

Understanding name-based neologisms

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Abstract: *The paper deals with neologisms based on proper names. It traces the main mechanisms by which such neologisms are formed, namely metonymic shift of meaning, affixation and blending. The creation and stability of neologisms depends on factors such as the cultural and political context. Examples in support of the abovementioned statements are provided in the paper.*

Key words: *proper names, neologisms, metonymy, affixation, blending.*

Introduction

A neologism is defined as a new word or expression, or a word used with a new meaning (Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English). Newmark (1988) defines neologisms as “newly coined lexical units or existing lexical units that acquire a new sense” (Newmark 1988: 140). Behera and Mishra (2013) classify the following types of neologisms according to their “life cycle”:

- unstable – very new or being used only by a small sub-culture (also branded as protologisms);
- diffused – having attained a noteworthy incidence of use, but not yet having gained pervasive acceptance;
- stable – having gained recognizable, being in vogue, and perhaps, gaining lasting acceptance;
- dated – the point where the word has ceased being novel, entered formal linguistic acceptance and even may have passed into becoming a cliché;
- passé – when a neologism becomes so culturally dated that the use of it is avoided because its use is seen as a stigma, a sign of being out of step with the norms of a changed cultural tradition, perhaps, with the neologism dropping from the lexicon altogether (see Bhagavan, Misha 2013: 26).

Neologisms related to the use of proper names that appear in the analysed corpus belong to the first three types: unstable, diffused, and stable. Proper names can form neologisms by metonymical shift of meaning, affixation and blending.

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Analysis

- **Metonymic shift of meaning**

A shift in category from common to proper nouns is one of the ways for the creation of proper names. A shift in meaning in the opposite direction (from proper to common nouns) is also present. This shift is metonymically motivated and happens with a name that very often appears in the media and is mentioned in relation with a certain phenomenon or event. The name becomes synonymous with that phenomenon and at a later stage it turns into a common noun.

In an article from 24 Chasa newspaper, „калинка”, which is the Bulgarian word for a ladybird, functions as a common noun for someone who has been appointed on some high-level administrative position on political grounds without having the necessary qualifications:

Гонят „калинките” от властта

Народното събрание спира със закон наплива на “калинки” по върховете на държавната администрация, пише в. “Труд”. Зам.-министри, областни управители и заместниците им, както и шефове на агенции и комисии задължително трябва да имат завършена магистърска степен.В закона е записано, че държавен служител ще се става само след конкурс и издържан тест. (24 Chasa, 07/072016)

The “kalinkas” ousted from office

The Parliament legally stops the inrush of “kalinkas” on top positions in state administration. Deputy ministers, county governors and their deputies, as well as directors of agencies and commissions, are obliged to have a master’s degree... It is stated that civil servants will be appointed only by competition and passed examination*.

The meaning of “калинка” as someone who has been appointed on some high-level administrative position on political grounds, without having the necessary qualifications, originates from the name of the director of State Fund Agriculture, Kalina Ilieva, who became notorious for her inexpedient appointment. With Калина and „калинка / калинки / калинките”, the following process is observed: the etymological meaning of Kalina is the word „калина” (mountain ash). In this case, there is a shift in meaning from common to proper noun.

калина (common noun) → Калина (name)

Then, the associative meaning of Kalina as someone who has been appointed on some high-level administrative position without having the necessary qualifications is transferred to the noun *калинка*. *Калинка* is the diminutive form of *Калина*, which is aimed at achieving a derisive effect.

Калина (name) → калинка (common noun)

* Translations of the Bulgarian articles are done by the author.

The two successive shifts are based on metonymy and support the idea that metonymy can lead to a change of the word class. In this case there is a shift from a common noun to a proper name and back to a common noun again. However, the common noun that precedes the name is different from the common noun that results from it. *Калина* is different from *калинка*. Although it could be considered just as the diminutive form of *Калина*, the connotations that it takes are different. There are two different common nouns in the two ends of the conceptual metonymic chain. The shift of meaning could be schematically presented in the following way:

калина → Калина → калинка

Common noun 1 → Name → Common noun 2

What is more interesting is that there are some degrees of meaning with the use of *калинка*. This is evident in its graphological representation. In one article it is found with a capital letter showing that the word still keeps its proprial characteristics. In another text it is not capitalized but is given in quotations. And yet in another text it is not capitalized and not in quotations. Those differences in the graphological representation trace the different degrees of meaning of the word. It could possibly be concluded that when it is with a capital letter or in quotations it is closer to a proper name, while presented without the quotations it is already established as a common word which has a meaning in some way related to the qualities attributed to the referent of the name. Furthermore, **калинките** has a meaning of ladybird in the following article, which contributes to the play on words:

Роенето на **калинките** продължава. Но за ГЕРБ въобще не е важно, че специалисти се заменят с некомпетентни хора на отговорни позиции. Стига да са свои. (www.duma.bg, 27/04/2015)

The swarm of the ladybirds continues. But to GERB, it doesn't really matter that professionals are replaced by incompetent people in responsible positions. As long as they are our own folks.

This change in the graphological representation is a mark that the word is already established as a common noun.

- **Affixation**

Personal names give names to events related in some way with the referent of the personal name. Sometimes those names are morphologically modified by noun affixes. Usually the newly created word sounds similar to another word with a different meaning. The achieved play on words fulfills the function of attracting the readers' attention. The newly created word (phrase) can become well established and can be often used in future texts, but it is possible for such a word to appear occasionally within a single article as is the case with the following example:

Орбанизация безкрай

Унгарският премиер **Виктор Орбан** взе на прицел неправителствените организации и медиите

Когато те наричат **Виктатор** и печелиш безапелационно вот след вот, изкушението да концентрираш възможно най-много власт и да я използваш по свой вкус става неустойчиво. Това доказва унгарският премиер Виктор Орбан. През април той спечели трети (втори пореден) мандат, а месец по-късно неговата дясноцентристка партия “Фидес” победи и на изборите за Европейски парламент. Още тогава прогнозите бяха, че за страната предстои повече от същото – авторитарни залитания, безогледни опити за циментиране във властта, конфронтация с ЕС и популизъм. С две събития от последните дни **Орбан** само потвърди най-лошите опасения. (Capital, 13/06/2014)

Orbanization without limit

The Hungarian Prime Minister **Victor Orban** drew the bead on NGOs and the media.

When people call you a **Victator** and you win every vote, the temptation to concentrate as much power as possible and use it to your liking becomes irresistible. This was proved by the Hungarian Prime Minister **Victor Orban**. In April he won his third and second turn of office in a row, and a month later his right-centred party “Fides” won the European Parliament elections. The prognoses were that the country would get more of the same stuff – authoritative vacillates, unscrupulous attempts to consolidate power, confrontation with the EU and populism. **Orban** just confirmed the worst apprehensions with two recent events.

Orbanization stands for the behaviour and policy of Victor Orban. There is no similarity in meaning between *Orbanization* and Urbanization. It is just an association on a phonological level aimed at achieving a greater effect on the readers and attracting their attention. This is not the case with *Victator*, however. *Victator* is a blending between the name Victor and the word *dictator* and stresses on a quality attributed to the referent.

Such coinages derived from names are often used in the media. A typical example is the way a certain line of policy is named after the person who implemented it. A well-known instance in this respect is the term *Thatcherism* used to stand for the political measures that Margaret Thatcher took during her term of office. This term is well established not only in media texts, but also in political scientific texts. In a similar way, a policy that is typical for a certain political leader is named after the political leader. The pattern by which this is done is the following:

Personal Name + -ism/-izm

As a result, there are Blairism, Putinism, etc. However, in some cases, those “-isms” are not used in academic texts, but appear only in certain media texts aimed at achieving humorous effect, scorning or mocking the person and the

political steps taken by him/her. The following excerpt illustrates such a use:

Obamaism is dead and Hillary Clinton killed it

It's official: **Obamaism** is dead. Hillary Clinton killed it.

It wasn't so much a mercy killing as an expedient one, but that's politics in the best sense. The important thing is that she broke the Democratic omertà code by stating the obvious: The president's policy of having America sit on the sidelines of a burning world is a disaster that threatens our national security.

The power of her argument is confirmed by a report that a testy Obama called it "horses-t" to congressional leaders. (nypost.com, 13/08/2014)

Here *Obamaism* is not a term, but a way to show a negative attitude towards Barack Obama's policy.

