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DIMINUTIVES IN FINNISH CHILD-DIRECTED AND CHILD SPEECH: MORPHOPRAGMATIC AND MORPHOPHONEMIC ASPECTS¹

Finnish diminutives can be formed by normal affixation, but they are often formed by exceptional means: by shortening the original stem and attaching an affix-like element, e.g. *porsas* → *possu*, *silmä* → *simmu* and *käsi* → *känny*. From the pragmatic point of view, these formations are clear diminutives expressing endearment, intimacy and warm feelings. Diminutives in Finnish child-directed and child speech are interesting not only from the morphopragmatic perspective which Finnish shares with other languages but also from the more language-specific morphophonemic perspective: using diminutives is one way to avoid some stem alternations, because the Finnish diminutives usually have the more simple and transparent inflection pattern than the simplex words from which these diminutives have been derived. For example, when from the noun *käsi* : *käde/n* : *kät/tä* : *käte/en* 'hand' (nominative, genitive, partitive and illative forms, respectively; suffixes are here separated by "/" from the stem) is formed the diminutive *känny*, the stem alternations are eliminated, and the corresponding case-forms are formed by simply attaching the case endings: *känny* : *känny/n* : *känny/ä* : *känny/yn*. Finnish diminutives thus exhibit a tendency towards transparency of inflection.

Morphopragmatics of diminutives

From pragmatics to semantics

Besides smallness diminutives express often also intimacy and warm feelings. In typical adult speech diminutives are not common, but they are used more in intimate speech and especially in child-directed speech; the use of diminutives is thus characteristic of certain speech situations. The morphopragmatics of diminutives has been studied by Dressler and Merlini Barbaresi (1994). According to them, the denotative **semantics** of diminutives can be derived from the basic concept of smallness (1994, p. 116), but the general morpho-**pragmatic** meaning of diminutives is [non-serious], which is metaphorically related to smallness (1994, p. 144). The main ideas of Dressler and Merlini Barbaresi (1994) can be summarized in the following way (cf. Stephany, 1997, p. 148): If the abstract fea-

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ture of non-seriousness is attached to the speech situation, it diminishes its formality, thus reducing psychological distance. Since reduced psychological distance is a component of sympathy, empathy, familiarity, and intimacy, the latter are thereby linked to the feature [non-serious]; diminutives modify the whole speech act in the given speech situation.

Jurafsky (1996, p. 563) has suggested a modification to the idea that diminutives have a semantic sense 'small' and a pragmatic sense 'non-serious': he replaces 'non-serious' by 'child-centered' as the core sense of the diminutives. Wierzbicka (1984) has also suggested that 'child-centered' is the basic concept of diminutives. Dressler and Merlini Barbaresi have recently (2001) presented critical comments to this view. First of all, they point out that diminutives without any connection with children are commonly used when intimacy, familiarity, sympathy, empathy, jocularity etc. are involved.

According to Dressler and Merlini Barbaresi (1994; 2001), the pragmatic meanings of diminutives and augmentatives are not derived from 'small' and 'big' respectively, but both diminutives and augmentatives express an evaluation 'as to value' (in contrast to 'as to fact'), according to the evaluator's intentions, perspectives and standards of evaluation. These are subjective and can be emotive. The view of Dressler and Merlini Barbaresi (1994; 2001) is that semantics is included within pragmatics, but can be separated from it by cancelling all pragmatic variables; their conclusion (2001) is that a purely semantic representation of the evaluative character of diminutives leads to unacceptable reductionism. Moreover, they point out (2001) that Jurafsky's approach does not account for the intimately related category of augmentatives and cannot explain the pragmatic similarity between diminutives and augmentatives. For example, Italian augmentatives are frequently used in child-centered speech situations which, according to Jurafsky, are opposed to diminutives and have nothing to do with the prototype 'child'.

