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RUSELINA L. NICOLOVA*
Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski

THE DERIVATION OF DIMINUTIVES FROM ABSTRACT NOUN BASES IN BULGARIAN

The paper reviews the formal and semantic characteristics of the formation of diminutives in Bulgarian, where the process affects nouns, adjectives, numerals, adverbs, verbs and pronouns. The derivation of diminutives from abstract nouns is analyzed on the basis of material excerpted from blogs and forums in the Bulgarian Google, in which significant activation of the process in the language practices of young speakers is observed. The factors which facilitate or constrain the derivation of diminutives from abstract nouns are studied, as well as the semantic interaction between diminutive suffixes and certain semantic components (both denotative and connotative) of base words.

Key words: abstract nouns, diminutive-formation, morphology, semantics of diminutives, Bulgarian.

1. 0. Nature of diminutive-formation. The formation of diminutives is a process characterized in numerous diverse ways in linguistics: as inflection, as derivation, as inflection in some cases and as derivation in others or as a third type of affixation, parallel to derivation and inflection.

In the Russian linguistic tradition, one finds V.V.Vinogradov's claim that diminutive suffixes are inflectional morphemes (VINOGRADOV 1972: 98 and so on). Notwithstanding, diminutives have been traditionally analyzed under the heading of word-formation even to the present day. In Bulgarian linguistic circles some authors share the opinion of diminutives as form-formative elements (e.g. ANDREJČIN (1944: 109–112, 133), ENCHEVA (1988).

ZIDAROVA (2008), who has published on nomination in diminutives in Bulgarian, distinguishes in Bulgarian substantive lexemes 'diminuti-

* nitsolova@abv.bg

ve forms' and 'diminutive words'. In the former case the diminutive expresses diminution of the basic denotative class or is associated with the expression of an evaluative attitude to the class, thus representing simply a variant of the referent of the base word, for example *râka* ('hand') – *râč-ičk-a*. In the latter case, the diminutive develops its own nomination, different from the one of the base word, for example *zvezda* ('star') – *zvezd-ičk-a* ('a small star-like symbol, an asterisk').

In Scalise's generative morphology the formation of diminutives is a third type of affixation, which is considered to run in parallel with derivation and inflection (SCALISE (1984: 131-133), a similar opinion s. in DIMITROVA (1959: 265).

In Bulgarian linguistic research and more generally in the Slavonic tradition, the formation of diminutives is considered derivation (STOJANOV (1964: 175–178), MASLOV (1982: 95–97), KRÂSTEV (1976) and others).

In our opinion, the formation of diminutives in Bulgarian and in the other Indo-European languages is a process converging more with derivation than with inflection. We fully share Dressler and Merlini-Barbaresti's understanding that diminutive suffixes are 'non-prototypical representatives of derivational morphology' (DRESSLER, MERLINI-BARBARESI 1994: 111, also MANOVA 2009).

2.1. The formation of diminutives in Bulgarian. Formal properties. One of the most important characteristics of diminutives in Bulgarian is that they violate Aronoff's (1976) 'Unitary Base Hypothesis', since they are formed from bases which belong to different part-of-speech categories:

a) from nouns: *hljab* ('bread') – *hleb-če*, *hleb-ec*; *gora* ('forest') – *gor-ičk-a*, *gor-ic-a*; *vino* ('wine') – *vin-c-e*;

b) from adjectives: *rus* ('blond') – *rus-ičâk*; *sin* ('blue') – *sin-ičâk*; *mil* ('kind') – *mil-ičâk*;

c) from adverbs: *bârzo* ('quicky') – *bârz-ičk-o*; *silno* ('strongly') – *siln-ičk-o*; *utre* ('tomorrow') – *utr-ička*; *tuk(a)* ('here') – *tuka-čk-a*; *sega* ('now') – *seg-ičk-a*, *seg-ink-a*;

d) from few verbs: *tičam* ('run') – *tič-k-am*; *plača* ('cry') – *plač-k-am*; *igraja* ('play') – *igra-jk-am*; *običam* ('love') – *obič-k-am*; *papam* ('eat') – *pap-k-am*; *lapam* ('swallow') – *lap-k-am*;

e) from cardinal numerals in the range 1 to 4: *edin* ('one' masculine) – *edn-ičâk*, *edna* ('one' feminine) – *edn-ičk-a*, *edno* – ('one' neuter) – *edn-ičk-o*; *dve* ('two' - these indicate the number of inanimate entities, children or women) – *dve-čk-i*, *dve-nki* // *dvama* ('two' – this indicates the number of male persons or of a man and a woman – the masculine personal form) – *dvam-k-a*, *dvam-c-a*; *tri* ('three') – *tri-čk-i*, *tri-nk-i*;

trima ('three' masculine personal form) – *trim-c-a*; *četiri* ('four') – *četir-k-i*;

f) from some pronouns: *moj* ('my') – *mo-ičâk*; *naš* ('our') – *naš-ičâk*; *nešto* ('something') – *nešt-ičk-o*, *nešt-ic-e*; *ništo* ('nothing') – *ništ-ičk-o*.

The derivational morphemes in the formation of diminutives are the suffixes: *-k-*, *-jk-*, *-čk-*, *-ičk-*, *-ičâk*, *-nk-*, *-če-*, *-c-*, *-ec-*, *-ic-*, *-čic-*, *-enc-*, *-e*, *-le*, with their allomorphs resulting from morphophonological changes.

