

## DIMINUTIVES IN IVAN VAZOV'S NOVEL "UNDER THE YOKE" AND THEIR RUSSIAN EQUIVALENTS

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**ABSTRACT:** Slavic languages as a whole are famous for the widespread use of diminutive forms and the variety of emotive-expressive nuances that diminutives can convey. During the age of the Bulgarian Renaissance (18th - 19th century) the use of diminutives was a characteristic feature of the language, whereas after that period their use in the literary language decreased significantly. Due to the fact that Ivan Vazov wrote his historical novel in 1889-1890, the text abounds in diminutive forms, which is characteristic for Bulgarian writers of that period. The paper studies the word-formative patterns of diminutive words excerpted from Ivan Vazov's novel "Under the Yoke" and their rendering in the Russian translation of the novel. An analysis of the formation and function of diminutives in the two languages is suggested. Considering the closeness of the studied languages, an attempt is made to investigate the specifics of diminutive words in Bulgarian and Russian, as well as the reasons for their omission in the Russian translation, if any. As both Bulgarian and Russian are rich in diminutive forms, the paper analyses the differences in the use of diminutives in these languages. The method of philological analysis has been used in collecting and analyzing the corpus of excerpts.

**KEYWORDS:** diminutives, Bulgarian, Russian, equivalents, Ivan Vazov

### Introduction

Diminutiveness is a category that can render one's positive or negative attitude towards an object or a person by means of a form usually denoting a small size of this object or person. As Schneider (2003, p. 1) puts it "The prototypical meaning of the term 'diminutive' is 'smallness' but it can also express an attitude that "can be either positive or negative, i.e. either affectionate or derogatory, depending on the specific interplay of linguistic and situational factors in a given context". Whether the diminutive form points out a physical smallness or denotes an additional attitudinal connotation basically depends on the context in which the diminutive form has been used. According to Dressler and Merlini Barbaresi (1994, 2001) the pragmatic function of the diminutives prevails over the semantic one. They speculate that in addition to the semantic feature 'small', diminutives contain a more basic pragmatic feature, specified as 'non-serious', which is the feature responsible for the majority of the pragmatic uses of diminutives. An opposite view on the diminutive is held by Jurafsky who claims that "the origins of the diminutive cross-linguistically lie in words semantically and pragmatically linked to children" (1996, p. 537). This is because the feature 'child', which is the central feature of the diminutive, "is historically prior and metaphorically and inferentially motivates the other senses" (1996, p. 543). In this respect, Jurafsky has proposed a single universal radial category for the diminutive which is a graphic representation of a polysemous category (Jurafsky 1996, pp. 542-543). According to the author (ibid.), 'child' gives rise to 'diminutive', i.e. diminutives arise from semantic or pragmatic links with children.

Structurally, there are two ways in which diminutiveness can be expressed in a language, namely synthetically (by means of affixation) and analytically (by means of adjectives denoting 'smallness'). In Bulgarian and Russian both ways are possible but the synthetic means of diminutive formation is more common due to the great number of various diminutive suffixes expressing different nuances of diminutiveness. Moreover, on account of the fact that in both languages not only nouns can be subjected to diminution but other parts of speech as well, most commonly adjectives and adverbs, a combination of synthetic and analytic diminutive formation is a third option.

As mentioned above, the context is of great importance for the identification of the exact meaning of a diminutive form. To illustrate this, I will give the following example: in Bulgarian the same diminutive form of a noun may express a positive attitude of endearment, affection or familiarity in one context, but it may have a negative connotation of derision or disparagement in another context, e.g. *Имам си една къщичка на село и често прекарвам отпуските си там (+);*

*Тази къщичка не си заслужава средствата, които влагаиш в нея (-).*

The polysemantic features of the diminutive suffixes are characteristic for Slavic languages as a whole, and Bulgarian and Russian are no exception. Another feature of diminutive suffixes is their

ability to combine and thus different degrees of diminutiveness can be formed (see Bratus, 1969; Krastev, 1976).