The standpoint of Dressler and Merlini Barbaresi is supported by material from many languages: children acquiring e.g. Italian (Ceccherini et al., 1997), Greek (Stephany, 1997), Dutch (Gillis, 1997), Russian (Voeykova, 1998) and Lithuanian (Savickiene, 1998) use diminutives first without the meaning of smallness; the pragmatic meaning emerges earlier than the semantic meaning. The Finnish material presented in this article also shows that the pragmatic aspect is important in the early use of diminutives: also in Finnish, diminutives are used in child directed and child speech to express endearment rather than smallness.

The perspective of Finnish diminutives

In Finnish child-directed and child speech, there are many diminutive formations that are used mainly for pragmatic purposes. From the morphological point of view, these diminutives are rather exceptional: they are not formed by regular suffixation but their derivational morphology is similar to affective formations in Finnish colloquial speech and slang. From the pragmatic point of view, they are clear diminutives expressing endearment, intimacy and warm feelings. From the morphophonological point of view, they exhibit a tendency to simplification and transparency of inflection.

Background: diminutive formation in standard Finnish

In many languages there is a more or less clear-cut derivational category of diminutives; see e.g. Ceccherini et al. (1997) and de Marco (1998) for Italian, Dressler & Merlini Barbaresi (1994) for Austrian German, Savickiene (1998) for Lithuanian, Stephany (1997)

for Greek and Voeykova (1998) for Russian. In some languages, diminutives are formed with a very regular derivational pattern (cf. Gillis, 1997).

In Finnish there is much variation in the marking of diminutiveness: there are many different diminutive elements. Most of the Finnish diminutives are formed by normal derivation, but in some cases the stem is shortened and an affix-like element is attached. There are also some compounds which express smallness, e.g. *pienaakkonen* 'small letter, minuscule' (cf. *aakkonen* 'letter'), *pieneliö* 'micro-organism' (cf. *eliö* 'organism'), *pienkuluttaja* 'small(scale) consumer', *pikkumies* 'little man, boy' (cf. *mies* 'man'), *pikkuhuilu* 'piccolo' (cf. *huilu* 'flute'), and *pikkubussi* 'minibus' (cf. *bussi* 'bus'). Most of these compounds have no pragmatic effects but e.g. *pikkumies* can be used in the same way as typical diminutives. The compounds beginning with *pikku-* seem to be more disposed to carry diminutive effects than those beginning with *pien-*.

In most cases, Finnish diminutives are nouns derived from other nouns, but there are also some adjectives, e.g. *kalv akka* 'somewhat pale' (cf. *kalpea* 'pale'). Diminutives expressing smallness are formed with many different derivational suffixes, for example with the following ones:

