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The Diminutive in English and Arabic: A Comparative study

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Abstract:

Carrying out comparative studies may pave the way for knowing some universal facts about human language and the common characteristics the compared languages have. The present study tackled one phenomenon of language, the diminutive, which was seen common both to English and Arabic. In English, the diminutive usually shows that something is small and it is either used literally or metaphorically. In Arabic, on the other hand, such meanings are also to be noticed together with the idea that the diminutive mainly means shortening. The paper was divided into three sections and a conclusion. Section one dealt with the diminutive in English giving a definition, talking about the formation of the diminutive, showing the relation between the diminutive and phonology, the diminutive and productivity, the diminutive and borrowing, the diminutive and other languages and afterwards the relation between the diminutive and pragmatics. Section two, on the other hand, was concerned with the diminutive in Arabic where a definition was also given, the functions the diminutive achieve, the conditions for forming the diminutive, the prosodic measures the diminutive follows and the rules and exceptions it follows. Section three was a comparison between the diminutive in English and Arabic. The study ended with mentioning some conclusions the study came out with. It was seen that the two languages differed on the phonological level, some differences were noticed as regards the parts of speech and functions the diminutive perform in each of the two languages.

و ديمينو تيف باللغتين الإنجليزية والعربية: دراسة مقارنة الدكتور غانم عيدان الساعدي، جامعة كربلاء / كلية التربية للعلوم الإنسانية

المخلص:

إن عملية اجراء دراسات مقارنة قد يمهد السبيل لمعرفة حقائق عالمية (مشتركة) حول اللغة البشرية، وكذلك معرفة الصفات المشتركة بين اللغات التي تتم مقارنتها. وإن الدراسة الحالية تناولت ظاهرة من ظواهر اللغة وهي التصغير والتي تبين انها موجودة في اللغتين الانجليزية والعربية . فبالنسبة الى اللغة الانجليزية، فان التصغير يدل او يشير الى ان شيئاً هو صغير وقد ينظر اليه اما حرفياً او مجازياً. وبالنسبة الى اللغة العربية، من جهة اخرى ، فان تلك المعاني موجودة فضلاً عن فكرة ان التصغير يعني التقليل او التخصيص. قسم البحث على ثلاثة فصول مع سرد بالنتائج. تناول الفصل الاول ظاهرة التصغير في اللغة الانجليزية معطياً تعريفاً لها، ومتحدثاً عن طرق صياغة الاسم المصغر وكذلك بيان العلاقة بين التصغير وعلم الصوت وكذلك العلاقة بين التصغير والانتاجية وبين التصغير والاستعارة من اللغات الاخرى. كما تطرق الى العلاقة بين التصغير واللغات الاخرى واخيراً العلاقة بين التصغير والتداولية. ومن جهة اخرى، تناول الفصل الثاني ظاهرة التصغير في اللغة العربية حيث اعطى تعريفاً لها مع بيان الوظائف التي يؤديها وكذلك الشروط الواجب توفرها لصياغة الاسم المصغر. مع بيان النماذج او المقاييس العروضية التي على اساسها يتم التصغير وكذلك بين القواعد والاستثناءات التي تخص التصغير. أما الفصل الثالث فقد اختص بمقارنة اللغتين الانجليزية والعربية فيما يخص ظاهرة التصغير. اختتمت الدراسة ببيان النتائج التي تم التوصل اليها. وقد وجد ان هناك اختلافات بين اللغتين فيما يخص التصغير على المستوى الصوتي وكذلك تبين وجود اختلافات على مستوى اجزاء الكلام وكذلك الامر بالنسبة الى الوظائف التي يؤديها التصغير في اللغتين.

Introduction:

The diminutive is a linguistic construction or a linguistic phenomenon which is common both in English and Arabic. The 'Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary', for example, defines a diminutive as a word or an ending of a word that shows that somebody or something is small. Crystal (2003: 139) adds to this that the use of the diminutive is either literal or metaphorical. The diminutive of 'duck', for example, is 'duckling' and for 'James' is 'Jim'. In Arabic, the diminutive of 'نهر' is 'نهيير'. It is hypothesized that the two languages differ as to the functions the diminutive fulfil.