A diminutive interfix *-c-* can be detected only in some nouns, but only in the forms for plural, for example *list* ('leaf') – *list-ec*, *list-ove* – *list-ov-c-e*, *grad* ('town') – *grad-ec*, *gradove* – *grad-ov-c-e*. It should be noted that this element can be considered an infix from a synchronic point of view only, as in the proto-language the morpheme *-ov-* was part of the stem which only later, after a process of decomposition, came to be considered as part of the inflection into which the diminutive suffix *-c-* merged.

2.2. Number defectiveness with diminutives. Not all diminutives with suffix *-ec-* have plural forms.

Compare: *brat* ('brother') – *bratja* (Pl.), *brat-ec* (DIM) – \emptyset ; *hljab* ('bread') – *hljab-ove* (Pl.), *hleb-ec* (DIM) – \emptyset ; *narod* ('a people') – *narodi* (Pl.), *narod-ec* (DIM) – \emptyset .

A few masculine and a number of neuter diminutive nouns in Bulgarian display reverse defectiveness – they have *only* plural forms. These nouns have regular singular and plural forms but with different suffixes, so that in the plural there are two diminutive variants.

Compare: *morkov* ('carrot') – *morkov-i* (Pl), *morkov-č-e* (DIM) – *morkov-č-e-ta* (Pl, DIM) // \emptyset – *morkov-k-i* (Pl, DIM); *krak* ('leg') – *krak-a* (Pl.), *kra-č-e* (DIM) – *kra-č-e-ta* (Pl, DIM) // \emptyset – *kra-čk-a* (Pl, DIM); *uho* ('ear') – *uši* (Pl.), *uš-e* (DIM) – *uš-e-ta* (Pl, DIM) // \emptyset – *uši-čk-i* (Pl, DIM).

These instances of defectiveness violate the basic morphological principle of derivational rules applying before inflectional ones. The differences between the regular and the defective plural forms are both semantic and syntactic: the defective plural masculine diminutives have a collective meaning and cannot be combined with numerals, while regular plural diminutives readily combine with numerals as they have singulative meaning (for a detailed account see DERŽANSKI 2002, 2005, who offers typological parallels to the phenomenon in Bulgarian.)

2.3. Gender changes with diminutives. Gender changes in nouns occur in diminutive-formation. Often masculine nouns change their gen-

der to neuter, for instance: *stol* ('chair') – *stol-če*; *zakon* ('law') – *zakon-če*; *vojnîk* ('soldier') – *vojnî-če*, however some preserve their masculine gender, for example: *vjatâr* ('wind') – *vetr-ec* (M), but also *vjatâr-če* (N). Feminine nouns preserve their gender or only rarely change it to neuter, for instance: *počivka* ('rest') – *počivč-ic-a*; *žena* ('woman') – *žen-če* (N), but: *žen-ičk-a*, *žen-ic-a* (F). Neuter nouns preserve their gender, for example: *selo* ('village') – *sel-c-e*. It is obvious from the examples provided that there exists a direct correlation between the gender of the base word, the diminutive suffix and the gender of the diminutive derivative.

2.5. The place of diminutive suffixes in the structure of the word.

Diminutive suffixes occupy the final position in a word in cases of zero inflection or they appear immediately before inflections. Some diminutive suffixes allow the addition of another diminutive of the second grade, for instance: *brat* ('brother') – *brat-č-e* – *brat-č-enc-e*. This accumulation of diminutive suffixes is typical of Slavonic languages. When emphasis is the aim, it is possible to use a given diminutive suffix a number of times in a single diminutive lexeme, for example: *brat-č-enc-enc-enc-e*.

3.1. **Meaning of diminutives.** As the examples reveal, in numerous cases in Bulgarian there are synonymous diminutive suffixes. Andrejčîn voices the opinion that some suffixes, for instance the suffix *-č-* in nouns, have the meaning 'small', while diminutive derivatives with other suffixes, for example in nouns with the suffix *-c-*, connotative meanings prevail (ANDREJČÎN 1944: 109–112). This claim needs further corroboration and analysis.

3.2. **Denotative and connotative features in the meaning of diminutives.** The literature on the semantics of diminutives in different languages is astounding with diverse opinions voiced. However, space considerations prevent us from a critical discussion of these opinions. (Detailed literature surveys are available in the fundamental work of DRESSLER AND MERLINI-BARBARESI (1994), JURAFSKY (1996) and others). Despite the numerous differences among separate authors in defining the semantic invariant of diminutives (and here it is only appropriate to raise the question whether it actually exists?), nobody denies the existence of two types of semantic components in the meaning makeup of diminutives – denotative and connotative features. The issue of the interplay between these two sets of semantic features is extremely complex. It is very difficult to determine whether both types of features are always jointly expressed in diminutive lexemes, or whether only one of the sets gets fo-

regrounded, with the second one sometimes not even present at all. Thus for example in the meaning of the diminutive *vanička* ('tub') the denotative meaning with the feature 'small' takes the upper hand, together with the functions of the object dependent on its size in contrast to *vana* ('bathtub'), while in other cases the central element of meaning is the connotative set in words such as *zajavlenie* ('application') – *zajavlenij-ce*, where the denotative feature 'small' is not expressed at all (see also ZIDAROVA 2008).

The prototypical denotative meaning of diminutives is related to gradational quantification of objects and events in all three spatial dimensions and sometimes even in the fourth one – time (when animate entities or events are named). What is more, the basic quantificational feature 'small' is unquestionably related to the feature 'child' due to the uniquely important role that children have in human life. It is not mere coincidence that the major use of diminutives is typical of the speech behavior of adults in their communication with children and of the speech of children in relation to the objects and activities from their immediate surroundings. This is the reason why many authors among whom WIERZBICKA (1984), JURAFSKY (1996) and numerous others believe that at the center of the widely extended polysemy of diminutives, where it is very difficult to establish an invariant core, lies the prototypical concept 'small/ child'. It is due to the general positive attitude to children that the prototypical connotative meaning of diminutives is positively marked.

