English Diminutives in Children's Literature: A Case Study of Directive Speech Acts

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The article deals with English diminutives within the framework of speech act theory. The focus is on the diminutive-based directive speech acts, which are used to get a hearer to perform an action. The research is based on children's literature that is rich in diminutive forms due to the fact, that it is child-directed and anthropocentric. Our intention is to show that the speech situations in which a child is one of the participants of communication, i.e. as addresser, addressee, referent, or third party, contribute to the realization of diminutivity. In accordance with Searle's taxonomy of speech acts the research presupposes analyzing the use of diminutives in such directives as order, demand, request and pleading. Of special interest is the implementation of the strategies of positive and negative politeness in children's literature. The results of the empirically-based study are reflected in the quantitative analysis of English diminutives in children's literature, which indicates that the number of occurrences notably prevails in directive speech acts of order and demand.

Keywords: *diminutives, speech act, directives, positive politeness, negative politeness*

1. Introduction

The phenomenon of diminutivity has received a great deal of attention and has been investigated from different perspectives since late 19th century. The in-depth study of diminutives in various languages belongs to Dressler & Merlini Barbaresi (1994), Jurafsky (1996), Schneider (2003), and other linguists. Schneider (2003: 4) defines diminutives as "words which denote smallness and possibly express also an attitude (positive or negative)" and views them as a universal concept. Observing the language phenomena from the point of view of morphosemantics and morphopragmatics, Dressler & Merlini Barbaresi (1994: 144) maintain that being a derivative word that expresses mainly smallness the diminutive possesses a connotative meaning as well and seems to be a pragmatic device to express attitudes, emotions, value judgements, affection, etc.

English which is not abundant in diminutive words and forms usually expresses diminutivity with synthetic and analytical morphological patterns. The synthetic morphological subtype is based on affixation/derivation, by adding suffixes and prefixes to noun or adjective bases: *-et, -ette, -y(-ie, -ey), -let, -ling, -ish, mini-,* etc. The derivatives, which "intensify the diminutive meaning" (Steriopolo 2015: 11) and express different shades of meaning, including positive or negative attitude, i.e. smallness, tenderness, affection, contempt, etc., are discussed by many sources (e.g. Nurmi 1996; Rosiak 2013; Schneider 2013; Schneider & Strubel-Burgdorf 2013 et al.). Usually, in the process of affixation, the noun diminutive suffix *-ie/-y* does not change the part of speech (e.g. *dog → doggie, horse → horsey*). However, some diminutive nouns can be formed from adjectival bases (e.g. *sweet → sweetie*) (Mintsys & Mintsys 2015). Various degrees of diminutivity may be rendered with the help of the adjectives *little, small, tiny, teeny, teeny-weeny, wee, petite, miniature, microscopic, minute,* etc. ('adjective+noun' pattern) which constitute either a morpholexical subtype or a mainly analytical subtype of English diminutives (see Lockyer 2012; Nasiscione

2001). It is notable that the adjective *small* "does not change the meaning of the base word, but merely modifies it" (Schneider 2013: 140), providing mostly factual information about the object described (i.e. size). In addition, diminutives formed according to the formula "little + adjective + noun" acquire some additional senses. In particular, they primarily denote positive and negative characteristics of objects and people. The latter is expressed by means of lexical units and may reveal expressions of disgust (e.g. *disgusting, suppurating, nauseating, poisonous*), lack of wit (e.g. *silly, ignorant, daft*), unpleasant appearance (e.g. *dirty, filthy, skinny*), etc. The class of adjectives in the former case is confirmed by intellectual qualities of the object (e.g. *clever, nifty*), modesty (e.g. *innocent, quiet*), positive attitude (e.g. *good, funny, pretty*), etc. Finally, compassion results from the lexemes *poor* and *miserable.*

Hypocoristic forms, which are included in the present study, are also referred to as pet names, terms of endearment, or diminutives. They represent both the affection of the speaker and the diminutive nature of the referent. The existence of hypocoristics in English has been reported by Jespersen (1923) and Quirk et al. (1985). Thus, in the given research hypocoristic forms are considered as diminutivised lexical units (e.g. *Edward – Ed – Eddie; Bruce – Brucie*) because they perform the pragmatic function of making speech intimate by introducing shades of tenderness, affection and endearment.

An in-depth analysis of the diminutive has recently been found in works presenting a comparative translation study of diminutive constructions (e.g. Lockyer 2012; Cimburová 2013), examining the acquisition of diminutives from a cross-cultural perspective (e.g. Savickienė & Dressler 2007), and considering diminutivity as a radial category by adopting the theoretical and methodological framework of cognitive linguistics (e.g. Katunar 2013) as well as the results of a corpus-assisted discourse study of diminutive meanings in courtroom communication (e.g. Szczyrbak 2018).

