

DIMINUTIVE SUFFIXES IN BULGARIAN*

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Abstract

Diminutive suffixes do not show the same properties cross-linguistically. In some languages they behave like inflectional, while in others they display a derivational character. This paper deals with Bulgarian diminutive suffixes. It investigates their behaviour, and gives an account of their status in morphology. The theoretical framework adopted here views morphology as a continuum with derivation and inflection at the two poles. Diminutive suffixes are situated in between, and their proximity to the one pole or to the other depends on the particular language one deals with and the individual properties of each suffix. In the light of this framework, the paper investigates Bulgarian diminutive suffixes with respect to their position within the word, their distribution, and the features (semantic and morpho-syntactic), which they transfer to the base. It is suggested that they are heads of their constructions, and that they display a derivational character.

Key words: diminutive suffixes, derivational properties, gender assignment, headedness.

1. Background and hypotheses

Diminutivization is very frequent in Bulgarian, suffixation being the basic mechanism for producing diminutives: nouns, adjectives, numerals, adverbs and verbs are diminutivized. In this paper, I will investigate the suffixes that produce diminutives from nouns. I will examine their properties in an attempt to show that they display a derivational nature and that they are heads of their constructions, similarly to their Modern Greek counterparts. To this end, I will rely on Melissaropoulou and Ralli's (2008) observations on the derivational and the head properties of diminutive suffixes in Standard Modern Greek and its dialects. Then, I will present the properties of their Bulgarian counterparts and interpret them in the light of the proposals put forward by these authors as well as by Grandi (2002).

Contradictory opinions regarding the status of diminutive suffixes in morphology have been expressed by various linguists. A brief review of the relevant studies is sufficient to show that all claims regarding the nature of these suffixes are

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made depending on the linguistic data that are explored. For instance, Anderson (1982) reports that diminutive suffixes in a language like Fula are inflectional. Ralli (1988) claims that Greek diminutive suffixes are derivational and heads of their formations, and Booij (1996) assumes the same characteristics for the corresponding suffixes in Dutch. Analyzing the properties of evaluative suffixes in Italian, Scalise (1988) proposes that they form a separate category; they are not heads of their formations, and are situated between inflectional and derivational suffixes. Dressler and Merlini-Barbatesi (1994) claim that diminutive suffixes in European languages are neither inflectional nor prototypically derivational. They also argue that there is no sufficient evidence to assume that evaluative suffixes form a separate category.

It appears that linguistic variation is the main cause for the lack of agreement among linguists on the nature of diminutive suffixes. This is a basic conclusion in the work by Melissaropoulou and Ralli (2008), who argue that, as far as Greek is concerned, they are derivational as well as heads of their constructions. Their claims are based on observations concerning:

- the syntactic, morphological, and semantic restrictions on the distribution of diminutive suffixes,
- the limited or absence of alternation of diminutive suffixes in Modern Greek dialects,
- the fact that diminutive suffixes are not exclusively peripheral within the word.¹

Evidence for the headedness properties of diminutive suffixes relies on:

- the semantic change that they bring to the base,
- certain cases of lexicalization,
- the change that diminutive suffixes may bring to the gender and the inflection class of their formations,
- the irregularities observed in the behaviour of their nominal formations, which are not proper to the base (e.g. the absence of a genitive case).

Melissaropoulou and Ralli (2008) suggest an approach, which also accounts for the linguistic variation that is observed among dialects, and possibly across languages. They further develop Scalise's proposal for situating diminutivization between derivation and inflection, and claim that since there is no clear-cut borderline between the two morphological processes, diminutive suffixes cannot form a separate subcategory. Adopting Bybee's (1985) idea of a morphological continuum with pure inflection and pure derivation at the two poles, Melissaropoulou and Ralli (2008) suggest that diminutive suffixes are positioned in between, and that being closer to the one pole or the other is a matter of the properties of the particular language and the suffix one deals with. They introduce the notion of 'strength' in headedness and derivational status, both of which can vary cross-linguistically and intra-linguistically. These claims are in line with Ralli's position (1999, 2005) that a morphological process or a certain phenomenon may be

¹ For more details see Melissaropoulou & Ralli (2007).

derivational in one language, but inflectional in another, and that word-formation processes and affixes are positioned in a scalar hierarchy within a morphological continuum. This position can account for the fact that some diminutive suffixes may or may not behave like typical derivational or inflectional suffixes.

In the next sections of this paper I will try to demonstrate that Bulgarian diminutive suffixes display derivational properties. Some basic characteristics of Bulgarian nominal morphology will be briefly presented, and attention will be paid to the category of gender, since it plays an important role in the distribution of diminutive suffixes. In fact, information about gender assignment to Bulgarian nouns is crucial for the understanding of the nature of diminutive suffixes in this language.