Diminutives derived from adjectives can have the denotative meaning 'little (low) intensity' of a property, for example: *Nina e pâlni-čĭk-a* 'plumpish (DIM)', but more often than not they express the speaker's positive attitude to the referent of the word with which the adjective is associated, or to the listener, when connotative meaning comes to the fore, for instance: *Anna beše rus-ičĭk-a* 'blondish (DIM)'; *Ela, mili-ičĭk-a* (Come here my darling/dearest DIM)' (compare Zidarova (2008)). It would be preposterous to claim that *rus-ičĭk-a* means 'slightly (little) blond', as the diminutive only marks the positive attitude of the speaker to *Anna*, while the diminutive suffix *-ičĭk-* in *mili-ičĭk-a* from *mila* ('dear'), an adjective with inherent positive connotations, only reinforces the positive connotations so that the diminutive does not mean 'only a little dear', but just the opposite – 'very dear', that is the scale has been reversed – a phenomenon which has long been commented on in the literature on diminutives.

The diminutives derived from adverbs have more or less the same characteristics as the ones defined for de-adjectival diminutives.

Numerals which make up a fully systematized quantification normally denote an exact number or quantity of objects. With them gradational quantification is impossible – it is impossible for the denotative feature ‘small’ in a quantitative interpretation to combine with an exactly defined number or quantity denoted by the numeral. The denotative feature ‘small’ relates exclusively to qualitative characteristics of the entities with which the numeral is associated – most often the named entities are children, for instance *Imaha dve-čk-i deč-ica* (‘They had two-DIM kids-DIM’). Moreover, the positive connotation in relation to the entities quantified by the numeral is frequently the only meaning of the diminutive, for example: *Elate tri-čk-i-te* (‘Come the three-DIM of you’) – what is referred to by the diminutive are three children or three little girls.

Diminutive verbs are used predominantly in the speech of adults in their communication with children or in children’s speech. Such verbs do not express quantification of processual features resulting from the feature ‘small’. This feature relates exclusively to the agents of the denoted activities who are prototypically children.

The few pronominal diminutives, derived from pronouns-nouns, pronouns-adjectives and pronouns-adverbs express predominantly connotations, most frequently positive ones. Only the diminutives derived from the pronoun-noun *nešto* (‘something’) – *nešt-ičk-o*, *nešt-ic-e* are more often associated with the expression of the denotative feature ‘small’.

By using Lakoff’s Radial Category model (LAKOFF 1987), Jurafsky defines all basic meanings of diminutives as deriving from the prototypical meaning ‘small/ child’. He assumes that the following mechanisms are at play in the semantic changes of diminutives: metaphor (for example the metaphor relating to grammatical gender: in many non-Indo-European languages it is the feminine gender, but in Bulgarian the neuter also plays a role as it is related to children), inference or contextually-determined reinterpretation, for example: *škaf* (‘drawer’) – *noštno škaf-č-e* (‘bedstand’), *škaf-č-e za banja* (‘bathroom drawer’), generalization or bleaching, for instance: *râka* (‘hand’) – *râč-k-a* (of a machine) (‘handle’), specification through lambda-abstractions in cases when the diminutive produces second order predicates, for example in the formation of singulative words from mass nouns, compare: *snjag* (‘snow’) – *snež-ink-a* (‘snowflake’), *zaxar* (‘sugar’) – *zaxar-č-e* (‘a sugar cube’) (Jurafsky 1996: 544 and others).

The connotative meanings of diminutives, as Volek illustrates, express two types of relations:

1. The expression of an “emotive attitude [...] toward the phenomenon named in the base of the diminutive derivative, e.g.

Oj, kakoj sup-čik vkusnyj! (Russian)

Oh what a soup-DIM delicious

‘Oh, what a nice delicious soup!’

2. The expression of an “emotive attitude ... toward a phenomenon not named in it”, particularly the addressee, as in:

Nu vypij vod-ički! (Russian)

Now drink water-DIM

‘Now drink some nice water!’

(VOLEK 1987: 149–175, quoted after DRESSLER, MERLINI-BARBARESI 1994: 89).

Connotative meanings can be expressed in parallel to denotative meanings, but they can also surface as the only meaning of the diminutive when it does not represent as a defining feature of the referent the feature ‘small’ (see the examples above). Pragmatically speaking, connotative features are realized in different speech acts produced for diverse communicative purposes: to express tenderness – in conversations with children, members of the family and close relatives, in maintaining contact with favorite pets; to express politeness or a friendly attitude towards the interlocutor; to mark humbleness or shyness; to put mildly in euphemistic terms a negative attitude towards something; to impart disregard or slight (for instance: *pisatel-č-e* (‘writer-DIM’), to express irony, sarcasm, etc.

3.4. Diminutives as ‘key’ in speech. It is difficult to establish a common invariant for all connotations of diminutives since their functions vary widely, broadly speaking from a fully positive to an absolutely negative connotation depending on the nature of the communicative event and the type of speech act as has been brilliantly demonstrated in DRESSLER, MERLINI-BARBARESI (1994). The scope of diminutives ranges over the totality of the speech act. L. Spitzer offers a very precise characterization of diminutives from a pragmatic point of view:

“The ludic instinct is a mood of the speaker’s which creates the ground of the sentence, the key: the playfully attached suffixes originally do not correspond to any logical express need, they do not stick to that specific single word, and this is why I called them sentence diminutives and today I would like, perhaps, to call them in a less grammatical way, impressionistic diminutives”. And in a note, he expands on tonality, “Suffixes (sc. diminutive) work like key signatures in music, determining the „key“ of human speech.” (SPITZER 1921: 201-202, quoted after DRESSLER, MERLINI-BARBARESI (1994: 86).