- a) **-nen** e.g. *kala* 'fish' → *kalanen* 'little fish'; *kirja* 'book' → *kirjanen* 'booklet'; *kukka* 'flower' → *kukkanen* 'little flower'; *tyttö* 'girl' → *tyttönen* 'little girl'.
This is the most productive diminutive suffix in Finnish; it can be attached to most noun stems (but not for example to the few monosyllabic stems). Many of the *nen*-diminutives have been lexicalized, e.g. *lehti* 'leaf; newspaper, journal' → *lehtinen* 'leaflet'.
- b) **-ke** e.g. *haara* 'branch' → *haarake* 'little branch', *kieli* 'tongue, string' → *kieleke* 'projecting part', *lahti* 'bay, gulf' → *lahdeke* 'cove', *linna* 'castle' → *linnake* 'fort(ress)', *niemi* 'cape' → *niemeke* 'little cape', *saari* 'island' → *saareke* 'little island'
- c) **-kka** with three subtypes
 1. **-(U)kka** (mostly denominal nouns, NOUN → NOUN) e.g. *nenä* 'nose' → *nenukka* 'little nose', *lehti* 'leaf' → *lehdykkä* 'little leaf', *pyöreä* 'round' → *pyörykkä* 'the little round one', *ressu* 'unfortunate' → *ressukka* 'unfortunate', *soppi* 'corner' → *sopukka* 'little corner'
 2. **-(i)kka** (mostly NOUN → NOUN) e.g. *kanta* 'base' → *kannikka* 'crust', *lude* 'bug' → *lutikka* 'bug' (more colloquial), *musta* 'black' → *mustikka* 'bilberry', *peni* 'dog' (archaic) → *penikka* 'whelp, pup', *vasa* 'fawn' → *vasikka* 'calf'
 3. **-(A)kka** (ADJECTIVE → ADJECTIVE) e.g. *kalpea* 'pale' → *kalv akka* 'somewhat pale', *puna* 'red colour' → *punakka* 'red-faced', *riipeä* 'rapid' → *rivakka* 'quick, vigorous'
- d) **-O** e.g. *emä* 'mother (archaic)' → *emo* 'dam', *jänis* 'rabbit' → *jänö*, *tytär* 'daughter' → *tyttö* 'girl' (also some adjectives, e.g. *iso* 'big' ← *isä* 'father')
- e) **-U** e.g. *kissa* 'cat' → *kisu* 'puss, little cat', *kulta* 'gold/dear' → *kultu* 'the dear one', *peukalo* 'thumb' → *peukku*, *poika* 'boy' (inflection stem *poja-*) → *poju*, *porsas* 'pig' → *possu* 'little pig'; also adjectives: *pikku* 'little' ← *pikka-*, *virkku* (cf. *virkeä*) 'fresh, frisky'.

As one can see from the examples in d) and e) above, the diminutive suffixes *-O* and *-U* are not merely typical suffix elements which are simply added to the end of the stem, but the stem is often shortened and modified in connection with the suffixation, as in *jänis*

→ *jänö*, *kissa* → *kisu*, *peukalo* → *peukku*, and *porsas* → *possu*. This way of forming diminutives also includes a change of stem-type: the most transparent Finnish inflection type with a minimum of stem alternations and no variation in suffix morphology consists of two-syllabic stems with a labial final vowel, and the forming of diminutives by shortening the stem and transferring the word to a inflectionally more transparent stem-type makes the inflection of the new derivatives as easy as possible. This morphophonological aspect is studied in detail in the following section.

The *U*-diminutives are very frequently used in Finnish motherese (Jorma Toivainen, 1972; Kirsti Toivainen, 1995, pp. 289, 300-304). Also diminutives belonging to other stem types than *O*- and *U*-stems are formed in Finnish by truncation and accompanying sound modification, e.g. *hevonen* 'horse' → *heppa* and *varvas* 'toe' → *varppi*.

Morphophonological aspects of Finnish diminutives

Morphophonological transparency is one factor which facilitates language learning, both the acquisition of the first language by small children and the second language learning. The morphophonological system of Finnish is complex, but there is also the possibility to reduce this complexity by diminutive formation. In connection with diminutive derivation, inflection is also simplified in another typologically similar language, namely in Russian: diminutive derivation simplifies plural formation and eliminates gender ambiguity of some end-palatalized nouns of Russian by adding morphemes that preserve the main morphophonological features of feminine and masculine nouns (Brooks & Kempe, 1999). This may aid second language learners in acquiring Russian gender.

Two-syllabic diminutives ending in *-U* and *-O* are numerous in Finnish child language and in motherese. As regards stem alternations, these diminutives belong to the most transparent inflection type of Finnish; these diminutive formations may be much more transparent than the corresponding simplex words. For example, when from the word *käsi* : *käde+n* : *kät+tä* : *käte+en* 'hand' (nominative, genitive, partitive and illative forms respectively; suffixes are separated by "+" from the stem) is formed the diminutive *känny*, all the stem alternations are eliminated, and the nominative, genitive, partitive and illative forms are simply *känny* : *känny+n* : *känny+ä* : *känny+yn*.

