

Diminutive Forms in English and Standard Arabic with Reference to Iraqi Arabic

أشكال التصغير في اللغتين الإنكليزية والعربية بالإشارة الى اللهجة العراقية

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**الكلمات المفتاحية: اشكال التصغير، اسلوب التلطيف، اسلوب السخرية، الدلالات، التطبيقات،
اللهجة العراقية.**



الملخص

تعنى هذه الورقة البحثية بوصف وتحليل ظاهرة التصغير باعتبارها ظاهرة لغوية - اجتماعية في اللغتين الإنكليزية والعربية الفصحى، مع التركيز على اللهجة العراقية. تحتل الاشكال المصغرة دورا هاما في وصف الناس والاشياء وما يتعلق بالشخصية والمظهر والاعمال والمهن. وبالإضافة الى المعنى الايجابي للتلطيف المعتمد على الحميمية والحب، فإن الاشكال المصغرة تحمل معنى سلبي للدلالة على الضئالة، عدم الأهمية، السخرية، الاحتقار والدونية.

ان الهدف الرئيس لهذه الدراسة هو تحري الاشكال المصغرة من الجانب التركيبي - الصوتي - المعنوي، وكذلك السياقات التي تحدث فيها. لقد تبين ان اللغة الانكليزية تعتمد بشكل اساس على اللواحق البدائية والنهائية لتكوين الاشكال المصغرة، بينما تعتمد اللغة العربية كليا على ظاهرة اللواحق البينية او الوسطية (داخل الكلمة) مع قليل من الاشتقاق والتحوير. وبخصوص اللهجة العراقية فأنها مشابهة بشكل كبير اللغة الفصحى ولكن مع شيء من التحوير وازضافة الملحقات (كما هو الحال في اللغة الإنكليزية. أما ما يتعلق بأجزاء الكلام التي تشملها ظاهرة التصغير في اللهجة العراقية فهي شبيهة لمثيلاتها في العربية الفصحى والإنكليزية.

Abstract

The present paper deals with the exploration of diminutive formation as a sociolinguistic phenomenon; its description and analysis in both Standard English (SE) and Standard Arabic (SA), with special emphasis on its realization in Iraqi Arabic (IA). Diminutives occupy a significant role in describing people and things as regards personality, appearance, deeds, professions or attributes. In addition to their euphemistic and positive connotations based on the conception of intimacy, affection and endearment, diminutives can also bear dysphemistic negative connotations based on smallness, unimportance, sarcasm, contempt or inferiority. The main objective of this study is to investigate the status of diminutives from morphological-phonological and semantic-pragmatic perspectives, the contexts in which they occur, and the implications they have to facilitate language learning. As regards their formation, it has been found that English basically depends on suffixation and prefixation to form their diminutives, while SA depends entirely on infixation with minor derivation and modification. As for IA, it is mostly similar to SA, but with some modification and suffix addition (just like English) in certain cases. Concerning parts of speech subject to diminutive formation in IA, they are similar to those in SA and English.



1. INTRODUCTION

This paper attempts to draw the attention to diminutiveness as a sociolinguistic phenomenon in English and Arabic, but with special emphasis on IA. The main objective of this study is to investigate the status of this linguistic phenomenon from morphological-phonological and semantic-pragmatic perspectives, and the contexts in which they occur. To achieve such an objective, a comprehensive coverage of the process of diminutive formation is needed. This includes definition of terms, significance and scope, research questions, review of related literature, data collection and analysis. The focus of attention is laid on the euphemistic-dysphemistic realizations of the phenomenon in IA, and the contexts in which they occur.

1.1 Definition of Terms

In its general sense the word diminutive (as an adjective) means very small, tiny or extremely or unusually small, often used either to show affection or to deprecate someone or something. The term diminutive (as a noun) refers to a category of words expressing smallness and endearment. These linguistic forms are found and used in almost every language. The term *diminutive* is defined as “any morphological device which means at least small” (Jurafsky, 1996, p. 534), and is realized by the addition of certain affixes (initially, medially or finally). Conveying smallness is one of the basic meanings that many researchers have associated with the diminutive in a number of languages. Schneider (2003, p.10) states that “Prototypically, diminutives express smallness”. Dressler & Barbaresi (1994, p.85), in apparent recognition of the fundamental significance of the meaning ‘small’ of the diminutive, refer to ‘smallness’ as its “morphosyntactic denotation” in contrast to other features such as endearment which they consider as its connotation, and its opposite form known as augmentative which expresses greater intensity, often in size but also in other attributes. Diminutiveness is the property of being very small in size. As a term, it is used to refer to the phenomenon of forming and using diminutives in linguistic contexts.

As a sociolinguistic phenomenon, diminutiveness can be perceived and interpreted either positively with euphemistic connotations to show intimacy, affection and endearment as ways of referring to something unpleasant so as to make it seem less unpleasant (Hasselgard (1999, p. 28) or negatively with dysphemistic connotations to show, unimportance sarcasm, contempt or inferiority as tools of humiliation, degradation, and minimization (**Burridge and Allan, 2000**). The focus of attention in this research paper is laid on sample citations of both types (euphemistic and



dysphemistic) in IA, the main regional dialect used by Iraqi people in spoken situations.

1.2 Objective of the Study

The main objective of this study is to investigate the use of diminutives from morphological-phonological and semantic-pragmatic perspectives and their euphemistic-dysphemistic connotations in IA. The rationale behind choosing this phenomenon, and this area in particular for investigation, is that it is used as attributes to describe people, things, actions, or places, and its impact on the people identity subject to these labels, i.e., the bearers of such diminutive forms.

1.3 Research Questions

The main questions raised in this research that need investigation are:

1. What is the morphological realization of diminutives in English, and their counterparts in SA with special emphasis on IA?
2. What phonological adaptation underlies the infix modification and suffix addition of diminutives in IA?
3. What are the denotations and connotations of this phenomenon in IA?
4. Do diminutives facilitate language learning?