In the Bulgarian media the pattern personal name + -изъм can also be found. The biggest part of such uses is probably borrowed from the international press (terms like *Thatcherism*, *Putinism*, *Blairism* entered the Bulgarian press through British or US media articles). There are similar uses of personal name + -изъм based on names of Bulgarian political figures as in the following example:

Монархизъм, живковизъм, бойковизъм – управленска градация по български

Термините „монархизъм” и „живковизъм” са ясни. „Бойковизъм” обаче се нуждае от допълнителни обяснения. Ясно е, от чие име произхожда, но тук виждам не само личността на този политик, а еманациите на неговото поведение, проявени почти на всякъде в политическата култура на настоящите ни управленци (<http://socbg.com>, 29/03/2015).

Monarchism, zhivkovizm, **boykovizm** – Bulgarian style governmental gradation

The terms *monarchism* and *zhivkovizm* are clear. **Boykovizm**, however, requires further explanation. The name it originates from is quite clear, but I envisage not only the politician's personality but the emanation of his behaviour, manifested almost ubiquitously in our governors' political culture.

At first glance, the term *Boykovizm* is parallel to the terms *Thatcherism*, *Putinism*, *Blairism*. However, *Thatcherism*, *Putinism*, *Blairism* are derived from surnames, based on the pattern surname + izm, while *Boykovizm* is derived from a first name, based on the pattern first name + -izm. The use of a first name can be considered derogatory and sarcastic. A term derived from Boyko Borisov's surname is also often used in the media, but the connotation is again negative. This is the term *борисовщина*:

Не може пожарникар да управлява държавата, да осъдим Борисов и Цветанов, не лично, а **борисовщината** и **цветановщината**. (topnovini.bg, 31/05/2016)

A firefighter cannot govern the country; let us condemn Borisov and Tsvetanov – not personally, but rather the *borisov-like* and the *tsvetanov-like way of thinking and acting* (in Bulgarian *borisovshtina* and *tsetanovshtina*).

Borisovshtina is formed from the surname *Borisov* and the suffix *-shtina*.

The suffix *-shtina* is usually used with Bulgarian negative nouns such as *простацина* (*vulgarity*), *дивацина* (*barbarism*), *etc.*, and by means of association, when added to personal names they evoke negative connotations. They can be used to express a negative attitude towards the name bearer. The suffix *-shtina* can be added to place names. In that case, a negative attitude is expressed not toward the place itself, but the way the idea of something is wrongly assumed. In the following excerpt, *европейщина* means phoney or misunderstood europeanism:

...ние ще бъдем европейци, ако сме преди всичко българи. Мисля, че Ботев е един много по-голям европеец от днешните претенденти за **европейщина**, които много често повтарят мантрите на Брюксел като „Светая Светих”, а всъщност имаме един много голям европеец, който е такъв, защото е българин и е водач на българската революция. (*focusnews.net*, 06/01/2015)

...we will be Europeans only if we are Bulgarians first of all. In my view, Botev is a much greater European than today's claimants for phoney **Europeanism**, who very often recite Brussels's mantras. Actually, we have a much greater European, who is European because he is Bulgarian and leader of the Bulgarian revolution as well.

Terms coined in this way can be considered morphologically modified. They form neologisms that tend to become stable and continuously used in the media.

The use of such phrases in the Bulgarian media is often influenced by their use in the British media. *Thatcherism* and *Blairism* are taken directly from the British media and established in the Bulgarian media as *Тачеризъм*, *Блеъризъм*. However, in some cases the Bulgarian media choose a different affix for the formation of the eponym. For instance, the eponym derived from the surname of Donald Trump in the British and the American media is *Trumpism*, as in the following excerpt:

Trumpism and the death of the Republican Party: Walkom

Donald Trump has blown up the Republican Party. It's not clear what will replace it

...Technically, Trump will appear on the November ballot as the Republican Party's nominee for the U.S. presidency. In fact, he will be the standard-bearer of a movement that some commentators are already referring to as Trumpism.

Trumpism is not a coherent ideology. It is a cult of personality that reflects the changing moods and thoughts of one man. Yet there are some key pillars that appear relatively fixed.

