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# Romanian Libfixes in the Making

**Abstract:** The present study examines whether or not Romanian libfixing is a case of structural borrowing. Libfixes, e.g. *-tastic* (< *fantastic*), are defined here as word parts emerging in blends that are analogically used in coining new words, while still preserving the connection with their source-words. This connection is best attested by the metrical properties of libfixed formations that tend to preserve the prosodic contour of the source-word, making libfixes an intermediate stage on the blending-bound morpheme continuum. By analysing 7 Romanian libfixes based on three corpora, we argue that Romanian libfixing is a case of both material and structural borrowing, relying, most likely, on the increasing productivity of lexical blending in Romanian under the influence of English.

# 1 Introduction

Mainly discussed in relation to English, libfixes such as *-licious* (< *delicious*) or *-tainment* (< *entertainment*) represent an intermediary stage situated somewhere along a continuum between word parts found in blends and bound morphemes. This study is a first analysis of Romanian libfixes that has sprung from the observation that, with the increased use of lexical blends in Romanian, libfixing has also started to be used to coin new words, most probably under the current English influence. Based on a corpus analysis of 7 Romanian libfixes, out of which 6 are of English origin, we aim to establish whether present-day Romanian libfixing is a case of structural borrowing, i.e. the borrowing of an abstract morphological schema (see Section 2.2).

Libfixes illustrate an interesting instance of the complex creativity-productivity interaction. The two are often viewed in opposition, with productivity being often discussed in relation to predictable, rule-governed word-formation, and creativity conceived as non-rule governed (Bauer 2001: 65; Arnaud 2013: 97; Arndt-Lappe 2018, a.o.). Creative means of coining new words that do not concatenate morphemes have sometimes been outcast from the realm of word-formation processes into those of word creation (Haspelmath 2002: 25; Ronneberger-Sibold 2015: 485–487) or extra-grammatical morphology (Dressler 2000). Yet, as shown by Norde and Trousdale (2023: 153), creativity and productivity should also be viewed on a continuum, since a creative non-concatenative process, such as blending, may yield productive morphemes in time. As libfixes arise from one-of-a-kind blends and come to form more

and more lexemes, we believe libfixes represent this very moment, i.e. when creativity becomes productive.

In Section 2, we present an overview of libfixing. First, as we aim to define libfixes, we distinguish them from splinters and bound morphemes such as combining forms and affixes. Secondly, we discuss libfixes and contact-induced language changes, and we explore the conditions in which structural borrowing occurs. Section 3 presents our methodology and details of the queried Romanian corpora. Section 4 comprises the seven case-studies and our data interpretation; tentative conclusions are drawn in Section 5.

# 2 Libfixing in Language Contact Settings: The Case of Romanian

The term libfix was originally coined by Zwicky (2010) in a blog post to name 'liberated' word-forming elements originating in the reanalysis of an older word, e.g. *-tacular* (< *spectacular*) or *-dar* (< *radar*). While belonging to expressive morphology, i.e. the sum of word-formation patterns with more difficult to-pindown rules and pragmatic effects, as opposed to plain morphology, i.e. rulegoverned word-formation (Zwicky and Pullum 1987), libfixing lacks a unanimously accepted definition (see below), most likely due to the evasive and temporary character of libfixes themselves. Moreover, libfixing has been mostly studied in English, so the situation in other languages is yet to be explored. As the current pervasive influence of English has changed most of the world's languages in various ways, certain subtle changes induced into the word-formation systems of the recipient languages have been analysed as forms of structural borrowing (see below 2.2). In this context, our aim is to observe whether the massive English influence on present-day Romanian has gone over borrowing only lexical items, thus also triggering the borrowing of a word-formation process, namely of libfixing.

## 2.1 What is a Libfix?

Libfixes are definitely older than their name. For example, the OED currently states that *-licious* and *-tastic* were created in the 19th century, but only in 1928 Jespersen (apud Hamans 2017: 11) first referred to the underlying process itself: he observed that sometimes parts of indivisible words were assigned a grammatical significance. Yet, scholars hesitated to classify them, and tried to place them in pre-existing categories. For instance, Marchand (1960: 160–161) includes *-athon* (< *marathon*) and *-eteria*

(< *cafeteria*) in a list of suffixes. As they are bound morphemes with lexical content, Warren (1990) calls *-aholic* and *-gate* combining forms, and places them in the same category with neoclassical combining forms, e.g. *astro-* or *-drome*. The same label is used by Lalić-Krstin (2014) for *-geddon* (< *Armageddon*), although she calls the resulting new words blends. Lehrer (2007) considers *-aholic*, *-gate* and *-athon* good candidates for future combining forms, but calls them splinters, i.e. non-morphemic word parts preserved in blends. Bauer, Lieber and Plag (2013: 525) use the term *splinters* to name "non-morphemic portions of a word that have been split off and used in the formation of new words with a specific new meaning", not necessarily in connection to blending. Moreover, the OED considers some of these items fully established morphemes: *-gate* and *-athon* are combining forms, whereas *-aholic* has already turned into an affix (although the second edition of the OED registered it as a combining form, in the latest updated online version, it is an affix).[1]

Taking on Zwicky's (2010) term, Hamans (2017) and Norde and Sippach (2019) consider libfixes a category *sui-generis*, but each define them differently. According to Hamans (2017), English libfixes are non-morphemic word parts used as morphemes, 'liberated' as a result of reinterpreting (a) partially transparent loanwords, e.g. Dutch *landschap* > En. *landscape* > *-scape*; (b) autochthonous formations, e.g. *Watergate* > *-gate* 'scandal'; (c) blends, e.g. *television + marathon > telethon > -thon*; (d) a series of similar forms, e.g. *Pakistan, Afghanistan, Uzbekistan* etc. > *-istan*. Hamans claims that the liberation of libfixes resembles folk etymology: speakers interpret a word part as an existing morpheme and reinterpret the other part as another morpheme. For instance, in *landscape*, speakers recognize *land-* and interpret the source-word as a compound, and thus also considering *-scape* a morpheme; then, it is added to other bases, e.g. *seascape, mindscape, soundscape* (Hamans 2017: 10–19).

