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EXPRESSIVE WORD-FORMATION (DIMINUTIVES) IN THE LANGUAGE OF NEWSPAPERS (ON THE BASE OF RZECZPOSPOLITA AND GAZETA WYBORCZA)

The aim of this paper is to present a survey of diminutive formations found in the newspapers articles. The evidence used throughout this study is taken mainly from two of the largest nationwide daily newspapers in Poland, i. e. Rzeczpospolita as well as Gazeta Wyborcza.

Key words: *diminutives, smallness, expressions of endearment, an attitude of pejoration or depreciation, ironic connotation, transposition.*

Целью данной работы является представление обзора демиинутивов найденных в газетных статьях. Предложенные данные взяты главным образом с двух наибольших ежедневных общенациональных газет в Польше, т. е. "Речпосполитой" и "Газеты Выборчей".

Ключевые слова: *демиинутивы, уменьшительное значение, ласкательное значение слов, негативная оценка, ироничная конотация, транспозиция.*

Метою данної праці є представити огляд демиинутивів, знайдених в газетних статтях. Запропоновані дані взяті головним чином з двох найбільших загальнонаціональних щоденних газет у Польщі, тобто "Речпосполітой" і "Газети Виборчої".

Ключові слова: *демиинутиви, значення зменшеності, нестливе значення слів, негативна оцінка, іронічна конотация, транспозиция.*

1. Introduction

The literature on diminutives is considerable and includes book-length monographs as well as articles (not to mention shorter remarks in grammar-books, etc.), for instance, in Polish, the process of diminutivisation attracts the following authors attention: Kreja [12, 13], Grzegorzczkova [6], Grzegorzczkova and Puzynina [7], Wierzbicka [19, 20], Warchoń [17, 18], etc. Carstairs-McCarthy [3, p. 261] stresses that diminutives have been studied widely during the past 150 years or so. Nevertheless, there are still problems, vexed questions pertaining to expressive word-formation. It is not an easy task to provide an exhaustive survey of diminutives in the language of newspapers, since the number of these expressive formations is limited in the press. The language of newspapers is considered to be accurate and precise, since the role of the press is to portrait current events, often from a very specific point of view [15]. To a certain extent newspapers create or at least influence a lot of aspects of our everyday life, society and culture. Bearing in mind those restrictions, let us attempt to present a general overview.

Native speakers of Polish, who use the stylistic possibilities or emotional resources of their language, frequently employ expressive words, i. e. diminutive formations in particular. The distinctive characteristic of these derivatives is that they appear in the written, official language only to a very limited extent. In fact, the scope of usage of expressive suffixes is restricted, to be precise, these expressive formations can be found in the language of poets and writers, in folk ballads and tales, in the more intimate speech of people in their daily existence, in children's manipulations of speech or in addressing a child (cf. [16, p. 57]). In epistolary styles expressive formations are quite natural because letters have close connection with the norms and methods of ordinary conversation. Speakers also have a tendency to use diminutives in conversations between friends [17].

It is worth stressing that expressiveness is a device for intensifying the meaning of an utterance. Evaluation is a culture specific, as a certain activity or property may be evaluated differently in different cultures. According to Zwicky & Pullum [21, p. 337], evaluation is clearly function-peripheral in languages, i. e. expressive morphology is often variable or unknown to some speakers. Expressiveness, on the other hand, is a linguistic and stylistic category that is supported by a whole complex of psychological, social and internal language factors. Our discussion of evaluative and expressive morphology can lead to the question of whether evaluative morphology is necessarily expressive morphology. Bauer [1, p. 563] points out that it is risky to claim that evaluative morphology is of necessity a sub-set of expressive morphology, that is, some diminutive formations appear to work as expressive morphology in certain languages. In other languages there is no evidence that evaluative morphology is anything other than plain morphology. For the purposes of our work we assume that the concepts expressive formation and evaluative formation are synonymous. In Polish, as in other languages, expressive vocabulary is instantiated mainly by diminutives, pejoratives, hypocoristics, and augmentatives. The main focus of our paper lies in the sphere of diminutivisation. We intend to analyse the language of the articles (concerning diminutive formations) on the base of *Rzeczpospolita* (RP) and *Gazeta Wyborcza* (GW), published in January and February 2009.