1.4 Data of the Study

The data of the study is derived from various authentic sources available in the two languages under study (English and Arabic), in addition to the researcher's introspection obtained from daily conversations (as regards IA). The subsequent analysis of data will shed light on many issues reflecting this sociolinguistic phenomenon and its euphemistic-dysphemistic connotations.

1.5 Significance and Scope of the Study

The significance of the study lies in its endeavour to investigate thoroughly diminutiveness as an important sociolinguistic phenomenon with its euphemistic-dysphemistic connotations. The scope of this study extends to cover all aspects related to the morphological-phonological-semantic-pragmatic parameters associated with diminutive forms in English as well as Arabic. This study is focused on collecting, recording and analyzing a host of diminutive forms adopted in IA which are frequently used in their colloquial forms. This study is significant in that not much research has been conducted on the euphemistic-dysphemistic connotations of diminutive forms in IA.

2. DIMINUTIVES IN ENGLISH

The study of diminutives has attracted a considerable attention since it represents a common phenomenon in the majority of the world languages (Bauer, 1996; Galeas 2004; Jurafsky, 1996). Traditionally, diminutives were considered as a pure morphological category mostly formed by affixation and also by some vowel or consonant modification (Haas, 1972:



p.148). Recently, diminutives are no more considered as a pure morphological process, but also as a semantic category. According to Schneider (2003, p. 74 cited in Rosiak, 2009), the study of diminutives should not only deal with the morphology of the process but also with the domain of pragmatics.

Morphologically, English diminutives are basically formed by adding a suffix or a prefix. As a suffix, it is added to the noun (base free morpheme) whether a personal proper noun or a common noun; animate or inanimate : “base (noun) + suffix” with the meaning of small, short or young, e.g., *let* in *piglet* (young pig), *droplet* (very small drop), *booklet* (small, thin book), *starlet* (small star), *ing* in *duckling*, *gosling* (young duck/goose), and the suffix *ette* in *kitchenette* (small kitchen), *novelette* (a short novel), etc. It can be a multi-word name, such as *Tiny Tim* or *Little Dorrit* (Richards et al, 1993, p.109; Lambert, 2009, p.3). According to Schneider (2003, p.9) this morphological process is realized by using a diminutive marker or ‘diminutivizer’.

In English, it is noted that some suffixes are of French origin, such as the suffix *et* as in: *circlet* (small circular arrangement or object), and the suffix *ette* as in: *sermonette* (short sermon), *roomette* (small room) and *statuette* (small statue) (Zandvoort, 1972, p. 304; Marchand, 1969, p.281; Stageberg, 1971, p.102). The suffixes *ie* and *y* of a Scottish spelling are also basically added to nouns; personal or common as in: *John* > *Johnny*, *Ann* > *Annie*, *Catherine* > *Kitty*, *bird* > *birdie*, and adjectives as in: *sweet* > *sweetie* and *dark* > *darkie* all of which imply the meaning of affection, intimacy and endearment (Zandvoort, 1972, p. 303 cited in Hamid & Faiq, 2009, p.4).

As for prefix addition, the diminutive is realized by adding a variety of prefixes which imply the meaning of smallness in size, such as *mini* in words like: *minimarket*, *minibus*, *miniskirt* (Quirk et al, 1985, p.1542), and *micro* found in technical and scientific terms as in: *microorganism*, *microbe*, *microwave* (Hamid and Faiq, 2009, p. 4). The prefix *under* with the meaning 'too little' is attached to nouns as in: *under-provision*, *underpayment*, *underbid*, verbs as in: *under-act*, *undercharge*, *underestimate*, *underbid* and adjectives as in: *underfed*, *underpaid*, *underprivileged*, etc. (Quirk et al, 1985, p. 1542). The prefix *vice* is attached to nouns to convey the meaning of being secondary, deputy or being lower in rank and status (Quirk & Greenbaum, 1973, p. 435) as in: *vice president*, *vice chairman*, *vice captain*. Briefly stated, the word classes subject to diminutive formation are mainly nouns, proper and common (both animate and inanimate), but to a lesser degree the process is also applied to adjectives and verbs.

From a semantic-pragmatic perspective, diminutives are characterized by the basic denotative meaning of smallness, and possibly



by a large number of connotative meanings, such as affection or endearment, as in *bunny* (a child's term for a rabbit), *puppy* (young dog), and depreciation, belittlement, sarcasm or contempt as in *darkie* (offensive: a black person) and *roughie* (a small Australian food fish) (Dressler & Barbaresi, 2001, pp. 46-47 cited in Watson, 2006). According to Mendoza (2005, p. 171, cited in Eshreteh, 2017, p. 46), the diminutive is a good example of a linguistic device that expresses socially motivated meanings and which stands as a reflection of "how social considerations impinge upon language". Diminutives have a common feature in that they convey the meaning of smallness, hence something regarded with affection or familiarity (e.g., referring to children), or contempt. Apparently, diminutives are mostly used by women addressing children (Jurafsky, 1996; Dressler & Barbaresi, 2001). They are also used in conversations with friends and lovers in informal and friendly situations (Rosiak, 2009). The denotative meaning of nominal diminutives is basically physical smallness, with connotations of affection and, less frequently, contempt and sarcasm.

3. DIMINUTIVES IN SA

In SA diminution is a common phenomenon that can be basically formed from nouns to express several meanings including: smallness, familiarity, endearment or contempt. This can be realized by following certain morphological rules through a process of infixation with minor derivation and modification (Abu-Mughli, 1987, p. 411) by the insertion of an affix within the root of a given word (Al-Khuli, 1982, p. 113; Crystal, 1985, p.10). Thus, diminutive formation in SA is different from its English counterpart in that it is mainly achieved through the process of infixation, while in English it is achieved through suffixation and prefixation.