This study also aims to see the points of departure and the meeting points between the two languages, i.e English and Arabic regarding the diminutive. It also aims at testing the hypothesis above.

As procedures for the study, a survey of the books, articles, etc. on the two languages will be made.

To the best of the researcher's knowledge, no previous study comparing the two languages has been made and this is what justifies the carrying out of such a study. It is hoped that the study will be of advantage to both students and researchers specialists in English and Arabic.

Section One: Diminutive in English

1.1. Definition

The 'Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary' (2005) defines a diminutive as a word or an ending of a word that shows that somebody or something is small. Crystal (2003: 139), on the other hand, and after giving (dim, DIM) as abbreviations for the diminutive, says that the use of the diminutive is either literal or metaphorical adding that the term is usually contrasted with augmentative .

1.2. Formation of the Diminutive

Regarding the formation of the diminutive, Cruse (2006: 50) says that the term diminutive is often applied to a word bearing a diminutive affix, and he also extends the use of the diminutive to apply to short forms of proper names such as **James: Jim** and **Margaret: Peggy**. He (ibid: 49) also argues that the main diminutive suffixes in English are: - **ling** (duck: duckling), -**ette** (kitchen: kitchenette), -**let** (tart: tartlet), -**ie** (lad: laddie). He also gives **mini** as a diminutive prefix (skirt: miniskirt). A number of things may be noticed here. First, the number of these diminutive affixes is limited in spite of the fact that Stageberg (1981: 102) adds to them -**et** (circle: circlet), -**kin** (lamb: lambkin), -**kin** (man: manikin) and -**i** and -**y** (Will: Willy), Second, they, together with those mentioned by Stageberg, are all

suffixes except **mini** which is a prefix. Third, most of these diminutives, if not all, seem to be shorter than the basic form of the word to which they are attached. Besides, they are considered morphemic due to their ability of being added to most nouns.

In this connection, a homophonic clash may take place and, therefore, must be avoided as some of these diminutive suffixes, Stageberg (ibid) argues have the following homophones:

1. **-y**, an adjective forming suffix added to a noun as in **cloudy**.
2. **-ie**, a noun-forming suffix added to an adjective, as in **smartie**, **toughie**.
3. **-ette**, a feminine suffix, as in **majorette**.
4. **-ling**, a noun suffix denoting animals, as in **yearling**, **shearling**, **fledgling**, **nestling**, **weanling**.

Some diminutive forms may be short forms of proper names, e.g (**James: Jim**) or completely different words i.e altered forms, e.g (**Margaret: Peggy**) (see Cruse, 2006:51).

1.3. The Diminutive & Phonology

The vowels of the six diminutive suffixes mentioned by Stageberg (ibid) are three front vowels: /i/, /I/ and /ε/. But the suffix **-y**, for example, Akmajian et al. (2001:40) argue, causes no phonological changes in the base word to which it is attached but does augment the base by adding its own sound.

1.4. The Diminutive & Productivity

Due to the fact that the diminutive formation in English is not part of any general, syntactically driven paradigm as there is no syntactic rule which makes reference to the property 'diminutive', it becomes apparent and uncontroversial, katamba (1993: 210) argues, to view **-ling**, **-y**, **-let** and **-ette** as derivational suffixes. In this regard, Stageberg (op.cit) differentiates between the degree and level of productivity each of these and other suffixes has. He says that the first suffix, pronounced /i/ and spelled **-ie**, **-i** and **-y**, is highly productive and the second i.e **-ette** is also in active use. The other four diminutive suffixes i.e (**-kin**, **-ikin**, **-kins**), **-ling**, **-et**, and **-let** exist in the language as diminutives but they are rarely if ever added to new nouns. In short, they are unproductive, inactive

1.5. The Diminutive & Borrowing

The process of borrowing or loan words has a role to play here as many other diminutive suffixes in addition to the six ones mentioned earlier, Stageberg (1981: 103) argues, have come into English as a part of borrowed words. These were diminutives in their own parent language but are non-morphemic in English. For illustration, he adds, here is a handful of them.