However, we believe that Hamans does not provide a clear-cut definition of libfixes that would differentiate them from affixes or combining forms. In the examples (a) and (d) above, libfixes are detached from loanwords and later combined with native bases, which is also the typical scenario for borrowing affixes or combining forms. This is why Marchand (1960) includes *-scape* and *-eteria* among suf-

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**1** Although some researchers do not draw sharp boundaries between combining forms and affixes, the two types of bound morphemes differ on a number of features. Though both categories combine with lexemes, which is typically a property of affixes Bauer (1983: 213), two combining forms alone may form a lexeme, whereas two affixes cannot, as they need a root (Bauer 1983: 214; Plag 2018: 154, a.o.). Moreover, affixes cannot form words by attaching to combining forms (Bauer 1983: 214–215). The distinction is also made on semantic grounds, as combining forms have more lexical density, i.e. a more specific meaning, whereas affixes merely modify the meaning of the base (Bauer 1983: 215; Warren 1990: 123, Bauer, Lieber and Plag 2013: 486, a.o.).

fixes. Moreover, it is pretty common for affixes to spring from the reinterpretation of native formations, therefore cases under (b) are not specific for libfixes either. For instance, the Romanian adjectival suffix *-os* 'abunding in . . .' is usually attached to singular nouns, but also to plural nouns such as *dealuri* 'hills' or *colțuri* 'corners', leading to adjectives such as *colțuros* 'edgy' or *deluros* 'hilly'; from these words, the form *-uros* was detached and then used as an adjective suffix, e.g. in *buburos* 'pimply'. Thus, for us, only (c) – serial blending – is in fact the only situation specific to libfixes. For instance, in the case of *-gate*, we believe that the first formations were blends of *Watergate* and another word, and that only afterwards the splinter was reinterpreted and then combined with other bases.

Norde and Sippach (2019) consider libfixes specific to playful word-formation and analyse two types of libfixes. The first category includes items originating in blends, e.g. *-licious* < *delicious*, *-fection* < *perfection*, and the second one comprises neoclassical combining forms, e.g. *-meter*, *-cracy*. Norde and Sippach's (2019) corpus analysis shows that libfixes have specific morpho-phonological features: libfixes are usually attached to whole words in an affix-like manner, but also to word parts, acronyms or even phrases, sometimes with a linking vowel. More importantly, the resulting libfixed formations tend to preserve the metrical structure of the source-word, e.g. the prosodic contour of *entertainment* is preserved in most words formed with *-tainment*, just like in blending (see below). Moreover, in Norde and Sippach's (2019) dataset, blend-originating libfixes, e.g. *-tastic* (< *fantastic*), display these features more often than neoclassical combining forms attached to native stems, such as *-cracy* (in *thugocracy*) and *-meter* (in *crapometer*). In our opinion, this finding suggests that in fact the two categories are rather distinct. Neoclassical combining forms may be used in playful formations just like any other regular word-formation process: see, for instance, playful formations with affixes such as *-ee* or *non-* in Bauer (1983). Thus, the distinctive feature of libfixes should not be playfulness, although libfixed formations are somehow marked and informal.

Although we agree that the 'liberation' of a libfix implies reanalysis, we believe that this reanalysis occurs only after the source-word has undergone blending. Therefore, in line with Norde and Sippach (2019), we consider libfixing a category on its own, situated on a gradient between blending and affixation. In fact, many researchers have noticed that blending often triggers the creation of morphemes in time (Fischer 1998; Fradin 2000; Kemmer 2003; Lehrer 2007; Mattiello 2018; Barrena Jurado 2019; Beliaeva 2019), the typical scenario displaying important stages: first, an iconic blend becomes a model for other blends, thus creating a series that models other analogical formations that can further lead to the creation of a new bound morpheme (Kemmer 2003; Mattiello 2018). Mattiello (2023: 187–203) calls the splinters used in analogical formations 'combining forms in the making', and we call them libfixes.

Thus, we characterize libfixes as an intermediary phase between blending and bound morphemes (Figure 1). In order to offer a fine-grained definition, there should be clear points that would mark the beginning and the end of the libfix phase. Nevertheless, as language is continuously changing, it is pretty much impossible to find clear cut-off points. The main criterion is the productivity of the form (see below), but yet again, it is almost impossible to state clearly how many occurrences formed with a liberated part are needed for it to pass the border between libfix and bound morpheme.
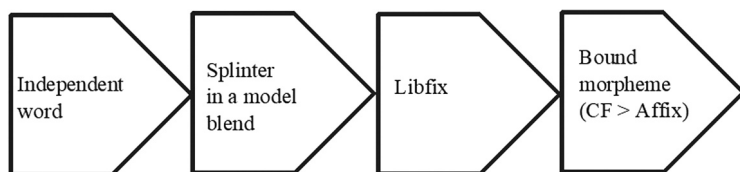


**Figure 1:** Libfixes on the blending – morpheme continuum.

In our opinion, when a splinter in a model-blend is used again to coin a new word, the creation of a libfix begins. When a blend is coined, it is modelled according to the properties of the two source-words; a subsequent formation takes into account not only the two source-words, but also the previous blend. Thus, the new word is shaped by taking into account more factors than in the case of the original blend. For instance, the libfix *-aholic* (< *alcoholic*) has various forms, such as *-holic*, *-oholic*, but *-aholic* appears to be dominant most likely due to the influence of *workaholic*, with the /a/ occurring whenever the root ends in a consonant (Lehrer in Fradin 2000: 17). This suggests that the original blend heavily influences subsequent formations. However, the creation of a libfix is never witnessed with its second occurrence, but can be observed once it has offspring, i.e. when a number of libfixed creations have already been established; this leads to the observed productivity of libfixes (Norde and Sippach 2019: 380).

The end of the libfix phase coincides with the establishment of a new morpheme whose birth is again difficult to establish, and the transformation is strongly linked with the formant's productivity (Lehrer 2007: 121; Beliaeva 2019; Barrena Jurado 2019; Mattiello 2023: 57). Yet, no fixed number of occurrences could be applied to all libfixes and in all languages so as to say that, from that moment on, a particular form has turned into a bound morpheme. Fischer (1998: 65) argues that "at least three neologisms containing the blend element must be found before the existence of a new combining form may be assumed", a number that has not yet reached consensus among researchers. What we retain from Fischer's (1998) claims is that morphemization implies both quantity and quality: the formants are offshoot only

after the creation of neologisms, i.e. new words that are embraced by speakers and become part of the language. Therefore, the creation of nonce words, i.e. words coined with a specific occasion that disappear once the specific occasion is gone, does not suffice (for the distinction between neologisms and nonce words, see Bauer 2001: 38–40; Mattiello 2017: 23–26). Nevertheless, the fact that a particular formant does appear in nonce words suggests that speakers find it easy to use it to create new words (Barrena Jurado 2019).