Diminutive formation in Arabic is one of the many complex processes of morphological change (Aziz et al, 2020, p.1). It is a common agreement among most Arab linguists that the diminutive construction is formed according to three basic patterns. The first pattern is **فُعَيْل** *fu'ayl* for the trilateral (consisting of three letters) root noun, as in: **جَبَل** *jabal* (a mountain) which is changed into **جَبِيل** *jubayl* (a small mountain), **رَجُل** *rajul* (man) into **رُجَيْل** *rujayl* (a short or unimportant man), **كَلْب** *kalb* (dog) into **كَلَيْب** *kulayb* (little dog) and the female proper name **هِنْد** *Hind* into **هِنَيْدَة** *Hunayda*. As for compound nouns, only the first part is diminutized) as in: **عَبْدُ اللَّهِ** *ʿabdallah* into **عَبِيدُ اللَّهِ** *ʿbaydallah*. The second pattern is **فُعَيْلِيل** *fu'ay'il* for the quadrilateral (consisting of four letters) root noun as in: **عَقْرَب** *ʿaqrab* (a scorpion) which becomes **عُقَيْرِب** *ʿuqayrib* (a small scorpion), the



proper name سلمى *Salma* changed into سليمى *Sulayma*, or to the root adjective as in: أحمر *ahmar* (red) which is changed into أحيمر *ahaymer* and أسود *aswad* (black) into أسويد *isaywid*. As for the third pattern فُعَيْعِل *fu'ay'eel*, it is used with quinquelateral (consisting of five letters) root nouns as in: عصفور *ʔasfur* (a sparrow) with the diminutive form عصفير *ʔusayfeer* (a small sparrow) (Adapted from Al-Ghalayīni, 1971, p. 87; Wright, 1971, p. 166; Sībawayhi, 1999, p. 460 cited in Hamid & Faiq, 2009, p. 8).

3.1 Diminutives in IA

It's very common in IA to use noun diminutives with the meaning of affection and endearment of the form فَعُولِي *faʔooli* (for the masculine) and فَعُولَة *faʔoola* (for the feminine) as affectionate nicknames. It is to be noted here that the process of diminutive formation is completely different from SA in that it involves a complete morphological change in the root proper noun via the form و (*oo*) + the suffix ي (*i*) and ه (*a*) for the masculine and feminine (respectively), e.g., محمد *Mohammad* becomes حمّودي *Hammoody*, حسن *Hassan* and حسين *Hussein* > حسّوني *Hassoony*, فاطمة *Fatima* and زينب *Zaynab* > فطّومة *Fatooma* and زنّوبة *Zanooba* (respectively). Some diminutive proper nouns (masculine and feminine), with the meaning of affection and endearment, are formed differently by using the form of فَعَالِي *faʔāli* (with the root noun morphologically modified via suffix addition + وي */wi/*, e.g., علي *ʔali* > علّوي *ʔalāwi*, خليل *Khaleel* > خلّوي *khalāwi*, جليل *Jaleel* > جلّوي *Jalāwi*, خوله *Khawla* > خوّالي *Khawāli*, etc.

IA is also rich with diminutive forms which are intended to minimize the status of the referent to convey the meaning of smallness, inferiority, unimportance or contempt. Just like SA, diminutives in IA are formed by the same morphological process of infixation and minor derivation (Abu-Mughli, 1987, p. 411), but with some modification. This is seen in simple nouns (with one free morpheme) which are phonologically formed by changing the short or long vowel of the root noun or adjective into the sequence وي pronounced as */wei/* or */eiwi/* depending on the letter ending of the root as in: *Nāsir* > *Nwaysir* */nweisər/*, *ʔali* > *ʔlaywi* */ʔleiwi/* or with a slight change in nouns like: *Hameed* > *Hmayyid* */hmeijid/*, *Majeed* > *Mjayyid* */mdʒeijid/*, etc. Proper feminine nouns also undergo the same morphological-phonological process but with the sequence أي pronounced as */ei/*, e.g., خديجة *Khadeeja* > *Khdayja*



/khdeidʒə/, جميلة *Jameela* > *Jmayla* /dʒmeilə/, Kareema > *Krayma* /kreimə/, etc.

As for common nouns, like SA, they are similarly diminutized, e.g., *rātib* (salary) > *rwaytib* /rweɪtɪb/ (small/modest salary), *bayt* (house) > *bwayt* /bweɪt/ (small, modest house), etc. The same process is also applied to adjectives, e.g., *ahmar* (red) > *ahaymir* /iheimər/ (a bit red), *aswad* (black) > *asaywid* /iseɪwɪd/ (a bit black), and so on. As for proper masculine compound nouns (with two free morphemes), they are diminutively formed by infix modification applied to the first part عبد *ʔabd* which is modified into عبيد *ʔobayd*, e.g., *ʔabdallāh* > *ʔobaydallāh*, *ʔabdilrahmān* > *ʔobaydilrahmān*, etc.

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The data of this study is derived from IA. The main source of data is the researchers' introspections or personal observations of the contexts in which diminutives are used by IA speakers. Personal observation is considered as a dependable source of data collection since self-observation can yield data which are probably unobtainable in any other way (Weinreich, 1963, p.13). For ease and practicality of exposition and analysis, the data has been divided into different groups depending on these parameters: proper nouns (masculine and feminine), common nouns and adjectives.

4.1 Proper Nouns

4.1.1 Masculine

Diminutiveness is a common phenomenon with proper nouns. Here, a distinction is to be made between compound nouns beginning with “*ʔabd* (slave/servant of the Creator/Allah + one of God's best names)” and ordinary simple proper nouns. The proper masculine compound nouns follow a certain rule in their diminutive formation in that only the first part of the compound noun is subject to diminutive change (*ʔabd* > *ʔobayd*) via a phonological adaptation in which the short vowel of the root noun is changed into the diphthong *ay* pronounced as /eɪ/ (with the meaning of belittlement, scorn, humiliation or dislike), while the second part is fixed without any change, and no diminution is allowed since it refers to one of the best names or attributes of Almighty Allah (Al-Hamalāwi, 1965, p. 31). This is clear in the following examples: *ʔabdallāh* > *ʔobaydallāh*, *ʔabdilkhāliq* > *ʔobaydilkhāliq*, *ʔabdilrahmān* > *ʔobaydilrahmān*, *ʔabdilwāhid* > *ʔobaydilwāhid*, etc.