First, like old Republicanism, it is nostalgic. It appeals to those mourning a mythical past in a mythical land, where minorities kept their grievances to themselves, cops were tops and America ruled the world.

Second, it is insular. As Trump explained in a wide-ranging interview with the New York Times this week, he is not wedded to the concept of collective defence under

NATO.

...**Trumpism** expresses American disillusionment with the wars in Iraq, Libya and Afghanistan. But it goes well beyond that to question U.S. military support of long-time allies such as Japan, South Korea and the nations of Western Europe. (The Star, 22/07/2016)

In Bulgarian texts, however, the common noun derived from the name Trump is formed by adding *-отия*, thus forming the noun **Тръмпотия** (Trumpotia). A play on words is achieved by the similarity between **Тръмпотия** (Trumpotia) and the Bulgarian word **тъпотия** (tupotia), meaning stupidity, as well as between the name Trump and the Bulgarian adjective *тън*, meaning “stupid”. Such strategies in the media are used to show a certain attitude towards the person whose name is used to form the neologism. Negative attitude is achieved by using a suffix associated with negative connotations.

Абсолютна **тръмпотия**

Историята не помни по-срамни времена като времето на голямото лицемерие.

Тъпотия и **Тръмпотия**. От нея е болен всеки втори модерен политик. Той е роден от реалити телевизията. От нея произтича поговорката - “**Тръмп** като галош”. Той говори това, което всички хора, от които винаги се е отворачавал, искат да чуят. Трендът на кухите лейки. (<http://btvnovinite.bg/article>, 24/07/2016)

Absolute Trumpotia

There has never been such a notorious period in history as the period of the great hypocrisy.

Tapotiya (Stupidity) and Trumpotiya. Every second modern politician suffers from it. He is born by reality TV. The slogan “Trump as an overshoe (analogy with ‘dead above the ears’)”. He speaks what people he is disgusted with want to hear. The trend of the empty heads.

It could be suggested that the more neologisms derived from a name, the greater their influence on society, and as a result the more obsessed with them the media are. In the cases of neologisms derived from *Trump*, apart from the mentioned above, another term was recently coined – *Trumpistan*. *Trumpistan* is used to stand for “the USA under Trump’s presidency” (urbandictionary.com). However, *-stan* is not a semantically neutral suffix. It rather brings a negative connotation, and is used to refer to the negative aspects of Donald Trump’s eventual presidency, as is evident in the following excerpts from the Asian Age and New York Daily news:

The US Commission on International Religious Freedom has been critical of India. If Donald Trump, the presumptive Republican presidential nominee, enters the White

House, the US too will become a most intolerant society, a sort of “**Trumpistan**” (The Asian Age, 17/05/2016)

This is **Trumpistan**: Donald Trump’s ignorant, dangerous immigration proposals would decimate the American economy and pit the nation against itself.

Donald Trump has stopped insulting people long enough to finally release his first policy paper – on immigration reform.

It is every bit as shallow, ignorant and dangerous as one would expect from the man who launched his campaign by smearing Mexicans who cross the border as drug-runners and rapists (New York Daily News, 17/08/2015)..

The suffix *-stan* is used to form names of countries in the Middle East and Central Asia, as well as in names of developing countries and when added to the name *Trump* it is associated with something that is drawn down in its development. The use of *Trumpistan* to stand for the presidency of Donald Trump therefore suggests the negative attitude of Trump’s opponents to the idea of his presidency.

In the Bulgarian media, the suffix *-stan* is also used to express a negative attitude. It is frequently added to the name of the country Bulgaria to form *Bulgaristan*:

“**Булгаристан** е едно непоправимо селце, нищо друго. Няма какво да ме дразни или да не ме дразни – това е една дълбока провинция”, отговаря Захари, попитан какво не му харесва в България. Продължава, че това е провинцията, в която е роден, и това е положението – ни повече, ни по-малко. Явор казва, че след като се върне от чужбина, някои неща му правят впечатление и го дразнят. “Но след десет дни ти е ежедневие и същите неща не ги регистрираш.” (Dnevnik, 24/09/2009)

“Bulgaristan is an irreclaimable village, nothing more. It is not about whether it annoys me or not – it is just at the back of beyond, says Zahari when asked what it is that he does not like in Bulgaria. He continues by saying that that is the country he was born in, and that is all – nothing more, nothing less. Yavor says that when he returns from abroad, there are some things he notices and is annoyed by. “But ten days later you stop even noticing them”.