Mosquito	Panel	Venezuela
bambino	Morsel	Quartet
armadillo	Damsel	Bulletin
		(two successive diminutives here)
peccadillo	Scalpel	Falsetto
flotilla	Satchel	Stiletto
Priscilla	Muscle	Maureen
cookie	Particle	Lochan
colonel	Pupil	Formula
citadel	Violin	Capsule
	Violoncello	
Novel(noun)	Puppet	calculus

1.6. The Diminutive & Other Languages

The diminutive in English is not language-specific Stageberg (ibid) argues that diminutive suffixes occur in many languages. Below are a few examples:

1. French **sonnette** /sɔnɛ't/ , little bell
2. Spanish **casita** / kasíta / , little house
3. Italian **stanzina** /stantsína/ , little room
4. Romanian **fetita** /fetítsa/, little girl
5. Hawaiiin **puliki** /pulíkí / , vest
6. German **Hündchen** /hɛntçɛn/, puppy
7. Portuguese **caşinha** /kaşĩna/ , little house
8. Dutch **hűisje** /hűisjə/ , little house

Arabic is another language, we can add, which is familiar with diminutiveness. In this regard Katamba (1993: 210) says that in many African languages, diminutive and augmentatives are marked by affixes that are at the heart of the inflectional system.

1.7. Arbitrary or Rule- Governed?

The question that may be raised here is , Is there a rule in English which says that a particular diminutive suffix must be used with a particular noun? The answer is that no such a rule is to be found. For example, the diminutive suffix **-ling** as in **gosling** (a young goose) and **suckling** (literally, an unweaned young animal or child; hence, an unweaned mammal; or, an infant or very young child) (see Williams, 2008: 222- 223) are similarly used for birds, animals and human beings respectively. Yes, the three diminutive suffixes **-ie** , **-i**, **-y** are primarily used with proper nouns and sometimes with common nouns but with no priority or preference of a certain sex over the other.

1.8. The Diminutive & Pragmatics

When defining the term diminutive, Crystal(2003) in his dictionary says that the term diminutive is used in morphology to refer to an affix with the general meaning of 'little', used literally or metaphorically (as a term of endearment). Matthews (2007), in his turn, says that the diminutive is a word, etc.

Which basically indicates small size. As we can see both writers emphasize the literal, i.e semantic meaning of the diminutive. Now, if we accept this idea, then why don't we consider the prefix **micro** or **micr** as part of this (system) which is the diminutive as they are attached to many words, e.g. **microfilm, microcomputer, microchemistry**, etc.

Cruse (2006: 49) also considers **mini** – as a diminutive prefix. Besides, why don't we include such synonyms as **wee, tiny, miniature, pigmy**, etc. as part of that system. However, when talking about the addition of the diminutive suffix **-y** to the noun **dad** making it **daddy**, Akmajian et al. (2006: 40) argue that the addition of the diminutive suffix **-y** causes no obvious semantic change in the sense that both **dad** and **daddy** denote the same persons, except that the form **daddy** is used in baby talk or intimate family context. Although **-y**, they add, does not cause a semantic change, it does change the context of appropriate use, which is a pragmatic change. This, I think, is a great movement towards morphopragmatics. Priority and precedence of pragmatics over semantics or literal meaning is also noticed in Cruse's (2006: 50) as he, when dealing with diminutives says that diminutives are often used to express affection or intimacy, rather than (or as well as) small size and adds that they are characteristic of talk with children. Pragmatic uses and purposes are also included in the definition given in Webster's dictionary (1988) where the diminutive is seen to indicate small and sometimes the state or quality of being familiarly known, lovable, pitiable, or contemptible. Stageberg (1981: 102), in his turn, also says that the six diminutive suffixes are considered morphemes which convey a meaning of smallness or endearment or both.