From the morphophonological perspective, many Finnish diminutive types represent inflectional transparency. The corresponding simplex nouns are inflectionally more complex, because they have more stem alternations: different stem variants are used in different case forms. For example, there are no stem alternations in the following diminutives (1a) but there are many different stem alternations in the corresponding simplex words (1b); from each word, the singular nominative, genitive and partitive forms and the plural partitive form are given:

- | | | |
|------|--|----------------------------|
| (1a) | <i>känny</i> : <i>känny+n</i> : <i>känny+ä</i> : <i>känny+j+ä</i> | 'sweet ~ dear little hand' |
| | <i>poju</i> : <i>poju+n</i> : <i>poju+a</i> : <i>poju+j+a</i> | 'sonny' |
| | <i>possu</i> : <i>possu+n</i> : <i>possu+a</i> : <i>possu+j+a</i> | 'piggy' |
| | <i>jänö</i> : <i>jänö+n</i> : <i>jänö+ä</i> : <i>jänö+j+ä</i> | 'bunny' |
| (1b) | <i>käsi</i> : <i>käde+n</i> : <i>kät+tä</i> : <i>käs+i+ä</i> | 'hand' |
| | <i>poika</i> : <i>poja+n</i> : <i>poika+a</i> : <i>poik+i+a</i> | 'boy' |
| | <i>porsas</i> : <i>porsaa+n</i> : <i>porsas+ta</i> : <i>porsa+i+ta</i> | 'pig' |
| | <i>jänis</i> : <i>jänikse+n</i> : <i>jänis+tä</i> : <i>jäniks+i+ä</i> | 'rabbit' |

The nominal inflection type with a final labial vowel (*o, u, y* or *ö*) – and thus also the diminutive type *känny, poju* etc. – belongs to the inflectionally most transparent stem-types in Finnish: there are no vowel alternations either in singular or plural. Contrary to this, the illabial stem-final vowels (*a, ä, i* and *e*) are either dropped (*e+i = i, ä+i = i, a+i = i*, e.g. *muna*) or changed (*a+i = oi*, e.g. *jalka, i+i = ei*) when the plural suffix *i* is added, as shown in the following examples:

(2)	NOMINATIVE	INESSIVE	INESSIVE
	SINGULAR	SINGULAR	PLURAL
	<i>ovi</i> ‘door’ :	<i>ove+ssa</i> ‘in the door’ :	<i>ov+i+ssa</i> ‘in the doors’
	<i>silmä</i> ‘eye’ :	<i>silmä+ssä</i> ‘in the eye’ :	<i>silm+i+ssä</i> ‘in the eyes’
	<i>muna</i> ‘egg’ :	<i>muna+ssa</i> ‘in the egg’ :	<i>mun+i+ssa</i> ‘in the eggs’
	<i>jalka</i> ‘leg’ :	<i>jala+ssa</i> ‘in the leg’ :	<i>jalo+i+ssa</i> ‘in the legs’
	<i>kuppi</i> ‘cup’ :	<i>kupi+ssa</i> ‘in the cup’ :	<i>kupe+i+ssa</i> ‘in the cups’

There are many stem alternations in Finnish. The most important of these alternations are those in (2) above illustrated alternations of illabial vowels before the suffix *i*, the use of consonant stems in certain forms of certain inflectional classes (e.g. *käsi : kät+tä* in 1b above) and the grade alternation of stops – both the quantitative grade alternation with two stops in the strong grade and one stop in the weak grade, e.g. *pp : p* [cf. *kuppi : kupissa* in (2) above] and qualitative alternation, e.g. in the strong grade *k*, in the weak grade one of the variants *j, v* or deletion [cf. *jalka : jalassa* in (2) above] depending on the phonetic environment. By using diminutives one can avoid many morphophonological alternations, because most diminutives in child language and motherese belong to the simplest and most transparent stem types. For example, the word *poika* ‘boy’ has the weak inflection stem *poja-* (e.g. genitive singular *poja+n*; the deletion of *k* is one form of grade alternation, and in syllable-initial position the *i* is changed to *j*), and in the plural the final *a* is deleted: *poik+i+a* ‘boys’ (partitive plural) : *poj+i+lta* (ablative plural). The corresponding diminutive is *poju* without any stem alternations, and the corresponding forms are *poju : pojun : poju+j+a : poju+i+lta*.