Lehrer (2007: 121) argues that new morphemes are created when the formants are no longer connected to their source-words, but does not explain how this connection or the loss thereof manifests itself. The connection could be marked by what Norde and Sippach (2019: 360) call "prosodic preservation", i.e. libfixed formations tend to preserve the number of syllables and the place of the main stress of the source-word, e.g. most *-tainment* formations are 4-syllable words stressed on the penultimate syllable, just like *entertainment*. Discussing blends, Beliaeva (2019) observes that prosodic preservation is negatively correlated with type frequency: the more productive the formant (which she calls splinter), the less it maintains a connection to its source-word. Mattiello considers the transition from splinter to combining form to be complete when metrical deviation from the original pattern is present (Mattiello 2023: 57). This idea relies on a salient, but not mandatory characteristic of blending, the source of libfixing: not all blends preserve the metrical contour of (at least) one source-word, although the majority do (Kemmer 2003; Arndt-Lappe and Plag 2013; Renner 2019 for English, Vasileanu and Niculescu-Gorpin 2022 for Romanian).

Another means of evaluating the connection of the libfix to the source-word is psycholinguistic testing. Niculescu-Gorpin and Vasileanu (2025) tested the processing and understanding of Romanian blends, and only marginally of libfixed formations, by administering a questionnaire. Romanian native speakers were presented with various stimuli, including libfixed formations, and they had to explain, in their own words, how they thought the target words were coined. Three libfixes, *-aholic*, *-gate* and *-exit*, were included in the questionnaire. The analysis showed that the stimuli formed with these libfixes were mainly perceived as blends, since subjects indicated two complete source-words in their responses. For example, most subjects indicated *Watergate* as a source-word for *Udreagate*, the stimulus containing *-gate*. *-Aholic* was slightly more often interpreted as an affix than as a part of a blend; nevertheless, when blending was referred to, En. *alcoholic* and even Ro. *alcoolic* 'alcoholic' were mentioned as source-words. There were also answers pointing to analogical models, mostly to *workaholic* which, due to its high frequency, seems to have triggered the analogical series (Mattiello 2018: 10). The analysis in Niculescu-Gorpin and Vasileanu (2025), although based on a small dataset, suggests that libfixes do preserve a connection to their source-words that is

still perceived by speakers, i.e. speakers still relate the libfixed formation to the source-word of the libfix. This connection is maintained even for borrowed libfixes, as, in order to understand words, speakers appeal to their linguistic knowledge, be it first or second language. The study also suggests that model blends may play a more important part than previously thought in libfixing, a hypothesis also supported by our case study on *-pedia* (see Section 4.1). Last but not least, this connection suggests that Romanian libfixing may be a case of structural borrowing (see below).

We therefore define libfixes as blend-emerging word parts that still preserve their connection with their initial source-word and that are used in analogical combinations to create new words. We believe that the libfixing process could involve the following steps. First of all, two source-words combine in a blend. One of the source-words, that from which the libfix will later be clipped, creates further blends with other source-words. It is pretty difficult to actually capture this moment in time as speakers are creative and new blends are born without being recorded. Nevertheless, it is plausible to assume that, analogically, new blends are formed based on a model blend. This process is then repeated until the libfix is completely broken from its source-word. Once the split is complete, i.e. there is no connection to the prosodic structure of the source-word and people do not link the part of the word with that source-word or with the model blend, the libfix turns into a bound morpheme. As word processing and word creation are yet impossible to be observed directly, we believe that the findings in the literature support our hypothetical scenario of how libfixes are created and evolve.

Thus, libfixed formations differ from blends both in their analogical nature and in their productivity, here understood mainly as type frequency, and from combining forms and affixes in their connection to the source-word they have been clipped from, mainly visible in the prosodic structure of outputs.

## 2.2 Libfixing and Contact-Induced Language Change

As the current *lingua franca*, English has become the donor language for various types of contact-induced language change phenomena, lexical items being the most numerous and thus an eye-catching type of transfer. However, besides enriching other languages, the massive influx of English loanwords may generate some changes in the word-formation system due to structural borrowing, i.e. the borrowing of abstract morphological schemata (Renner 2018). If the contact-induced change of the frequency of a word-formation pattern is understood as structural borrowing, English appears to have impacted the word-formation systems of other languages, e.g. by increasing the scope of clipping in Polish or of noun-noun compounding in French and Polish (Renner 2018). Hamans (2021:

674–676) shows that Dutch libfixing has become much more frequent when the productivity of English libfixing increased, mainly in American English. Although the process may have become more frequent in each language independently, it is more likely that the Dutch frequency increased partly due to the borrowing of certain libfixes, such as *-tainment*.

English libfixes have been borrowed in languages such as Italian (*-gate* and *-nomics*, Vaccarelli 2019), Bulgarian (*-aholic*, Stamenov 2015), Polish (*-aholic* and *-gate*, Konieczna 2012: 65), and Romanian (*-gate*, Stoichiţoiu Ichim 2006: 70), where they combine also with native bases. Since only recently libfixing has been conceived as a word-formation process of its own, data in these languages are scarce. However, the premises for structural borrowing are created by the English-induced increased frequency of blending, as lifbixing is genetically related to blending. Moreover, the recent rise of lexical blending in Bulgarian (Stamenov 2015), Italian (Cacchiani 2016), and Dutch (Hamans 2021) has also been connected with the English influence.

In present-day Romanian, lexical blending has increased its frequency due to the pervasive English influence. Experimental results indicate that international blends are understood better than autochthonous ones (Niculescu-Gorpin and Vasileanu 2025), and corpus data show that international blends have gained wider circulation whereas autochthonous ones, though more numerous, tend to remain nonce words (Vasileanu and Niculescu-Gorpin 2022). Moreover, lexical blending is an active word-formation process and it has become the default means of naming hybrid objects at least for the younger generation, as suggested by an elicitation experiment (Vasileanu, Niculescu-Gorpin and Radu-Bejenaru 2024). In this experiment, subjects were asked to name, using only one word, hybrid entities, mostly imaginary. 68.31% of Romanian outputs were blends, whereas only 12.22% were compounds, which was unexpected since compounding is a major word-formation process in Romanian, unlike blending.

The connection between blending and libfixing sets the premises for interpreting libfixing as another case of structural borrowing in Romanian. Ten Hacken and Panocová (2020: 7) observe that speakers borrow words, not rules, and that borrowing of structures implies re-analysis, making structural borrowing a gradual, diachronic process. In order to claim that libfixing is a case of structural borrowing, we need to see: (a) the number of borrowed libfixed formations; (b) the number of libfixed formations with Romanian bases, as they attest the re-analysis of the previous borrowings; (c) the emergence of new, native libfixes, considering also the fact that libfixing has not yet been observed in the literature on Romanian word-formation.

