

## Comparative Analysis of the Category of Diminutiveness in the Russian, English and Armenian Languages

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### **Abstract**

The paper highlights the most typical features of the lexico-grammatical category of diminutiveness from the derivational point of view. The correlation between language and culture, language and national linguistic traditions, language and national mentality is revealed through the category under study.

The results of the research prove that applying cognitive approach to the analysis of the category of diminutiveness on the derivational level enables us to reveal: a) the existing asymmetry of linguistic images of the world in different languages, b) graduality of the lexico-grammatical category of diminutiveness in Modern Russian which brings forth peculiar derivational clusters.

**Key words:** *category of diminutiveness, linguistic world image, cognitive approach, word-formation, derivative.*

### **Introduction**

The problem of language and culture interrelation has always attracted the attention of linguists of different scientific schools and approaches. The latter has become one of the major issues in the light of cognitive investigations dominating in the science nowadays.

It is well-known that there exist different, somehow similar and sometimes contrastive, approaches to the correlation of such many-facet and complicated phenomena as human language and culture of a nation. Though being quite different, all the existing approaches have something in common: all of them

undeniably accept the fact of inseparable connection and interaction of two different semiotic systems - language and culture. In spite of numerous scientific investigations there is no, and, perhaps, there even couldn't have been till now, a well-formulated common approach to the question of how language and culture are interrelated, and the answer to the everlasting linguistic question why so and not in some other way. The above mentioned may be accounted for by the complicity of the interrelation of the two sign systems.

The problem under study becomes more topical when the investigations are carried out on the data extracted from two and more languages. In such cases the scientist deals with different linguistic categorizations of the world, i.e. different linguistic world-images. It is common knowledge that even when the reality seems to be just the same at first glance, different language systems categorize it in different ways. It results in a peculiar asymmetry of linguistic world images which reflect the national and cultural features of the linguocultural socium, the peculiarities of language and logic system correlation and, consequently, peculiarities of mentality and world perception.

It is worth mentioning that asymmetry of linguistic world-images may be observed on all language levels - one more evidence of the integrity of human language as a structurally organized system of signs. Of utmost importance is the fact that on all the language levels linguistic asymmetry is accounted for by both linguistic and extralinguistic factors. Human language by all means reacts to any really important "social order" as it is a dynamic system, a part of culture and a tool of cultural analysis simultaneously. Therefore, the use of cognitive approach as "one of the means of explaining linguistic phenomena" in many spheres, namely, phonology, morphology, lexis, discourse, the perception of language as a "cognitive mechanism" functioning to discretize, objectivize and interpret knowledge" (Krongauz 2005:195), makes it possible to transfer it to the domain of word-formation as well. Such approach is very important and topical as, on the one hand, word-formation performs a unique role in verbal discretization of the world, and on the other hand, this language level correlates with extralinguistic factors, very often presupposing numerous, at first glance, pure linguistic facts.

### **On Some Differences and Similarities of the Category of Diminutiveness in the Russian, English and Armenian Languages**

The development of synchronic word-formation theory, enlargement of its investigation domains as well as the specificity of word-formation as a system, on the one hand, realizes the onomasiologic function of the language, and combines the two interrelated complexes – complex of actual and complex of potential realizations, and, on the other hand, claims that word-formation should be regarded as one of the main “participants” of world linguistic categorization.

It is worth mentioning that the derivational level of the language performs the pivotal role in naming new as well as virtual notions by means of coining new derivatives. The latter may be regarded as small “models of knowledge” about the world.

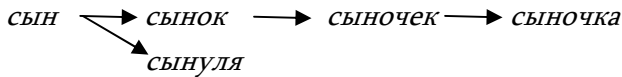
It stands to reason that word-formation is the structural basis of lexis (Manucharyan 1981:3). Hence, many facts and phenomena of the lexical level of the language are inevitably reflected in word-formation and viewed from derivational standpoint. Such investigations become more topical when comparative typological analysis of different languages is carried out, aimed at revealing the derivational peculiarities of the linguistic categorization of the languages under study.

While analyzing the derivational aspect of the category of diminutiveness in the Russian, English and Armenian languages, a great number of diminutives-derivational variants formed as a result of derivational activity of motivating bases were revealed.

By derivational variants we mean a rather abstract notion, including heterogeneous phenomena, i.e. one-base derivatives formed by means of different affixes and semantically equivalent morphemes. They may be classified as derivational synonyms which also include the so-called “absolute” synonyms, for example: *мамочка-мамуля, дочка-дочура*.