2. Gender assignment in Bulgarian nouns

Bulgarian is a Slavic language. It has lost its case declension² and unlike most Slavic languages, it has developed a definite article which is suffixed to the noun base. Nouns in Bulgarian have two inflectional categories: number and definiteness. In most grammatical descriptions, gender is a classificatory category, according to which nouns fall into three classes: masculine, feminine and neuter. Each class has its own endings, which are defined as gender suffixes. According to a broad classification, masculine nouns end in a consonant, and display a zero marker for gender, feminine nouns end in *-a/-ja* and neuter nouns in *-o/-e*. A formal distinction relying on the final phoneme of the noun has numerous exceptions though, as it can be seen in the following examples:

- (1)
- a. bašt-**a**
father-MASC.SG 'father'
 - b. djad-**o**
grandfather-MASC.SG 'grandfather'
 - c. kol-**a**
car-FEM.SG 'car'
 - d. sel-**o**
village-NEU.SG 'village'
 - e. lost-**Ø**
lever-MASC.SG 'lever'
 - f. krâv-**Ø**
blood-FEM.SG 'blood'

Gender determination in (1a,b) above is semantically driven. These nouns are [+human] and their masculine gender is determined on the basis of their physical gender (male). The gender value of the nouns in (1c,d,e) is determined by their

² Apart from some non-productive and limited forms in vocative (Scatton 1993:199).

suffix, as stated above. In (1f), however, the gender value cannot be predicted by means of semantic or phonological information. Nitsolova (2008: 58) points out that in derived [-human] nouns gender is determined by the derivational suffix. I suggest that this also holds for derived [+human] nouns, and I will instantiate my suggestion with several examples. Deverbal nouns in *-ets* (*kradets* ‘thief’), as well as denominal nouns in *-nik* (*sveštnik* ‘candlestick’) are masculine. Deverbal and denominal nouns in *-ka* (*počivka* ‘rest’, *sâsedka* ‘female neighbour’) are feminine, deadjectival nouns in *-ost* (*nežnost* ‘tenderness’) are feminine and so are the denominal and deverbal nouns in *-itsa* (*gâlâbitsa* ‘a female pigeon’, *kašlitsa* ‘cough’). Deverbal nouns in *-lo* and *-ne* are neuter (*greblo* ‘oar’, *peene* ‘singing’).

(2)

a. kradets	< krada ‘to steal’	-ets.MASC
b. sveštnik	< svešt.FEM ‘candle’	-nik.MASC
c. počivka	< počivam ‘to rest’	-ka.FEM
d. sâsedka	< sâsed.MASC ‘neighbour’	-ka.FEM
e. nežnost	< nežen ‘tender’	-ost.FEM
f. gâlâbitsa	< gâlâb.MASC ‘pigeon’	-itsa.FEM
g. kašlitsa	< kašljam ‘to cough’	-itsa.FEM
h. greblo	< greba ‘to row’	-lo.NEU
i. peene	< peja ‘to sing’	-ne.NEU

Ralli (2002) has proposed that in Greek derived nouns, the gender value is determined by the nominal derivational suffix, and is assigned to the formation through headedness and percolation. I suggest that the same phenomenon holds for Bulgarian:

(3)

[[krad] _v [ets] _{N.MASC}] _{N.MASC}
[[svešt] _{N.FEM} [nik] _{N.MASC}] _{N.MASC}
[[počiv] _v [ka] _{N.FEM}] _{N.FEM}
[[nežn] _A [ost] _{N.FEM}] _{N.FEM}
[[pee] _v [ne] _{N.NEU}] _{N.NEU}

From the observations made so far, it seems that gender assignment in Bulgarian depends partially on phonological information relevant to gender suffixes, partially on semantic criteria regarding the feature [+/-human] of the base, and on morphological information relevant to the presence of a derivational suffix. In many cases, though, these criteria cannot apply successfully. In nouns marked as [-human], which constitute morphologically simple words, i.e. do not contain a gender suffix or a derivational one, gender determination is problematic. Consider the examples below, which belong to different gender values, while all of them end in a consonant, are [-human], and do not have a derivational suffix:

(4)

kol
stake.MASC.SG 'stake'
sol
salt.FEM.SG 'salt'
nošt
night.FEM.SG 'night'

It should be noted that Nitsolova (2008: 52-58, 80) and Scatton (1993: 199) argue that gender is marked on the inflectional suffixes, which also denote number and definiteness. However, there are also several cases of identical inflectional morphemes coding different gender values, as the following examples illustrate:

(5)

- a. lost-**ât**
lever-MASC.SG-DEF 'the lever'
- b. kost-**ta**
bone-FEM.SG-DEF 'the bone'
- c. lost-**ove**
lever-MASC.PL 'levers'
- d. kost-**i**
bone-FEM.PL 'bones'
- e. stremež-**i-te**
aspiration-MASC.PL-DEF 'the aspirations'
- f. pesn-**i-te**
song-FEM.PL-DEF 'the songs'
- g. nasekom-**i-te**
insect-NEU.PL-DEF 'the insects'
- h. majk-**a-ta**
mother-FEM.SG-DEF 'the mother'
- i. bašt-**a-ta**
father-MASC.SG-DEF 'the father'
- j. dets-**a-ta**
children-NEU.PL-DEF 'the children'
- k. mâž-**e**
man-MASC.PL 'men'
- l. det-**e**
child-NEU.SG 'child'

These examples show that inflectional information regarding definiteness can indicate gender only in certain cases, e.g. in masculine and feminine nouns ending in a consonant, like those in (5a, b). The rest of the examples prove that inflectional markers indicating number and definiteness do not appear to be a reliable source for the determination of gender in nouns: the plural marker *-ove* is used with masculine nouns (5c), the plural marker *-i* is used with nouns of the three gender values (5d, e, f, g) and so is the morpheme of the definite article *-te* for the plural of nouns (5e, f, g). The morpheme *-ta*, which is the definite article of singular feminine and masculine nouns ending in *-a* (5h, i), has the same form with the morpheme of the definite article of neuter nouns in plural (5j). The gender suffix for feminine nouns *-a* (5h) is identical with the morpheme indicating the plural number of neuter nouns (5j). The plural number morpheme *-e* for some masculine nouns (5k) coincides with the gender suffix of neuter nouns (5l).