As for simple proper masculine nouns, they are diminutized via a process of infix adaptation with euphemistic connotations (to show endearment and affection) using the form *faʔāli* (a + consonant + wi)



as affectionate nicknames, e.g., *علي* *ʔali* > *علاوي* *ʔalāwi*, *خليل* *Khaleel* > *خلاوي* *khalāwi*, *جليل* *Jaleel* > *جلاوي* *Jalāwi*, etc. Other nouns are diminutively formed with a slight change in the infix addition by using the form *فَعُولِي* *faʔooli* (*oo+consonant+i*) such as, *جمال* *Jamal* > *جمولي* *Jammooli*, *كريم* *Kareem* > *كرومي* *Karoomi*, and *وحيد* *Waheed* > *وhoodي* *Wahoodi*. With the dysphemistic connotations of belittlement and contempt, simple proper nouns are formed according to the already mentioned general morphological process of infixation via a phonological change of the root noun by using the syllables *aywi* or *way* pronounced /eiwi:/ depending on the letter ending of the root as in *عليوي* *ʔlaywi* /*ʔleiwi*:/ from *علي* *ʔali*) or /wei/ as in *نويسر* *Nwaysir* /*nweisər*/ from *ناصر* *Nasir*. This rule applies to trilateral and some quadrilateral nouns with a change in the root noun by using the syllable *ay* /ei/ plus the addition *yi* /ji/ as in: *حميد* *Hameed* > *حميد* *Hmayid* /*hmeijid*/, and *مجيد* *Majeed* > *مجيد* *Mjayid* /*mdʒeijid*/.

A distinguishing feature of proper nouns that end with “d, l”, and to some extent “h, s, m”, is that they are similarly diminuted but with the additional syllable *yi* (phonemically transcribed as /eɪ/ + /j/ + /ɪ/), e.g., *Amjad*/*Majid*/*Majeed* > *Mjayyid*, *Hameed* > *Hmayyid*, *Jaleel* > *Jlayyil*, *Jamal* > *Jmayyil*, *Wajeed* > *Wjayyih*, *Falih* > *Flayyih*, *Faris* > *Frayyis*, *Kareem* > *Krayyim*, *Wisam* > *Wsayyim*, and so on. It is noteworthy to mention that the proper nouns *Falih* and *Faris* are distinctive in that they have two diminutive forms (with the same dysphemistic connotation):

فويلح *Fwaylih* /*fweilih*/ and *فليح* *Flayyih* /*fleijih*/, *فويرس* *Fwayris* /*fweiris*/

and *فريس* *Frayyis* /*freijis*/. As for the proper nouns that end with “m”, some form their diminutive regularly as in *Salim* > *Swaylim* /*sweilim*/ or with an additional syllable *ayyi* as in *Wisam* > *Wsayyim* /*wseijim*/. For more examples, see the following appendix:



Appendix 1: Diminutive Forms in IA: Masculine Proper Nouns

Original Form	Phonemic Transcription	Diminutive Form	Phonemic Transcription
1. <i>ʔbdallah</i>	/ʔæbdele/	<i>Abaydallah</i>	/ʔberdele/
2. <i>ʔbdilkhaliq</i>	/ʔbdilxæliq/	<i>Abaydilkhaliq</i>	/ʔberdilxæliq/
3. <i>ʔbdilrahman</i>	/ʔbdilrehmæn/	<i>Abaydilrahman</i>	/ʔberdilrehmæn/
4. <i>ʔbdilwahid</i>	/ʔbdilwæhid/	<i>Abaydilwahid</i>	/ʔberdilwæhid/
5. <i>ʔali</i>	/ʔeli/	<i>ʔalaywi</i>	/ʔlerwi:/
6. <i>Amjad</i>	/æmdʒed/	<i>Mjayid</i>	/mdʒejid/
7. <i>Asaad</i>	/æsʔæd/	<i>Sayyid</i>	/sʔejid/
8. <i>Fālih</i>	/fælih/	<i>Fwaylih/Flayih</i>	/fweilih/-/fleijih/
9. <i>Fāris</i>	/færis/	<i>Fwayris/Frayis</i>	/fweiris/-/freijis/
10. <i>Hameed</i>	/hemi:d/	<i>Hmayid</i>	/hmejid/
11. <i>Jaleel</i>	/dʒeli:l/	<i>Jlayil</i>	/dʒlejil/
12. <i>Jamāl</i>	/dʒema:l/	<i>Jmayil</i>	/dʒmejil/
13. <i>Kareem</i>	/keri:m/	<i>Krayim</i>	/krejim/
14. <i>Majeed</i>	/medʒi:d/	<i>Mjayid</i>	/mdʒejid/
15. <i>Nāsir</i>	/na:sir/	<i>Nwaysir</i>	/nweisir/
16. <i>Sālim</i>	/sa:lim/	<i>Swaylim</i>	/sweilim/
17. <i>Shākir</i>	/ʃa:kir/	<i>Shwaykir</i>	/ʃweikir/
18. <i>Tāriq</i>	/tʰa:riq/	<i>Twayriq</i>	/tʰweiriq/
19. <i>Waheed</i>	/wehi:d/	<i>Whayid</i>	/whejid/
20. <i>Wajeeh</i>	/wedʒi:h/	<i>Wjayih</i>	/wdʒejih/
21. <i>Wanees</i>	/weni:s/	<i>Wanayis</i>	/wnejis/
22. <i>Wisām</i>	/wisæm/	<i>Wsayim</i>	/wsejim/