### Data Analysis

In my previous research on the formation and frequency of use of diminutives in Bulgarian, English and Russian, I investigated diminutive forms in children's books. In the present study, I decided to investigate the use of diminutives in a novel which is not aimed at young children's audience, namely the novel of Ivan Vazov "Under the Yoke". For my research I used the version of the novel published in 1986 by Bulgarski Pisatel Publishing House, Sofia. As I mentioned before, diminutive forms express not only positive attitudes addressing children, but a vast array of nuances, both positive and negative concerning situations of different contexts.

In the novel in its original language – Bulgarian, 595 cases of diminutive forms were attested.

In the Russian translation of the novel (translated by V. Volodin, M. Klyagina-Kondrat'eva and Ya. Slonim, published in 1970 by Hudozhestvennaya Literatura Publishing House, Moskva), the diminutive equivalents were 254 or 43% of the diminutives in Bulgarian. First, I found this fact strange and unusual for the Russian language which is famous for having a long list of various diminutive suffixes as well as for many different ways of using the diminutives. 43% was too little. However, after reading the text for the second time, I investigated all the cases of diminutive words in the text, not only the equivalents. As a result, it appeared that in the Russian text there were 255 cases of diminutive words which were not presented by diminutive forms in the original text. The number is almost the same as the equivalent diminutive words. It justified the fact that Russian language, as well as Bulgarian, and many other Slavic languages, are rich in diminutives and their usage is common in fiction not only in speech, or in children's literature. The fact that these forms appear at different places in Bulgarian and Russian only emphasizes on the different usages of diminutive forms in both languages. Another explanation could be that the Russian translators used the translation technique of compensation in order to render the overall expressiveness and emotionality of the text by preserving almost the same number of diminutive forms in the Russian text, i.e. 595 cases in Bulgarian vs 509 cases in the Russian translation. Still the difference in the number can be explained by the big number of the diminutive forms of male names in the Bulgarian text, such as *Boycho*, *Spiridoncho*, *Asencho*, *Ivancho*, *Kolcho*, *Mooncho*, etc. (about 100 cases), which are derived by means of the Bulgarian diminutive **suffix –cho** for masculine gender, but are not considered diminutive in Russian. In the Russian text these names are transcribed and coincide with their Bulgarian forms.

### Diminutives in the Bulgarian text

The most numerous group of diminutives in the Bulgarian text are derived by means of suffixation, i.e. synthetic diminutive formation. There are 390 cases of nominal diminutives (common nouns), which amounts to 66% of all diminutive forms. In these group the main function of the diminutive forms is to express diminutiveness proper, i.e. the form which denotes 'small size of an object' (e.g. *прозорче*, *вратичка*, *одърче*, *дворче*) or to express diminutive-hypocoristic meaning, i.e. to express endearment, tenderness, familiarity or sympathy (e.g. *човечец*, *дечица*, *майчице*, *слънчице*).

The same pattern of diminutive suffixation has been attested in personal names – 84 cases or 14% of all diminutive forms. The number could be bigger, because of the multiple usage of many of the names. I have put the diminutive proper nouns in a different group as their form is specific for the Bulgarian language and these diminutive names were transcribed into Russian and English in order to preserve their national sounding. A specific feature of the diminutive personal names in Bulgarian, which is not to be found in Russian, is their ability to combine with a definite article, e.g. *Спиридончето*, *Кандовчето*. These forms can express familiarity but also disparagement. Additionally, in Bulgarian, not only masculine but also feminine diminutive names can be combined with a definite article, e.g. *Иринчето*, *Марийчето*, *Викичката*. In these cases, however, the diminutive feminine names express a positive connotation.

As can be seen from the examples excerpted from the novel, in Bulgarian even family names can be diminutivized and then combined with a definite article, e.g. *Кандов-Кандовче – Кандовчето*. As Todorova (2016, p. 323) points out "...diminutive forms of personal names preserve their gender, which is either masculine or feminine (e.g. Ана – Анче – Анчето (f); Румен – Румче – Румчето (m), whereas the diminutive forms of common masculine nouns are always neutral (e.g. приятел (m) – приятелче (n), овчар (m) – овчарче (n), стол (m) – столче (n), мост (m) – мостче (n)...".