The transparency of inflection (= a minimum of stem alternations) is an advantage in the early acquisition, because the child’s first attempts to recognize word-forms are made easier. Canonical word-forms have the same advantage; in the group of lexemes denoting body parts there are diminutives which are linked to each other by a phonetic family resemblance, namely, they all have stems ending in a nasal consonant + *U*:

- (3) *nenü* ‘sweet little nose’ (derived from *nenä* ‘nose’)
simmu ‘little eye’ (derived from *silmä* ‘eye’; the cluster *-lm-* is simplified to *-mm-*)
känny ‘sweet little hand’ (derived from *käsi* ‘hand’)

At least for both *simmu* (← *silmä*) and *känny* (← *käsi*), the change of final stem vowel from illabial to labial and the accompanying simplification of inflection is quite relevant, because both words are often used in plural forms. In Finnish, the plural nominative is formed by adding the suffix *t* to the singular stem whereas all other plural cases are formed with the *i*-suffix, and word stems with an illabial final vowel have such complex plural paradigms as

- (4) *silmät* : *silmissä* (= plural nominative and inessive of *silmä* ‘eye’)
kädet : *käsissä* (= plural nominative and inessive of *käsi* ‘hand’)

Nouns with a labial final vowel have such plural paradigms as *simmu* : *simmuissa* and *kännyt* : *kännyissä*. In this transparent inflection class, the plural oblique stem is formed by simply adding the plural suffix *i* to the singular stem, and the plural stem is *simmui-* (which is easily segmented to *simmu* + *i-*).

Stem type simplifications are characteristic of Finnish child language. The nouns formed this way are also used in nursing language; this may intensify their diminutive colour. The simplification of stem type is a functional strategy for avoiding morphophonological complexities, as in *känny* and *simmu*.

A case study

The material for this case study was collected by the author from his daughter’s speech. The daughter’s name is Tuulikki, and she was born the 28th of June, 1991.

Tuulikki does not use many diminutives but she seems to use diminutive formation as a useful device to truncate words to two-syllables (e.g. *heppa* ← *hevonen*) or to transform words to a morphophonologically more transparent stem-type (e.g. *simmu* ← *silmä*). At the end of her second year, Tuulikki started to produce her own diminutive formations, which were individual neologisms. She started with an extension of the use of the *putti*-element, and a little later used canonical four-syllabic words ending in *-(l)iini*. Both these morphological elements have the phonetic characteristics of typical iconic diminutives, i.e. palatal vowels (Dressler & Merlini Barbaresi 1994, p. 93). Before the *putti*-type and the very productive *liini*-type, she used some acquired diminutives.

The first diminutives of Tuulikki until the age of 1;8 were all rote-learned from the child-directed speech of adults. The parental names *äiti* ‘mother’ and *isi* ‘father’ are among the very first words of most children; from these two, the form *isi* consists of *isä* ‘father’ and the diminutive suffix *i*.

The following words have the pragmatic meaning of diminutiveness, and they are all based on the child-centered speech of adults. The age mentioned in connection with the words refers to the first occurrences in Tuulikki’s speech:

- (5) 0;8 *isi* ‘father’
 0;10 *avva*, phonetically simplified from *hau(v)a* ‘bowwow’ (an onomatopoeic word; the word for ‘dog’ in adult Finnish is *koira*)
 1;4 *eppa* ‘geegee’ (← *heppa*, derived from *hevonen* ‘horse’; cf. 1;6)
 1;5 *timmu* (← *simmu*, derived from *silmä* ‘eye’)
 1;6 *posu* (← *possu* ‘piggy’, derived from *porsas* ‘pig’)
heppa ‘geegee’ (cf. 1;4 *eppa*)
 1;7 *essu* (← *esiliina* ‘apron’)
tipu ‘birdie’
 1;8 *massu* ‘tummy’ (← *maha* ‘stomach’)
pottu (← *potaatti* ‘potato’)
vamppi (phonetically simplified by assimilation from motherese *varppi*, which is based on *varvas* ‘toe’)