The category of diminutives is very productive in Polish. In the investigation we focus on denominal diminutives, because nouns are the typical input category and, in general, they participate in expressive derivation more frequently than members of other word classes.

Before we embark on the analysis of diminutives found in the newspapers, there is an important point to be considered concerning the language of print media. The language of print media is a powerful tool that can be used to manipulate people's thoughts, actions or behaviour. We should not underestimate the influence of mass media on our life. As Kellner [10, p. 1]

rightly points out, the role of media is “shaping political views and social behavior, and providing the materials out of which people forge their very identities.” Generally speaking, media broaden our knowledge, influence our everyday life as well as provide the models of it, i. e. define whether we are considered to be successful or not, powerful or powerless, what is good or bad, positive or negative, moral or evil. Media play a dominant role in constituting a common culture for the majority of people all over the world and as a result present a new form of global culture. Media culture defines or influences our social, political, psychological or even religious identity. This is a reason why, for centuries, state regulation of the media has existed.

Kelly and Prokhovnik [11] reflect whether it is possible to assess the effects of the media. The authors state that research has found no direct effects of the media on our daily lives as we might assume. It should be pointed out that the primary interest of Kelly and Prokhovnik lies in the influence of television on people’s lives, attitudes, values, etc. According to them, “we do not passively or uncritically receive messages after these have been encoded in broadcast material. Rather, audiences are *active* in reading cultural texts. In a complex process they bring their own cultural predispositions and resources to bear in interpreting and making sense of television programmes” [11, p. 74]. Thus, we might suggest that the effects of media are far from straightforward or predictable. The consequences of media influence are complex and varied, since cultural goods may be interpreted and adapted in different ways.

2. Analysis

In this part of the article, we shall concentrate on the analysis of semantic extensions of diminutives found in the language of Polish newspapers, *Rzeczpospolita* and *Gazeta Wyborcza* in particular. Kryk-Kastovsky [14, p. 172] emphasizes that diminution is a complex and multifarious process which not only indicates that something is small, although it involves the semantic and/or metaphorical extensions of diminutives that results in change of denotation. The author comes to the conclusion that diminutives illustrate the interaction of the following three levels: word-formation, semantics and pragmatics. As a matter of fact, the pragmatic and semantic features of diminutives seem to be universal (cf. [8, 9]). Jurafsky [8] investigates the metaphorical extensions of the diminutive from its main meaning of size [+small] to its various target domains. Traditional grammars of Slavic languages generally maintain that expressive derivations are asemantic and simply reflect an attitude of the speaker [2, p. 385]. Thus, morphological diminutives can express the following meanings in Polish¹:

2. 1. Diminutives proper indicating that something is small. As Wierzbicka [19] states, the sense [+small] is added to the general meaning of a noun base. In fact, it is considered the obligatory invariant meaning component of all diminutives (cf. [4]). The nouns in question are compatible

with the schema invoking the scale of size. By way of illustration, consider the following sentences found in RP:

(1a) *Samo Uyuni jest niewielkim miasteczkiem_{DIM} rozwiniętym wokół bazy wojskowej dla stacjonującej tutaj armii granicznej i nie ma tu nic szczególnego².*

'Samo Uyuni is a small town-DIM which is located round of military base for border guard troops and it is nothing special here.'

(1b) *Cienki złoty drucik_{DIM} na końcach którego osadzone są brylant i perła lub inny klejnocik_{DIM}³.*

'This is a thin golden wire-DIM on the ends of which there is a brilliant and a pearl or other jewel-DIM.'