Over the last two decades, analysing diminutives from the perspective of speech act theory is considered a great step forward because previously diminutives had been treated as units in which the meaning of objective smallness was dominant. A special type of communicants, i.e. children, is in the focus of diminutivity being primarily activated on conditions of highly emotional speech, which is "most commonly associated with children's language, as well as with adults talking to and about children" (Rosiak 2013: 289) and mainly occurs "in communication with or by children or in children's stories" (Biały 2012: 118). This explains the choice of the empirical material of the current research. Moreover, irrespective of multiple studies, which view the diminutive from the perspective of its semantic and pragmatic properties, this research discusses diminutives with the emphasis on the speech act theory in the domain of English children's prose.

In the given research, we take into consideration the arrangement of relations and interactions between such components of communication:

1. Addresser is the 'producer' of the message who encodes it in a certain way with reference to the norms, rules, strategies and tactics of communication.

2. Addressee is the final 'consumer' of the message who perceives and interprets it according to concrete conditions of the situation.

3. Referent is the object that a certain linguistic expression correlates with (Batsevich 2010: 336). Both a living being and an inanimate object can perform the function of the referent in a communicative situation.

4. Third party is a passive listener who does not take part in the conversation, however, is present in the communicative situation, and cannot change communicative roles.

Taking into consideration the fact that a diminutive is "a language tool of social interaction" (Wierzbicka 1991: 1) and "a sign of reduced psychological distance" (Khachikyan 2015: 78), we focus on the communicative situation in which diminutivity is often realised, with the most significant components being the addresser, the addressee, the referent and the third party. As a result, the arrangement of interactions between the communicants shows the specificity of diminutivity in children's literature. As diminutives express intimacy, familiarity and warm feelings primarily in child-directed speech they cannot but "modify the whole speech act in the given speech situation" (Laalo 2001: 72).

For defining the illocutionary potential of diminutive units in different pragmatic contexts, we should analyse them from the perspective of speech act theory, which considers speech activity as a target-based application of a language means by speakers according to certain rules with a view to communication. Thus, the present study, which is restricted to child-centered speech situations in children's prose, is aimed at analyzing the communicative functions of diminutives and the frequency of their occurrences in the directive speech acts.

The term *speech act* has different names in the literature. For instance, Austin, Searle and Vanderveken speak of speech acts (e.g. Austin 1975; Searle & Vanderveken 1985). T. van Dijk proposes the term communicative acts (Van Dijk 2009) and following Klein (1987), Steen (2003), and Wierzbitska (1991), we intend to distinguish between speech acts and discourse acts. A number of linguists follow Austin's idea of interpreting a speech act as a three-level action consisting of locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts (e.g. Bezugla 2012). In the definition of a speech act, the concept of "discourse-speech interaction" is most significant as it emphasizes the common speech activity of interlocutors as well as the involvement of speech activity in a broad discourse context. Speech acts include real-life interactions and require not only knowledge of the language but also an appropriate use of that language within a given culture (Anhkama 2014/2015: 3).

Batsevich, for example, views speech acts from two perspectives (Batsevich 2004: 170): (1) as a focused speech act relevant to the speaking principles and rules acceptable in a certain society; and (2) the minimal unit of conventional sociolingual behaviour which is observed in the framework of a pragmatic situation.

There exist multiple classifications of speech acts in pragmatics. Thus, Wunderlich (1980) singled out directives, quesitives, expressives, commissives, vocatives, representatives and others. According to Searle & Vanderveken (1985), speech acts comprise representatives, expressives, directives, commissives and declaratives. Pocheptsov's (2001) classification of speech acts includes constatives, promissives, menacives, performatives, directives, quesitives, etc. It is noticeable that directives, i.e. speech acts which "are addressed to another (usually physical) person the speaker establishes an interactive relation with" (Kiklewicz 2011: 76), are present in each of the classifications.

Thus, speech acts are involved in true communication between the addresser and addressee. The illocutionary focus of the speech act of directives is meant to make the addressee perform a certain action. Such speech acts are expressed by illocutionary verbs such as *order*, *command*, *request*, *beg*, *demand*, *advise*, *allow*, *invite* (Searle 1986: 182). In directives, the action is performed for the benefit of the speaker. Although both the speaker and the hearer might benefit from it, only the hearer has to make an effort. Moreover, directives belong to the speech acts which threaten the communicants' face in case of refusal and reluctance to perform the action. The analysis of the requirement of communicants' face and their statuses is closely connected with the theory of politeness by Brown & Levinson (1987), in terms of which diminutives can serve as strategic means of positive and negative

politeness. Diminutives' applicability to negative politeness may contribute to expressing the speaker's pessimism about obtaining the desired and minimize the imposition on the addressee (Brown & Levinson 1987: 177).

As a result, the question arises with respect to the role of diminutives as the means of positive or negative politeness strategies in child-related contexts regarding the addressee's positive or negative face. In a wider sense, the study of diminutives combines theoretical pragmatic and morphopragmatic approaches to the text. It goes even further in trying to make a difference between its static and dynamic dimensions within the framework of speech act theory where dynamic dimensions include "a textual linguistic act" (Biscetti & Dressler 2002: 53) and, consequently, the employment of diminutives in directive speech acts.