The pragmatic meaning of diminutives is also emphasized and noticed in some other languages. For example, when talking about Italian diminutives, Dressler and Merlini- Barbares (1993: 54-275) as cited in Spencer and Zwicky, 2001: 276) argue that pragmatically, diminutives express an evaluation or judgment which depends on the speaker's intentions, perspective and standards of evolution and add that the most general pragmatic meaning of diminutives seems to be non- seriousness and that the use of the diminutive can be analyzed adequately in terms of (i) speech situations, (ii) speech acts and (iii) regulative factors such as playfulness, emotion, intimacy, understatement, modesty, euphemism, etc. Typical speech situations in which diminutives are used are child- centered, pet-centered and lover- centered speech situation. As to speech acts, the main

contribution of diminutive is the modification of the relative strength of a speech act.

Section Two: The Diminutive in Arabic

2.1. Definition:

In language, Ibrahim (1957:186) says that the diminutiveness means diminishing or causing to look less and morphologically it is a change in the form of a word, usually a noun. Al- taweel (2007: 42), in his turn, says that this noun is always inflected. In the same regard, Halwany (1999: 328) argues that diminutiveness is one expressive characteristic of the Arabic language where one can express some psychological meanings. Salah (2005: 140) also adds that the diminutive mainly means shortening as it is a sort of description of meaning e.g. when we say **عَصِيفِير** it is shorter than when we say **عصفور صغير** . Halwany (op.cit) adds that the diminutive also involves two means of expression in language; these are affixation and form, where a consonantal (vowelless) **ي** (yaa) is added to the word and some phonological changes also take place such as by the first letter carrying (damma) (◌◌) and the second letter carrying fetha (◌◌) . It is, therefore, closer to a change in form than to affixation.

2.2. Purposes / Functions of the Diminutive:

The diminutive in Arabic is usually used to achieve a number of functions. Ibrahim (1957: 186) and Salah (2005: 140) talk nearly about the same functions. These may be summarized as follows:

1. Diminishing a thing by diminishing itself, e.g. **جُبَيْل** and **نُهَيْر** as diminutives of **جبل** and **نهر** respectively.
2. Diminishing a thing by diminishing its quantity, e.g. **دريهمات** as a diminutive of **دراهم** .
3. Depreciation of prestige, e.g. **رُجَيْل** and **شَوَيْعِر** as diminutives of **رجل** and **شاعر** respectively.
4. Showing the proximity of time, e.g. **قُبَيْل المغرب** and **بُعَيْد العصر** as diminutives of **قبل المغرب** and **بعد العصر** respectively.
5. Showing the proximity of place /destination, e.g. **قُرْب المدرسة** and **تَحْت الشجرة** as diminutives of **قرب المدرسة** and **تحت الشجرة** respectively.
6. Showing pity, kindness and mercy, or closeness and intimacy e.g. **يا بَنِي** , **يا أَخِي** , and **يا صَدِيقِي** respectively.
7. Showing glorification and honour e.g. **وكل أناس سوف تدخل بينهم دويهة تصفر منها الأتامل**

2.3. The Diminutive & Its Conditions:

For forming and making the diminutive, Salah (2005: 142) argues that the following conditions must be met:

1. It should be a noun; it is neither a verb nor a preposition. This is due to the fact that the diminutive is usually a description (modification) of meaning and the verb and the preposition are not usually described. Such verbs of surprise or wonder as **مَا أَحْيَسَنَهُ** and **مَا أَحْلَاهُ** are exceptionally diminuted and are not usually preferred by the Basrah scholars. However, Wright (1981: 167) argues that the diminutive is also formed from the demonstrative pronoun **ذَا** and its derivatives, as well as the relative pronoun **الَّذِي** and also from certain prepositions, which are, however, substantives in the accusative, as **قَبِيلٌ a little before, بُعِيدٌ a little after, فَوْقٌ a little above, دُونٌ a little below, a little nearer than**, etc. But, the diminutives of demonstrative and relative pronouns are only considered by most grammarians but exceptions .

2. It should be declinable; pronouns, conditional and interrogative nouns, indefinite nouns with vague intensifying force such as **مَا و مَنْ** and other relatives and also demonstrative nouns, etc. are not usually diminuted; if seen, then these are only considered but exceptions.