4.1.2 Feminine

With euphemistic connotations, feminine proper nouns are diminutized by using the form *faʔoola* فعولة as in: فاطمة *Fatima* and زينب *Zaynab* > فطومة *Fatooma* and زنوبة *Zanooba* (respectively). Forms with dysphemistic connotations undergo the same infix adaptation, but with the addition of a feminine marker *a* (phonemically transcribed as /ə/ that follows the diphthong *ay* (phonemically transcribed as /ei/). This is clear in these examples; *Khadeeja* > *Khdayja*, *Khawla* > *Khawyla*, *Sameera* > *Smayra*, *Kareema* > *Krayma*, *Zahra* > *Zhayra*, *Jumana* > *Jmayna*, and *Sahar* > *Shayra*. Other feminine nouns are slightly modified with the addition of *w+ay* (phonemically transcribed as /wei/) as in: *Sara* > *Swayra*, *Layla* > *Lwayla*, etc. The proper nouns *Fatima* and *Zaynab* are odd in that they have two diminutive forms: *Ftayma* and *Ftayyim*, *Zwaynib* and *Znayyib* (respectively). It is to be noted here that all these diminutive forms share the same semantic-pragmatic associations of contempt, degradation, unimportance, humiliation or scorn. For more examples, see Appendix II below:



Appendix II: Diminutive Forms in IA: Feminine Proper Nouns

Original Form	Phonemic Transcription	Diminutive Form	Phonemic Transcription
1. Ameena	/æmi:nə/	Mwayna	/mweɪnə/
2. Bushra	/buʃrə/	Bshayra	/bʃeɪrə/
3. Fātima	/fa: tʻɪmə /	Ftayma-Ftayim	/ftʻeɪmə/-/ftʻeɪjɪm/
4. Huda	/hudə/	Hdaywa	/hdeɪwə/
5. Jameela	/dʒemi:lə/	Jmayla	/dʒmeɪlə/
6. Jumāna	/dʒumænə/	Jmayna	/dʒmeɪnə/
7. Kameela	/kemi:lə/	Kmayla	/kmeɪlə/
8. Kareema	/keri:mə/	Krayma	/kreɪmə/
9. Khawla	/xewlə/	Khawyla	/xweɪlə/
10. Khadeeja	/xedi:dʒə/	Khdayja	/xdeɪdʒə/
11. Laylā	/leɪlə/	Lwayla	/lweɪlə/
12. Nādia	/na:dijə /	Ndaywa	/ndeɪwə/
13. Ranā	/renə/	Rnaywa	/rneɪwə/
14. Sahar	/sehər/	Shayra	/sheɪrə/
15. Sameera	/semi:rə/	Smayra	/smeɪrə/
16. Sāra	/sa:rə/	Swayra	/sweɪrə/
17. Suād	/suʔa:d/	Sayda	/sʔeɪdə/
18. Yusra	/jusrə/	Ysayra	/jseɪrə/
19. Zahra	/zehrə/	Zhayra	/zheɪrə/
20. Zaynab	/zeɪneb/	Zwaynib-Znayib	/zweɪnɪb/-/zneɪjɪb/

4.2 Common Nouns

Common nouns are also subject to diminutive formation. They can be morphologically formed via the same general process with the same connotations of affection, endearment (positive/euphemistic) or belittlement, scorn, humiliation, degradation and dislike (negative/dysphemistic). The list, here, is long enough to include a variety of common masculine nouns. Here are some examples: *bayt* (house) > *bwayt* (very small house), *matbax* (kitchen) > *mtaybix*, (very small kitchen), *chalib* (dog) > *chlayb* (very small dog), etc. As is the case with feminine proper nouns, feminine common nouns are also diminutively formed via the feminine marker *a* (added after the form *ay*). This is seen in: *gurpha* (room) > *grayfa* (very small room), *khobza* > *khbayza* (very small piece of bread), *lahma* (piece of meat) > *lhayma* (very small piece of meat), *mara* (woman) > *mraya* (small type of woman), *moza* > *mwayza* (small banana), *tamra* (date) *tmayra* (small size of date), etc. See Appendix III below:



Appendix III: Diminutive Forms in IA: Common Nouns

Original Form	Phonemic Transcription	Diminutive Form	Phonemic Transcription
1. bayt (house)	/bert/	Bwayt	/bwert/
2. bint (girl)	/bɪnt/	bnaya	/bneɪjəh/
3. bistān (orchard)	/bɪstɑ:n/	bsayteen	/bseti:n/
4. chalib (dog)	/tʃelɪb/	chlayb	/tʃleɪb/
5. frash (mattress)	/fræʃ/	frayish	/freɪɪʃ/
6. gurfa (room)	/ɣurfə/	grayfa	//ɣurfə/
7. hammal (porter)	/hemma:l/	hmaymeel	/hmeɪmi:l/
8. kitāb (book)	/kɪtɑ:b/	ktayib	/kteɪɪb/
9. khubza (bread)	/xubzə/	khbayza	/xberzə/
11. lahma (piece of meat)	/lehmə/	lhayma	/lheimə/
12. makān (place)	/mekɑ:n/	mkayin	/mkeɪɪn/
13. mara (woman)	/merə/	mraya	/mreɪjə/
14. matbax (kitchen)	/metbex/	mtaybix	/mteɪbɪx/
15. moza (banana)	/mɔ:zə/	mwayza	/mweɪzə/
16. naxla (palm tree)	/nɛxlə/	nxayla	/nxeɪlə/
17. rajāl (man)	/redʒɑ:l/	rjayjeel	/rdʒeɪdʒi:l/
18. sāhib (friend)	/sæhɪb/	swayhib	/sweɪhɪb/
19. shajara (tree)	/ʃedʒerə/	shjayra	/ʃdʒeɪrə/
20. tamra (date)	/temrə/	tmayra	/tmeɪrə/
21. tufāha (apple)	/tufa:hə/	tfayfeeha	/tfeɪfi:hə/
22. walad (boy)	/weled/	wlayd	/wleɪd/

Some common nouns undergo a slight infix modification by the addition of *ayyi/ayya* (phonemically transcribed as /eɪɪ/eɪjə) as in *frash* (mattress) > *frayyish* /freɪɪʃ/ (very small mattress), *kitab* (book) > *ktayyib* /kteɪɪb/ (very small book), *makan* (place) > *mkayyin* /mkeɪɪn/ (very small place), *bint* (girl) > *bnayya* /bneɪjə/ (small/little girl) and *mara* (woman) > *mrayya* /mreɪjə/ (small/unimportant woman) (respectively). As for the nouns *rajāl* (man), *tufaha* (apple) and *hammal* (porter), they have special diminutive forms as: *rjayjeel* /rdʒeɪdʒi:l/, *tfayfeeha* /tfeɪfi:hə/ and *hmaymeel* /hmeɪmi:l/ (respectively). All these diminutive forms convey the meaning of being small, unimportant, modest or mean.