2. Data and Method

The texts constituting the empirical material for the research are 20th – early 21st century popular fairy tales, stories and novels by famous prize-winning children's authors (e.g. Allan Ahlberg was awarded Guardian Children's Fiction Prize; Roald Dahl – the Edgar Award and the World Fantasy Award; Jacqueline Wilson – the Carnegie Medal, the Smarties Prize, etc.). The corpus comprises one hundred and sixty-nine diminutive units, both analytic and synthetic (including diminutive-based directives) selected by means of employing the manual selection procedure. The total number of pages of the excerpted texts is two thousand.

Literature for children is more reader-oriented in comparison with literature for adults, and its personages are more unambiguous, either positive or negative (Oittinen 2000: 61). The world of a children's literary work is inherently anthropocentric, with a child (or another character that a child can identify himself/herself with) in its centre.

We emphasize that the target material of the study is children's literature, therefore, all the examples cited have been excerpted from works of fiction and do not refer to real-life situations. Moreover, the term 'children's literature' is a quite ambiguous one. On the one hand, it can imply an academic discipline, and, on the other hand, it refers to the writing of children's literature and may be regarded as "a double discourse that keeps the child in and outside fiction, apparently simultaneously" (Chapleau 2005: 14). This research focuses on a class of writing which encompasses fictional texts where child-related speech situations with English diminutives are set in a specific pragmatic context.

The methods used in the research are as follows: 1) the method of discourse analysis that aims to correlate the use of diminutives not only with the participants of the communicative situations as forms of social interaction but also with the factors influencing the social status of the interlocutors, their social position, gender, age, etc., 2) a pragmatic analysis that enables a definition of diminutives' pragmatic parameters in the context of direct interaction of listener and addressee, their communicative intentions. This kind of analysis highlights the requirement of communicants' face within the theory of politeness and the role of diminutives as a linguistic means of expressing positive and negative politeness in children's literature, 3) a quantitative analysis of English diminutives with qualitative data of diminutive use – various forms of diminutive expression (10 patterns) taken from thirteen fictional texts including the number of diminutive words and constructions seen in Table 1; the distribution of diminutives according to subtypes of directive speech acts including the number of their occurrences (see Table 2 in 3.3.1. Table 3 in 3.3.2, Table 4 in 3.3.3, and

Table 5 in 3.3.4); and, finally, it also shows the frequency of diminutive-related speech acts (see Table 6 in 3.3.4).

Table 1: Subtypes of diminutives in children's literature

Subtypes of diminutives	Number of excerpts
'little' + noun	89
'little' + diminutive noun	18
'little' + proper noun	15
diminutive noun derived via *-ie(y)*	13
'poor' + 'little' + noun	11
internal diminutive noun	8
hypocoristics	6
'little' + adjective + noun	5
reduplication	3
echo-word formation	1
Total	169

As it can be seen from Table 1, the overwhelming majority of the cases is constituted by the pattern 'little' + noun (e.g. *little child, little thing, little hands, little peep*) – 89 cases out of 169 (52.6%), compared to 18 cases (10.6%) of the pattern 'little' + diminutive noun (e.g. *little micies*). In 15 cases (or approx. 9%) 'little' is used with a person's name (e.g. *little Wilfred*), in 11 excerpts the diminutives are formed by putting 'little' between 'poor' and the following noun, and in 5 cases the pattern 'little' + adjective + noun is employed (9.5%) to express primarily a positive attitude towards a person or an object (e.g. *poor little April, little filthy hands*). Reduplication and echo-word formation (an overall total of 4 uses) do not prove to be very common cases for English diminutives in children's literature (2.4%).

Nineteen cases of diminutive nouns of the synthetic morphological subtype (11.2%) are derived by *-ie/-y* (e.g. *Daddy, Mummy, nightie, kiddie*), the suffix which is the most commonly used in contrast with other diminutive suffixes (e.g. *-let, -ling, -ette*), including hypocoristic nouns (e.g. *Rosy, Charlie*). In contrast, the cases of internal diminutives are rather few (e.g. *minute*), which demonstrates that diminutives in English are basically constituted analytically.

To summarize, as the examples above show, the most common way to express diminutivity in English is analytical via 'little' + either common or proper nouns or diminutive nouns.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 *Expressive uses of diminutives in children's prose*

Children's prose has its peculiarities, which are perceived on linguistic, compositional and genre levels. Diminutives in children's prose always involve expressive content and it is the context where language emotiveness is fully implemented because, according to Schneider (2013: 145), "diminutive meaning crucially depends on the context and situation in which a diminutive is used". As a result, the author's speech performs the function of expressing emotions, commenting on and interpreting their causes and effects.

The necessity of creating positive settings in children's prose triggers the author to use language means for relaxing emotional tension created in the text. The phenomenon of diminutivity serves this purpose best because it is realized in children's speech and embraces various modes of expressing positive rather than negative emotions, most notably affection. This is true for English prose for children, which includes a great number of diminutives in the author's and characters' speech, and, furthermore, both synthetic and analytical markers of expressive meaning account for important constituents in the study of diminutive nominations.