3. It should not be in the form of or in accordance with the forms and patterns of the diminutive or even similar to such patterns such as **بثينة و شعيب و كُمَيْت**, etc.

as they are in the form of the diminutive pattern of the trilateral verbs or as **مُهَيِّمِن** and **مُسَيِّطِر** as they are similar to the form and pattern of the diminutive.

4. It should admit and be capable of diminutiveness; nouns which are usually stamped with and characterized by glorification, honour and highness such as Allah's, the Most High, names and also His Prophets and angels, the noun which denotes totality such as **كُل the whole** or which denotes fewness or rareness such as **بعض some** and nouns which refer to or are connected with certain times such as names of the months and days of the week are not usually diminuted.

2.4. Prosodic Metres / Measures of the Diminutive:

Because of the great majority of the words to be diminuted and the different measures they take, Al-Khalil bin Ahmed (as cited in Ibrahim, 1957: 365-366), put forward three prosodic measures for the diminutive and these are: 1. **فَعِيلٌ** 2. **فُعَيْعِلٌ** 3. **فُعَيْعِيلٌ** .

The first prosodic measure i.e **فَعِيلٌ** , Halwany (1999: 332-333) argues, is generally used for making the diminutive of trilateral nouns, e.g **رَجِيلٌ وَقَمِيرٌ** as diminutives of **قلم و قمر** and **رجل** respectively while the second measure, i.e. **فُعَيْعِلٌ** is used for forming the diminutive of quadrilateral nouns, e.g **مَجِيلِسٌ و مُبِيرِدٌ و جُعَيْفِرٌ** as diminutives of **جعفر و مبرد** and **مجلس** respectively. The third measure (form), i.e **فُعَيْعِيلٌ** is used for forming the diminutive of

quinteliteral nouns, e.g. مُصَيَّبٌ و عُصَيْفِيرٌ و قَتَيْدِيلٌ as diminutives of عَصْفُورٌ و قَتَيْدِيلٌ and مُصْبِحٌ respectively.

In the same regard, Halwany (ibid) adds that the measures (forms) mentioned above depend on the number of the letters of the noun before its being diminuted but some letters are not usually regarded part of the word (noun) to be diminuted. Of such letters are: 1. The feminine termination (- آء), e.g. حُمَيْرَاءٌ as a diminutive of حَمْرَاءٌ ; 2. The feminine termination (- و), e.g. حُنَيْظَلَةٌ as a diminutive of حَنْظَلَةٌ ; 3. The relative termination (- ي), the ending (- ان) and the dual and plural terminations (- ان), (- ون), e.g. عُيَيْقَرِيٌّ for عُيَيْقَرِيٌّ and طَوِيلَاتٌ for طَوِيلَاتٌ, طَوِيلَاتٌ for طَوِيلَاتٌ, طَوِيلَاتٌ for طَوِيلَاتٌ. Morphologists have added to these nouns consisting of two words such as عِبْدَاللّٰهِ the diminutive of which is عُبَيْدَاللّٰهِ where the second word remains unchanged. The diminutives حُضَيْرَمُوتٌ and بُعَيْبِكٌ as diminutives of حَضْرَمُوتٌ and بَعْبِكٌ respectively are also considered part of this.

2.5. The Diminutive: Rules and Exceptions:

The opposite or the antonym of the diminutive is the augmentative (see Ibrahim, 2 : 365). Regarding the rules and exceptions of forming the diminutive, Darweesh (1980: 123) provides the following:

First : The first letter carries **damma** (َ), the second carries **fetha** (ِ) and a third (ِ) is added, e.g. عَقِيْلٌ for عَقْلٌ and سَبِيْعٌ for سَبْعٌ. This is the general principle (rule) for trilateral nouns.

Second: In a quadrilateral noun, even if its letters are primitive (original) and no other letter is added to them, another change, in addition to the first letter carrying damma, the second fetha and adding (ِ), takes place. For example, in جَعْفَرٌ which is diminuted to جُعَيْفِرٌ the letter after (ِ) takes kesra (ِ). If the last letter but one is a servile letter, It is changed into (ِ) and then coalesces with the (ِ) of the diminutive which results in the (ِ) being geminated, e.g. صُبْحٌ و كَتِيْبٌ and بَلِيْعٌ as diminutives of صَبْحٌ و كِتَابٌ and بَلِيْعٌ respectively.