It is important to add that the gender value of nouns which appear only in the plural form (*pluralia tantum*) cannot be determined as well:

- (6)
- a. očila
eye glasses.PL ‘eye glasses’
 - b. vâglišta
coal.PL ‘coal’

Moreover, a group of nouns with a singular ending in *-a*, the so called *genus communia* (Nitsolova 2008: 57) denote a person of both sexes (7a, b) and their gender value depends on agreement, which means, it is triggered by syntax. The same holds true for some professional nouns marked as [+human] like those in (7c, d):

- (7)
- a. rodnin-**a**
relative.MASC/FEM ‘relative’
 - b. skrândz-**a**
miser.MASC/FEM ‘miser’
 - c. letets
pilot.MASC/FEM ‘pilot’
 - d. profesor
professor.MASC/FEM ‘professor’

Therefore, and as already noted above, gender assignment in Bulgarian relies partially on phonology and partially on semantics. Morphological information relevant to word-formation processes seems important for the determination of

gender. Furthermore, in a number of cases, gender assignment depends on syntactic agreement.

In order to provide a uniform account for gender assignment in Bulgarian the approach proposed by Ralli (2002: 533-542) for gender assignment in Modern Greek will be adopted here. According to Ralli's proposal, gender is considered to be a property inherent to certain items of the mental lexicon, i.e. noun stems and nominal derivational affixes. Their entries are listed in the form of feature bundles representing phonological, morphological, semantic and syntactic information. These items are specified for a gender feature, which is given as an attribute-value pair. In derivational affixes the gender value is fully specified. In stems, gender can be either fully specified, i.e. in those cases where its value is unpredictable, or underspecified, i.e. when this value is acquired by some process. In other words, when a gender value cannot be predicted by information found elsewhere, it is considered to be a fully specified feature, which is inherent to the nominal stem. However, when gender is underspecified, in the sense that a value can be predicted by another co-occurring feature, this missing value is filled through a feature specification rule, which takes into consideration the information that is relevant to gender assignment (e.g. phonological, morphological, semantic, syntactic). Word-formation processes also participate in gender assignment, where headedness and feature percolation in derivation and/or compounding may have an effect on gender assignment.

In the light of this framework, I will interpret the determination of gender in Bulgarian nouns. As already mentioned, I assume that the assignment of a gender value depends on morphological information relevant to derivation, as well as on phonological, semantic and syntactic information. In morphologically simple words, gender is represented with a fully specified value which is inherent to the stem. In morphologically complex words the assignment of gender is the result of the interaction between phonology and semantics, or the result of a derivational process (suffixation). In nouns marked as [+human], which are composed of a stem and a gender suffix, the semantic information is considered to prevail over the phonological information which is depicted by the ending. In nouns marked as [-human] the phonological information is more important than the semantic one. In derived nouns the gender value is determined by the gender value of the derivational suffix. Moreover, for certain cases (e.g. examples in (7)), the assignment of gender depends on syntax. These conclusions are also in line with Corbett's (1991) claims, according to which languages may use different types of information for gender assignment and may even use different combinations of these types of information.

In what follows, these assumptions will be investigated with respect to the behaviour of Bulgarian diminutive suffixes, the basic properties of which will be examined in the next section.

3. Affixal order and the distribution of Bulgarian diminutive suffixes

Like most Slavic languages, Bulgarian displays a rich system of diminutive suffixes, diminutivization being a highly productive process (Krâstev 1976). Nouns, adjectives, numerals, adverbs, and verbs are diminutivized by means of suffixation. The distribution of diminutive suffixes is subject to categorial restrictions, i.e. they select bases of a certain category³. In this paper, only the suffixes that select noun bases will be investigated, since diminutivization appears to be very productive within this category (Vaseva 1994).

3.1. Position within the word

It has been argued that inflection and derivation occupy different positions within the structure of a word. According to Plank (1994), derivational suffixes are generally positioned closer to the base than inflectional ones, the latter being situated at the periphery of the word.