Another subgroup of diminutive common nouns, but still forming a different group, are the diminutive common nouns which express a derogative meaning – 23 cases or 4% of all diminutive forms. Their diminutive suffixes are the same as in the first group, but based on the context, they have a pejorative or disparaging meaning, e.g. *учителче, дипломица, историйки, графче, интригантче, подло човече*. Lexicalized diminutive nouns have been presented only by one example, namely, *девствена брадичка* (in Russian – *бородка, которой пока не касалась бритва*). In Russian the lexicalized diminutive noun has also been rendered by a lexicalized form and a description of the meaning of the adjective in Bulgarian. However, if we combine these three groups, it will be evident that diminutive nominal suffixes is the most numerous group of diminutive suffixes in Bulgarian, which comprises 497 cases or 84% of all diminutive forms in the Bulgarian text. This once again emphasizes the fact that synthetic formation is the most common pattern of diminutive formation in Bulgarian.

The other parts of speech which can be diminutivized in Bulgarian by means of suffixation but are far less numerous in the text are:

Diminutive Adjectives – 35 cases (6 %), e.g. *тъничко, лудичка, сухичка, дребничък, похубавичка*, etc.

Diminutive Adverbs – 6 cases (1%), e.g. *сегичка, надлъжко, простичко, надалечко, поскоричко*, etc.

Diminutive Verbs – 5 cases (1%), e.g. *боричкам се, заприпка, припкам*, etc.

Diminutive Pronouns – 1 case only, e.g. *нищичко нямаше*.

Diminutive Numerals – 1 case only, e.g. *едничък*.

The next pattern which have been attested in the text is a combination of synthetic and analytic diminutive formation, i.e. an adjective denoting ‘small size’ plus a diminutive form of a common noun – 26 cases or 4% of all diminutive forms. E.g. *малко/тесно дворче, малко прозорче, малка врачка, дребно човече, ниски дръвчета, късо сукманче*, etc. There is only one case in which a diminutive adjective combines with a diminutive noun, e.g. *мънички уста*.

The pattern which takes the third place is the analytic diminutive formation, i.e. the adjective denoting ‘small size’ plus the base form of the noun – 23 cases or 4% of all diminutive forms. The meaning of this pattern is to express diminutiveness proper or pure diminutiveness, which lacks evaluative meaning, e.g. *малка причина, малки деца, мала врата, малки групи, малка зелена кесия, малък парламент*, etc.

#### **Diminutive equivalents in the Russian translation**

In the Russian translation of the novel, the number of equivalents of Bulgarian diminutives is 254, or 43% of the cases. It shows that the majority of diminutive forms in Bulgarian have not been rendered by diminutive forms in Russian. However, there are cases in which non-diminutive forms in Bulgarian have been diminutivized in the Russian text and this number is 255, which makes the overall number of diminutive forms in Bulgarian and Russian texts almost identical.

#### **Analysis of Russian equivalents**

The vast majority of diminutive equivalents in Russian have been rendered by means of suffixation, i.e. synthetic diminutive formation. The nominal diminutives make the greatest part of this pattern amounting to 213 cases, or 84% of all diminutive equivalents. Only in 1% of them, or in 3 cases, the nominal diminutive has a derogative meaning, e.g. *подлый человечико, смешная страстишка, свой дипломишко*. The derogative meaning has been emphasized by the adjective as well.

The cases of other parts of speech which have been subjected to synthetic diminutive formation in the Russian translation are only 4 – 3 cases of diminutive adjectives which have been substantivized in the text (e.g. *самый маленький, мелкие, маленькие*) and 1 case of diminutive negative pronoun (e.g. *ничегошеньки не слышно*), which is the equivalent of the Bulgarian diminutive pronoun *нищичко*. Forms of diminutive adverbs or verbs have not been found in the equivalents in the Russian text.

The analytic diminutive formation takes the second and third place of the patterns of diminutive formation in the Russian equivalents. It has been attested in 24 cases, or 9%, of the type **adjective + base noun** (*маленький + base noun*), e.g. *маленькие глаза, маленькое тело, маленький отряд, малая люстра*, etc., of which in 5 cases the adjective **young** has been used (e.g. *молодой дякон, молодая медведица, молодой учитель*) and in 3 cases – **not big** (e.g. *небольшой тюк, небольшие группы, небольшой отряд*).