# 3 Methodology

The current study on libfixes has sprung from a corpus-based study of lexical blending in Romanian (Vasileanu and Niculescu-Gorpin 2022). To identify blends, we manually checked a wordlist resulting from a 60,000,000-word corpus, made of Romanian newspapers, magazines, blogs and satirical websites from the past 15 years. In doing so, we noticed that some words resembling blends actually formed series that had the same final part in common. There were 45 words formed with 7 libfixes. These were the international -*aholic*, -*gate*, -*aton* (= En. -*athon*), -*ghedon* (= En. -*geddon*), -*zilla*, and -*pedia*, alongside a Romanian one, -*izdă* (< *pizdă* '(slang) vulva'). To further investigate their productivity, we checked two larger Romanian corpora: the one-billion word CoRoLa, currently the reference corpus of Romanian (Barbu Mititelu, Tufiș and Irimia 2018) and RoTenTen16, a 2.6-billion-word corpus, part of the TenTen family (Jakubícek et al. 2013). Since Romanian is a language with a rich inflective system and definite articles are bound to the end of words, our queries included the libfix in a medial position, e.g. *\*aholic\**. We also took into account phonological alternations that might occur, e.g. a word ending in -*aton* might be pluralized as -*atoane*. The resulting lists were manually checked to discard words that happened to contain the same letter strings, e.g. proper names or -*gate* 'door, entrance' in compounds. When necessary, we checked the actual contexts to clarify the meaning.

As we could not establish whether the three corpora contained completely different texts or whether there was some degree of overlap, we could not determine real token frequencies that could be used as an indicator of productivity. Moreover, libfixed formations were mostly nonce words, with low token frequency; frequency per million words resulted in such small fractions that they cannot be a reliable source of actual productivity. In addition, due to the nature of the input texts, there were also huge differences in terms of token frequency in the two larger corpora: CoRoLa is largely based on published, mainly legal and scientific texts, whereas RoTenTen16 is a web-based corpus, comprising more informal language. Therefore, we assessed the productivity of each libfix based only on type frequency (see Section 4).

Each libfixed word was annotated with respect to (a) the base type (whole word, acronym, multi-word unit, combining form, clipped base[2]); (b) the number

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**2** We counted established clippings as whole words, e.g. we considered *Maimuzilla* 'name of a Romanian shop' < *maimu*, established clipping of *maimuță* 'monkey', as formed from a whole word, and not from a clipped base.

of syllables; (c) the stress position; (d) for international libfixes, whether the word was coined in Romanian or in another language. The analysis was not always straightforward and required additional searches. In some cases, the presence of Romanian inflection markers eased the task. For example, a Romanian forum user, in a Romanian text, used the expression *"view who's online"-oholică* to describe herself, where the final *-ă* is the Romanian feminine singular ending. In the case of brand names, the task was more complicated. Commercial names are sometimes coined from English bases, even for autochthonous products. For instance, a Romanian parenting platform is called *Muffypedia,* but we could not identify a foreign model for the word. In this case, we considered the formation a pseudo-Anglicism (for an overview see Furiassi and Gottlieb 2015) as the word does not exist in English, be it British or American, and it has actually been created in Romanian. The reasons underlying such occurrences are manyfold, such as: English or English-looking names attract attention, they are seen as more prestigious; or, for online language, a word formed from English bits may yield better web-search results. In other cases, the same word was used in several brand names, some Romanian, some international, and we cannot clearly state whether the companies or products were related or not; even for clearly unrelated companies, we cannot be sure the names have been coined independently. Such words were marked ambiguous, and placed in a separate category. In case the meaning of the Romanian word was different from the meaning of an identical international word, we considered that the two were coined independently. For instance, we marked *pornaghedon* 'a sudden end to a politician's career due to video recordings of him having sex outside marriage' as a Romanian creation, since En. *pornageddon* means 'a sudden end of porn films'.

Our results are presented in Section 4, with Sections 4.1–4.7 each analysing one of the following libfixes: *-pedia, -gate, -aholic, -zilla, -aton, -ghedon,* and *-izdă.* Section 4.8 is a final overview of the data and their interpretation.

# 4  Results: Corpus Findings

We have found 558 libfixed types in the three analysed corpora. Different spellings of the same word were counted together, e.g. we counted *bagoholic* and *bagoholic* as one type. Likewise, adapted spellings of an English loanword were counted together with the original spellings, e.g. *swimathon* and *swimaton* were considered one type. Different forms of the same libfix were also counted together, e.g. *Vunkaholic* and *Vunkoholic* (< *Vunk,* name of a Romanian music group) were considered one single type and counted as one word.

There is a striking difference in frequency between the three most productive international libfixes with type frequency of over 100 each, *-pedia*, *-gate*, *-aholic*, and the other three, *-zilla*, *-aton* and *-ghedon* (see Table 1 below). Interestingly, though originating in a taboo word, the native Romanian libfix *-izdă* is very productive. One possible explanation is that people do like to use taboo words, but prefer to dress them up. Moreover, such uses can either be funny or derogatory or both, but they are definitely attracting the readers' / hearers' attention.

**Table 1:** Raw type frequency for the 7 libfixes.

| Libfix | Total type frequency |
| --- | --- |
| *-pedia* | 178 |
| *-gate* | 125 |
| *-aholic* | 120 |
| *-zilla* | 33 |
| *-at(h)on* | 20 |
| *-g(h)ed(d)on* | 12 |
| *-izdă* | 70 |

## 4.1 *-pedia*

With 178 types, the most productive libfix is *-pedia*, extracted initially from *encyclopedia* and preserving its core meaning, that of a comprehensive, highly informed data collection. The new *-pedia* is different from the neoclassical combining form *-pedia* 'education, learning' (< Gr. *παιδεία*), therefore, we discarded words such as *hypnopedia* 'learning during sleep' from the analysis.

All 178 types are proper names of companies, products, websites etc., 88 being loanwords, and only 56 most likely coined in Romanian, according to the criteria mentioned above; there are 34 items for which we cannot establish or refute a connection between Romanian and identical international words.

Only items created in Romanian will be discussed, since we are concerned with Romanian libfixing.

In Romanian, the international libfix *-pedia* combines with a variety of base types as shown in Table 2. Most frequently, it is bound to whole words (36 items), a behaviour that resembles that of an affix. Out of these, in 8 instances, the libfix is preceded by an interfix, e.g. *-o-* in *tristopedia* 'ironic name for a website' < *trist* 'sad' + *-o-* + *-pedia*, or *-i-* in *blondipedia* < *blonde* 'blondes' + *-i-* + *-pedia*. However, *-o-* may also be interpreted as part of the *-opedia* clipping of *encyclopedia*, an interpretation supported by the form *comentopedia* 'the title of the comments section of a newspa-

per' < *comentarii* 'comments' + *-opedia,* where it combines with a clipped base in a blend-like manner. In this context, we have interpreted *-opedia* as an allomorph of *-pedia* (in case not-yet-morphemes can be said to have allomorphs).