The position of Bulgarian diminutive suffixes within the word shows a derivational character, since they are not peripheral, and the inflectional morphemes indicating number and definiteness follow them, as it can be seen in the examples below:

- (8)
- | | |
|---------------|------------------------|
| a. snjagØ > | snež- ets-ât |
| snow.MASC.SG | snow-DIM.MASC.SG-DET |
| ‘snow’ | ‘the little snow’ |
| b. gor-a > | gor- ička-ta |
| forest-FEM.SG | forest-DIM.FEM.SG-DET |
| ‘forest’ | ‘the little forest’ |
| c. palt-o > | palt- ents-a-ta |
| coat-NEU.SG | coat-DIM.NEU-PL-DET |
| ‘coat’ | ‘the little coats’ |
| d. dârv-o > | drâv- če-ta-ta |
| tree-NEU.SG | tree-DIM.NEU-PL-DET |
| ‘tree’ | ‘the little trees’ |

3.2. Distribution of diminutive suffixes

Unlike inflectional suffixes, the distribution of which is relatively free, derivational suffixes are distributed with certain limitations (Plag 2003: 16). According to Grandi (2002: 113) the distribution of diminutive suffixes is subject to restrictions of phonological, syntactic, morphological and semantic nature.

³The suffix *-ička* is an exception. It attaches to nouns, adjectives, adverbs and rarely to numerals and verbs (Krâstev 1976). Categorial neutrality appears to be common for diminutive suffixes cross-linguistically (Stump 1993), and may also characterize derivation (Melissaropoulou & Ralli 2008).

3.2.1. Morphosyntactic restrictions

Studies on Bulgarian have shown that the most important restriction which governs the application of diminutive suffixes refers to the subcategorization frame and the gender of the base they attach to (Krâstev 1976, Vaseva 1994). The importance of the gender restriction has been proved with respect to Italian (Grandi 2002) and Greek as well (Melissaropoulou and Ralli 2008), where diminutive suffixes fall into two groups: those that attach to bases of one gender only (group A), and those that select masculine, feminine and neuter bases (group B).

- Group A

In Bulgarian, this group consists of suffixes that select bases of one gender value (masculine, feminine, or neuter), and their formations preserve this value:

(9) Masculine diminutives from masculine bases which are produced with the suffix *-ets*:

a. <i>dâžd</i> Ø >	dâžd-ets
rain.MASC.SG	rain-DIM.MASC.SG
‘rain’	‘little rain’
b. <i>život</i> Ø >	život-ets
life.MASC.SG	life-DIM.MASC.SG
‘life’	‘little life’
c. <i>snjag</i> Ø >	snež-ets
snow.MASC.SG	snow-DIM.MASC.SG
‘snow’	‘little snow’

(10) Feminine diminutives from feminine bases which are produced with the suffixes *-ka*, *-itsa*, its allomorph *-čitsa*, and *-ička*⁴:

a. <i>mašin-a</i> >	mašin-ka
machine-FEM.SG	machine-DIM.FEM.SG
‘machine’	‘little machine’
b. <i>rib-a</i> >	rib-ka
fish-FEM.SG	fish-DIM.FEM.SG
‘fish’	‘little fish’
c. <i>gor-a</i> >	gor-itsa
forest-FEM.SG	forest-DIM.FEM.SG
‘forest’	‘little forest’
d. <i>zahar</i> >	zahar-čitsa
sugar.FEM.SG	sugar-DIM.FEM.SG
‘sugar’	‘little sugar’
e. <i>krâv</i> >	krâv-čitsa

⁴ The suffix *-ička(a)* is formed by the accumulation of *-itsa* and *-ka*, but has acquired an autonomous status. Accumulation of diminutive suffixes is common in Bulgarian, but they will not be examined here.

blood.FEM.SG	blood-DIM.FEM.SG
‘blood’	‘little blood’
f. gor- a >	gor- ička
forest-FEM.SG	forest-DIM.FEM.SG
‘forest’	‘little forest’
g. kol- a >	kol- ička
car-FEM.SG	car-DIM.FEM.SG
‘car’	‘little car’

(11) Neuter diminutives from neuter bases which are produced with the suffixes *-tse*, its allomorph *-itse*, and *-entse*:

a. ezer- o >	ezer- tse
lake-NEU.SG	lake-DIM.NEU.SG
‘lake’	‘little lake’
b. ogledal- o >	ogledal- tse
mirror-NEU.SG	mirror-DIM.NEU.SG
‘mirror’	‘little mirror’
c. lits- e >	lič- itse
face-NEU.SG	face-DIM.NEU.SG
‘face’	‘little face’
d. mljak- o >	mleč- itse
milk-NEU.SG	milk-DIM.NEU.SG
‘milk’	‘little milk’
e. palt- o >	palt- entse
coat-NEU.SG	coat-DIM.NEU.SG
‘coat’	‘little coat’
f. det- e >	det- entse
child-NEU.SG	child-DIM.NEU.SG
‘child’	‘little child’

- Group B

The diminutive suffixes in this group attach to both masculine and feminine (and rarely to neuter) bases, and their formations belong to the neuter gender value.