4. 0. **Google as a data source.** Diminutives occur naturally in spontaneous everyday dialogic speech. This motivated our choice to collect data from the Bulgarian Google where very few of the texts are literary prose. Texts from forums and blogs predominate. What is more, stylistically they are representative of the contemporary informal oral speech habits of the young generation. The authors of blogs and in forums do their best to write in a manner maximally resembling the way they speak, absolutely spontaneously, discussing all types of topics – from mundane to very serious ones. The attitude of the author towards both text and reading audience is natural, friendly and devoid of any degree of formality. One of the most important means for the adequate expression of such an attitude is the use of diminutives, which in this particular case should be classified as ‘impressionistic diminutives’ according to Spitzer’s definition.

In the speech of contemporary youngsters in Bulgaria one can easily observe a tremendous boost in the use of diminutives from both concrete and abstract nouns. This boost is first signaled by the high frequency of diminutives in texts in Google, compare for instance an announcement in the high life section: *Alarm-ičk-a za apartament-č-e s bezplatno montaž-č-e* (‘home-DIM alarm system-DIM with free installation-DIM’) and second by the widening of the list of abstract lexemes which are used as bases for the formation of diminutives, for example: *krasot-ičk-a* (‘beauty’), *psuvn-ičk-a* (‘swear-word’), *svatb-ičk-a* (‘wedding’), *borb-ičk-a* (‘fight’), *obosnov-čic-a* (‘grounding’), *grabež-č-e* (‘robbery’), *bezumi-jic-e* (‘lunacy’), *obrazovan-jic-e* (‘education’), *izjav-k-a* (‘performance’) and numerous other ones.

5.0. **Focus of the study.** The paper focuses on the comparatively peripheral, atypical diminutives from abstract nouns which are far from numerous in works of literature.

Abstract nouns denote static or dynamic attributes, properties, relations or events, as well as concepts.

6.0. **Two groups of abstract nouns according to their status as bases for the formation of diminutives.** The detailed review of abstract nouns represented in the Reverse Dictionary of Contemporary Bulgarian (ORSBE) (1975) showed that depending on the formation of diminutives abstract nouns in Bulgarian neatly divide into two groups: abstract nouns which do not build diminutives and abstract nouns which do.

A. Abstract nouns that do not give rise to diminutives contain derivational suffixes which block the appearance of diminutive suffixes. These are the three groups with the following suffixes:

1. – *n* – *oran* ('ploughing'), *prodan* ('selling'), *kopan* ('digging'), *dan* ('tribute; toll'), *pridan* ('dowry'), *bran* ('war'). This is a small group of almost obsolete words with a verbal root and a non-productive suffix meaning human activities.

2. – *stv-o*. This is a very large group with a productive suffix and diverse bases: verbal (*proizvodstvo* 'production'), substantive (*vinarstvo* 'winery', *bratstvo* 'brotherhood'), adjectival (*ravenstvo* 'equality') and with divergent meanings: static and dynamic attributes and events (*pokorstvo* 'obedience', *svojstvo* 'property', *prijatelsvo* 'friendship', *ribarstvo* 'fishing', *zârnoproizvodstvo* 'corn production').

3. – *lâk* – *daskallâk* ('teaching') *hadžilâk* ('pilgrimage'). This small group with an unproductive suffix contains Turkish borrowings which are considered archaic.

B. Abstract nouns which form diminutives. These are the groups with the following suffixes: *-štin-a*, *itb-a*, *-izâm*, *-otevic-a*, *-a*, *-ot*, *-b-a*, *-in-a*, *-ot-a*, *-otij-a*, *-ij-a*, *n'-a*, *-ic-a*, *-ost/-est*, *-ne*, *-ni-e*, *-i-e*, *-da*, *-ež*, *-k-a*, *-ovk-a*, *-tv-a*, *-až*, *-cij-a*.

It is worth mentioning that for some of the groups (e.g. with the suffixes *-štin-a*, *-itb-a*, *-izâm*, *-otevic-a*) only a single lexeme with a diminutive was found in the Google data. However, the diminutive in question has high frequency of use, for instance: the diminutive *čoveštin-k-a* ('human trait'), which is commonly used to denote human infirmities and foibles. In most of the remaining groups the lexemes from which diminutives are built do not make a large percentage, but single diminutives are frequently used, for instance: *radost-čic-a* ('joy'), *glupost-čic-a* ('stupidity'), *hitrost-čic-a* ('cunning'), *svatb-ičk-a* ('wedding'), *krasot-ičk-a* ('beauty'), *borb-ičk-a* ('fighting').

Few are the groups in which the lexemes with a diminutive are significantly larger in numbers, for example in the groups with the suffixes: *-in-a*, *-ni-e*, *-ež*, *-k-a*, *-ovk-a*, *-otij-a*. In view of the established differences in the data it would be interesting to investigate:

1. whether there are more general factors which are conducive to the formation of diminutives from abstract nouns or ones that constrain such formations;

2. what types of semantic interaction occur between the base or certain elements of it (root, 'the abstract' suffix) and the diminutive suffix.

7.1. **Factors which activate or constrain the formation of diminutives from abstract nouns.** In the formation of diminutives the membership of the abstract noun to the basic stock of vocabulary and its frequency of use are of extreme importance. The higher the frequency of

use of an abstract noun is in spontaneous oral speech, the greater the probability for it to function as a base for the formation of diminutives. This is a necessary but far from sufficient condition.