Nouns which end with the feminine (ِ), e.g. شَجْرَةٌ and عَنَبَةٌ are considered exceptions as their letter before (ِ) take fetha (ِ) and not kesra (ِ), hence شَجِيْرَةٌ and عُنَيْبَةٌ. The same goes for nouns ending with the feminine elif (ِ), e.g. حُبَيْلِيٌّ for حُبْلِيٌّ and for those nouns the fourth letter of which is a servile elif (ِ), e.g. حُمَيْرَاءٌ for حَمْرَاءٌ . Of other exceptions, سَكْرَانٌ and عُثَيْمَانٌ as diminutives of سَكْرَانٌ and عُثْمَانٌ take different forms; سَرْحَانٌ and سَلْطَانٌ which are diminuted to سَرْحِيْنٌ and سَلْطِيْنٌ are considered exceptions to these.

Third: In the quinqueliteral nouns ending with the feminine (ة) or the servile elif or have other additions (letters), the letter after the diminutive (ي) takes kesra (◌ِ), e.g حنظلة for قريفصاء, حنظلة for زعيفران, قرفصاء for زعيفران, مخيرج for مخرج and مخيرجون for مخرجون.

Fourth: In the quinqueliteral ending with elif not indicating or marking the feminine and not the elif of فعلان or the last letter but one of which is (ي) or (و), the vowel letter is changed into (ي), e.g تمساح for عصيفير and تمساح for عصفور respectively.

Fifth : If the noun consists of less than three letters as it looks, the diminutive will render it and make it trilateral according to the following:

- Recover what has been omitted of the (فاء), (عين) or (لام), e.g عدة and يد become عيدة and يديه respectively.
- Resolve the geminated letter in nouns with double (geminated) consonants, e.g مديد and حبيب for مدّ and حب respectively.
- Double the letter and make the diminutive (ي) consist of two letters. As examples, if a person is named لم or هل, then their diminutives will be لميم and هليل respectively.

The diminutive (ي) may be geminated, hence لمي and هلي.

Sixth: If the second letter of the noun to be diminuted is an elif, it must be changed as the first letter of the diminutive must take damma and the second must take fetha and the elif is not capable of this. If the second letter is (و) or (ي) which are not primitive, they are recovered or taken back and an elif is changed into (ياء), if it is originally (ياء), e.g نيبب for ناب. An elif is changed into (واو) if it is originally (واو) or of unknown origin or augmented, e.g شويعر , شويج , حويل for شاعر , عاج and حال respectively. Besides, the (واو) is changed into or rendered (ياء) or the (ياء) is changed into (واو) or they are changed or replaced by hemza (ء) according to the origin from which they come or from which they are generated. Hence, we say قويمه for قيمة and ميقن for موقن as they are originally derived from قوم and يقن respectively. ذؤوب and رؤيسة are considered diminutives for ذيب and دنينير is دنينير respectively but for دينار the usual diminutive is دنينير.

Seventh : If the noun has no feminine termination the feminine (ة) is usually added to it when forming its diminutive, e.g أذينة , عيينه and يدية are considered diminutives for أذن , عين and يد respectively.

In the same regard, proper names consisting of two words such as عبدالله , حضرتهموت and بعلمك , their diminutives, Wright (1981: 170) argue are usually formed from the first word with the second word remaining unchanged, hence عبيدالله , حضيرهموت and بعيلمك respectively.

The softened or curtailed diminutive (تَصْغِيرُ التَّرْخِيمِ), Wright (ibid) argue, is also used. Consequently, قُضَى, قُرَيْطِسْ, and عُصَيْفِرْ are also considered diminutives for قَاضٍ, قَرطاس, and عُصْفُور respectively.

When talking about quadriliteral or quinqueliteral nouns of which the last two letters are weak, Wright (ibid) argues that one of them is to be rejected, e.g the diminutives for صَبِيٌّ and عَطَاءٌ are صَبِيٌّ (for صَبِيٌّ), عَدِيٌّ (for عَدِيٌّ) and عَطِيٌّ (for عَطِيٌّ) respectively.