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(12) Neuter diminutives from masculine, feminine, and rarely neuter bases, are produced with the suffix *-e* and its allomorphs *-le* and *-če*:

a. <i>kliučø</i> >	<i>kliuč-e</i>
key.MASC.SG	key-DIM.NEU.SG
‘key’	‘little key’
b. <i>rokl-ja</i> >	<i>rokl-e</i>
dress-FEM.SG	dress-DIM.NEU.SG
‘dress’	‘little dress’
c. <i>bratø</i> >	<i>brat-le</i>
brother.MASC.SG	brother-DIM.NEU.SG
‘brother’	‘little brother’
d. <i>mâžø</i> >	<i>mâž-le</i>
man.MASC.SG	man-DIM.NEU.SG
‘man’	‘little man’
e. <i>knig-a</i> >	<i>kníž-le</i>
book-FEM.SG	book-DIM.NEU.SG
‘book’	‘little book’
f. <i>vlakø</i> >	<i>vlak-če</i>
train.MASC.SG	train-DIM.NEU.SG
‘train’	‘little train’
g. <i>kladen-ets</i> >	<i>kladen-če</i>
well-MASC.SG	well-DIM.NEU.SG
‘well’	‘little well’
h. <i>star-ets</i> >	<i>star-če</i>
old man-MASC.SG	old man-DIM.NEU.SG
‘old man’	‘little old man’
i. <i>bul-ka</i> >	<i>bul-če</i>
young woman-FEM.SG	young woman-DIM.NEU.SG
‘young woman’	‘little young woman’
g. <i>Elen-a</i> >	<i>Elen-če</i>
Elena-FEM.SG	Elena-DIM.NEU.SG
Elena (woman’s name)	‘dear Elena’
k. <i>dârv-o</i> >	<i>drâv-če</i>
tree-NEU.SG	tree-DIM.NEU.SG
‘tree’	‘little tree’

3.2.2. Phonological restrictions

By investigating the behaviour of evaluative suffixes in the languages of the Mediterranean, Grandi (2002: 112) concludes that the distribution of Italian diminutive suffixes is governed by a phonological restriction relevant to the appearance of similar consonants in adjacent syllables. The distribution of Bulgarian diminutive suffixes is also subject to this restriction. The suffix *-ets* does not

produce diminutives from nouns also ending in *-ets*. The suffix *-če* is applied instead, and the derivation is accompanied by a truncation of the suffix of the base:

- (13)
- | | | | |
|-----------------|---|----------------|------------------|
| a. star-ets | > | *starets-ets | star-če |
| old man-MASC.SG | | | old man-NEU.SG |
| ‘old man’ | | | ‘little old man’ |
| b. kladen-ets | > | *kladenets-ets | kladen-če |
| well-MASC.SG | | | well-NEU.SG |
| ‘well’ | | | ‘little well’ |

The same phonological restriction blocks the attachment of the suffix *-itsa* to bases that end in *-itsa* or in its allomorph *-nitsa*. The suffix *-ka* is used for the creation of diminutives from such bases, and the diminutivization is accompanied by the morphologically conditioned alternation of the alveo-dental affricate /ts/ and the alveo-palatal affricate /č/.

- (14)
- | | | | |
|-------------------|---|-------------------|------------------------|
| a. råkav-itsa | > | *råkavits-itsa | råkavič-ka |
| glove-FEM.SG | | | glove-DIM.FEM.SG |
| ‘glove’ | | | ‘little glove’ |
| b. sladkarn-itsa | > | *sladkarnits-itsa | sladkarnič-ka |
| pastryshop-FEM.SG | | | pastry shop-DIM.FEM.SG |
| ‘pastry shop’ | | | ‘little pastry shop’ |

For the same reason, the bases ending in *-ka* cannot be diminutivized with the suffix *-ka* as well. The suffix *-itsa* is applied instead, and the velar /k/ of the base alternates with the alveo-palatal affricate /č/⁵.

- (15)
- | | | | |
|-----------------|---|-----------|---------------------|
| a. mrav-ka | > | *mravk-ka | mravč-itsa |
| ant-FEM.SG | | | ant-DIM.FEM.SG |
| ‘ant’ | | | ‘little ant’ |
| b. vrâz-ka | > | *vrâzk-ka | vrâzč-itsa |
| shoelace-FEM.SG | | | shoelace-DIM.FEM.SG |
| ‘shoelace’ | | | ‘little shoelace’ |

It should be noticed that the application of the suffix *-ka* is also subject to another phonological restriction, namely to the kind of the consonant cluster of the

⁵ The alternation of /ts/ with /č/ shown in (14a, b) as well as the velar palatalization mentioned in (15a, b) are inherited from Proto-Slavonic and in Modern Bulgarian are not phonologically, but morphologically conditioned (for more details see: Scatton 1999:194).

last syllable: it does not select bases that contain stem final consonant clusters. For the production of well-formed diminutives from such bases the suffix *-ička* is applied instead:

- (16)
- | | | |
|---------------------|------------------|---------------------|
| a. grivn-a > | *grivn-ka | grivn-ička |
| bracelet-FEM.SG | | bracelet-DIM.FEM.SG |
| ‘bracelet’ | | ‘little bracelet’ |
| b. metl-a > | *metl-ka | metl-ička |
| broom-FEM.SG | | broom-DIM.FEM.SG |
| ‘broom’ | | ‘little broom’ |
| c. bradv-a > | *bradv-ka | bradv-ička |
| axe-FEM.SG | | axe-DIM.FEM.SG |
| ‘axe’ | | ‘little axe’ |

3.2.3. Morphological restrictions

According to Grandi (2002:112) diminutive suffixes do not combine with other derivational suffixes. In fact, the distribution of the suffix *-ets* is subject to this restriction: it does not attach to bases created with the suffixes *-tel*, *-ist*, as well as to bases of foreign origin created with the suffixes *-or*, *-er* (which are not productive in Bulgarian). If there are no particular semantic restrictions for the diminutivization of such bases (see below), their diminutive formations are produced with the suffix *-če*.