Let us review an example: in Bulgarian the group of abstract nouns denoting properties, ending in the suffixes *-ost/-est* is exceptionally productive. In ORSBE the members of this group exceed 2200 and new lexemes from the discourses of the hard sciences, literary and art studies and various other areas of human knowledge are constantly added to the group. Notwithstanding, only four lexemes from this huge group have been registered as bases for diminutives in Google: – *radost* (‘joy’) – *radost-čic-a*, *glupost* (‘stupidity’) – *glupost-čic-a*, *hitrost* (‘cunning’), *hitrost-čic-a*, *hubost* (‘beauty’) – *hubost-čic-a*. While most of the lexemes in the group are of academic, formal character, the above four lexemes are frequently used in everyday speech as they denote basic human qualities and properties.

Another example is the group of abstract nouns with the suffix *-tb-a* in which the nouns predominantly denote agricultural activities. In this group just one of the nouns has high frequency of use due to its lexical meaning and it is the only one which yields a diminutive – *ženitba* (‘marriage’), напр. *ženitb-ic-a po smetka* (‘marriage-DIM for money’).

Abstract nouns that are not part of the basic vocabulary stock, that is archaisms, scientific terms and all academic and literary vocabulary items, which are not frequently used in everyday speech, if at all, can naturally not be expected to function readily as bases for the formation of diminutives, compare for instance: *provodimost* (‘conduction’), *валентност* (‘valency’), *veličie* (‘grandeur’), *kipež* (‘agitation’), *letež* (‘flying’) and many other ones.

7.2. Another constraint. Yet another factor constrains the formation of diminutives and it is of a formal nature. This is the greater length of complex abstract nouns, for example: *svetouseštane* (‘worldview’), *vodonepronicaemost* (‘water resistance’), *zakononarušenje* (‘breach of law’), *energoemkost* (‘energy consumption’) and so on. This factor frequently pairs off with the low frequency of use of such lexemes in everyday speech.

7.3. Semantic interrelations between diminutive suffixes and denotative or connotative components in the meaning of the base word. The most influential factor in the formation of diminutives is the lexical meaning of abstract nouns. Some components of meaning are highly compatible with the meanings of diminutive suffixes (even though idiosyncrasy cannot be easily dismissed), while others are fully in-

compatible. The relevant meaning components of both denotative and connotative character are the following:

1. denotative components relating to features which allow quantification along a gradient scale and as a consequence readily associate with the denotative meaning 'small' of diminutive suffixes;

2. denotative components relating to the positioning of the respective abstract noun along the scale of abstraction from nouns with the most concrete to the most abstract possible meaning;

3. connotative elements, expressing the positive attitude of the speaker to the referent of the naming unit;

4. connotative elements expressing the pejorative attitude of the speaker towards the referent of the naming unit (see NITSOLOVA 2009).

7.4. **Analysis.** Let's begin with the denotative components which allow quantification along a scale, which guarantees compatibility with the denotative meaning 'small' of diminutive suffixes. When the noun denotes a static or dynamic property which can be represented with variations of gradational intensity and/or gradational temporal extension, as well as with variable evaluative marking (axiological variants) along a given scale, the formation of diminutives is regularly licensed. The resulting derived diminutives usually designate a property of low intensity and/ or short temporal duration or lower evaluative marking. The existence of such types of quantification is further supported by the modifiers naturally accompanying the diminutive, for example: *leka gorčiv-ink-a* ('slight bitterness'), *malka radost-čic-a* ('a little joy'), *leko/ malko upražneni-jc-e* ('an easy/short exercise'), *drebna medijsna izjav-k-a* ('a tiny media appearance'), *kratka vražd-ičk-a* ('short-lasting animosity'), *malko/ leko/ bърzo masaž-če* ('a little/slight/quick massage'), *mizerno udovolstvi-jc-e* ('miserable pleasure'), *taja leka prepirn-ičk-a* ('this little quibble'), *edna malka glupost-čic-a* ('one little folly').

It is important to emphasize that in all these cases the meaning of the diminutive is far from exhausted by features of quantification, since besides the quantifying denotative meaning the diminutives also carry connotative meanings most frequently associated with a positive attitude to the referent of the naming unit or to the participants in a communicative act. It is only rarely that the diminutive expresses a negative or contemptuous attitude towards the referent of the naming unit on the part of the speaker, as for example in *mizerno udovolstvi-jc-e* ('miserable pleasure'). Such cases deserve a separate, detailed study.

Surprisingly, the existence of a quantifying component allowing gradation along a scale in the meaning of an abstract noun does not always

and automatically condition the expression of the denotative meaning component ‘small’ in the diminutive suffix. The semantics of event nominals is extremely complex. With nouns naming events the number of semantic components significantly increases: participants in the event, the particular relations among the participants, place, time, etc. All these components are associated with semantic features that can be gradationally quantified.