In her speech before the age of 1;10, Tuulikki used only the two initial syllables of most word-forms. This way of reducing longer word-forms to two-syllables is a common strategy in the speech development of many children acquiring Finnish (Laalo, 1994; Laalo, 2000; Paju, 1997; Räisänen, 1975, p. 256). This shortening tends to trochaic word-forms which are favoured by the Finnish stress pattern: the main stress is always on the first syllable. Many children acquiring other languages have also been observed to truncate word-forms to trochaic two-syllables (Wijnen et al., 1994; Gerken, 1994; Jusczyk, 1997, p. 107-108, 186-187, 225), but in some languages these truncations may be difficult to identify, because the first syllable may be unstressed and is thus deleted.

The trochaic formations can have more than two syllables. Some four-syllabic word-forms, mostly compounds, consisting of two trochaic parts are also typical for the two-syllabic period of Finnish infants (Laalo, 1994, p. 431; Paju, 1997, p. 5; Räisänen, 1975, p. 256). Even more than four syllables are possible; this prosodic pattern of word-forms consisting of more than one trochaic part was also characteristic of the first diminutives formed by Tuulikki herself – these diminutives were at the same time her first neologisms.

At the age of 1;8 Tuulikki used some very special compound-like diminutive formations for three fingers. The model for these formations was the diminutive of *peukalo* ‘thumb’, namely *peukaloputti*, and Tuulikki’s three own formations were formed by segmenting the element *putti* and adding it to the names of the other fingers. These other three fingers are *pikkurilli* ‘little finger’, *etusormi* ‘forefinger’ and *keskisormi* ‘middle finger’ (the fifth finger, which had no diminutive with *putti*-ending, is the three-syllabic *nimetön* ‘nameless’ and does not fit the trochaic pattern). The diminutives *pikkulilli-putti*, *etutommi-putti* and *kekkitommi-putti* are examples of overextension, Tuulikki’s first individual type of spontaneous diminutive formations; an element with no denotative meaning, used as a diminutive element but normally attached only to the word *peukalo* ‘thumb’ was segmented and attached to the names of other fingers. These three neologisms ending in *-putti* can perhaps also be regarded as compounds.

Tuulikki’s most productive type of individual spontaneous diminutive formations was the type of four-syllabic word-forms ending in *-(l)iini*. She started to produce them at the age of 1;10, and especially during that month this type was extremely productive. In order to attain these canonical diminutives Tuulikki might sometimes simply add the *liini*-element to the simplex, e.g. *kissa* ‘cat’ → *kissaliini* ‘pussycat’, *pesu* ‘washing’ → *pesuliini* and *kärriyt* ‘waggon’ (plural tantum in Finnish) → *kärryliini*. But often the neologisms were formed in a special way so that the combination of the base and the derivative element was modified to fit the trochaic pattern, e.g.

- (6) *kiisseli* ‘thickened fruit juice’ + *liini* ⇒ *kiisseliini* (not **kiisseliini*)
meloni ‘melon’ + *liini* ⇒ *meloniini* (not **meloniliini*)
rypäle ‘grape’ + *liini* ⇒ *vypäliini* (not **rypäleliini*)
banaani ‘banana’ + *liini* ⇒ *banaliini* (not **banaaniliini*)
peruna ‘potato’ + *liini* ⇒ *penuliini* (not **perunaliini*)
porkkana ‘carrot’ + *liini* ⇒ *ponkkaliini* (not **porkkanaliini*)
tomaatti ‘tomato’ + *liini* ⇒ *tomaliini* (not **tomaattiliini*)
paperi ‘paper’ + *liini* ⇒ *papeliini* (not **paperiliini*)
tiski ‘the dishes’ + *liini* ⇒ *tikkaliini* (cf. the verb *tiskata* ‘to do the dishes’)

The above examples of Tuulikki's *liini*-diminutives are all from the age of 1;10.