[+Small] is considered the obligatory invariant meaning component of all diminutives (cf. [4]). The list in (1a) and (1b) above illustrates that the process of diminutivisation causes a change in the perceived size of an object. The diminutive form of a word implies that the object is perceived as particularly small, tiny, minute, etc. As a matter of fact, in the language of newspapers, diminutives proper indicating that something is small are rare. One may find the derivatives under analysis in descriptions of places, towns (1a), jewelry (1b), etc.

2.2. Expressions of endearment. Polish speakers frequently use diminutive suffixes not only to indicate the small size of an object but also to indicate affection, to show the speaker's feelings toward the person or object. In other words, between the concepts of small size and the ability to express tenderness, sympathy can exist contiguity that causes that the concept of diminution develops the meaning of endearment.

As pointed out by Jurafsky [9], expressions of endearment are one of the cases of inferential change in the diminutive that occurs in the development of the 'affection' sense. The sense in question is related to the core sense of diminutives, i. e. 'child', and the natural tendency to feel affection towards children gives us an opportunity to draw the natural inference that the speaker feels affection towards the diminutivised object (cf. [20], [4]). Diminutives can show the attitudes of affection or tenderness on the part of the speaker, as in the following example:

(2) *A przecież wydawało się, że razem z piękną żoną Zeldą i uroczą córeczką_{DIM} Scottie przejdą przez życie lekkim krokiem – w blasku fleszy, wśród hołdów wielbicieli, przy odgłosie strzelających korków szampana⁴.*

'In fact, it seemed that with beautiful wife Zelda and lovely daughter-DIM Scottie they would proceed through their life in easy way – in light flashes, among homage of admirers, at sounds of popping champagne corks.'

The sentence in (2) demonstrates that some diminutives (like *córeczka_{DIM}*) do not necessarily refer to small entities, but mark affection and tenderness. Thus, diminutives can express the speaker's affection for the noun and the

speaker's pleasure experienced in speaking to or about that particular noun. Consider two more sentences:

(3a) *Jill Sander ma w ofercie płaszcz_{DIM} wcięty w pasie, niczym damski⁵.*
'Jill Sander has to offer a coat-DIM indented at the waist like for ladies.'

(3b) *A tak powstał pakiet bezpretensjonalnych i pełnych uroku opowiadań_{DIM}⁶.*

'In this way it has emerged a set of unpretentious and charming stories-DIM.'

As may be seen, the diminutives in (3) do not indicate the small size of the objects under consideration *plaszcz* 'coat' and *opowieść* 'story', but express endearment. For example, the aim of the derivative *plaszczyk* in (3a) is to show that there is a nice-looking coat, not a small one.

2. 3. Diminutives which express both the meaning of small size and endearment, depending on context. The meaning of this pattern is not simple; it can be decomposed into small size and endearment [19]. Thus, the meaning of the expressive formations in question can be glossed as 'nice + small BASE'. We can also use the gloss 'little BASE', however *little* is considered more affective than *small* (see [16]). For example:

(4a) *Jest to wełniana czapeczka_{DIM} raperów⁷.*

'There is a woollen hat-DIM of rappers.'

(4b) *Te małe kurki okrągłymi kształtami przypominają serduszka_{DIM}⁸.*

'Those small hens remind hearts-DIM because of their round shape.'

(4c) *To dla mnie wyzwanie, w tej doniczce może wyrosnąć duża roślinka_{DIM} – mówi Paweł Piskorski⁹.*

"'This is a challenge for me, a big plant-DIM can grow in this flowerpot,'" Paweł Piskorski said.'