**Table 2:** Base types for Romanian libfixed *-pedia* words.

| Base types | n. | Example |
|---|---|---|
| whole word | 36 | *citatepedia* 'name of a famous quotation website' < *citate* 'quotations' + *-pedia* |
| acronym | 4 | *RATT-pedia* 'website on the public transportation system of Timișoara' < *RATT* 'the public transportation system of Timișoara city' + *-pedia* |
| multi-word unit | 1 | *mysportpedia* 'name of a website' < *my sport* + *-pedia* |
| combining form | 2 | *cronopedia* 'name of a literary circle and its website' < *crono-* 'chrono' + *-pedia* |
| clipped base | 13 | *redupedia* 'name of a discount website' < *reduceri* 'discounts' + *-pedia* |

Combinations with clipped bases, e.g. *redupedia,* and with combining forms, e.g. *chronopedia,* are evidence that, although productive, *-pedia* is still on the blending – morpheme continuum, thus underlining its libfix status. To assess its position on this continuum, we need to consider also the metrical properties of the outputs.

Being a stressed formant, *-pedia* should create items stressed on the same syllable, i.e. *-pe-.* Although the libfix has been extracted from a 6-syllable word, *encyclopedia,* most items display a 5-syllable structure (Table 3). This is not random. Out of the 13 items formed from clipped bases, 9 words have 5 syllables, which means that they were purposely clipped to fit the metrical pattern. Our hypothesis is that, in this particular case, the metric structure was not modelled by the source-word *encyclopedia,* but by the more recent, but very popular *Wikipedia,* which may also explain the occurrence of *-i-* as an interfix. The hypothesis is also supported by the fact that some of the *-pedia* formations are in fact names of collaborative websites, such as *citapedia, turismpedia.*

With a type frequency of 178 items, *-pedia* also comprises the items with the highest token frequency. For instance, *softpedia* has the highest token frequency, occurring 1315 times (0.505 pmw) in the RoTenTen16 corpus. Its productivity is definitely triggered by the advance of the Internet and social media and the existence of large collections. The metrical properties of *-pedia* words indicate the influence of the model blend Wikipedia, placing it towards the morpheme end of the continuum.

**Table 3:** The metrical structure of the Romanian *-pedia* libfixed formations; all items are stressed on the antepenultimate syllable.

| Number of syllables | n. | Example |
|---|---|---|
| 4 syllables | 8 | *mobpedia* 'name of website dedicated to furniture' < *mobilă* 'furniture' + *-pedia* |
| 5 syllables | 33 | *imopedia* 'name of a real estate website' < *imobiliare* 'real estate' + *-pedia* |
| 6 syllables | 11 | *pensiopedia* 'name of a website on private pensions' < *pensie* 'pension' + *-pedia* |
| 7 syllables | 4 | *cosmeticopedia* 'name of an online cosmetics store' < *cosmetice* 'cosmetics' + *-opedia* |

## 4.2 *-gate*

The second most productive libfix is *-gate*, 'public scandal (usually followed by cover-up attempt)', with 125 types, out of which 95 are loanwords, 30 Romanian, and 1 ambiguous. It is a relatively young formant, since it was extracted from *Watergate*, the name of the office building in Washington DC where people connected with the Nixon administration broke into a headquarters of the Democratic Party in 1972. In the years after Nixon's resignation, *-gate* was a popular formative. Its productivity heavily depends on extralinguistic factors, i.e. public scandals (Mattiello 2023). The OED currently labels *-gate* as a combining form.

**Table 4:** Base types for Romanian libfixed *-gate* words.

| Base types | n. | Example |
|---|---|---|
| whole word | 25 | *Băsescugate* < *Băsescu* 'name of a former Romanian president' + *-gate* |
| acronym | 3 | *SRIgate* < *SRI* 'Romanian Intelligence Service' + *-gate* |
| multi-word unit | 2 | *Băsescuberceamondialgate* < *Băsescu* 'name of a former Romanian president' + *Bercea Mondial* 'name of a shady businessman' + *-gate* |

Unlike *-pedia*, *-gate* does not combine with clipped bases or with combining forms, but mainly with whole words (25 items out of 30, see Table 4 above), which is typical for affixes (see Bauer 1983: 213).

The metrical structure of *-gate* formations also indicates an affix-like behaviour: the newly formed words retain the stress of their bases, the libfix being unstressed, just like in English. Moreover, Table 5 shows that the formations display a variety of metrical patterns: *Watergate* is a trisyllabic word with stress on the first, whereas less than half of the Romanian formations with *-gate,* i.e. 13 items, are 3-syllable words, and only 9 have first syllable stress, preserving the metrical

structure of the source-word. Therefore, prosodic patterns indicate a loose connection with the source-word *Watergate*.

**Table 5:** The metrical structure of the Romanian *-gate* libfixed formations; all formations preserve the stress of the base.

| Number of syllables | n. | Example |
|---|---|---|
| 2 syllables | 3 | *romgate* < *rom* 'Roma' + *-gate* |
| 3 syllables | 13 | *Udreagate* < *Udrea* 'name of a former Romanian minister' + *-gate* |
| 4 syllables | 9 | *Turcescugate* < *Turcescu* 'name of a former Romanian journalist' + *-gate* |
| 5 syllables | 2 | *Teleormangate* < *Teleorman* 'name of a Romanian county' + *-gate* |
| 6 syllables | 1 | *Elisabetagate* < *Elisabeta* 'name of a Romanian prostitute' + *-gate* |
| 7 syllables | 1 | *Băsescu-Mondial-gate* < *Băsescu* 'name of a former Romanian president' + *Mondial* 'name of a shady businessman' + *-gate* |
| 9 syllables | 1 | *Băsescuberceamondialgate* < *Băsescu* 'name of a former Romanian president' + *Bercea Mondial* 'name of a shady businessman' + *-gate* |

Due to its productivity, morphological and metrical properties, in Romanian *-gate* seems to be situated more towards the affix part of the continuum.

## 4.3 *-aholic*

Another productive libfix is *-aholic*, with 120 types: 77 international, 13 ambiguous, 30 Romanian. The OED has recently changed its status from combining form in the 2nd edition to suffix in the 3rd edition (Mattiello 2018: 14). This change suggests that recent formations with *-aholic* take only whole words as bases. However, this is not the situation in Romanian, as shown in Table 6. Although in the majority of original Romanian types *-aholic* is bound to whole words, in a few formations it is attached to clipped bases, e.g. *călătoholic* 'addicted to travelling' < *călători* 'to travel', and combining forms, e.g. *ihtioholic* 'addicted to fish' < *ihtio-* 'ichtyo-', which do not usually combine with affixes (see Bauer 1983: 214–215; Mattiello 2023: 13).