4.3 Adjectives

In addition to nouns (proper and common), there are some adjectives that undergo the process of diminutive formation by using the same general rule. A variety of diminutives are used as dysphemistic epithets (Rawson, 1989, **Burridge & Allan, 2000**) and attributes in IA as means of humiliating, degrading, or insulting the referent. As regards appearance, some adjectives are used to degrade or insult opponents, enemies or people we do not like. A very thin man is dysphemistically described as *maslool* (thin like one with TB), and is diminutively referred to as *msayleel* (rather



thin or dying). One who is dark/black-skinned is referred to as *aswad* (coal-black), with the diminutive form *asaywid* (mean type of a black-skinned person). A brown skinned woman *samra* is euphemistically diminished as *smayra* (a little brown). The adjective *hilwa* (beautiful) > *hlaywa* /*hleiwə*/which means (somewhat beautiful), *qseer* (short) > *qsayyir* (somewhat/rather short), *zgeer* (small in size) > *zgayer* (rather small), *greeb* (near) > *grayyib* (somewhat/rather near), etc.

Concerning personal qualities other than colour and appearance, many adjectives are used to refer to negative aspects of one's personality or behaviour. A person is described as *asfar* /*esfər*/ (yellow) for (envious or jealous), is diminutively referred to as *asayfir* /*eseifər*/ (a bit envious or jealous). Similar diminutive forms are found in adjectives like; *jaban* (cowardly) > *jbayna* /*dʒbeinə*/ (a mean cowardly man), *xafifa* (light in weight) > *xfayfa* (rather light) to describe things, but when used to describe women it has a different connotation; one of moral degradation, bad reputation or insensible behaviour. A sensible and decently-behaved person is described as *ʔaqil* is diminutively formed as *ʔwayqil* (rather/somewhat decently-behaved person). A clever and hard working person *shatir* is diminutized as *shwaytir* (rather/somewhat clever), one who is mad is called *mxabbal* as *mxaybeel* (a little mad), *gareeb* (near) as *grayyib* (somewhat near), etc. For more examples, see the following appendix:

Appendix IV: Diminutive Forms in IA: Adjectives

Original Form	Phonemic Transcription	Diminutive Form	Phonemic Transcription
1. ahmar (red)	/æhmər/	ihaymir	/iħeimər/
2. asfar (yellow)	/æsfər/	asayfir	/iseifir/
3. ʔaqil (sensible)	/ʔa:qil/	ʔwayqil	/ʔweiqil/
4. aswad (black)	/æswed/	isaywid	/iseiwid/
5. gareeb (near)	/geri:b/	grayib	/greijib/
6. hanina (kind)	/heni:nə/	hnaayna	/hneinə/
7. hilwa (beautiful)	/hɪlwə/	hlaywa	/hlweiwə/
8. jabān (cowardly)	/dʒeba:n/	jbaynah	/dʒbeinə/
9. maslool (very thin)	/meslu:l/	msayleel	/mseili:l/
10. mxabbal (mad)	/mxeɒl/	mxaybeel	/mxeibi:l/
11. qseer (short)	/gs i:r/	qsayir	/gseijir/
12. samra (brown-skinned)	/semrə/	smayra	/smeirə/
13. shātir (clever)	/ʃætɪr/	shwaytir	/ʃwertir/
14. xafifa (light)	/xefi:fə/	xfayifa	/xferfə/
15. zein (good)	/zein/	zwayn	/zwein/
16. zgeer (small)	/zgi:r/	zgayer	/zgerijr/



As regards adjectives two points are worth mentioning. First, feminine adjectives just like feminine nouns are diminutively formed with the feminine marker *ay* /ei/ as in: *smayra*, *xfayifa* and *hnayna*. Although the adjective *jaban* is a masculine attribute, it is marked with the feminine marker *ay* as *jbayna* to indicate utmost degree of contempt towards the addressee by depriving him of his manly character and comparing him to a woman who is weak, helpless and cowardly. Second, there are some adjectives that undergo a slight modification by the addition of *ay* + *y* (phonemically represented as /eij/) to their diminutive forms, e.g., *zgayyer* (small), *grayyib* (near) and *qsayyir* (short) (Appendix IV).

4.4 Diminutive Forms in Spoken Situations

Below are examples extracted from everyday situations in which diminutives are used in IA. The first five examples are with positive connotations of endearment, love and affection, while the last five are with negative connotations of sarcasm, belittlement and unimportance:

1. A woman addressing her dear son whom she is very pleased with due to his wonderful and outstanding performance in school exams:

Afia Hassoni rah ajeeblak khosh hadiya.

(Well done Hassoonny, I'll get you a very good present.)

2. A woman addressing her dear little beautiful daughter Zaynab in a way that shows her admiration:

Shono hal jamal Zanoobti!

(What beauty my little Zanooba!)

3. A typical example of the diminutive form with the tone of endearment is noticed in the

speech of a grandmother trying to persuade her very thin grandson (Ahmed) who refuses to eat any more:

Hum, yalla habeeby Hamoodi bas hi illigayma.

(Hum, my dear Ahmed, just this small mouthful.)

4. A father is encouraging his son to be like his cousin Abdullah who is known for his great achievements (to show his admiration of the referent):

Baba habeeby seer mithil ibn ammak Aboodi.

(My dear son, follow the example of your cousin Abdullah.)

5. Another example is found in a situation where a man is addressing another one (called Ali who has done many things to help the poor and needy, in a way that shows his admiration and aspiration:

ʔāshat eedak ʔalāwi allah ybarik wi zeedak.

(Well done Ali. May God bless you.)

