

## Literature

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## Summary

The article deals with the importance of speaking English as the language of globalisation and Lingua Franca not only for communication, but for international business, politics, diplomacy, science and technology. The author stressed out also other language learning as an excellent way to spread tolerance and mutual understanding among people all over the world.

## EVALUATIVE MORPHOLOGY AND (MOR)PHONOLOGICAL CHANGES IN DIMINUTIVES OF SLAVONIC LANGUAGES

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### Theoretical background

Evaluative morphology deals with the structure and function of diminutive and augmentative affixes, i.e. evaluative morphemes [cf. Scalise 1984, Körtvélyessy 2009, Panocová 2010]. According to Universal #1926 (originally 1932) as specified in Plank and Filimonova's Universals Archive [<http://typo.uni-konstanz.de/rara/nav/search.php>] diminutives are characterized in high front vowels and augmentatives tend to contain high back vowels [ibid.]

Ultan [1978] and Niewenhuis [1985] have extended this observation by the claim that palatal and post-alveolar consonants prevail in diminutives and velar consonantal sounds are typical for augmentatives.

Thus the cited Universal and the authors assume that segments articulated in the area of palatum, i.e. hard palate (front high vowels and palatal, or/and post-alveolar consonants) are the iconic symbols of diminutives.

### **Research points of departure**

However, the cross-linguistic research into phonetic iconicity in evaluative morphology of the Indo-European, Austronesian and Niger-Congo languages has not proved the mentioned iconic tendencies in evaluative markers [Štekauer et al. 2009, Gregová – Körtvélyessy – Zimmermann 2010].

On the contrary, a detailed analysis of diminutive and augmentative affixes, supported by the frequency distribution histograms, indicates that high front vowels are typical of augmentatives rather than diminutives. Diminutive affixes are acoustically realized by central vowels. Similarly, the behaviour of consonants contradicts any universal expectations: alveolar and velar consonants slightly prevail in both diminutives and augmentatives [ibid.].

But it seems that diminutive morphemes cause various (mor)phonological changes in word stems which are not the part of evaluative morphology. In some languages, for example, Slovak, the process of palatalization changes the consonant before the diminutive affix, e.g. *palic-a* ‘stick’ > *palič-k-a* ‘a little stick’.

Assuming that Universal #1926 did not emerge out of nothing, without any justification, I have decided to aim the attention at those (mor)phonological changes in word stems of diminutives caused by evaluative affixes.

Since Slavonic languages, which are all inflectional, display the high number of various diminutive morphemes, the analysis was carried out on the sample of eleven Slavonic languages: West Slavonic – Czech, Polish, Slovak; East Slavonic – Russian, Ukrainian, Belorussian and South Slavonic – Bulgarian, Serbian, Croatian, Slovenian and Macedonian.

The material point of departure for my research probe into (mor)phonology of Slavonic diminutives was a core vocabulary of 35 lexical items comprising four main word classes – nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs – that are supposed to exist in all languages of the world [cf. Štekauer et al. 2009]. The data sheets for individual languages were completed by linguists, native speakers of a particular language.

### **Present research results**

#### **WEST SLAVONIC LANGUAGES**

In West Slavonic languages, 81 diminutive affixes have been delimited, 31 of them, i. e. 38 % , trigger (mor)phonological changes of segments in word stems based on the shift of articulation towards the hard palate. The most frequent changes are the following:

## CONSONANTS

### type of change

alternation *k/č*

alternation *h/žž*

alternation *k/š*

alternation *c/č*

neutralizations: *d/d'*

*l/l'*

*t/t'*

### example

Slovak, Czech, Polish

ok-o, DIM oč-k-o (*eye*)

Czech, ruk-a, DIM ruč-k-a (*hand*)

Polish, domek, DIM domecz-ek (*house*)

Czech, knih-a, DIM kníž-ka (*book*)

Polish, ptak, DIM ptasz-ek (*bird*)

Czech, měsíc, DIM měsíč-ek, (*moon*)

Slovak, vod-a, DIM vod'-ičk-a (*water*)

Slovak, mal-ý, DIM maľ'-ičk-ý (*little*)

Czech, tát-a, DIM tat'-ínek (*father*)

(On the difference between alternation and neutralization cf. Sabol 1989.)

## VOWELS

alternation *e/i*

Czech, oheň, DIM ohýn-ek (*fire*)

kámen, DIM kamín-ek (*stone*)

## EAST SLAVONIC LANGUAGES

The situation in East Slavonic languages is similar: 24 diminutive affixes out of 79 (30 %) change the phonetic character of segments in word stems – the articulation of vowels and/or consonants is shifted toward palatum.

