a person who approves of the idea of Meghan Markle and Prince Harry to leave their royal duties, as in the next excerpt:

One **Megxiteer** wrote: "Meghan Markle created issues with her own family, 2 ex husbands and a bunch of lice in boyfriends. Ask her siblings, they'll tell you she's not a good person." (<https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/7895342/meghan-markles-megulator-superfans-threatened-to-kill-me-hacked-my-computer-and-stole-money-from-my-bank-account-now-im-buying-a-gun-to-defend-myself/>)

In another newspaper article, however, the expression appears with a different meaning. Prince Harry is called 'Mexiteer', hence the expression refers to those who leave their royal duties, Meghan Markle and Prince Harry. Hence, it can be concluded that someone who is involved in Megxit is a Megxiteer, as evident in the next excerpt:

**Megxiteer Prince Harry will now be barred from wearing his military uniform**

(<https://uni-watch.com/2020/01/22/tennessee-school-turns-back-the-clock-to-segregated-era/>)

*Mexiteer* exists with an alternative spelling – 'megxiter', as evident in the next excerpt from the Herald Sun:

The **megxiters** are saying that Meghan and Harry pics are photoshopped. (<https://www.heraldsun.com.au/entertainment/celebrity/prince-harry-and-meghans-christmas-card-accused-of-being-photoshopped/news-story/70d16b4e900968f2461d50fa07efa8f1>)

The variation in spelling demonstrates that the coinage is not yet felt well established.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The structure of *Megxit* is based on the pattern of the neologism *Brexit* (Britain + exit), standing for "the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union". The parallel between the two neologisms is probably due to the extralinguistic context they appear in. *Megxit* is formed by blending the personal name *Meghan* and the verb *exit*. It can function as a noun, as a verb, or attributively to characterize a noun. After The new coinage *Megxit* became relatively well established, it led to other neologisms related to the Duke and Duchess of Sussex' withdrawal from their royal duties, such as *Mexiteer* and *Megxiter*. The variation in their spelling signifies the current instability of the derived neologisms.

## REFERENCES

- Терзиева, Т.В. Особенности терминообразования в русском и болгарском языках (на примере терминов автомобилестроения). *Проблемы когнитивного и функционального описания русского и болгарского языков. Выпуск десятый*, Шумен: УИ "Епископ Константин Преславски", 2016, с. 257-277.
- Aitchison, J. *Language Change: Progress or Decay?* 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1991
- Algeo, J., *Fifty Years among the New Words: A Dictionary of Neologisms, 1941–1991*. Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993
- Fowler, R. *Language in the News*. London and New York: Routledge, 1993
- Newmark, P., *A Textbook of Translation*. New York: Prentice-Hall International, 1988
- Tsvetkova, M. Grammar Mistake or Creative Effectiveness? In Dimitrovski R. (ed.) *Knowledge - International Journal*. Vol. 30.5. Serbia, 2019, 1137-1142. ISSN 2545-4439. Global IF 1.822 (2017).
- Brexit. (n.d.). Retrieved February 25, 2020, from <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/brexit>
- HARD BREXIT (noun) definition and synonyms: Macmillan Dictionary. (n.d.). Retrieved February 26, 2020, from <https://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/hard-brexit>
- MEGXIT (noun) definition and synonyms: Macmillan Dictionary. (n.d.). Retrieved February 25, 2020, from <https://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/megxit>
- SOFT BREXIT: definition in the Cambridge English Dictionary. (n.d.). Retrieved February 26, 2020, from <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/soft-brexit>