Let’s analyze as an example the diminutive *svatb-ičk-a* from *svatba* (‘wedding’). A wedding is a multifaceted event celebrating the marriage of two persons. The participants in such an event are at least the following: the bride, the groom, the witnesses, the best man, the maids-of-honor, the officer leading the ceremony, relatives, guests and so on. Prototypically the event includes a feast with dancing and other festivities. *Svatba* can be ascribed attributes such as *goljama* (‘big’), *malka* (‘small’), *bogata* (‘rich’), *skromna* (‘simple’), etc. relating to the number of guests and the amount of financial expenses. Obviously these two features are readily graded (for brevity we leave aside all gradable axiological features associated with *svatba*). The data we gathered, however, reveals that in too few of the cases the diminutive *svatb-ičk-a* denotes ‘a small wedding with few guests’ or *skromna svatba* (modest wedding – one that is not expensive to organize’), for example *malka/ mâânička svatb-ičk-a* (‘a little tiny wedding’). More frequently young speakers of Bulgarian use the diminutive not to specify the gradational quantification of the event but only to express their positive attitude to it, especially in cases when the speaker/writer has been a participant in the event, for instance *mojata/ našata svatb-ičk-a* (‘my/our wedding’). What is more, there are numerous examples in which the diminutive is used to describe not a small but a very big wedding, as in the example here: . . . *i ako mi platjat edna svatbička ot 300–400 duši*... (‘and if they pay for me a wedding of 300–400 guests’), which illustrates that the basic meaning component of the diminutive is not quantification, but the expression of positive connotations. This phenomenon accounts for the fact that very often the diminutive tends to replace the base word in naming the event.

7.5. Denotative components relating to the degree of abstractness of the abstract noun. Abstract nouns denote concepts, static and dynamic properties and qualities, without directly naming objects relating to those properties and qualities, as well as relations and events. The classification of nouns into abstract and concrete according to features such as ‘existence/non-existence’, ‘tangibility/intangibility’ of their referent, or ‘completeness/ incompleteness’ thereof poses serious diffi-

culties in the application of these criteria for the classification of the specific lexical material (see also Burov 2004: 231–253). This is accounted for with the lack of a Chinese wall between the two types of nouns, since abstract and concrete are two extremes which delimit a gradual space within which nouns are positioned along a fine-grained cline. A perceptible tendency can be established in the formation of diminutives and the positioning of the base noun along the cline – the closer a noun is to the concrete extreme, the greater the possibility and probability for the formation of diminutives from it; respectively the closer a noun's positioning is to the abstract extreme, the lower the probability for forming diminutives from that noun. Admittedly, due to a high degree of idiosyncrasy, this tendency has an indicative, not a predictive power.

The group of nouns with very low propensity for functioning as bases for the derivation of diminutives includes those that name a static or dynamic property or quality without referring it to an extra-linguistic object and many that denote concepts. These make up the large group of de-verbal nouns ending in the suffix *-ne*, which denote processes named by verbs in the imperfective aspect, for example: *hodene* ('walking'), *tičane* ('running'), *pisane* ('writing'). Other similar groups include lexemes of the type: *letež* ('flying'), *vârvež* ('stepping'), *pojava* ('appearance'), *kositba* ('scything') or lexemes denoting static properties or qualities of objects as is the case in *divaština* ('savagery'), *ambicija* ('ambition'), *krotost* ('meekness'), *belota* ('whiteness'), *uverenost* ('confidence'); as well as lexemes naming concepts, for example: *otnošenje* ('relationship'), *taksonomija* ('taxonomy'), *kačestvo* ('quality'), *količestvo* ('quantity'), *priznak* ('property') and others.

Nouns denoting events are less abstract since events are bound not only via the participants involved in them but also in specified spatial and temporal dimensions. This is the reason why the probability of forming diminutives from them is much higher, for instance: *sâstезanie* ('competition') – *sâstезani-**jc**-e*, *borba* ('fight') – *borb-**ič**k-a*, *prodážba* ('sale') – *prodážb-**ic**-a*, *razhodka* ('walk') – *razhodč-**ič**-a*.

A third set comprises those abstract nouns that name not only a static or dynamic property but also denote objects associated with these properties. In this set, if a diminutive is formed it is based on the 'concrete' meaning associated with the object associated with the respective property, for example: *jadene* – *jaden-**c**-e* ('eating, meal'), *prane* – *pran-**enc**-e* ('washing'), *molitva* – *molitv-**ič**k-a*, *molitv-**ic**-a* ('prayer'), *molba* – *molb-**ič**k-a* ('application'), *besotija* – *mojata besotij-**k**-a* ('my naughty dare-devil' – thus a mother calls her beloved little daughter), *visočina*

(‘height’) – *visočin-k-a* (‘mole’). Such lexemes are most frequent in the groups with the suffixes *-ni-e* and *-i-e*, for instance: *zajavlenie – zjavleni-ĵc-e* (‘application’), *otsâstvie – otsâstvi-ĵc-e* (‘absence’ at school), *bezumie – bezumi-ĵc-e* (‘folly’), *obrazovanie – obrazovani-ĵc-e* (‘education’), *predpisanie – predpisani-ĵc-e* (‘prescript’), *obeštanie – obeštani-ĵc-e* (‘promise’), *vâznagraždenie – vâznagraždeni-ĵc-e* (‘remuneration’). Thus the abstract noun *stroež* (building) names a construction site besides its processual meaning of a type of activity. The diminutive derived from it, *stroež-č-e*, means a smaller construction site, unless in a specific context the emphasis is expressly put on the connotative semantic feature ‘non-important’ as a metaphoric extension of the semantic features ‘small’.

In some cases, the derived diminutives have more restricted meaning than the base nouns from which they are derived. This meaning can preserve the processual features, for example: *ritanica* (‘kicking’) – *ritanič-k-a* (‘a children’s dance’), or it could acquire a more object-like meaning denoting the concrete results of a given activity, for instance: *bârkanica* (‘medley’) – *bârkanič-k-a* (‘a meal prepared by mayonnaise, cheese and onion’).