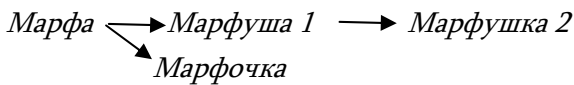
The numerous cases of derivatives formed by means of different affixes, undoubtedly, realize one and the same derivational meaning of diminutiveness. Thus, they may be considered coderivatives, actualizing the same modification on different levels of derivation. From the word-formation point of view, in

such cases we deal with derivational variation, a phenomenon specified by any language to express a certain meaning, in our case, the diminutive meaning, which reflects the presence or absence of cognitively motivated “social order”. For example, in Russian the following derivational cluster can be observed:



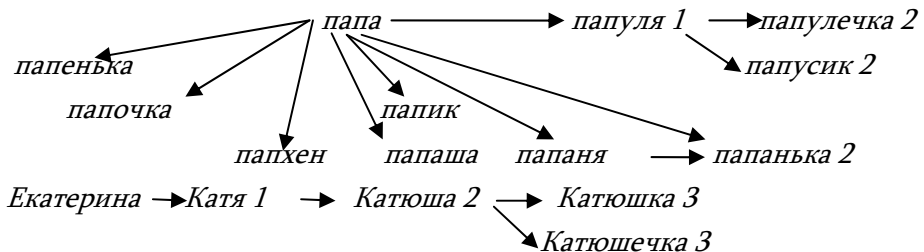
In English only one derivational pair: *son-sonny*, is singled out, while in Armenian no diminutives can be observed at all, as the derivative *սոննի* (sonny) in Modern Armenian has become obsolete due to its bookish colouring.

The category of diminutiveness in Modern Russian is characterized by one more feature, which has not yet attracted the linguists’ attention, though the derivational aspect of the category seems to be well investigated. However, the analysis of numerous examples of the above-mentioned derivational cluster of the noun *сын*, as well as different proper nouns, e.g.



testifies to the fact, that in Modern Russian the category under study undergoes a peculiar “graduality”. As a rule, the graduality of the Russian nouns coincides with their derivational activity.

Of utmost interest is the fact, that even in cases of derivatives-derivational variants the activity of the motivating bases is restricted by the second, rarely - third level of derivation both for common and proper nouns:



The derivative diminutives are characterized by a wide spectrum of stylistic colouring, ranging from diminutive-caressing up to the connotation of pejorativeness, irony, abuse. Moreover, nowadays a tendency of new formations bearing ironic meaning is observed: *мамсик, папик*, etc. But there are also numerous derivational variants which coincide in their stylistic colouring, e.g. *день – денек – денечек*.

### Conclusion

Thus, it can be assumed that the lexico-grammatical category of diminutiveness in the Russian, English and Armenian languages is very peculiar in its derivational aspect.

The current study enables us to reveal a certain asymmetry of linguistic categorization of reality which is reflected in the derivational levels of these languages and may be accounted for by the differences in mentality and world perception.

The comparative-typological analysis of the data extracted from the above-mentioned languages has disclosed some semantic nuances of the category of diminutiveness, which may be regarded as peculiar features of the languages under study. One of such features is the phenomenon of graduality of diminutive nouns in Modern Russian.

### References:

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### Նվազականության կարգի գուգադրական քննություն ռուսերենում, անգլերենում և հայերենում

Սույն հետազոտության նպատակն է կատարել նվազականության բառաքերականական կարգի գուգադրական վերլուծություն երեք լեզու-

ներում: Հոդվածի շրջանակներում կիրառվում է նյութի ուսումնասիրության ճանաչողական մոտեցում, որը հնարավորություն է ընձեռում վեր հանել տարբեր ժողովուրդների լեզվամտածողությունների արդյունքում ստեղծվող աշխարհի տարբեր պատկերացումները և դրանցում տեղ գտած անհամաչափությունները նշված թեմայի վերաբերյալ:

Հատուկ ուշադրության է արժանանում նվազականության կարգի բառակազմական առանձնահատկությունների ուսումնասիրությունը:

Ինչպես ցույց է տալիս կատարված վերլուծությունը, նվազական գոյականներին բնորոշ է բառակազմական յուրահատուկ աստիճանավորում: Դա հատկապես բնորոշ է ժամանակակից ռուսերենին, որտեղ դրա շնորհիվ նույնիսկ առանձին բառակազմական բներ են ստեղծվում:

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