Sometimes, in order to reach a desired stylistic effect the author may even deliberately overload the text with diminutives. For example, in the short story *Teeny-tiny* Joseph Jacobs (2009) used the lexeme *teeny-tiny* 59 times. In fact, every noun *(teeny-tiny woman, teeny-tiny church, teeny-tiny gate, teeny-tiny bed),* even some adverbs *(teeny-tiny further, teeny-tiny louder*) and participles *(teeny-tiny frightened)* acquire a diminutive meaning. Every fifth word in this short story changed its meaning under the influence of the modifier *teeny-tiny.* The author "diminished" the size of all the objects and personages irrespective of their initial size: e.g. *teeny-tiny village – teeny-tiny churchyard – teeny-tiny woman – teeny-tiny bed – teeny-tiny bone.*

In the story, the diminutive serves as the main stylistic device employed by the author for creating a fairy-tale effect, namely for molding a diminished world with diminished objects in children's imagination (1):

(1) *And when this* ***teeny-tiny woman*** *had got into the* ***teeny-tiny churchyard****, she saw* ***a teeny-tiny bone*** *on* ***a teeny-tiny grave****, and* ***the teeny-tiny woman*** *said to her* ***teeny-tiny self****, 'This* ***teeny-tiny bone*** *will make me* ***some teeny-tiny soup*** *for my* ***teeny-tiny supper****.'* (Jacobs, *Teeny-tiny* 2009: 39)

The author chooses the lexeme *teeny-tiny* formed by means of an echo-word formation, which emphasizes diminution. However, the term is combined both with names of objects to denote their smallness *(teeny-tiny village, teeny-tiny woman),* and with abstract nouns or nouns of material *(teeny-tiny time, teeny-tiny self, teeny-tiny soup).* Thus, the aim of the author is not only to set diminutive forms and the diminutives' denotative meaning of smallness within particular contexts but also, first and foremost, to express secondary uses of the diminutive, namely the connotative meaning of emotiveness in order to make the text less serious and to strengthen positive emotions of the listener.

3.2 *Diminutivity in communicative situations*

In a communicative situation, the addresser, addressee and referent are considered to be obligatory components whereas a third party is an optional component that can be absent. As a rule, in children's literature, the communicative situation includes a child at its centre and one or two adults or additional children. The number of cases in which diminutives are present depends on the arrangement of the participants and the communicative purpose of the addresser.

If children are the participants in communication, they have a good chance of employing diminutives. For example, if a child is the addresser, it is natural that diminutives occur in his/her speech because they are among the language forms acquired in the first years of life

and constitute the greater part of their lexicon. It is typical of the situations when a child is stressed out and strives for protection on the part of the adult who is an authority:

(2) '*I want **Mummy**,' I whispered. The policewoman was blinking a lot. She patted my hands. 'I'm afraid **Mummy**'s gone to sleep, she said.'*
(Wilson, *Dustbin Baby* 2002: 71)

As (2) shows, the child has a premonition that there is something wrong with her mother and she needs support and comfort from the adult (the policewoman) who euphemistically informs her that her mother is dead (*Mummy's gone to sleep*).

At an early age, children use diminutives which fit not only their denotative ('small X') meaning but also may possess syllable repetition and reduplicative meanings of "plurality, distribution, iterativity, extension, intensivation" (Dressler et al. 2005: 465), thus revealing their positive and negative connotations as well, as in (3):

(3) *'What's the matter with you, Garnet? Have you gone completely nuts? Is this Let's Love **Rosy-Posy** Day?'* (Wilson, *Double Act* 1995: 62)

The child is struck by the behavior of the adult who starts treating her in a different way, and the diminutive proper name *Rosy-Posy* helps her to express her disbelief, surprise and negative attitude toward the adult-referent.

In (4), the child is the addressee, and the adult is the addresser. The latter tries to come to terms with the former, to come closer to the children's world, to express comfort, support and sympathy. The child has come to an antique shop in order to sell her porcelain doll and raise money for a ticket. Being unable to help her without her parents' presence, the shop assistant expresses sympathy with the help of the diminutives *Mummy*, *Daddy*:

(4) *'But the antique shop lady wouldn't buy them. She said I had to have **Mummy** or **Daddy** with me. Well, I haven't got a mummy. Or much of a dad.'*
(Wilson, *Double Act* 1995: 98)

In a case when the addresser and addressee are adults and the referent is a child who is being commented on, the message with a diminutive demonstrates a positive attitude to and affection toward the child-referent (5):

(5) *'But we can't have a scandal here. I've fostered **kiddies** more than twenty years with never a moment bother.'* (Wilson, *Dustbin Baby* 2002: 98)

If the referent is a diminished inanimate object, the communicative situation is manifested in an indirect reference to the diminutive-based message. It means that such a message is indirectly aimed at the addressee and directly – at the referent.

Sometimes the addresser's positive attitude toward the addressee can be directed at the referent via indirect reference, i.e. by means of mentioning household objects, toys and other things belonging or related to the addressee. It is done in order to indirectly demonstrate amicability to the addressee (if the addresser likes things belonging to the addressee, then the addressee must appeal to him/her as well).