7.6. Ameliorative connotative components in the meaning of the base word. Due to their prototypical positive connotations, diminutive suffixes combine very successfully with abstract nouns which in their base form display positive connotations. In such cases the role of the diminutive is to intensify the already present positive connotations which are most often directed towards the referent of the name or express mutual empathy on the part of the participants in the speech event. It is worth noting that not infrequently the diminutive suffix “chooses” from the whole group of nouns only those lexemes which are characterized with positive connotations. Thus, for example, the majority of nouns in the group marked by the suffix *štin-a* have pejorative meanings which block the formation of diminutives, for example: *divaština* (‘savagery’), *tvârdoglavština* (‘stubbornness’). The only diminutive from a noun belonging to this group registered with numerous uses in Google and in everyday speech is *čoveštinka* (‘human weakness, foible’), whose base lexeme bears positive connotations.

There is a large group of nominal lexemes ending in *-ost/-est* which do not typically serve as bases for the production of diminutives. However four lexemes from this group are used to derive diminutives. Positive connotations are detectable in the meanings of three of these four base words, compare: *radost* (‘joy’) – *radost-čic-a*, *hitrost* (‘cunning’) – *hi-*

trost-čic-a, *hubost* ('prettiness') – *hubost-čic-a*. Within the other groups of abstract nouns that rarely, if ever, serve as bases for the derivation of diminutives cases of diminutive formation have been registered from lexemes with positive connotations, for instance: *naslada* ('delight') – *naslad-k-a*, *udovolstvie* ('pleasure') – *udovolstvi-je-e*, *počivka* ('rest') – *počivč-ic-a*, *pečalba* ('profit') – *pečalb-ic-a*, *krasota* ('beauty') – *krasot-ičk-a*, *čistota* ('cleanliness') *čistot-ičk-a* and a few other ones.

7.7. Pejorative connotations in the meaning of the base word.

An even more active process has been observed of diminutives being formed from base lexemes with pejorative meanings. These lexemes can be classified into two types. One of the types is characterized by the root or stem of the lexeme carrying the pejorative meaning, for example: *psuvnja* ('swearing') – *psuvn-ičk-a*, *zaguba* ('loss') – *zagub-ičk-a*, *vražda* ('animosity') – *vražd-ičk-a*, *prepirnja* ('squabble') – *prepirn-ičk-a*, *grabež* ('robbery') – *grabež-če*, *tupanica* ('thrashing') – *tupanič-k-a*. In the second type, the pejorative connotations are carried by the suffix –*otij-a*, where in some derived diminutives both the suffix and the root carry pejorative connotative meanings, for instance: *lošotija* ('evilness'), *tâpotija* ('stupidity'), *mrâsotija* ('filth, dirt'), etc. In terms of connotative meanings, the group of nouns with the suffix –*otij-a* contrasts with the group of nouns with the suffix –*ot-a*. Both groups typically denote static properties and sometimes dynamic qualities. The nouns with the suffix –*ot-a*, which belong to the more formal register express the positive or neutral attitude of the speaker towards the described property, while nouns with the suffix –*otij-a*, which are used exclusively in everyday speech and belong to the informal register express the pejorative attitude of the speaker towards the property denoted by the lexeme.

Only two lexemes from the first group with the suffix –*ota* are used as bases for diminutives: *krasota* ('beauty') – *krasot-ičk-a* and *čistota* ('cleanliness') *čistot-ičk-a*. The derived diminutives are typical of the speech of the youngest generation of Bulgarian speakers. The second group of nouns with the suffix –*otij-a* boasts highly active diminutive formation, for example: *V Ruse njama evtinij-k-a*, *a ima bednotij-k-a* ('You can't find cheap staff-DIM in Rouse, only poverty-DIM'). Abstract nouns ending in the suffix –*ij-a* have the same meanings as the ones ending in the suffix –*otij-a*; *lošotija* ('evilness') – *lošotij-k-a*, *tâpotija* ('stupidity') – *tâpotij-k-a*, *mrâsotija* ('dirt') – *mrâsotij-k-a*, *prostotija* ('simplicity') – *prostotij-k-a* and many other ones.

What is of importance in diminutive derivation in the latter case is the combination in a single lexeme of contrasting elements with pejora-

tive and prototypically ameliorative connotations coming from the diminutive suffixes. As a terminal suffix, the diminutive suffix becomes the most powerful derivational element with the widest scope of influence – over all suffixes to the left of it, compare: ‘...if we assume that suffixation proceeds sequentially from the innermost base to the periphery, then the order whereby meaning is diagrammatically added proceeds from denotative via connotative (semantic) to pragmatic meaning.’ (DRESSLER, MERLINI-BARBARESI 1994: 101). The diminutive suffix minimizes the negative connotations of the preceding suffixes and can even ‘override’ them, since in such cases the morpho-semantic feature ‘non-important’, formulated by DRESSLER AND MERLINI-BARBARESI (1994: 144) comes into full play. They interpret the morpho-semantic feature as a metaphoric extension of the denotative feature ‘small’ and associate it with the debatable pragmatic feature ‘non-serious’ characterizing the nature of the whole speech event in which diminutives are used.

In the reviewed cases, the connotative feature ‘non-important’ affects both the denotative and connotative meanings of the base noun which denotes some event or property with negative connotations, but these negative connotations are considered insignificant by the speaker. Due to all factors described above, the positive connotations carried by the diminutive suffix become extremely powerful, compare: *kražba* (‘theft’) – *kražb-ičk-a*, *kražb-ic-a*, *blâskanica* (‘hustle’) – *blâskan-ičk-a*, *tesnotija* (‘crowdedness’) – *tesnoti-jk-a*.