Regarding nouns which have lost their third radical, whether they have the feminine termination (ة) or not, Wright (ibid) argues that their diminutives are usually formed by recovering their third radical, e.g أَبِيٌّ, لُعَيْةٌ and دُمِيٌّ as diminutives for أَبٌ, دَمٌ and لُعَاءٌ respectively.

Section Three : A Comparison Between The Diminutive In English & In Arabic:

As belonging to two different families, English as an Indo-European language and Arabic as a Semitic language, therefore; expecting differences is something normal. This section is going to show where the two languages, the subject of the study, meet and where they diverge.

On the phonological level, no phonological changes take place when adding the diminutive suffixes in English except that they augment the base by adding their own sounds, e.g 'will' /wɪl/ becomes 'willy' /wɪli/. The matter is different in Arabic. In Arabic, the general principle for forming the diminutive, mainly in trilateral nouns, is by the first letter carrying (damma), the second carrying (fetha) and a (ya) is added, e.g عَصْفُور becomes عُصْفَيْر. Besides, the formation of the diminutive in Arabic is made according to certain prosodic measures or meters which are three in number and which depend mainly on the number of the letters of which the noun is composed. On the contrary, no such measures are found in English.

Another point of departure to be noticed between the two languages is that the formation of the diminutive in English is mainly a matter of suffixation while such a formation is closer to a change in form than to affixation in Arabic. An example in English is **duckling**, the diminutive of **duck**. نُهَيْر is the diminutive of نَهْر in Arabic. Moreover, the number of suffixes used for forming the diminutive in English is limited; Stageberg, argues that they are six in number; besides, they differ in the degree of productivity each suffix has. In addition to this, those suffixes which are borrowed from other languages are considered non- morphemic. Related to this, it has been shown that another way of forming the diminutive in

English is by using a completely different form, e.g **cub** is the diminutive of **bear**.

Regarding the parts of speech, it has been shown that this phenomenon of language only applies to nouns in both languages. However, some other parts of speech are said to be, Wright argues, capable of being diminutives. Some prepositions such as **قبل**, **بعد**, and **فوق** have their diminutives as **قُبَيْل**, **بُعَيْد** and **فُوقِي** respectively. He has also added to them the demonstrative pronoun **ذا** and its derivatives and also the relative pronoun **الَّذِي**. Moreover, not all nouns are capable of being diminutives; the only nouns from which we can form the diminutive are the declinable; others which are seen diminished and are indeclinable are considered by most Arabic grammarians as exceptions.

Still another important point to be mentioned here is related to the purposes or functions achieved by using the diminutive. It has been noticed that such functions are more varied in Arabic than in English. However, the use of **dad** and **daddy**, for example, makes no semantic change as both words denote the same person; these two words are usually used in baby talk or in intimate family contexts. Besides, as it has been shown, although the suffix **-y** causes no semantic change, it does change the context of appropriate use, which is a pragmatic change. As a consequence, it can be argued that we are now within the domains of (comparative pragmatics).

Conclusion:

As a general conclusion, it can be said that the diminutive is a feature which is common both in English and Arabic.

One conclusion to be drawn is that on the phonological level, English has shown no phonological changes taking place when adding the diminutive suffixes except that they augment the base while in Arabic, phonological changes take place and the usual formula for this is that the first letter carries 'damma', the second letter carries 'fetha' and a 'ـِ' is then added i.e the formation of the diminutive proceeds according to certain prosodic measures which are three in number.

Another conclusion is that this feature of language mainly applies to nouns in both languages. However, other parts of speech such as prepositions, demonstrative pronouns and relative pronouns are also included in the list in Arabic in spite of the fact that they are considered exceptions by most Arabic grammarians.

Still another conclusion to be mentioned is that the purposes and/ or functions the diminutive in Arabic perform are more varied than those in

English and this goes hand in hand with the hypothesis set above. Besides, such functions are said to be pragmatic due to the fact that the form and its diminutive counterpart are said to be semantically the same.

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