(6) *'She'd even bought me a blue **nightie** and a blue quilted dressing-gown. I would have liked a brighter blue and I prefer wearing pajamas and I don't ever bother with a dressing-gown but I pretended to be very grateful.'*
(Wilson, *Dustbin Baby* 2002: 140)

In (6), the addresser (girl) names the thing, which her foster mother bought for her, using the diminutive *nightie.* The foster-child makes an effort to demonstrate her gratitude to the addressee (foster mother) by saying how much she appreciates the present.

If a child is a passive listener, the communicative situation of realization of diminutivity will have a dual reference of the diminutive-related message, where the addressee-adult is a "quasi-addresser" and the child (passive listener) – is the true recipient of information. Adults often resort to such situations to indirectly pass information on to the child and make it easier for perception, for example, to indirectly praise a child's action, give advice or express support in a difficult situation:

(7) 'Where's my ***poor little April***?' He called, and he rushed into my room and swept me up into his arms, squeezing me tight. (Wilson, *Dustbin Baby* 2002: 710)

By means of the diminutive *poor little April* the addresser-father indirectly addresses his daughter putting into words his sympathy and support after her mother's death. Evidently, the question is not meant for his daughter, which is why she cannot be the addressee. At the same time she is not the referent, either: by raising his voice (*He called*) and by using the evaluative adjectives *poor little*, the father wants to have the girl hear him. Thus, in (7) we deal with an example of dual reference when the target of the message is not the addressee, but a third party who is a child.

3.3 *Directive speech acts in children's literature*

For defining the illocutionary force of diminutives in a specific pragmatic context, it is relevant to analyze them from the perspective of the speech act theory, which views speaking as a purposeful use of language by interlocutors according to certain rules and with the aim of maintaining communication. Diminutive-based directives are intended to persuade the addressee that there is less effort to be made by the hearer for performing an action. The assumption that the minimization of the speaker's benefit occurs together with the minimization of the hearer's efforts (Schneider 2003) is disputable. The construction with the diminutive in (8) contains an explicit indirect directive, which is conventionally implemented. It demonstrates that there is a minimization of the hearer's efforts and maximization of the speaker's benefit:

(8) *And you will see me do it if you will be so kind as to bandage me up first. It would be a great favour to me if you do this **little thing**, sirs.*
(Dahl, *The wonderful story of Henry Sugar and Six More* 2000: 107)

The efforts required for performing the action are regarded as 'unimportant', 'not-so-hard' and therefore acceptable to the addressee. Therefore, we suggest that in (9) in the dialogue context with two suppositive sentences and the adverb *timidly*, the diminutive-related

directive can be aimed at minimising the imposition on the addressee and downgrading the threat to his/her face:

(9) *"Do not be worried," said the old man of the dog timidly.*
"Does she bark?" said Lizzie with worry anyway.
"Not at ***little children****," said the old man.*
(Johnston, *A Small Thing…but Big* 2016: 18)

The internal diminutive in (10), which is formed analytically and performs the syntactic function of the direct object, is as a rule used for this purpose (Schneider 2003: 64):

(10) *This one'll be as easy as pie! All we have to do is dig another* ***little tunnel*** *from here to there.* (Dahl, *Fantastic Mr Fox* 2009: 44)

In (11), illocution of directive and commissive is evident in this speech act, and the diminutive serves as a means of minimizing the number of efforts, which the addresser demands from the addressee. If a synthetic diminutive is used as the direct object, it will function as a strategy of positive politeness for expressing positive attitudes (Schneider 2003: 164):

(11) *'Now don't over-excite yourself, Grandpa,' Mrs. Bucket said. 'And don't fluster* ***poor Charlie****. We all try to keep calm.'*
(Dahl, *Charlie and the Great Glass Elevator* 1995: 72)

In (11), the synthetic diminutive *Charlie* is amplified by the analytical form *poor*, which the addresser-granny used in order to express positive and favourable attitude towards the referent-grandson.

According to Dressler and Merlini Barbaresi (1994: 235), the strategies of positive politeness are based on the assumption that interlocutors have common desires. Consequently, diminutives can serve as the markers of group identity lessening the psychological distance and increasing familiarity and intimacy of communication. Diminutives can function as positive politeness strategies, expressing readiness for consent and avoiding disagreement, seeking for what the participants of the speech act have in common:

(12) '*We must go down and take a look at* ***our little friends*** *before we do anything else,' said Mr. Wonka. He pressed a different button, and the lift dropped lower, and soon it was hovering just above the entrance gates to the factory.*
(Dahl, *Charlie and the Great Glass Elevator* 1995: 181)

We consider the speech act in (12) as a directive commissive because, on the one hand, the speaker is to perform the described action together with the hearers (commissive component), and on the other hand, he wants the hearer to accept his/her proposal (directive component). As Schneider (2003: 180) states, the correlation between dominance of components varies with reference to a concrete situation. In (12), we can speak of the dominance of the directive component because the addresser is the director of the chocolate factory who occupies a higher social position than the addressee-child. It is shown by the fact that the addresser

started performing an action without the addressee's reaction, whereas commissives require the hearer's consent for the action to be performed.