The analytic diminutive formation of the type **base adjective + diminutive noun** have been attested in 11 cases, or 4% of all diminutive equivalents, e.g. *маленькие дикие глазки, маленький*

*мальчик, маленький звереныш*, etc. Of these 11 cases, there are 2 cases in which the pattern is **Dim. Adj. + Dim. Noun**, e.g. *низенький человечек, низенькие лавчонки*; and 2 cases of the pattern **the adjective narrow + Dim. Noun**, e.g. *тесный дворик, тесная коморка*.

There has been attested only one case of lexicalized diminutive nouns in the Russian text – *бородка* (BG *брадичка*).

Overall, it can be said that synthetic diminutive formation as a pattern has been preferred by the Russian translators to render the diminutive forms from Bulgaria. The number of diminutive forms in the Russian text which are not diminutive in the original Bulgarian text is almost the same as the diminutive equivalents, i.e. 255 cases. This fact can be explained by the translation technique of compensation by which the translators have probably decided to render the atmosphere created by the number of diminutives in Bulgarian and have used almost the same number of diminutive forms in the translation. Once again it can be said that the synthetic diminutive formation is the pattern used the most by the Russian translators, i.e. 219 cases, or 86% of all cases. Only one example of derogative meaning of a diminutive nominal has been found in the text, namely *станет царьком*.

An interesting fact is that in the Russian equivalents of diminutive forms not a single case has been attested of diminutive adverbs to correspond to the 6 cases in Bulgarian, while in the Russian translation there appeared 19 cases, or 7%, of diminutive adverbs, e.g. *потихонько, хорошенько, легонько, трудненько, рядышком*, etc. It shows that such forms are more usual and common for the Russian language than for Bulgarian.

Analytic diminutive formation comes next with the three types:

- 1) Base Adjective + Dim. Noun, 8 cases, e.g. *маленькие флажки, узкая улочка, мелкий снежок, тесные улочки*.
- 2) Dim. Adjective + Base Noun, 2 cases, e.g. *низенькие ограды, реденькая роща*.
- 3) Dim. Adjective + Dim. Noun, 1 case, e.g. *тепленькое местечко*.

Finally, there have been found only 2 cases of lexicalized diminutive nouns, i.e. diminutive forms which have lost their diminutive meaning, e.g. *солнечные зайчики* (Bul. *търкала*), *бабушка* (дядо попе).

### Conclusion

Based on the studied examples from both languages, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. The Bulgarian text of the novel, which is the original, contains **the greatest number of diminutive forms**, as well as the most various patterns of diminutive formation. The most frequent diminutive pattern is the **synthetic one**, i.e. diminutive formation derived by means of diminutive suffixes. The part of speech most frequently being diminutivized is the common noun, followed by personal names and adjectives. A combination of analytic and synthetic diminutive formation is also common. Analytic diminutive formation is the most infrequent.

2. The equivalents of diminutive forms in the Russian translation are not numerous, having attested less than a half of all cases in Bulgarian, namely only 43%. However, this is compensated by almost the same number of diminutive forms found in the Russian translation which are not diminutive in the original. Still, the number of diminutive forms in Bulgarian is the greatest due to the big number of personal names in the diminutive form which have been transcribed/ transliterated into Russian.

3. The pattern which, like in Bulgarian, has the most frequent use in Russian is the **synthetic formation**, due to the fact that both languages possess a wide array of numerous diminutive suffixes which can derive not only nominal diminutives but also adjectival, adverbial, and even verbal and pronominal. The use of diminutives is characteristic for some authors in Bulgarian, like Ivan Vazov, Yordan Yovkov, Elin Pelin, Hristo Botev, etc. because first, these forms are various and polysemantic, which makes them an easy tool for expressing a vast array of emotions in a text, both positive and negative; second, in Bulgarian these forms are used not only in child-directed speech (where the main meaning is to express endearment), but also in literature, where diminutives can be used to better describe a character's personality through his/her speech. This is what Ivan Vazov has done in his novel. The frequent use of diminutives and the numerous diminutive personal names express the positive and sympathetic attitude of the author towards his characters. At the same time, the profound use of diminutives was characteristic for the period in which the story of the novel takes place, namely the period before the Bulgarian liberation at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. A future perspective of the study

will be to investigate the use of diminutives by contemporary writers in Bulgaria from the beginning of the 21 century.

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