

The concept of young animal (Proto-Slavic **nt-stems*) and diminutivization in modern Slavic languages

Stela Manova, Dmitri Sitchinava & Maria Shvedova
(University of Vienna; Russian Language Institute & Higher School of Economics,
Moscow; & Kyiv National Linguistic University)

Keywords: typology, diminutivization, derivation, inflection, Slavic

The literature on diminutivization in the world's languages reports a diachronic link between diminutive suffixes and linguistic items expressing the relation between 'the adult and the young' (Grandi 2011). Likewise, Ivanova-Mircheva & Xaralampiev (1999) claimed that in colloquial Old Bulgarian (Old Church Slavic in some sources) all diminutives belonged to the so-called *nt-stems*, an inflection class that comprised the young of animals. A few inflectional forms of a *nt-noun* follow:

- (1) *tel-ę* 'calf-nom.sg'
tel-ęte 'calf-gen/loc.sg'

Ivanova-Mircheva & Xaralampiev's claim explains the existence of inflectional diminutives (2) in modern Bulgarian (Bg.):

- (2) Bg. *meč-ka* 'bear' → *meč-e* 'teddy-bear & bear-dim' (-e is inflection)

Compare with Bg. *meč-ence*, either 'bear-dim' or 'bear-dim-dim', the latter meaning if *meč-ence* is seen as derived from *meč-e*. In other words, the theme *-ęt-* (1) developed into the very productive diminutive (i.e. derivational) suffix *-enc(e)* in modern Bulgarian, cf. *meč-enc-ence*.

Based on the Proto-Slavic **nt-stems*, Slavic nouns for young animals and their diminutive forms provide an excellent testing ground for investigation of the relation between the concept of young animal and diminutivization. That is, the goal of our research is to contribute to the better understanding of diminutivization as a morphological process.

We have collected and analyzed large sets of nouns for animals, diminutives of animals, nouns for young animals and diminutives of young animals (sample in (3)) in a number of Slavic languages. We will demonstrate that those forms, if seen as paradigmatically organized, allow for a number of interesting observations, both language-specific and typological. As shown in (3), Bulgarian has collapsed the difference between young animals and diminutives, but languages such as Russian (R.), Czech (Cz.) and Slovak (Sl.) keep the two groups of nouns strictly separate:

(3)	'stork'	DIM	young X	DIM of young X
Bg.	<i>štärkel</i>	<i>štärkel-če</i>	<i>štärkel-če</i>	<i>štärkel-č-ence</i>
R.	<i>aist</i>	<i>aist-ik</i>	<i>aist-enok</i>	<i>aist-enoč-ek</i>
Cz.	<i>čáp</i>	<i>čáp-ek</i>	<i>čáp-ě</i>	<i>čáp-átko</i>
Sl.	<i>bocian</i>	<i>bocian-ik</i>	<i>bocian-ča</i>	<i>bocian-č-atko</i>

An interesting position in the overall picture has Ukrainian. In this language, there are two different paradigms for young animals and diminutives, i.e. Ukrainian resembles

Russian, Czech and Slovak (3) in this respect, but it is like Bulgarian (4) when it comes to the use of the suffixes for young animals as diminutivizers:

(4) a. Ukrainian

štan-en'-ata 'trousers-dim-pl'

(-en'(a) derives young animals, as in *koš-en'a* 'kitten')

b. Bulgarian

pantalon-če 'trousers-dim', plural *pantalon-č-eta*

(recall *štárkel-če* 'stork-dim & stork-young' in (3))

The type of diminutivization illustrated in (4) seems to be typical of plural nouns in Ukrainian, is not really developed in Russian and is impossible in Czech and Slovak. For a better understanding of the relation between young animals and diminutives, we also ran psycholinguistic experiments with native speakers.

Based on a contrastive paradigmatic analysis of the data, electronic corpora and the psycholinguistic experiments made, we conclude that the nature of the relation 'young animal-diminutive' is more complex than reported in the literature so far and, importantly, the direction of that relation is different in the different languages (contra Grandi 2011 and other scholars).

References

- Grandi, Nicola (2011), Renewal and innovation in the emergence of Indo-European evaluative morphology, in L. Körtvélyessy, and P. Štekauer (eds.), (2011), *Diminutives and Augmentatives in the Languages of the World, Lexis: e-J. Engl. Lexicology* 6, 5–25.
- Ivanova-Mircheva, Dora & Ivan Xaralampiev (1999), *Istorija na bălgarskija ezik / A History of the Bulgarian Language*, Veliko Tărnovo: Faber.