If the referent of the directive speech act is an inanimate object, by giving it a diminutive name, the addresser transfers his/her positive attitude toward it from the addressee:

(13) *You're a right little card, Tracy! Go on then, open the rest of your* ***pressies***.
(Wilson, *The Dare Game* 2001: 126)

The use of the diminutive *pressies* in (13) shows how the addresser-mother expresses her favourable attitude to the addressee-daughter.

In cases of expressing positive attitude to the referent that is a living being, the addresser encourages the addressee to act not by showing affection for the referent but by having the addressee feel fondness for the referent, and thus makes him act.

(14) *'Wait and see,' shouted the Monkey. 'Hold your breath, old man! Hold your nose! Hold your horses and watch the* ***Pelly*** *go!'*
(Dahl, *The Giraffe and the Pelly and Me* 2008: 39)

As illustrated by (14), the diminutive *Pelly* (*Pelican*) is used in the directive act to express the addresser's positive attitude toward and support of the referent (friend). The addresser desires the addressee to feel affection for the referent and support him.

In (15), the referent's name is *Mrs. Tibblethwaite*; however, the addresser tenderly calls his wife *Tibby*. In such a way, he is supposed to express positive attitude to the referent but not to the addressees (i.e. Vikings). With the help of the diminutive, the addresser means, by displaying affection for the referent, to arouse the addressee's similar favourable attitude toward him. Consequently, the former will have to perform a certain action.

(15) *Sigurd dropped the three ladies at once and rushed across to help his wife 'You leave my* ***Tibby****!' He cried.* (Strong, *Viking at school* 2004: 6)

If the diminutive form within the clause performs the syntactic function of the indirect object, then, it is formed synthetically in order to express the speaker's attitude toward a specific referent and to signal close relationships between the speaker and the addressee (Schneider 2003: 164) rather than to function as a means of downgrading and threatening face. Diminutive forms, which perform the syntactic function of the indirect object, are local. As such, they implement the strategy of positive politeness (16):

(16) *'So you go creeping along the bank until you see a big one – and you come up behind him – and you lie down on your* ***tummy*** *– and then slowly, very slowly, you lower your hand into the water behind him…'*
(Dahl, *Danny the Champion of the World* 1998: 76)

The addresser-adult orders the addressee-child to catch fish. Being the child's close friend, the adult uses a diminutive in the directive speech act to show his kindness.

The analysis demonstrates that diminutives as means of positive politeness strategy occur much more frequently in children's literature than as means of negative politeness

strategy. This is caused by the fact that children's literature, in which a child is in the focus of speech situation, aims at supporting a child by manifesting favourable attitudes toward them (positive politeness) rather than saving their face and communicative status (negative politeness).

In this study, we claim, that in English children's literature diminutive forms are frequently employed by adults for their own benefit, for example, talking a child into doing something or behaving in a certain way.

In (17), the diminutive *telly* concerns the communicative conduct of the mother, who wants her daughter to stay at home. Meanwhile, she goes out with her friends.

(17) '*What if I can't get to sleep?'*
'Then watch the ***telly****, like I said.'*
(Wilson, *The Dare Game* 2001: 189)

Diminutives in directive speech acts can enforce antagonism expressing the listener's offence. As predicted, in this context, the diminutive is accompanied by an adjective with negative connotation:

(18) *He didn't get out of the car, he just handed me the key to the cap of the gasoline tank and as he did so, he barked 'And keep your* ***little filthy hands*** *to yourself, you understand?'* (Dahl, *Danny the Champion of the World* 1988: 43)

In (18), the diminutive *little hands* applied in the directive speech act of order is accompanied by the adjective *filthy*, which has clearly negative connotation. The addresser-adult uses the diminutive *little hands* in order to express his anger in addition to his contempt for and negative attitude toward the addressee child.

Even if diminutives are accompanied by adjectives with a positive meaning, they can add negative expressiveness to speech acts and increase confrontation between interlocutors. Clearly, in this communicative context, we find instances of irony and sarcasm (19):

(19) *'So what you're goin' to do, Mister Swan, is to climb up to the very top of this tree, and when you get there you're goin' to spread out your wings like a good clever* ***little swannee-swan-swan*** *and you're goin' to take off.'*
(Dahl, *The Wonderful Story of Henry Sugar and Six More* 2000: 9)

The addresser-child is trying to make the addressee-child climb up a tree and jump off. With the help of the synthetically formed diminutive *swannee-swan-swan*, which is intensified by the analytical one *little*, the addresser expresses his contempt for and superiority over the addressee.

Among the directive speech acts there occur such diminutive-related speech acts as order, demand, request and begging/pleading, which are commonly used in children's literature. The analysis demonstrates that speech acts of order and demand are most frequently used in children's literature (see Table 6 in 3.3.4) presumably due to its specific nature, the asymmetry of speech situation being typical of it.