6. A typical example of the diminutive with the tone of sarcasm, belittlement and unimportance is found in the speech of a Baghdadi



woman addressing her son-in-law whom she is very cross with: *lek inta moo rajāl walā irjayjeel, inta rijrija.*

(Hey! You are not a man or a small type of man, you are a mean type of man: *rijrija.*)

It is to be noted here that the diminutive of *rajāl* which is generally formed by the use of the diphthong *ay /ei/* instead of the vowel *a /a:/* as *irjayjeel* is modified into another unique type which occurs only on very rare occasions as *rijrija* depending on the speaker's dialect or attitude of total ignorance, disregard, sarcasm and inferiority.

7. Two guys in a conversation. Notice the use of the diminutive *rwaytib* from the noun *rātib* to indicate B's dissatisfaction with his poor salary:

A: Ee kulish zein sār ?indak rātib.

(Great, you've got a salary.)

B: Yam ?awad yā rātib..rwaytib.

(Oh guy! What a salary! It's a small/poor one.)

8. One is so cross with a talkative woman called Fatima:

Ihna lo nikhlas min lisān hi il chalba Ftayyim.

(We wish we got rid of this chatterbox bitch Ftayyim.)

Here the diminutive form *Ftayyim* is used instead of the proper name *Fatima* together with the use of the metaphor *chalba* (bitch) to indicate utter dysphemism, contempt, degradation and humiliation of the referent.

9. A badly behaved and talkative woman named *Zahra* is totally abused by another a person who shows his/her disregard by addressing her with a harsh word *inchabbi* (*shut up*) and the diminutive *Zhayra*:

inchabi wahtarmi nafsich ya Zhayra.

(Shut up and respect yourself Zhayra.)

10. A girl is trying to persuade her mother to buy her a smart phone which most girls own

including two girls whom she is not on good terms with; *Huda* and *Sameera*. She

diminutively refers to the two girls as *Hdaywa* and *Smayra* to show belittlement and

unimportance:

Mama kul ilbanāt ?idhum smart phone hatta Hdaywa wo Smayra.

(Mum, all girls have got smart phones, even Hdaywa and Smayra.)

5. A DISTINCTIVE FEATURE

A distinctive feature of diminutive formation is found in Basrawi Dialect (a variety of IA in the city of Basra and surrounding areas). In this dialect diminutives, just like English, are formed by process of suffixation. This applies only to some proper nouns (masculine and feminine). Here, the suffix '*aw*' pronounced as /ɔ:/ is added to the proper noun to express utter dysphemism, with the meaning of contempt, scorn and belittlement.



It is worth mentioning that this process of diminutive formation, which is morphologically similar to English (which employs suffix addition), is also found in nearby Gulf countries, namely Kuwait and Bahrain. Notice the following examples; *Hasan/Hussein* > *Hsaynaw* /hseino:/, *Hameed* > *Hameedaw* /hemi:do:/, *Ahmed* > *Ahmedaw* /æhmedo:/, *Mohammad* > *Mohammadaw* /mhæmædo:/, *Kareem* > *Kareemaw* /kri:mo:/, etc. The same process is applied to feminine proper nouns, e.g., *Zaynab* > *Zaynabaw*, /zeinebo:/, *Zahra* > *Zahraw* /zehro:/, *Layla* > *Laylaw* /leilo:/, *Ameena* > *Ameenaw* /æmi:no:/, etc.

6. IMPLICATIONS FOR LANGUAGE LEARNING

Research done on languages in which an extensive use of diminutives was noted convinced some scholars to raise the hypothesis that the use of diminutives simplifies the acquisition of nominal declension (Savickienė, 2001; Kempe et al. 2001 cited in Dabašinskienė, 2021, p.11). As regards their formation, diminutives can have a facilitating role and/or effect in the process of morphology acquisition for children in languages with complex noun morphology. In a series of experimental studies, it was shown that diminutives facilitate the acquisition of complex inflectional systems in languages like Russian, Polish and Lithuanian (Ševa, 2006). According to Erdmann (2018), the formation of diminutives from the morphological-phonological levels helps babies learn predictable word endings along with the rhythm and intonation of their language. Diminutives facilitate word learning because of their very limited word endings. For example, in English they always end in “y”: *doggy*, *kitty*, *tummy*, “let”: *piglet*, *droplet*, *booklet*, *starlet*, or “ing”: *duckling*, *gosling*, etc. Phonologically, such diminutives have clear syllable stress patterns; two-syllable CVCV pattern in which the first syllable is always stressed, e.g. *cat* to *kitty*, *dog* to *doggy*. A similar pattern is found in Iraqi Arabic as shown in the diminutive forms but with three-syllable CVCVCV pattern: *Hammoody* *Hassoony*, *Fatooma*, *Zanooba*, *ʔalāwi* and *Khalawi*.

Such examples and similar ones facilitate vocabulary acquisition in that they provide cues for word segmentation since children use the syllable stress patterns as a template for deciding what might be a word. Children are interested in the regularities present in the stems of words, in addition to the regularities in the endings. They also search for fixed word endings, like “y” in English, which helps them identify word boundaries (ibid).

It was predicted that the characteristics of baby-talk words, in which diminutives play a vital role, would speed up word learning during the early stages of language development (Ota et al., 2018). According to them, diminutives play a critical role in giving children the tools to facilitate general vocabulary development “whose main contribution is to kick-start the process of lexical learning.”(ibid, p. 1994). They highlight the



importance of using diminutives in child-directed interactions, and using these specific types of words when coaching caregivers. Current studies show that this input appears to have the most impact prior to the age of 2 (Houston & Jusczyk, 2000).

According to Kempe, et al (2007), the use of diminutives may lead to a regularization of morpho-syntactic properties in the input presented to children. Adults, also, benefit from exposure to diminutives over their simplex (not compound) counterparts, supporting the hypothesis that diminutives simplify word segmentation and morphology acquisition, by increasing word-ending invariance, regularizing stress patterns, and decreasing irregularity in morpho-syntactic categories. They refer to experiments demonstrating that exposure to elements resembling Dutch and Russian diminutives facilitate word segmentation in adult language learners.