 With respect to the metrical structure, the most frequent pattern (14 items) is a 4-syllable word stressed on the penultimate syllable (see Table 7), which is exactly the metrical pattern of *alcoholic*. We believe that this prosodic structure was reinforced by *workaholic*, which appears to be the model blend that triggered further analogical creations and the liberation of *-aholic*, according to the diachronic study of Mattiello (2018: 10). In some cases, the choice of a specific allomorph of

**Table 6:** Base types for Romanian libfixed *-aholic* words.

| Base types | n. | Example |
|---|---|---|
| whole word | 23 | *curcubeoholic* 'addicted to rainbows' < *curcubeu* 'rainbow' + *-oholic* |
| multi-word unit | 1 | *"view-who-s-online"-oholic* 'a person who compulsively checks who is online' < *view who's online* + *-oholic* |
| combining form | 1 | *ihtioholic* 'addicted to fish' < *ihtio-* 'ichthyo-' + *-holic* |
| clipped base | 5 | *călătoholic* 'addicted to travelling' < *călători* 'to travel' + *-holic* |

*-aholic* was made so as to fit the model metrical structure. For instance, *biciholic* 'addicted to biking' is formed on the base *bici*, a disyllabic established clipping of *bicicletă* 'bicycle', which combines with *-holic* to form a 4-syllable word. Nevertheless, deviations from the metrical model suggest that the connection to the source-word is loosening even in Romanian.

**Table 7:** Metrical structure of Romanian *-aholic* formations; all formations are penultimate-syllable stressed.

| Number of syllables | n. | Example |
|---|---|---|
| 3 syllables | 1 | *Betholic* 'addicted to Beth' < *Beth* 'Beth Hart' + *-holic* |
| 4 syllables | 14 | *brânzoholic* 'addicted to cheese' < *brânză* 'cheese' + *-oholic* |
| 5 syllables | 11 | *impozitholic* 'addicted to tax' < *impozit* 'tax' + *-holic* |
| 6 syllables | 2 | *înghețatoholic* 'addicted to icecream' < *înghețată* 'icecream' + *-oholic* |
| 7 syllables | 2 | *telenoveloholic* 'addicted to soap opera' < *telenovele* 'soap operas' + *-oholic* |

*-Aholic* has been discussed in numerous papers as an example of meaning secretion (Warren 1990, Mattiello 2018, 2023 a.o.): the base clipping comes with a "semantic clipping": *-aholic* 'addicted to' preserves part of the meaning of *alcoholic* 'addicted to alcohol'. Moreover, it seems that *-aholic* is undergoing melioration. If *alcoholic* 'addicted to alcohol' has a negative meaning, *curcubeoholic*, literally 'rainbow-aholic', should be understood as 'passionate about rainbows', with a positive connotation. This semantic shift is yet another indicator that *-aholic* is losing connection to its source-word.

The morphological, metrical and semantic features mentioned indicate *-aholic* as more advanced on the path to morphemization.

## 4.4 *-zilla*

En. *-zilla* is registered in OED as a combining form. Extracted from *Godzilla*, it has become more and more productive, and it is mostly bound to monosyllabic whole word bases (Mattiello 2018: 12). In Romanian, we identified 33 types in the three corpora: 20 international, 12 Romanian, and 1 ambiguous. The Romanian formations are coined from whole words or clipped bases, as shown in Table 8.

**Table 8:** Base types for Romanian libfixed *-zilla* formations.

| Base types | n. | Example |
| --- | --- | --- |
| whole word | 8 | *veveritzilla* 'huge squirrel' < *veveriță* 'squirrel' + *-zilla* |
| clipped base | 4 | *șnitzilla* 'huge schnitzel' < *șnițel* 'schnitzel' + *-zilla* |

Just like in English, by adding the libfix to monosyllabic bases, Romanian formations tend to preserve the metrical pattern of *Godzilla*, a 3-syllable word with a stressed penultimate syllable (see Table 9). However, other metrical patterns deviate from the original, suggesting *-zilla* is also turning independent.

**Table 9:** Metrical patterns of Romanian libfixed *-zilla* formations; all items are penultimate-syllable stressed.

| Number of syllables | n. | Example |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 3 syllables | 7 | *mortzilla* 'nickname of a forum user' < *mort* 'dead' + *-zilla* |
| 4 syllables | 3 | *mamazilla* 'momzilla' < *mamă* 'mother' + *-zilla* |
| 5 syllables | 2 | *cotcodaczilla* 'huge hen' < *cotcodac* 'cluck (interjection)' + *-zilla* |

Semantically, *-zilla* has also undergone a process of meaning secretion, as it preserves only certain meaning features of the source-word, such as 'huge' or 'frightening'. In English, corpus data show that *-zilla* is added usually to nouns, mostly names of animals or family members. Mattiello (2018: 12) found only one example where it combines with an inanimate base, *brandzilla*, which she interprets as a metaphorical extension. Romanian examples suggest that this extension is continued cross-linguistically, as shown by examples such as *Contzilla* 'name of an accounting website' < *contabilitate* 'accounting', *gropzilla* 'huge pothole' < *groapă* 'pothole', or even an on-the-spot creation *blackzilla* 'overcooked meat' (although formed from an English base, we could not identify an English *blackzilla* with the same meaning, making this word another pseudo-Anglicism).

Given all of the above, we can argue that, although not very productive, *-zilla* is halfway through the morphemization process, slightly leaning towards the bound morpheme end of the continuum; in time, it may turn into an augmentative suffix.

## 4.5  *-aton* (= En. *-athon*)

Extracted from *marathon*, *-athon* has been productive in English for quite some time. Marchand (1960: 161) called words such as *danceathon* and *swimathon* "barbarisms". Warren (1990) includes *-athon* on her list of secreted combining forms, as it does not preserve the entire meaning of the source-word, but has gone through a process of semantic broadening, creating names of prolonged activities resembling a marathon.

In Romanian, *-aton* is not at all productive. Out of the 20 items containing this libfix, 18 are English loanwords and only 2 Romanian formations (see Table 10). The loanwords may be graphically adapted. For instance, 2 items occur with both English and Romanian spelling: *hackathon* and *hackaton*, *swimathon* and *swimaton*. Another 3 items have been attested in our corpora only with a Romanian spelling of the libfix: *ciclaton, sexaton, techaton*. This suggests that, although the libfix is not productive in Romanian, people understand it and connect it to its source-word, both En. *marathon* and the Ro. *maraton*.