This diminutive type has some possible models, above all the motherese diminutives *vauveliini* (← *vauva* 'baby'), *pupuliini* 'dear little bunny' (← *pupu* 'bunny'), *tuhmeliini* 'the little mischief' (← *tuhma* 'naughty'), perhaps also the colloquial variant of the name Nikitin, namely *Nikitiini* (the name of Tuulikki's own doctor); these motherese words were used often in the adult speech directed at Tuulikki. Following the model of these relatively few unproductive formations, Tuulikki produced so many *liini*-diminutives that she seems to have developed a word-formation rule for them. The *liini*-diminutives were not formed by so simple an surface analogy as *putti*-diminutives; rather, Tuulikki established her own productive type of diminutives, which she initially used very frequently. The productivity of this type was soon weakened, but still at the age of 6;2 Tuulikki derived a *liini*-diminutive of her newborn little brother Tuomas, namely *Tuomasliini*.

The third individual diminutive type used by Tuulikki was established as an analogical formation. In intimate speech, two variants of Tuulikki's name were used, namely *Tuuti* and *Tuutikki*. She segmented the *kki*-element and used it in her own diminutive formations based on *äiti* 'mother' and *isi* 'father':

(7) Tuulikki 2;2

*TUU: hyvä äitikki hyvä Tuutikki hyvä isikki.

%mor: a|hyvä n|äiti-DIM a|hyvä n:prop|Tuuti-DIM a|hyvä n|isä-DIM-DIM

%eng: well done mother-DIM well done Tuuti-DIM well done father-DIM .

(8) Tuulikki 2;4

*TUU: niilen nimi oli Tuulikki ja äilikki ja isikki

%mor: pron:dem|se-PL-GEN n|nimi v:cop|ole-PRET-SG3 n:prop|Tuulikki conj|ja n|äiti-DIM conj|ja n|isä-DIM-DIM

%eng: their name was Tuulikki and mother-DIM and father-DIM-DIM

Conclusion

Diminutives in Finnish child-directed and child speech are interesting not only from the morphopragmatic perspective which Finnish shares with other languages but also from the more language-specific morphophonemic perspective: using diminutives is one way to avoid some morphophonemic stem alternations, because the Finnish diminutives have usually a more simple and transparent inflection pattern than the simplex words from which these diminutives have been derived.

In many languages there is a more or less clear-cut derivational category of diminutives. In the Finnish derivation morphology there is much variation in the marking of diminutiveness: there is no single diminutive element. Finnish diminutives can be formed by normal affixation, but they are often formed by modifying the word: by shortening the original stem, eliminating difficult sounds and attaching an affix-like element, e.g. *porsas* → *possu*, *silmä* → *simmu* and *käsi* → *känny*. In some cases, this modification results in shortened forms which reflect the idea of smallness in an iconical way: *peukalo* 'thumb' → *peukku*, *kissa* 'cat' → *kisu*, *hevonen* 'horse' → *heppa*.

From the morphological point of view, many of the diminutives used in Finnish child-directed and child speech are rather exceptional: they are not formed by regular suffixation but their derivational morphology is similar to affective formations in Finnish colloquial

speech. From the pragmatic point of view, they are clear diminutives expressing endearment, intimacy and warm feelings.

The empirical material includes some overextensions at the onset of productive diminutive formation. The child observed, Tuulikki, started with diminutives formed by shortening and stem-type simplification which are also characteristic of the child-centered speech of adults. From the age of 1;8 onwards, Tuulikki established some individual diminutive derivation types which seem to be at least partly based on adult models. These diminutives were her first productive type of neologisms, and especially the two-syllabic *liini*-suffix used in the derivation of trochaic diminutives was remarkably longer than other suffixes used at the same age.

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