

THE USE OF DIMINUTIVES IN CHILDREN'S FAIRY TALES

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Abstract. *This article examines the ways in which diminutive-lacing units are used in children's fairy tales. Since diminutive-serious units denote tenderness, endearment, we often encounter them in children's fairy tales. It was found that diminutive forms carry not only positive but also negative semantic load.*

Keywords: *Diminutive, fairy tales, diminutives, language, communication.*

INTRODUCTION.

In different communicative situations, the use of diminutive has a different impact on the course of communication, since in each specific case a whole range of diminutive meaning is actualized. The language of children's fairy tales is characterized by its evocative (e.g. goblin, prince, forest, kingdom) and descriptive (“enchantment”, “wicked”, “prince”) vocabulary.

Diminutives are used in children's fairy tales in the following cases:

- Conveying smallness and youth: duckling, piglet;
- Diminished world, a feeling of a fairy tale world is smaller and more manageable for a child's imagination: teeny, tiny;
- Expressing emotion (affection and endearment): sweetie, dearie.

As we know, diminutives are usually noted by diminutive suffixes. Diminutive suffixes include: -ie, -y, -ling, -let, -o, -cy, -ish etc.

According to X.Samigova there are 9 diminutive suffixes (-kin, -les, -ling, sy, -cy, -ie, -y, -ey, -o) in English [Samigova X. 2010, 35].

English fairy tale discourse has considerably more diminutive units. These are primarily diminutive suffixal formations [Z.V.Mixeleva, 9.92]. For example, in the fairy tale “The swan princess” the word **starlet** is used, which derives from **star**.

The fairy tale “The Three Little Pigs” frequently used the word “**piglets**”, which has a diminutive meaning, describing the characters as little children. In the fairy tale “Beauty and the beast” features the word princeling, with the suffix -ling suggesting the idea of a pathetic young prince unable to assume the responsibilities that come with his royal title.

Lexical devices are used, such as the epithet “little” in the fairy tale “Wolf and the Seven Little Goats”. The lexeme “little” in the title emphasizes the factual meaning that the characters are still small, while also conveying the expressive meaning that the kids, the goat's daughters, were very cute.

The next two fairy tales each contain two diminutives. In “Jack and the Beanstalk”, the diminutives **froglet** (derived from frog) and **eaglet** (derived from eagle) indicate that these animals are smaller and younger than the others. In “Little Red Riding Hood”, the word **nutlet** means 'a small or young, not fully grown nut, and **treelet**, a small or young tree, such as a seedling or sapling.

The fairy tale “Muzzy,” which has taught generations of children, uses three diminutive names for animals: **duckling**, **catling**, and **gosling**. The fairy tale “The Simpsons” featured a few more diminutives, which is probably due to the length of the film: **firstling**-firstborn, **toothlet**-tooth.

Diminutives are also often seen in names: **Petey** from Peter, **Johnny** from Jonathan.

As we have witnessed, the diminutive suffixes -ie, -y, -let, -ling and the lexeme “little” play a crucial role in expressing diminutives.

It has been established that diminutiveness as a category inherent in various linguistic cultures, surprisingly, is widely used in old children's fairy tales as children's literature.

Sometimes, in order to reach a desired stylistic effect the author may even deliberately overload the text with diminutives [Yakiv Bystrov, Ella Mintys, Yuliya Mintiys, p. 82]. For example, in the short story *Teeny-tiny* Joseph Jacobs (2009) used the lexeme *teeny-tiny* 59 times. In fact, every noun (*teeny-tiny* woman, *teeny-tiny* church, *teeny-tiny* gate, *teeny-tiny* bed), even some adverbs (*teeny-tiny* further, *teeny-tiny* louder) and participles (*teeny-tiny* frightened) acquire a diminutive meaning. Every fifth word in this short story changed its meaning under the influence of the modifier *teeny-tiny*. The author “diminished” the size of all the objects and personages irrespective of their initial size: e.g. **teeny-tiny village – teeny-tiny churchyard – teeny-tiny woman – teeny-tiny bed – teeny-tiny bone**.

In the story, the diminutive serves as the main stylistic device employed by the author for creating a fairy-tale effect, namely for molding a diminished world with diminished objects in children's imagination (1):

(1) And when this **teeny-tiny** woman had got into the **teeny-tiny** churchyard, she saw a **teeny-tiny** bone on a **teeny-tiny** grave, and the **teeny-tiny** woman said to her **teeny-tiny** self, ‘This **teeny-tiny** bone will make me some *teeny-tiny* soup for my **teeny-tiny** supper.’ (Jacobs, *Teeny-tiny* 2009: 39)

The author chooses the lexeme *teeny-tiny* formed by means of an echo-word formation, which emphasizes diminution. However, the term is combined both with names of objects to denote their smallness (*teeny-tiny* village, *teeny-tiny* woman), and with abstract nouns or nouns of material (*teeny-tiny* time, *teeny-tiny* self, *teeny-tiny* soup). Thus, the aim of the author is not only to set diminutive forms and the diminutives' denotative meaning of smallness within particular contexts but also, first and foremost, to express secondary uses of the diminutive, namely the connotative meaning of emotiveness in order to make the text less serious and to strengthen positive emotions of the listener.

In conclusion, diminutives are used in children's fairy tales to convey a range of attitudes, primarily affection and endearment, but also to express smallness, youth, or a negative or mocking tone. They can make characters and situations seem more familiar, intimate, or less imposing. Their use is a powerful narrative tool for setting the emotional and social context of a story, often accompanying other speech acts like directives or requests.

References:

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