The suffix *-зация* is used with proper names to form expressions with the structure X- *зация*, which have the meaning “the influence of X”. In the next excerpt, *Putisation* means the influence of Putin:

България навлиза в нов етап на **путинизация**

Оцеляването на режима все повече зависи от неутрализирането на гражданското пробуждане чрез изграждане на паралелна реалност. (Dnevnik, 15/12/2013)

Bulgaria enters a new stage of **Putinisation**

The survival of the regime depends to a great extent on the neutralization of citizens’

awakening with the help of the construction of parallel reality.

The term Putinisation is used in the British media with the same meaning:

Poland protests against BBC ‘**Putinisation**’ report

Newsnight report ‘Is Poland being **Putinised**?’ was biased and drew unjustified conclusions according to foreign ministry

Poland has formally protested against a BBC report asking if controversial moves by Warsaw’s new right-wing government were “**Putinising**” the country.

A foreign ministry letter addressed to a top BBC executive said a January report on the political crisis in Poland was “biased”, “inaccurate” and drew “unjustified conclusions”. ([The Guardian](#), 10/02/2016)

The examples provided prove the fact that the suffix *-sation/-zation* is usually added to place names to attain the meaning “the influence of X” but in cases such as Americanization and Europeanization they are already well established and are not considered neologisms.

- **Blending**

Blending is defined as a compound “consisting of one word and a splinter (part of a morpheme) or two splinters” (Lehrer 2007: 115). Sometimes neologisms can result from the blending of two proper names. This happens when two people who receive much media attention are presented as one whole unity and to affirm that unity they become called by one common name, which is a combination between their names. This way, the two referents will be perceived as a single individual, as if they were one person. A typical example of such a name, especially in the yellow press, is the name *Brangelina* – a blending between the first names of Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie, famous actors known worldwide.

Who’s to blame for ending **Brangelina**? It must be somebody’s fault!

Brat and **Angelina** have separated. Now we could accept that at the end of the day celebrities are merely people with their own very human issues and flaws and choose to give the couple privacy as they work out what’s best for their future and children. We could just be patient and wait for the inevitable post-split interviews to have any curiosity satiated ([Women’s magazine](#), 20/09/2016).

When used frequently in the media, a neologism is conventionalized and its meaning can be further shifted by metonymy. For instance, *Brangelina* can be used to stand not for the couple Jolie-Pitt, but for their separation and in this case, there is a PERSON FOR THE EVENT metonymy. The separation is further accentuated by avoiding the use of *Brangelina* with its primary meaning – the union between the two people – and referring to them by using their surnames – *Jolie* and *Pitt* thus emphasizing the fact that they are already two different people with two different surnames. Angelina Jolie is used instead of Angelina Jolie-Pitt, thus indicating they not one family any more:

Brangelina proves you should never trust a cheater

In the wake of Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt's divorce announcement earlier this week come reports that Jolie was very jealous of Pitt being around other women, including his "Allied" co-star Marion Cotillard. Jolie's paranoia is understandable, as it's alleged that she had an affair with Pitt during the filming of "Mr. & Mrs. Smith" in 2004, when he was married to Jennifer Aniston.

And as those who have been involved with an unfaithful partner know: Once a cheater, always a cheater. (New York Post, 22/09/2016)

A neologism can result from blending of a proper name and a common noun. This is the case with the well-established new coinage *Brexit* (Britain+exit). The term was created during the UK referendum about UK's withdrawal from the EU.

Britain votes to leave the EU

Britain is on its way out of the European Union. In a referendum on June 23rd 51.9% of voters opted for **Brexit**, on a high turnout of 72.2%. London, Scotland and Northern Ireland plumped for "Remain", while the rest of Britain voted "Leave"... What happens now is uncertain. Years of negotiations are likely to follow today's result, as Britain tries to navigate an exit from the Union. For now, the initial reaction of the markets is one of panic and chaos. (The Economist, 24/06/2016)

When a neologism becomes well established, its pattern is followed and new neologisms are formed that way. For instance, after *Brexit* was introduced and established as a notion in the media, some other "-exits" appeared. A talk about the possibility of France to leave the EU appeared and that was called *Frexit*. Here are two examples in this respect:

What is **Frexit**? Will France leave the EU next?