The examples in (4) show that the diminutive suffixes added to bases can be used in the process of diminutivisation for expressing both the meaning of smallness and an attitude of affection or tenderness depending on context. The interesting case is the sentence in (4c). Paweł Piskorski is planning to transform *Democratic Party* (SD) into serious centrist party, the main aim of which is to break existing division of parties in the public arena. As a leader of this party he is fully aware of the fact that SD has only a small support base and as a result is not represented in the Polish parliament. Paweł Piskorski would like to reactivate or to transform *Democratic Party*. In the interview he used the oxymoron *duża roślinka_{DIM}* which combines two normally contradictory senses [+big] (*duża* 'big') and [+small] (*roślina_{DIM}* 'plant-DIM'). These senses involve extreme or polar qualities, i. e. qualities close to either endpoint on the evaluation scale. It is particularly interesting to note that oxymorons are commonly employed in expressing a sense of ludicrousness, ostensibly unintended irony or humor. P. Piskorski used this oxymoron intentionally, not only for rhetorical effect or for showing contradiction between two

components, but to stress that this party should play more important role in the country's development in future or to become 'a big plant'. Nevertheless, he employed also the diminutive *roślina* which can be perceived in two ways, i. e. as a means to give the noun in question a nuance of endearment or the sense [+small] indicating that SD reminds a small plant nowadays, though it can grow and become one of the leading parties in Poland. Thus, the oxymoron in question increases in force the idea conveyed by the word.

2.4. Diminutive formsexpressingironicconnotation. In the language of newspapers, we might notice a tendency to use diminutives ironically. As a consequence, these formations can also convey an attitude of pejoration, e. g. :

(5a) *Prezes PiS bardzo dobrze dobrał obsadę spotu, który powszechnie znany jest jako "Aniolki_{DIM} Jaroslawa 1"*¹⁰.

'The chairman of the Law and Justice party (PiS) has selected a staff of the spot very well that is commonly known as "Jaroslaw's angels-DIM 1". '

(5b) *Mało tego, część mężczyzn przyznaje, że mogłoby przejść na garnuszek kobiet*¹¹.

'Besides, some men admit that could turn to a pot-DIM of women. '

(5c) *Jest dziś w telewizji miejsce na twórczość autorską? To zależy od łańcuszka ludzi, którzy podejmują decyzje*¹².

'Is there a place for author's creativity in television today? It depends on a chain-DIM of people, who make decisions. '

The data in (5) illustrate that diminutives can be used to express ironic connotation. The phenomenon of transposition of evaluative meaning is demonstrated by the diminutive *aniolki* in (5a). As a rule this derivative is employed to convey the meaning of smallness or endearment depending on context. However, in (5a), the author attempts to criticize the chairman of the Law and Justice party as well as his colleagues by using the diminutive under analysis. Thus, in the context of this sentence the diminutive *aniolki* acquires evident ironic connotation.

The expressive derivative *garnuszek* 'pot-DIM' in (5b) requires some discussion too. The diminutive in question can be perceived as a joke with ironic connotation. As a matter of fact, the attitude towards marital lifestyle and family life has changed a lot during the past years. The shift from rights to responsibilities is common among married couples. The journalist describes not so striking situation that responsibility for earning money can lie not on the shoulders of husbands but their wives. Nevertheless, this issue is still controversial and can evoke emotional responses, because of it the author employs the diminutive *garnuszek* to show ironic connotation. It is also worth analysing the diminutive *łańcuszek* in (5c). This derivative seems to possess two meanings, i. e. the sense [+small] as well as ironic connotation. We cannot exclude the fact that the author's intentions were to show his ironic and critical attitude towards bureaucratic system existing in television. Unfortunately,

nowadays the creativity of journalists depends on authorities or people who make decisions and does not depend on the reporters own will.

It should be added that the ironic connotation of an output formation is the general effect of irony and has nothing to do with the semantics of diminutives as such [19, p. 57]. We can also point to the tendency that the scope of expressive lexemes' use with context-dependent negative meaning is wider than that of diminutives which designate the meaning [+ small] or positive meaning in the language of newspapers.