3.3.1 *Speech acts of order*

Speech acts of order occur in a communicative context when the speaker's authority is beyond doubt; his/her position is superior to that of the listener (speech situation "adult-child"), and the latter is obliged to obey. Order has the highest degree of illocutionary force because the speaker takes advantage of his/her authority and power. Order also has the highest degree of imposition, i.e. it is characterized by a high degree of interference in the life and behavior of the listener, who, in these cases is not given any option about performing an action:

(20) *'What about **little Wilfred**?' said Dinah. 'Forget **little Wilfred**. Now then, let's do it like this!'* (Ahlberg, *Ten in a Bed* 2003: 55)

The addresser-wolf expresses an order while speaking to the addressee girl. His position in the conversation is higher (owing to his physical superiority), which is why using the order is acceptable. The diminutive construction *little Wilfred* in (20) is the wolf's name, which the girl uses in a diminutive form in order to make him experience the forgotten emotions and become kind. However, in this context, the use of the diminutive must have failed to produce the desired effect.

According to Schneider (Schneider 2003: 173) the words *moment, second, minute* etc. are internal diminutives, which can be used in directives. These lexemes denote a very short period of time and can be used in the indirect meaning as a diminished amount of time:

(21) *'Wait **a minute**.' The wolf was frowning. 'In this story of yours, does the wolf get to eat Red Riding Hood up, and her grandma?'* (Ahlberg, *Ten in a Bed* 2003: 53)

The diminutive *minute* in (21) is used to save face for the listener, who is required to keep waiting and present this amount of time as something not long, but rather brief.

The quantitative analysis in Table 2 presents the distribution of diminutive subtypes within directive speech acts of order where the vast majority of the cases are presented analytically, i.e. by means of 'little' (18 cases out of 28, or 64.3%).

Table 2: Diminutives in the directive speech act of order

Subtype of directive speech act	Subtype of diminutive	Number of occurrences
Order	'little' + noun	7
	'little' + diminutive noun	6
	'little' + proper noun	2
	diminutive noun derived via *-ie(y)*	4
	'poor' + 'little' + noun	1
	internal diminutive noun	2
	'little' + adjective + noun	2
	hypocoristics	4
	reduplication	0
	echo-word formation	0
Total		28

3.3.2 *Speech acts of demand*

Speech acts of demand on the whole, do not presuppose asymmetrical communication, i.e. the speaker and the listener occupy the same social position (Schneider 2003). While some sources include an assumption that demand and order are speech acts which are characterized by the asymmetry of communication, demand does not presuppose resorting to authority and allows refusal (Dressler & Merlini Barbaresi 1994: 229). In speech acts of demand the degree of illocutionary force is higher than that in recommendation, but lower than in speech acts of order and pleading. Demand on the scale of imposition is weaker than order but more intensive than request. By the scale of imposition we mean the degree of the speaker's interference in the listener's sphere, i.e. demand offers to the listener more options as to whether to perform an action or not than order, but fewer options than request:

(22) '*You just ought to be hearing* ***the little micies*** *talking!' He said. '****Little micies*** *is always talking to each other and I is hearing them as loud as my own voice.'*
(Dahl, *The BFG* 1982: 46)

With the help of the statement containing a grammatical structure of obligation (*ought to be*) in (22) the addresser realises the illocutionary force of demand because the speakers are close friends and the communication does not envision resorting to authority.

The results in Table 3 present the distribution of diminutive subtypes within the directive speech act of demand where the majority of the cases are presented by analytical diminutives (9 cases out of 16, or 56.2%).

Table 3: Diminutives in the directive speech act of demand

Subtype of directive speech act	Subtype of diminutive	Number of occurrences
Demand	'little' + noun	3
	'little' + diminutive noun	2
	'little' + proper noun	4
	diminutive noun derived via *-ie(y)*	3
	'poor' + 'little' + noun	0
	internal diminutive noun	1
	'little' + adjective + noun	0
	hypocoristics	3
	reduplication	0
	echo-word formation	0
Total		16

3.3.3 *Speech acts of request*

Speech acts of request are always realized when the speaker's position is inferior to that of the listener and consequently he is not entitled to order or demand. It is "an illocutionary act whereby a speaker (requester) conveys to a hearer (requestee) that he/she wants the requestee to perform an act which is for the benefit of the speaker" (Trosborg 1995: 187). Speech acts of request are based on a context, which indentifies the participants of the speech situation with a certain communicative intention. On the scale of imposition, request affects the

listener the least, enabling him/her to choose the mode of his/her behavior. Request is insured by a higher degree of politeness than order and demand (23):

(23) *'OK, OK, it's private, right. But couldn't I have one **little peep**?'*
(Wilson, *The Dare Game* 2001: 43)

Speech acts of request have been used for tagging high degrees of politeness. Among means of rendering politeness are the negative form of the sentence, modal verbs, etc. The diminutive demonstrates a low degree of the speaker's benefit in case the request is implemented.