THE National Front has seized on Brexit to further its campaign for French independence from the European Union. Could France leave too?

What is **Frexit**?

Britain's historic vote to leave the EU has sparked calls for a French exit, or **Frexit**, from the European Union. The British public voted for a Brexit, or British exit, during a historic EU referendum on Thursday June 23.....

Who is calling for a **Frexit**? Marine Le Pen, the head of the far-right National Front party, is leading calls for French independence from Brussels rule.

Ms Le Pen has declared that she is '**Madame Frexit**' and has promised to hold a EU referendum within six months if she gets into power next year (<http://www.express.co.uk>, 01/07/2016)

Frexit, Nexit or Oexit? Who will be next to leave the EU

After the UK backed withdrawing from the EU, politicians elsewhere are calling for referendums in their own countries.

Now there has been a vote for **Brexit**, there are calls in other countries for people to have their say on the European Union. But, though they have inherited the pithy naming formulation – from “**Frexit**” and “**Nexit**” through to “**Oexit**” – the proposed referendums vary depending on what they want, what they’re motivated by, and how likely they are to happen. (*The Guardian*, 27/06/2016)

The pattern *Country name + exit* seems to be able to attain an infinite number of embodiments. Practically, it can be formed with the name of any country within the European Union which contemplates on the possibility of leaving it. However, the stability of such coinages depends on how much attention the media will pay to that possibility, as well as on some extralinguistic factors: is leaving the EU just a possibility, is it something brought for discussion in Parliament, or already approved by referendum. The more realistic an event is, the more media attention it receives. The idea of France, the Netherlands and Austria to leave the EU is still hypothetical and coinages like *Frexit*, *Nexit* and *Oexit* appear sporadically in media texts. It could be suggested that if those countries decide to leave the EU in effect, the above neologisms will become stable and probably even contribute to the development of other coinages based on the same pattern (Country name + exit). *Brexit* itself is a result of such a process – it was formed by analogy with *Grexit* – a term used to refer to Greece potential withdrawal of the euro zone.

The process of the creation of neologisms based on proper names seems to be illimitable. It is determined by the social and political context as well as by the attitude that texts producers express towards people and situations.

As expected, English, being a global language, has some influence on Bulgarian and this is valid for proper name-based neologisms. When a neologism is established in the English language, it enters the Bulgarian language and starts to appear in the Bulgarian media. For instance, *Брекзит*, which is a transliteration of *Brexit*, is used in the Bulgarian language with the same meaning it has in English:

Повече от половината сърби искат да влязат в Евросъюза и след **Брекзит**

Повече от половината граждани на Сърбия (53%) смятат, че страната им трябва да продължи процеса на европейска интеграция и след излизането на Великобритания от Европейския съюз, показва проучване... (*Dnevnik*, 26/07/2016)

More than half of the Serbians want to enter the EU even after **Brexit**.

More than half of the Serbian citizens (53%) believe that their country should continue the European integration process even after Britain leaves the EU, according to a survey.

Some neologisms, however, enter Bulgarian with some slight changes in their form. For instance, as shown in the above examples, *Trumpism* in English

corresponds to *Тръмпотия* in Bulgarian. In both cases, English expressions that entered the Bulgarian language are found in foreign affairs articles and are almost entirely lacking in articles related to domestic affairs. Another difference in the use of proper name-based neologisms is the fact that in Bulgarian it is quite normal for such expressions not to be capitalized when they are already well established, while in English they always start with a capital letter. In this respect, the following examples come to prove this fact:

Bulgarian: *орбанизация, бойковизъм, брекзит, цветановщина, калинка, тръмпотия*

English: *Orbanization, Trumpism, Brexit, Brangelina.*

Another reason for the lack of capitalization is the fact that the newly coined expressions are not felt like proper names anymore and function as common nouns.

Conclusion

Name-based neologisms are widely used in the media. They can be a result of metonymy, affixation or blending. Name-based neologisms provoke the readers' interest and express the attitude towards the name referent. Some of them are well established in language while others are used sporadically in relation with a particular event that the media cover.

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