## CONSONANTS

### type of change

alternation *k/č*

alternation *ch/š*

alternation *g/ž*

alternation *c/č*

### example

Ukrainian, ruk-a, DIM ruč-eň-a (*hand*)

Russian, ochótnik, DIM ochótnič-ek (*hunter*)

Ukrainian, ptach, DIM, ptaš-eňa (*bird*)

Belarusian, knig-a, DIM kniž-ačk-a (*book*)

Russian, ptic-a, DIM ptič-k-a, (*bird*)

Ukrainian, palic-a, DIM palič-k-a (*stick*)

## VOWELS

alternation *o/e*

Belarusian, agoň, DIM, ageňčik (*fire*)

## SOUTH SLAVONIC LANGUAGES

The total number of delimited evaluative affixes is 136 in the sample from South Slavonic phylum. 32 of them (i. e. 23.5 %) cause (mor)phonological changes in word stems shifting the articulation of segments to the hard palate.

## CONSONANTS

### type of change

alternation *k/č*

alternation *g/ž*

alternation *c/č*

neutralization *n/ň*

### example

Croatian, majk-a, DIM majč-ic-a (*mother*)

Slovenian, otrok, DIM otroč-ek, (*child*)

Macedonian, trk, DIM, trč-k-a (*run*)

Croatian, knjig-a, DIM knjiž-ic-a, (*book*)

Bulgarian, slnc-e, DIM slnč-ic-e (*sun*)

Bulgarian, grozn-a, DIM grožn'-ičk-a, (*ugly*)

## VOWELS

alternation *a/e*

Bulgarian, goljam, DIM golemičik (*big*)

Overall, only 29% of evaluative morphemes in Slavonic languages trigger such neutralization and alternation processes in word stems of diminutives that shift the articulation of vowels and consonants closer to the hard palate. The consonant changes are much more common than those of vowels.

The data for individual languages also indicate certain differences between the language phyla and the languages analysed. While the (mor)phonological changes caused by diminutive marker approach almost 40 % in West Slavonic languages, there is only 30% occurrence in East Slavonic phylum and in South Slavonic languages the changes in word stems occur only in 23.5%.

As to the differences between the individual languages, vocalic alternations seem to be the most frequent in Czech and Belarusian, and consonantal alternations or/and neutralizations are typical for Slovak and Bulgarian. On the other hand, in Macedonian there is almost no palatalization change of consonants or change of vowels articulation in the stems of words. But all evaluative affixes delimited in Macedonian contain either high front vowel (41%) or palatalized consonant (44%) [cf. Gregová – Körtvélyessy – Zimmermann 2010].

## Conclusions

The results of the research probe aimed at the analysis of the influence of evaluative affixes on word stems carried out on the sample of diminutives from Slavonic languages support the areal nature of phonetic symbolism as mentioned also by Nieuwenhuis [1985].

The results also indicate that:

- (1) the dominance of high front vowels and palatal (or palatalized) consonants in diminutives is rather language universal than language specific;
- (2) so as to prove or disapprove the validity of Universal 1926 diminutive as a whole (word stem + evaluative affix) should be taken into consideration. Because any other type of analysis – either the evaluation of evaluative affix, or the evaluation of word stem – is only partial and it does not reflect the phonological and morphological regularities of the given language fully and in complexity.

In the follow-up research I plan to extend the sample of languages in order to compare Slavonic languages to the other European and non-European language groups.

## Literature

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## Summary

Universal #1926 as specified in Plank and Filimonova's Universals Archive assumes that there is a universal iconic tendency for diminutives to contain high front vowels in their morphological markers. Ulan (1978) and Niewenhuys (1985) add that palatal and post-alveolar consonants prevail in diminutives. However, the recent research on phonetic iconicity in evaluative morphology has not proved the mentioned sound symbolism (cf. e.g. Bauer 1996, Štekauer et al. 2009, Gregová – Körtvélyessy – Zimmermann 2010). But evaluative morphemes seem to cause various (mor)phonological changes in word stems.

The analysis of changes of segments in word stems caused by evaluative affixes in Slavonic languages shows that there are some differences between individual languages which indicate the areal nature of phonetic symbolism in diminutives.

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## LANGUAGE VARIATION

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The branch of linguistics, named as sociolinguistics is the study of the effect of any and all aspects of society, including cultural norms, expectations, and context, on the way language is used; or it talks about how and why people use language to interact with others in their society. It also studies how varieties differ between groups separated by certain social variables, e.g., ethnicity, religion, status, gender, level of education, etc., and how creation and adherence to these rules is used to categorize individuals in social class or socio-economic classes. Its other focus is on the situation existing in the society when it is possible to use two or more languages distinctively. Related to this situation, bilingualism or multilingualism becomes also an interesting matter discussed