The request is realized on condition when the speaker needs permission. In this case, the speaker's future actions can be predicted; however, they can be performed only on condition of the interlocutor's permission. Correspondingly, if the speaker is eager to get the permission, he/she will try to use as polite and unimposing form of request as possible.

Table 4 shows the distribution of diminutive subtypes within the directive speech act of request where 50% of all the cases are presented by analytical diminutives (6 cases out of 12).

Table 4: Diminutives in the directive speech act of request

Subtype of directive speech act	Subtype of diminutive	Number of occurrences
Request	'little' + noun	3
	'little' + diminutive noun	1
	'little' + proper noun	1
	diminutive noun derived via *-ie(y)*	2
	'poor' + 'little' + noun	0
	internal diminutive noun	1
	'little' + adjective + noun	1
	hypocoristics	2
	reduplication	0
	echo-word formation	1
Total		12

3.3.4 *Speech acts of pleading*

Speech acts of pleading and request are realized when the speaker's position is inferior to that of the listener. It is typical of pleading and order to reflect the highest degree of achieving the illocutionary force due to the intensiveness of the desire expressed. On the scale of imposition, pleading affects the listener less than order and demand, however more than request:

(24) *'**Daddy!**' The boy cried out, still caressing the old brown head.*
*'Please, do something, **Daddy!** Please make them let him go!'*
(Dahl, *The Wonderful Story of Henry Sugar and Six More* 2000: 13)

As is clear in (24), the addresser-child is pleading with the addressee-father to let the turtle go to the sea. In order to make the intensity of the request stronger, the child uses the diminutive form of *Daddy* in the vocative function, which makes the speech act of pleading more expressive and effective. The described situation is typical of realizing the strategy of positive politeness, when the speech act is grammatically expressed by the imperative mood without any mitigators, while the diminutive is used in the vocative, which is functioning as a supporting speech act.

As it can be seen from Table 5, which shows the distribution of diminutive subtypes to represent the directive speech act of pleading, the most numerous patterns of diminutives are also analytical ones (6 out of 9 cases, or 66.6%).

Table 5: Diminutives in the directive speech act of pleading

Subtype of directive speech act	Subtype of diminutive	Number of occurrences
Pleading	'little' + noun	2
	'little' + diminutive noun	2
	'little' + proper noun	0
	diminutive noun derived via *-ie(y)*	1
	'poor' + 'little' + noun	0
	internal diminutive noun	0
	'little' + adjective + noun	2
	hypocoristics	1
	reduplication	1
	echo-word formation	0
Total		9

The results of the quantitative analysis of diminutive occurrences in children's literature for realizing directive speech acts can be found in Table 6. The frequency of diminutive-related speech acts made it possible to define not only the total number of diminutive occurrences in the directive speech acts of order, demand, request and pleading but to also compare the frequency of their use. Indeed, quantitative analysis clearly suggests that the frequency of diminutive occurrences in child-related topics is much higher in speech acts of order and demand than, for example, in speech acts of pleading.

Table 6: Diminutive occurrences in the directive speech acts

The type of the directive speech act	The number of diminutive occurrences	The ratio, %
Order	28	43.1
Demand	16	24.6
Request	12	18.5
Pleading	9	13.8
Total	65	100

4. Conclusion

The findings of the research allow us to conclude that the attempt was made to study the realization of English diminutives in children's literature from the perspective of speech acts types and illocutionary force, wherein a child is set as a key participant in the communicative situation (addresser, addressee, referent or third party). It is notable that although there exist multiple studies on diminutives which are grounded on different empirical material (e.g. children's spontaneous language), none of them is based on English literature for children, which accounts for the novelty of the current research.

Firstly, in the case of the selected diminutives in children's literature, apart from marking 'smallness', they connote attitudes, emotions, value judgements, affection, etc. In this study, the pragmatic meanings of diminutives in child-directed speech situations are intensified by a reduplicative form (e.g. *Rosy-Posy*), an echo-word formation (e.g. *teeny-tiny*) or by analytical forms (e.g. *little filthy hands, little swannee-swan-swan*), thus showing not purely semantic representation of their positive or negative connotation.

Secondly, on pragmatic grounds, the diminutives in the directive speech acts in child-related contexts are used as the means of expressing positive politeness as positive attitude and creating a friendly atmosphere and, thirdly, as a means of negative politeness strategy by weakening the illocutionary force in terms of minimizing efforts. As seen from the current study, authors in children's literature resort to positive rather than negative politeness strategy. The analysis also shows a distinct tendency for using synthetic diminutives for expressing positive politeness and the use of analytical diminutives for expressing negative politeness in English children's literature. However, further research is needed to obtain estimates of the frequency of diminutives in child-related contexts to assess in which of the contexts diminutives express the strategies of positive or negative politeness.

Finally, as the data of the quantitative analysis of diminutive-based directive speech acts demonstrate in Table 6, diminutives in speech acts of order (43.1%) and demand (24.6%) have been most frequently used in children's literature, while diminutives in speech acts of pleading (13.8%) have been the least frequently used.

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