2.5. Diminutives which can express an attitude of depreciation or endearment, depending on context. Polish possesses a pattern of diminutive formation that expresses opposite meanings (depreciation or endearment), depending on context. The same ambiguity may be found in other languages like Russian, Ukrainian, Italian, etc. In order to provide some illustration, consider the sentences in (6):

(6a) *Twój debiut "Owadzie opowieści" jest zbiorem szczęci opowiadań dla najmłodszych. Z morałem. To klasyczne bajeczki_{DIM} Masz pociąg do klasyki?*¹³

'Your debut "Insect stories" is a collection of six tales for youngest readers. With moral issues. These are classic fairy tales-DIM. Do you have an inclination for the classics?'

(6b) *Oficerowie sprowadzili tam swoje rodziny i urządzili im spokojne gniazdko_{DIM}.*¹⁴

'Officers had brought their families there and they arranged quiet nest-DIM for them.'

As demonstrated in (6a) above, the diminutive *bajeczki* 'fairy tales-DIM' could mean either 'nice fairy tales' or 'worthless fairy tales'. We can predict that in (6a) the journalist would like to stress the meaning 'nice/small fairy tales'. However, in another context the diminutive under consideration could be interpreted as the way to show the author's contempt. In (6b), the author uses the diminutive *gniazdko_{DIM}* 'nest-DIM' to express his irony of the existed situation. Officers did not want Polish soldiers to get off the train in Buzułuk (it is a town in OrenburgOblast, Russia), because their families were located there. However, in another context the derivative *gniazdko_{DIM}* can express an attitude of endearment.

2.6. Diminutives which are always (at least slightly) pejorative. It should be realised that diminutives can be also derived from the noun bases the semantics of which is inherently negative. Hence this negative or pejorative trait is inherited by the diminutive itself. Let us consider the following sentence found in GW:

(7) *"Kościół w Polsce bardziej ceni cwaniaczków_{DIM} niż bohaterów" – czytam tytuł we wtorkowym dzienniku "Polska"*¹⁵.

'"Church in Poland respects sly dogs-DIM more than heroes" – I read in the Tuesdays journal title "Poland".'

The sentence in (7) illustrates the phenomenon in question. In fact, the

diminutive suffixes added to bases with negative meaning can neutralize this meaning; as a result, a diminutive noun can express irony or sympathy, etc. In (7), the journalist employs the diminutive *cwaniaczków*_{DIM} 'sly dogs-DIM' as one of the means to show his irony.

3. Conclusions

This paper explores a question that has arisen whether we can come across diminutive formations in the newspapers articles. In point of fact, it was not an easy task to find out expressive derivatives in printed media, since the number of these formations is limited in the press. Journalists focused on current political affairs and events do not implement a lot of expressive formations in their articles. Nevertheless, the data presented above show that diminutives are attested in the press, in Rzeczpospolita and Gazeta Wyborcza in particular.

Generally, diminutivisation is a productive morphological process that generates a proliferation of lexical items with the meaning [+small]. In the language of newspapers diminutives proper denoting the small size of a noun base are attested in a small scale (see 2. 1.). Diminutives may also indicate the various shades of meaning, i. e. the meaning of smallness and endearment, the meaning of endearment or irony, pejoration or endearment, depending on context. A diminutive may refer to an object small for its category, but it may also reveal either an affectionate or pejorative attitude on the part of the speaker toward the referent. It should be noted that it is not the referent that limits the semantic interpretation of a diminutive formation. Using a diminutive in referring to an object which is already negatively loaded results in a pejorative meaning of this object, but in reference to positively loaded input form, the effect can be affectionate. Consequently, diminution becomes an important means to express the attitude and emotions of the writer. In fact, the categories proposed above do not have clear-cut boundaries and allow for some overlapping.

In general, a positive connotation is characteristic of diminutives. In daily speech, derivatives in question give what may be called an intimate tone to conversations with children and familiar persons. We can suggest that in the newspapers there is a tendency to use diminutives to express irony. Thus, they can express a complex scale of human feelings which indicate the subjective attitude towards reality.

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¹ This division is based on my earlier article [5].

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