- (17)
- | | |
|-----------------------|----------------------|
| a. naema-tel > | naematel-če |
| tenant-MASC.SG | tenant-DIM.NEU.SG |
| ‘tenant’ | ‘little tenant’ |
| b. komunist > | komunist-če |
| communist.MASC.SG | communist-DIM.NEU.SG |
| ‘communist’ | ‘little communist’ |
| c. inžener > | inžener-če |
| engineer.MASC.SG | engineer-DIM.NEU.SG |
| ‘engineer’ | ‘little engineer’ |

3.2.4. Semantic restrictions

It has been argued by Grandi (2002: 115) and Rainer (1989: 210-211) that the distribution of diminutive suffixes is also subject to semantic restrictions. Generally, bases marked as [+abstract], and those belonging to the [+administrative] and [+scientific] registers do not constitute an input to diminutive suffixes. However, in Bulgarian, these restrictions are not systematically obeyed, as the following counter-examples indicate:

(18)

a. kongres >	kongres- če
congress.MASC.SG	congress-DIM.MASC.SG
‘congress’	‘small/unimportant congress’
b. profesor	profesor- če
professor-MASC.SG	professor-DIM.MASC.SG
‘professor’	‘small/unimportant professor’
c. disertatsi-ja >	disertatsij- ka
dissertation-FEM.SG	dissertation-DIM.FEM.SG
‘dissertation’	‘small/unimportant dissertation’
d. zavešta-nie >	zaveštani- tse
will-NEU.SG	will-DIM.NEU.SG
‘will’	‘small/unimportant will’

As shown in these examples, the production of diminutives from bases of special registers is not blocked. However, the formations are interpreted with a certain irony and pejorative evaluation, which are brought to the base.

4. Diminutive semantics.

Following Grandi (2005: 189) evaluative morphology comprises two aspects of interpretation: one descriptive and one qualitative. Therefore, a diminutive formation can refer to the physical size, i.e. “small” of the entity, which is diminutivized or to its quality, i.e. “good” or “bad”, which is subjectively perceived by the speakers. Vaseva (1994: 34) points out that in Bulgarian traditional grammars each diminutive suffix is assigned a meaning of its own, since it is assumed that different suffixes express different aspects of diminutivity. Thus, according to the case, some suffixes refer mainly to the physical size, others bear the connotation of affection and tenderness, and others carry a pejorative meaning. It is pointed out that one and the same suffix can express the notion of smallness, or the connotation of familiarity, or to imply a pejorative evaluation/irony, depending on the situation (Krâstev 1976).

However, in numerous cases, the semantic change is not limited solely to adding a descriptive or a qualitative aspect to the meaning of the base, but leads to a non-compositional meaning. In such cases, the diminutive formation is no longer perceived as diminutive, its meaning being totally different from the meaning of the base. This process is known as lexicalization, and is typical of evaluative morphology, distinguishing it from prototypical inflection (Bauer 1997). In fact, lexicalization of diminutive formations is common in languages (Melissaropoulou and Ralli 2008), and the data from Bulgarian illustrate this fact:

Diminutive Suffixes in Bulgarian

(19)

- | | |
|----------------|--|
| a. knig-a > | kniž- ka ⁶ |
| book-FEM.SG | driving license-FEM.SG |
| ‘book’ | ‘driving licence’ |
| b. mom-âk > | mom- če |
| lad-MASC.SC | boy-NEU.SG |
| ‘lad’ | ‘boy’ |
| c. kan-a > | kan- če |
| pitcher-FEM.SG | pannikin-NEU.SG |
| ‘pitcher’ | ‘pannikin’ |
| d. ezikØ > | ezič- e |
| tongue-MASC.SG | bolt-NEU.SG ‘bolt’ (in a door lock) |
| e. top-ka > | top- če |
| ball-FEM.SG | marble-NEU.SG ‘marble’
(used in children’s games) |
| f. kor-a > | kor- itsa |
| bark-FEM.SG | cover-FEM.SG ‘cover of a book’ |

Relevant to the issue of diminutive semantics is also the alternation of diminutive suffixes, which is often regarded as evidence against a derivational nature. Since derivation is characterized by low alternation (Bauer 1983), the production of diminutives from the same base, but with different suffixes, could be considered as evidence against a derivational character. Alternation of suffixes is considered as a violation of Aronoff’s Blocking principle, which is defined as the ‘non-occurrence of one form due to the existence of another’ (Aronoff 1976:43). The process of producing morphological constructions from the same base with different suffixes seems to be a common characteristic of diminutivization cross-linguistically. Katramadou (2001 in: Melissaropoulou & Ralli 2008) points out that high alternation characterizes the distribution of diminutive suffixes in Modern Greek. In my opinion, alternation of diminutive suffixes should be regarded in relation to diminutive semantics, namely to the fact that different diminutive suffixes do not share the same meaning. In the examples given below, there are pairs of diminutive formations derived from the same base, with the attachment of different suffixes. The derivatives in each pair have the same referent, but differ in terms of various semantic aspects that are expressed by each suffix.