Finally, in many languages, diminutives have a tendency to regularize irregular aspects of inflectional morphology thereby facilitating the acquisition of morpho-syntax (ibid, p. 322). Since both children and adults are highly sensitive to regularities, this use of diminutives with its simplifications can additionally facilitate first language learning. Recent cross-linguistic experiments showed that, even within the class of adult language users, it has been noticed that diminutives can perform more consistently for items that fall within morpho-phonologically densely populated clusters of words (Albright & Hayes, 2003; Dabrowska, 2004 cited in Ševa, 2006). Diminutives create a stimulating atmosphere of interaction between affective, pragmatic, structural and statistical features, and the way the interaction between adult and child fosters the development of linguistic and communicative abilities (Kempe, et al, 2007).

7. CONCLUSION

Having displayed the phenomenon of diminutiveness in English and Arabic, it is pertinent to summarize the process of its formation in both languages. In English, the tendency is to employ two distinct morphological processes; suffixation and prefixation. The first process is achieved by using a variety of suffixes, namely, *let* (piglet, booklet), *ing* (duckling, gosling), *ette* (kitchenette, novelette), and *y* (Johnny), *ie* (darkie). As for prefixation, it can be achieved by adding: *mini* (minibus, minimarket), *micro* (microbe, microwave), *under* (underestimate, underpayment), and *vice* (vice president, vice chairman). Semantically, diminutive forms are mostly charged with the meaning of smallness, endearment, and belittlement. It is to be noted that in English the process is generally applied to nouns (proper and common) as in: John > *Johnny*, Ann > *Annie*, Catherine > *Kitty*, bird > *birdie*, *minibus*, *miniskirt*, and some



adjectives as in: sweet > *sweetie* and dark > *darkie*, and a few verbs, such as *under-act*, *undercharge*, *underestimate*, etc.

Diminutive formation in SA is different from its English counterpart in that it is achieved only through the process of infixation or minor derivation which follows three basic patterns: (1) *fu'ayl* with trilateral nouns, as in: *jabal* > *jubayl*, (2) *fu'ay'il* with quadrilateral nouns as in: *ʔaqrab* > *ʔuqayrib*, (3) *fu'ay'eel* with quinquelateral nouns as in: *ʔasfoor* > *ʔosayfeer*.

IA is similar to SA in that it applies the same process of infixation, but with slight modification in vowel quality to match the morphological rules of this spoken variety. This occurs when the short or long vowel in the root common noun or adjective is internally (involving the use of infix) changed into the form *ay* (pronounced as /eɪ/) as in: *rātib* > *rwaytib* /rweitib/, *mara* > *mraya* /mreijə/ (common nouns), *shātir* > *shwaytir* /ʃweitir/, *qseer* > *qsayyir* /gseijir/ (adjectives). As for masculine proper names, they are differently formed, especially those with positive connotations of endearment, love and affection, e.g., *Mohammad* > *Hammoody*, *Hassan/Hussein* > *Hassoony*, *Saʔeed/Asʔad* > *Saʔoody* (with suffix addition just like English as mentioned earlier). Yet, others are formed with a different suffix addition (*wee*) /wi:/ as in: *ʔali* > *ʔalāwee*, *Khaleel* > *khalāwi*, *Jaleel* > *Jalāwi*, etc. As regards compound nouns beginning with “ʔabd (servant/slave of the Creator/Allah + one of God’s best names), only the first part is diminutively formed, while the second part doesn’t undergo diminutive formation due to its sanctity, e.g. *ʔabdallāh* > *ʔobaydallāh*, *ʔabdilkhāliq* > *ʔobaydilkhāliq*, and *ʔabdilrahmān* > *ʔobaydilrahmān*.

Feminine proper nouns in IA are diminutively formed (with euphemistic connotation) to show endearment and affection by using the infix *oo* + the feminine marker *a* as in: *Fatima* and *Zaynab* > *Fatooma* and *Zanooba* (respectively). Forms with dysphemistic connotations (scorn, belittlement) undergo the same infix adaptation, but by using the form *ay* /ei/ + the feminine marker *a* /ə/. This is clear in the previously mentioned examples of; *Khadeeja* > *Khdayja*, *Khawla* > *Khawyla*, *Sameera* > *Smayra*, and *Kareema* > *Krayma*. Parts of speech that undergo the process of diminutive formation in both SA and IA are mostly nouns (proper and common) and adjectives.

A common characteristic of diminutive forms in IA is found with feminine nouns and adjectives. These are formed by the addition of the marker *ay* (phonetically symbolized as /eɪ/) + the last letter of the noun + *a* suffix (phonetically symbolized as /ə/. This is clearly seen in the proper feminine nouns: *Khadeeja* > *Khdayja*, *Layla* > *Lwayla*, and in common



feminine nouns: *mara* > *mraya*, *shajara* > *shjayra*, and feminine adjectives: *hilwa* > *hlaywa* and *hanina* > *hnayna*.

A striking exception to the general rule of diminutive formation in IA is found in Basrawi dialect which, just like English, employs a suffix addition, namely *aw*, phonemically represented as /ɔ:/. This occurs when referring to proper nouns, masculine and feminine, but with negative/dysphemistic connotations, e.g., Ahmad > Ahmadaw, Hameed > Hameedaw, Hasan/Hussein > Hsaynaw, Ameena > Ameenaw, Zaynab > Zaynabaw, Zahra > Zahraw, etc.

From a semantic-pragmatic perspective, diminutive forms in English usually indicate smallness, endearment, familiarity and, very rarely, contempt. As for SA, and IA in particular, the diminutive forms do not merely express smallness, endearment and familiarity but also contempt, belittlement, scorn and degradation. These shades of meaning are related to the dysphemistic associations of diminutive forms which represent a widespread phenomenon in IA.

As for their pedagogical implications, diminutive forms can have a facilitating role in the process of morphology and vocabulary acquisition for children and adults. This has been shown by the findings of a number of studies conducted in certain languages, such as Russian, Polish, Serbian and Lithuanian. As regards the role of diminutive forms in facilitating the process of morphology and vocabulary acquisition in other languages, and IA (as a variety of SA), remains a task for future research and investigation.



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