**Table 10:** Romanian formations with the libifix *-aton* = *-athon.*

| Base types | n. | Example |
|---|---|---|
| whole word | 2 | *varaton* 'long vaccination session during the summer' < *vară* 'summer' + *-aton* <br> *Mayaton* 'long concert of Maya' < *Maya* 'name of a singer' + *-aton* |

As can be seen in Table 10, the two Romanian items are formed by adding the graphically adapted libfix to whole words. Both items preserve the metrical structure of *maraton* 'marathon', i.e. they are three-syllable words with final-syllable stress. Moreover, *varaton* may also be interpreted as a blend of *vară* 'summer' and *maraton* 'marathon', with a larger overlapping segment, a characteristic of initial-phase libfixes. As Kemmer (2003: 89) points out in her case study of En. *-erati*, when a splinter is detached from a blend and is further attached to other bases, speakers tend to choose bases that share phonological segments with the splinter.

The low productivity of *-aton* and the metrical characteristics of the two Romanian creations indicate that this libfix stands more towards the blending end of the continuum.

## 4.6  *-ghedon* (= En. *-geddon*)

The analysis of Ro. *-ghedon* reveals similar patterns to Ro. *-athon*. We identified only 12 items in the three Romanian corpora: 8 international words, 3 Romanian formations, and 1 ambiguous. In English, *-geddon* is secreted from *Armaggedon*, originally a proper name designating the Biblical battlefield where the final fight between the Good and the Evil would take place (Revelation 16:16). The meaning of *Armageddon war* further broadened to name any decisive confrontation. Lalić-Krstin (2014: 260) found 102 English items that she considers blends with *armaggedon* as a second source-word. This suggests high productivity for the libfix in English.

Just like in the case of *-athon*, En. *-geddon* is recognized by Romanian speakers who connect it with En. *Armageddon* and/or Ro. *armaghedon*, which is stressed on the final syllable. Since we only relied on written corpora, it is impossible to determine whether Romanian speakers connect a particular libfix with its English or Romanian counterpart. Nevertheless, both items would be highly activated in the speakers' minds. This may explain why 2 out of the 8 international libfixed formations occur both with English and Romanian spelling: *eurogeddon* and *euroghedon*, *Romageddon* and *Romaghedon*. Conversely, the variation can lead to ambiguous situations such as *tramvagedon*, in which the libfix is spelled neither as in English (*-geddon*, with a double *-d-*), nor as in Romanian (*-ghedon*).

The examples in Table 11 suggest that *-ghedon* is also an initial-phase libfix in Romanian. In 2 cases, the libfix is bound to clipped bases; in the third example, a double interpretation is possible, both as a libfix attached to a whole word and as an overlap blend of *sarma* 'meat roll' + *armaghedon*. All 3 Romanian items preserve the metrical structure of *armaghedon*.

**Table 11:** Romanian formations with the libfix *-ghedon* = *-geddon*.

| Base types | n. | Example |
|---|---|---|
| whole word | 1 | *sarmaghedon* 'a meal where one eats too many meat rolls' < *sarma* 'meat rolls' + *-ghedon* |
| clipped base | 2 | *tramvagedon* 'imaginary tram crash' < *tramvai* 'tram' + *-gedon*<br>*pornaghedon* 'a sudden end to a politician's career due to video recordings of him having sex' < *porno* 'porn' + *-aghedon* |

The Romanian dataset is too small to draw strong conclusions; nevertheless, the existing forms suggest that *-ghedon* lies more towards the blending end of the continuum. It may develop into a more productive libfix and further into a com-

bining form, due to the productivity of En. *-geddon*. For the moment, it is infrequent and still preserves blending features.

## 4.7 *-izdă*

The only original Romanian libfix is extracted from a taboo word, *pizdă* '(slang) vulva', therefore all items containing it are mainly offensive, but there is also an idea of playfulness and sarcasm. This is why real type and token frequency may actually be higher in this case: taboo language is even more taboo in writing.

In 64 out of 70 types, the libfix is bound to clipped bases (see Table 12), and only in a few it is attached to whole words or acronyms, a situation which is completely different from the international libfixes discussed above. Interestingly, all 64 items formed from clipped bases preserve the metrical structure of the base, e.g. *jurnalizdă* is a 4-syllable word, with its stress on the penultimate syllable, just like the base *jurnalistă* 'female journalist'. This embedding of *-izdă* in the metrical contour of the base is favoured by the phonological similarity of the base. 58 of the 64 clipped bases end in *-istă*, with the only difference in the voicing of the consonants, e.g. *feminizdă* '(offensive) female feminist' < *feministă* 'female feminist', *artizdă* '(offensive) female artist' < *artistă* 'female artist'. The other 6 words are also professional names formed with a different suffix, e.g. *bucătărizdă* '(offensive) female cook' < *bucătăreasă* 'female cook' < *bucătar* 'male cook'.

**Table 12:** Base types for libfixed formations with *-izdă*.

| Base types | n. | Example |
|---|---|---|
| whole word | 5 | *Merkelizdă* '(offensive) Merkel' < *Merkel* + *-izdă* |
| acronym | 1 | *gesepizdă* '(offensive) female journalist at the Sports Gazette' < *GSP* 'Sports Gazette' + *-izdă* |
| clipped base | 64 | *jurnalizdă* '(offensive) female journalist' < *jurnalistă* 'female journalist' + *-izdă* |

Due to the taboo nature of the libfix, it is difficult to embark on a diachronic study of the *-izdă* formations. Yet, there are reasons to assume that the libfix was liberated after the creation of a blend from the source-word *pizdă* with a professional name ending in *-istă*, catalysed by the phonological similarity of the final word parts. Then, the splinter took as bases other feminine professional names that ended differently, e.g. *bucătărizdă* '(offensive) female cook' < *bucătăreasă* 'female

cook' < *bucătar* 'male cook'. In that phase, the process resembled affix substitution, and the next step was the combination with whole bases in an affix-like manner.

Interestingly, for 18 out of the 70 feminine nouns formed with *-izdă*, there are masculine back-formations in our corpora, e.g. *ziarizd* '(offensive) male journalist' < *ziarizdă* '(offensive) female journalist < *ziaristă* 'female journalist'. Moreover, we found 9 masculine words derived with *-izd* for which there was no feminine counterpart in the corpora, e.g. we found *minimalizd* '(offensive) male adept of minimalism', but not *\*minimalizdă* '(offensive) female adept of minimalism'. This suggests an emerging masculine form of the libfix. Semantically, such masculine formations are offensive both for males and for females, as they imply that the males they are referring to have a more female-like behaviour that is seen as weak or, in any case, derogatory. As a result, these words are also disrespectful towards women.

As it is no longer confined to a feminine noun base, *-izdă* is undergoing a process of meaning generalization. Yet, it is still subjected to semantic restrictions, as it combines with animates, with the aim of pejorating the base word.