(20)

- | | |
|------------------------|-------------------|
| a. gor- itsa > | gor- ička |
| forest-DIM.FEM.SG | forest-DIM.FEM.SG |
| ‘dear little forest’ | ‘little forest’ |
| b. narod- ets > | narod- če |

⁶ Used both as a diminutive of the base and as a lexicalized form.

people-DIM.MASC.SG 'poor people'	people-DIM.NEU.SG 'little people'
c. χ leb- ets > bread-DIM.MASC.SG 'dear/ precious bread'	χ leb- če bread-DIM.NEU.SG 'little bread'
d. čant- e > bag-DIM.NEU.SG 'little bag' (pejorative)	čant- ička bag-DIM.FEM.SG 'little bag'
e. rokl- e > dress-DIM.NEU.SG 'little dress' (pejorative)	rokl- ička dress-DIM.FEM.SG 'little dress'

The first member of each pair displays a meaning referring to the qualitative aspect of diminutive semantics, i.e. a positive or negative attitude towards the referent. The second member of each pair conveys the descriptive aspect of diminutive semantics, i.e. it refers to the physical size of the referent.

According to Grandi (2005:189), the same formation may express more than one semantic value, the purely descriptive aspect not being easily distinguishable from the qualitative one. In Bulgarian diminutives, both the descriptive and the qualitative aspects cannot be easily interpreted if words are isolated from the context they are used in. Krāstev (1976) notes that the same suffix can refer to the small size, express endearment, or imply a pejorative evaluation, depending on the context, and the meaning of diminutive formations is closely related to the particular communicative situation they are used in. Their use in discourse depends on socio-pragmatic factors, and semantic and pragmatic differences are easily perceived by native speakers.

Relevant to these considerations is another interesting semantic property that is displayed by Bulgarian diminutive suffixes: their graded character, as noted by Krāstev (1976). There are diminutive suffixes of the first degree and diminutive suffixes of second degree, the latter expressing the notion of smallness or a notion of familiarity/tenderness, more intense than the first. This is shown in the examples below:

(21)

- a. Milena > Milen-**ka** 'little Milena' = 'dear Milena'
- b. Milena > Milen-**če** 'little little Milena' = 'dear, dear Milena'

These diminutives are produced from the same proper name but the derivatives differ semantically. (21b) expresses familiarity and tenderness more intensely than (21a) does. In a graded semantic hierarchy, the suffix *-če* could be considered of the second degree as compared to the suffix *-ka*, which should be of the first. Speakers consciously choose a particular form among the diminutive formations according to

their communicative intentions, and according to the socio-pragmatic factors that regulate communication.

One important conclusion can be drawn on the basis of the above observations: since constructions with one and the same referent differ semantically, claims about alternating diminutives should be carefully dealt with. First, the diminutive formations produced from the same base with the attachment of different suffixes should not be considered as instances of violation of Aronoff's Blocking principle, since each diminutive suffix adds a different aspect to the meaning of the base. Second, since there is no real alternation of diminutive suffixes for the same words, there is no counter-evidence of their derivational nature.

The properties of Bulgarian diminutive suffixes examined so far are suggestive of a derivational character. Their position and their distribution within the diminutive formation distinguish them from inflectional suffixes. It has been shown that they appear closer to the base than the inflectional morphemes indicating number and definiteness, and unlike inflectional markers, diminutive suffixes are not distributed freely, but according to certain categorial, morphosyntactic, phonological and semantic restrictions. The semantic modifications that diminutive suffixes bring to the base constitute evidence for a derivational character.

In the next section, a property suggestive of headedness will be examined, namely the assignment of the gender value to diminutive formations.

5. Diminutive suffixes and gender

Following Ralli's (2002) approach for gender, as a feature inherent to stems and derivational affixes, Bulgarian diminutive suffixes display three gender values:

(22) Gender values in Bulgarian diminutive suffixes:

Masculine	Feminine	Neuter
-ets	-ka	-tse ~ -itse
	itsa ~ -čitsa	-entse
	-ička	-e~ -le~ -če

As shown in section 3.2.1, some diminutive suffixes preserve the gender of the selected base, while others change it to neuter. It is suggested here that since a gender value is inherent to diminutive suffixes the gender of the derivatives is in fact the gender of their diminutive suffix. It has also been assumed that the gender value is assigned to the diminutive formation by the diminutive suffix through feature percolation (Lieber 1989, Ralli 2002). As already said, this suggestion is based on the assumption that gender is a feature inherent to stems and derivational affixes, which percolates to the mother node. Assuming that a gender value is inherent to diminutive suffixes, and that they are situated to the right of the base, they constitute heads of their formations, and thus, determine the gender value of their constructions. Evidence for this argument is found in Bulgarian diminutive

formations marked as [+human] and [-human]. Examples will be repeated here for convenience:

- (23)
- | | |
|--------------------|------------------------|
| a. bratø > | brat- le |
| brother-MASC.SG | brother-DIM.NEU.SG |
| ‘brother’ | ‘little brother’ |
| b. mâžø > | mâž- le |
| man-MASC.SG | man-DIM.NEU.SG |
| ‘man’ | ‘little man’ |
| c. bul-ka > | bul- če |
| young woman-FEM.SG | young woman-DIM.NEU.SG |
| ‘young woman’ | ‘little young woman’ |
| d. kladen-ets > | kladen- če |
| well-MASC.SG | well-DIM.NEU.SG |
| ‘well’ | ‘little well’ |
| e. vlakø > | vlak- če |
| train-MASC.SG | train-DIM.NEU.SG |
| ‘train’ | ‘little train’ |
| f. dâždø > | dâžd- ets |
| rain-MASC.SG | rain-DIM.MASC.SG |
| ‘rain’ | ‘little rain’ |
| g. rib-a > | rib- ka |
| fish-FEM.SG | fish-DIM.FEM.SG |
| ‘fish’ | ‘little fish’ |
| h. krâv > | krâv- čitsa |
| blood-FEM.SG | blood-DIM.FEM.SG |
| ‘blood’ | ‘little blood’ |
| i. ogleđal-o > | ogleđal- tse |
| mirror-NEU.SG | mirror-DIM.NEU.SG |
| ‘mirror’ | ‘little mirror’ |

The physical gender of the referents of the diminutives marked as [+human] (15a, b, c) does not coincide with their grammatical gender that seems to be assigned to the formation by the diminutive suffix. The [-human] diminutives (15d, e) also acquire their neuter gender from the diminutive suffix. As for cases like (15f, g, h, i), the preservation of the gender of the base is interpreted as a coincidence of the gender value of the stem and that of the diminutive suffix.

To partially sum up, diminutive suffixes in Bulgarian are gender determining. They do not change the category of the selected base, but assign their gender value to the created derivative item. This property can be considered as expressing headedness, also in accordance with Booij (2007:53).

6. Conclusions

In this paper, I have dealt with the behaviour of diminutive suffixes in Bulgarian. From the observations made on their properties, I have concluded that they display features that are suggestive of a derivational character as well as of a headedness property.

Unlike inflectional markers, diminutive suffixes are not distributed freely. Their distribution is subject to specific requirements in that their selectional properties are governed by morphosyntactic, phonological, morphological and semantic restrictions.

The position of diminutive suffixes within the word suggests a derivational character, since they are not situated at the periphery of their formations, and the inflectional morphemes indicating number and definiteness follow them.

Diminutive suffixes bring a semantic change to the base they are attached to, by adding a descriptive or a qualitative perspective to its meaning. Often, the semantic changes lead to a non-transparent meaning of the derivative and numerous cases of lexicalized diminutives are observed.

I have claimed that the alternation of diminutive suffixes should not be perceived as a violation of Aronoff's Blocking Principle and, therefore should not be regarded as evidence against a derivational nature. This claim is related to the fact that diminutives created from the same base with the attachment of a different suffix do not constitute synonyms, since different diminutive suffixes bring various connotations to the meaning of the base, and often express the same notion but to a different degree.

The major conclusion that follows from these observations is that diminutive suffixes in Bulgarian display derivational and headedness properties.

I have argued that diminutive suffixes are category-determining because they determine the morphosyntactic features of the formations they create, namely gender.

Taking into consideration all these observations, and along the line of Melissaropoulou and Ralli (2008), I would like to suggest that Bulgarian diminutive suffixes belong to the domain of derivation, but are situated within a morphological continuum, which has derivation and inflection at its two poles. However, further investigation is needed in order to determine the 'strength' of this derivational status, as well as the properties that seem to be close to inflection. This could be achieved by a more detailed examination of Bulgarian diminutive suffixes.

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Περίληψη

Η συμπεριφορά των υποκοριστικών επιθημάτων ποικίλει διαγλωσσικά, καθώς σε ορισμένα γλωσσικά συστήματα παρουσιάζουν χαρακτηριστικά της κλίσης, ενώ σε άλλα της παραγωγής. Η παρούσα εργασία μελετά τα υποκοριστικά επιθήματα στη

Diminutive Suffixes in Bulgarian

Βουλγαρική γλώσσα. Ερευνά τη συμπεριφορά τους με σκοπό να ορισθεί η θέση τους στη μορφολογία. Στο θεωρητικό πλαίσιο που υιοθετείται η μορφολογία νοείται ως συνεχές στους δύο πόλους του οποίου βρίσκονται η κλίση και η παραγωγή, αντίστοιχα. Τα υποκοριστικά επιθήματα τοποθετούνται ανάμεσά τους, καθώς η εγγύτητά τους προς τον έναν ή τον άλλον πόλο εξαρτάται από το συγκεκριμένο γλωσσικό σύστημα, καθώς και από τα χαρακτηριστικά του εκάστοτε επιθήματος. Τα Βουλγαρικά υποκοριστικά επιθήματα μελετώνται αναφορικά με τη θέση τους στη δομή της λέξης, την κατανομή τους και τις ιδιότητες (σημασιολογικές και μορφο-συντακτικές) οι οποίες μεταφέρονται στη βάση. Συμπεραίνεται ότι παρουσιάζουν παραγωγικό χαρακτήρα και αποτελούν τις κεφαλές των κατασκευών που δημιουργούν.

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