In the majority of cases the connotative meanings of the diminutive overpower the denotative meaning thereof with its basic feature ‘small’, so that the diminutive lexeme and phrasal combinations of the base noun with the attribute *malâk* (‘little, small’) are not fully synonymous. Let us look at an example which clearly illustrates these complex correlations. In a documentary article on the life of prisoners, one prisoner says that he has been arrested just for *edno grabež-č-e na 1000 leva* (‘one little robbery to the amount of 1000 BGN’). Commenting on the statement, the author of the article remarks that prisoners tend to talk about their crimes excessively using diminutives. This can only be due to the morpho-semantic feature ‘non-important’ of the diminutive, which parallels the denotative feature ‘small’, as well as to the strong positive connotations generally carried by diminutive suffixes. Unlike prisoners, law enforcement authorities do not use diminutives in describing crimes in court settings, and if the need arises to specify the severity of a crime, their only choice is the phrase *malâk grabež* (‘little robbery’). They would never use the diminutive *grabež-č-e* to avoid minimizing the pejorative meaning of the lexeme denoting the nature of the crime *grabež*.

The diminutive suffixes in the reviewed abstract nouns with negative connotations often function as means for the euphemization of speech, especially for the expression of politeness in cases when the speaker restrains from direct expression of a strong negative attitude towards something – in this case the referent of the abstract noun. We can find an illustration of this phenomenon in the following negative comment on a musical performance, in which the author has chosen the diminutive *šumotevič-k-a* in order to minimize his negative evaluation: *Po-bezdar-na i bezmozâčna šumotevič-k-a, pretendirašta da bade black metal...* ('a more incompetent and brainless clamor-DIM that is trying to pass itself off as black metal...').

For the sake of brevity we here present only the most frequent cases of minimization of the pejorative connotations of the base word by the addition of a diminutive suffix. .

Conclusions. In Bulgarian, as in all other Slavonic languages, the formation of diminutives through affixation is a process which comes closer to derivation than to inflecting. Derivational suffixes are 'non-prototypical representatives of derivational morphology' (DRESSLER, MERLINI-BARBARESI 1994: 111). This non-prototypicality of diminutive suffixes is first revealed in the violation of ARONOFF's (1976) 'Unitary Base Hypothesis', as diminutives can be formed from six different parts of speech: nouns, adjectives, adverbs, numerals, verbs and pronouns. What is more, in the cases of defectiveness – the formation of diminutives from nouns in their plural forms only – the basic principle of applying derivational rules prior to inflectional ones is also violated.

Diminutives have two basic sets of meaning components: a denotative set with the basic feature 'small' and a connotative one with a prototypical positive attitude of the speaker towards the referent of the diminutive lexeme or towards the participants in the speech event. In some cases, through metaphorical extension of the feature 'small', the feature 'non-important' is added to the set. The denotative and connotative components in the meaning of diminutives are represented in variable combinations in different diminutive lexemes: they can be both present to equal degrees, one of them can be foregrounded at the expense of the other, and it is also possible for only one of them – the denotative or the connotative – to be activated.

Generally speaking, the formation of diminutives from abstract nouns is a peripheral phenomenon of low frequency. That is why the activation and the expansion in the formation and use of diminutives in the speech of the young generation of Bulgarian speakers as represented in

Google is of such interest to linguists. From a pragmatic point of view diminutives function as impressionistic means which determine the key to the music of speech as aptly defined by L. Spitzer.

Depending on their propensity for forming diminutives or lack of such, abstract nouns are divided into different groups: one whose members do not form diminutives at all, one among whose members only a few lexemes form diminutives and a third one whose members freely form diminutives and their formation can safely be considered active.

In the present paper an attempt was made to review some of the major factors that are conducive to or prohibitive of the formation of diminutives from abstract nouns. Among the most important such factors, which usually have a joint, complex influence, are the positioning of the abstract noun along the cline of abstractness, the membership of the abstract noun to the basic vocabulary stock of the language, the frequency of use of the abstract noun in speech and the peculiarities of its unique lexical meaning. This lexical meaning combines denotative and connotative features which combine with the meanings of diminutive suffixes. Most relevant are the following meaning components: 1. denotative components which allow for gradational quantification of certain properties, so that the denotative feature 'small' can be expressed; 2. denotative components relating to the position of the abstract noun along the cline enclosed by the two extremes *abstract* and *concrete*; 3. ameliorative connotative components; 4. pejorative connotative components.

Some semantic changes conditioned by the correlation between the semantics of the base word or certain of its meaning components and the diminutive suffix were reviewed. Exhaustive analysis of the semantics of diminutives can be accomplished only if purely theoretical reflections are combined with detailed pragmatic, stylistic and socio-linguistic accounts of the use of diminutives in different types of speech acts and in different kinds of texts as produced by different types of native speakers of the language under study.

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Резюме

Руселина Ницолова

ДЕРИВАЦИЈА ДЕМИНУТИВОВ ОД АБСТРАКТНИХ СУЩЕСТВИТЕЛЬНЫХ В БОЛГАРСКОМ ЯЗЫКЕ

В настоящей работе рассматриваются формальные и семантические характеристики образования деминутивов в болгарском языке, в случаях, когда этот процесс оказывает влияние на свойства существительных, прилагательных, числительных, наречий, глаголов и местоимений. Деривация деминутивов от абстрактных существительных анализируется на материале, собранном на блогах и форумах болгарской версии поисковой системы Гугл, при этом большое внимание уделяется данному явлению в речи молодежи. Проанализированы факторы, способствующие или препятствующие деривации деминутивов от абстрактных существительных, а также семантическая интеракция между уменьшительно-ласкательными суффиксами и некоторыми семантическими компонентами мотивирующих слов (и денотативными, и коннотативными).

Ключевые слова: абстрактные существительные, образование деминутивов, морфология, семантика деминутивов, болгарский язык.