Assessing the exact position of *-izdă* on the blending – bound morpheme continuum is difficult, if not impossible. The combination with clipped bases could suggest the blending end of the continuum; yet, as shown above, the clipping pattern, i.e. the fact that *-izdă* usually replaces an affix, indicates an affix-like behaviour. The meaning generalization and the creation of a masculine counterpart also underline a higher degree of morphemization. As both the masculine and the feminine coinages retain the emotional force of a taboo word, the connection to the source-word is maintained rather semantically than metrically, i.e. the outputs do not preserve the metrical structure of the source-word.

## 4.8 Libfixing as Structural Borrowing

Libfixing, understood here as the liberation of a word part from a source-word as a consequence of blending, has never been observed, studied or discussed in relation to the Romanian language before. The seven case studies presented above illustrate a novel word-formation process in Romanian.

Studying Romanian corpora has allowed us to embark on a fine-grained analysis of its origin, and to establish whether it is an internal evolution of the Romanian word-formation system or a contact-induced language change.

As shown in Section 2.2, structural borrowing implies the borrowing of abstract morphological schemata carried out via loanwords. For libfixing, we argue that the process implies first borrowing lexical items, then the combination of international libfixes with native bases and, then, in this context, new native libfixes may emerge.

Our case studies support the hypothesis that all international libfixes have entered Romanian via a series of loanwords. For each international libfix, there are only a few autochthonous formations (see Table 13). Nevertheless, the fact that such libfixes combine with native bases is evidence that Romanian speakers have indeed reanalysed the loanwords, extracted and (re)applied the morphologic rule. The emergence of a native libfix, *-izdă*, a quite productive one, is further evidence that Romanian libfixing is a case of structural borrowing.

**Table 13:** Total types and autochthonous types.

| Libfix | Total type frequency | Autochthonous types | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | **n.** | **%** |
| *-pedia* | 178 | 56 | 31.46% |
| *-gate* | 125 | 30 | 24% |
| *-aholic* | 120 | 30 | 25% |
| *-zilla* | 33 | 12 | 36.36% |
| *-aton* | 20 | 2 | 10% |
| *-ghedon* | 12 | 3 | 25% |
| *-izdă* | 70 | 70 | 100% |

Due to the existing English-Romanian language contact, and with the omnipresence of English on the Internet, structurally borrowing libfixing and its incorporation into Romanian are multidimensional rather than linear. When borrowed, each libfix brings into Romanian not only a form-meaning pair, but also traces of its history, i.e. the connection to its source-word.

For instance, OED already acknowledges *-athon* as a combining form in English, but its connection with En. *marathon* is still visible in the Romanian outputs. Romanian speakers did borrow *hackathon, swimathon, danceathon* and other English formations, and recognized *-athon* as a word formant, but also recognized *marathon* as its source and thus its underlying blending formation. In Romanian, the only two formations (*varaton, Mayaton*) may also be interpreted as blends of Ro. *maraton*, since they differ from this word by only one letter and since similarity with the source-words is one of the modelling factors of blends (see, for instance, Gries 2012: 159–162). This is why the two autochthonous formations resemble Ro. *maraton* so much. Autochthonised spellings such as *swimaton, techaton* for English loanwords suggest that the words are also processed in relation with Ro. *maraton*. In this context, we argue that the borrowing of libfixing as a process somehow overlaps with or even is triggered by the increasing productivity of Romanian lexical blending under the influence of English, which may also be considered a case of structural borrowing (see Section 2.2). As we have

shown, lexical blending and libfixing have a strong connection that is passed into the recipient language.

Lexical blending was attested in Romanian prior to the English influence, but only marginally, whereas recently it has become more widespread (see Section 2.2). The increased productivity of lexical blending and the ease with which Romanian speakers now understand and coin lexical blends have opened the path to borrow libfixing. On the one hand, since Romanian native speakers are currently blending more than in the past, it is more likely that the same word will be blended several times and offshoot a libfix; on the other hand, speakers recognize international libfixes as productive word formatives still connected to their source-words.

In their network analysis of English libfixes, Norde and Sippach (2019: 380) show that libfixes form clusters with strong interparadigmatic links, which make English speakers produce and understand libfixed formations easily. Our results further support the idea that these links extend even over language boundaries, and are passed into the recipient languages as non-native speakers are exposed to English libfixed formations almost on a daily basis.

The Romanian libfix -*izdă* is another argument that libfixing has become part of the Romanian word-formation system. The libfix itself is highly productive compared to the number of native creations based on international libfixes. However, its morpho-phonological properties differ from the international libfixes: -*izdă* is bound mostly to clipped bases, and its source-word never imposes its metrical contour over the resulting words. This may be due to the fact that the base is actually the semantic head of the new word, the libfix only adding some extra semantic features. We do not have diachronic corpora to establish the exact moment when this libfix emerged; our own Internet searches indicated *ziarizdă* '(offensive) female journalist' as the oldest formation, from 2008. However, we believe it followed the same process as other libfixes, i.e. it was created as a result of a series of blends. Masculine back-formations, such as *ziarizd* '(offensive) male journalist' indicate semantic generalization, and, along with type frequency, suggest it is advancing on the path to morphemehood. More importantly, the case of -*izdă* suggests that Romanians did not borrow a schema understood as a form-meaning pair, but some sort of procedural knowledge: how to liberate libfixes from blends.

# 5 Conclusions

Romanian libfixing is an emerging word-formation process whereby speakers form creative, expressive and attention-grabbing words in a partly predictable and routinized way, since the same phonological string with more or less the same meaning is repeatedly attached to various bases. Yet, the combinations are also partly restricted prosodically and semantically: in some cases, bases are clipped to fit certain metrical patterns or to deviate from them as little as possible; in other cases, bases are restricted to a certain semantic category, such as animates.

In line with Norde and Sippach (2019: 380), we considered libfixes to be part of a continuum from blending to combining forms and affixes. The seven case studies present seven word-formants in different stages of morphemization: *-aton* and *-ghedon* are closer to the blending end, *-zilla* is half way through, *-pedia* and *-aholic* are more productive and lean towards the combining form end of the continuum, whereas *-gate* is the closest to becoming a fully-established morpheme. The autochthonous *-izdă* is productive, but still linked to its taboo source-word; its partial semantic generalization and its combination with whole words indicate it is also half-way through the morphemization process.

Our corpus-based analysis shows that Romanian libfixing is indeed a particular case of both material and structural borrowing: speakers borrowed libfixed formations and combined the international libfixes with native bases, but, more importantly, Romanian speakers borrowed the know-how of serial blending and of liberating libfixes, thus enlarging the Romanian word-formation system with a creative and productive process.

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