

## Diminutives in Phytonymic Lexis

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*Using different approaches, the author highlights functions of diminutives in medicinal plants' names. A diminutive is traditionally understood as a noun suffix expressing the degree of diminutiveness or a word form; in English 'diminutive' also means a derivative word containing a diminutive suffix. The results of the phytonymic lexis analysis show that diminutives are presented in various languages in a specific way. Some languages (French or German) have limited number of diminutives, whereas in Slavic languages, in which derivation is the most frequent word formation process, they are numerous. The use of structural-semantic and onomasiological analyses accompanied by a field approach, gives possibility to make complex research of medicinal plants' names in Romance, Germanic and Slavic languages. The author states the role of the diminutive in the structure of the onomasiological model, which includes basis, feature and predicate. Diminutives mainly serve as evaluative or emotive-expressive features denoting a medicinal plant of small size. Basic features of diminutives are smallness, the characteristic of the object, i.e., medicinal plant, and its subjective evaluation.*

**Keywords:** *diminutive, phytonymic lexis, medicinal plants' names, onomasiological model, evaluative morphology.*

### 1 Introduction

This article reflects the results of the analysis of diminutives in the medicinal plants' (MP's) names or phytonyms. Specifying the function of the diminutive in the onomasiological model (OM) (Dokulil 1962; Kybryakova 1978) it is possible to establish conceptual mechanisms for the formation of a particular plant's name and clarify the principles of its motivation.

As Kubryakova (2001: 13) points out, special units of designation created to name and fix certain structures of knowledge are modelled by suffixes. I am interested in how knowledge about the world, information about the appearance of the plant, its useful properties, effectiveness of application and much more are packed in derived words and other word-forming models.

Lexis containing diminutives forms mainly the layer of evaluative morphology, a linguistic notion that deals with the modification of words or phrases conveying an evaluative or expressive meaning. It focuses on how affixes, particles, or other linguistic elements are used to express evaluations, emotions, judgments, attitudes, or other subjective meanings within a language. Considerable contribution into evaluative morphology has been done by Körtvélyessy (2015) who has conducted contrastive research based on 200 languages.

In the phytonymic lexis the evaluative component is greatly pronounced. Subjective-evaluative meanings include the following: diminutive, affectionate, diminutive-affectionate, diminutive-derogatory, and magnifying (Sevostyanova 1972). Formations with suffixes of subjective assessment are characteristic of colloquial speech. This is evident in the separation of literary names from common names, including vernacular and dialect forms, which I do applying the field approach.

As Schneider writes, "diminutives are traditional category, and there is a long history of diminutive studies" (2015: 461). And it is really so. In this brief review, I present the most

interesting, in my opinion, works that form the theoretical background of the phytonymic lexis analysis. Diminutives have been considered as language universals (Rusínová 2001); their stylistic function has been discussed together with their semantic characteristics (Sevastyanova 1972) and communicative-pragmatic aspect of diminutiveness (Zvonareva 2013). The studies have been conducted on different language material: German (Schneider 2015; Travushkina 1967); English (Schneider 2003); Russian (Bratus 1969); Czech (Fenclová 1985; Káňa 2013); Slovak (Böhmerová 2011); Baltic languages (Ambrazas 1993); Romance languages, Slavonic languages, and Greek (Grandi 2011).

The analysis of the discussed studies reveals different understanding of the notion of diminutive. Some scholars name it as a specific morphological indicator of diminutiveness or a word form constructed by the index of this type (Böhmerová 2011; Sevostyanova 1972; Travushkina 1967). Wide understanding of this notion brings us to the complex semantic category that combines particular values expressed by using various language means, detailed analysis of which is presented below.

The studies reviewed above are based on various vocabulary groups. I intend to concentrate my attention only on one lexico-semantic group (LSG) – MPs' names.

## 2 Theoretical background of research

Groups of words that have semantic similarities and different ways of expressing the same language concept, i.e. LSGs, constantly attract the attention of scholars all over the world: acronyms and non-acronyms designating transport brands (Borys & Materynska 2020); onomastic terminology (Gałkowski 2022a); theologisms and biblicisms (Panassenko 2014); English 'clothes' vocabulary (Žyško & Žyško 2022); vocabulary of wedding (Panassenko et al. 2018); urban toponyms (Rutkowski 2019); compounds denoting 'airline passengers' (Kopecka & Mamet 2022); marketing terminology (Radchenko 2019); military terms (Panassenko et al. 2017). Some LSGs have been considered from a linguo-cultural point of view (Gałkowski 2022b; Panassenko 2008). Other studies are based on contrastive analysis of languages with different structures: English, Polish, and Chinese (Uberman & Uberman 2021).

MPs' names have repeatedly come to the attention of linguists. Scholars considered them as botanical terms (Bojo & Lančarič 2021) taking into account motivational features that were revealed in the process of their designation; the evaluation component; cognitive aspects of their designation (Khoshimkhujeva 2017; Panassenko 2021a), principles of metaphoric designation (Stec 2016) and many other aspects. I conducted structural-semantic and onomasiological analyses of phytonyms in Romance, Germanic, and Slavic languages focusing on diminutives.

Structural-semantic analysis was very popular in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and laid the foundations for a more complicated onomasiological analysis. Later scholars made an attempt to combine world-formation and onomasiological analyses (Grzega 2005; Kalafus Antoniová 2020; Kos & Kozubíková Šandová 2020; Štekauer 1998) and cognitive analysis (Kubryakova 1994).

If we consider phytonymic lexis from the point of view of its world-formation, we will see that it comprises words of different structure: simple, derivative, compound, complex-compound words, multi-word units and phrases. At first, mainly derivative and compound words were considered from onomasiological point of view (Kubryakova 2001); later other

structural models were added (complex-compound words and multi-word units (Panasenko 2021a).

In the OM, which is in detail considered below, suffix can be a formal basis or a feature. Having connotational meaning, diminutives form a group of evaluative and emotive-expressive onomasiological features. As the analysis of literature in evaluative morphology shows, the attention of linguists is especially focused on the expression of emotionality by means of word formation. Evaluation, emotionality and expressiveness in phytonymic lexis are created by morphological, lexical, syntactic, and other linguistic means.

### 3 Aim, language material, and methods

The aim of my research is to specify the role of diminutives in phytonymic lexis, namely to characterize them as evaluative, emotive-expressive features combined with other onomasiological features, like features of alienate/inalienate possession, appearance (size), etc.

MP's names were selected from special dictionaries and reference books. As far as their corpus is very large and comprises many languages a special programme "Flora" has been written, which greatly helped sort phytonyms in different categories. MPs' names were selected from special dictionaries and reference books. As their corpus is very large and comprises many languages, a special programme "Flora" was written to categorize phytonyms. Recently, additional programmes considerably facilitate the processing of large datasets (see, e.g., Kubovics & Zaušková 2021 or Kubovics et al. 2021). The total number of examples in nine analyzed languages comprises around 10,000 entries. Examples containing diminutives have been selected from this corpus, sorted and thoroughly analysed. All the examples in the text are presented in the following way: language, name under analysis in italics, the explanation or translation of the example, MP's literary name in English and its botanical name in Latin, e.g., German *Pfaffenhütchen* /priest's small hats/ – European spindle-tree (*Euonymus europea* L.); Russian *Псунка* /doggie/ – Bittersweet nightshade (*Solanum dulcamara* L.); Slovak *Smotánka* /souer cream + suff./ – Dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale* Wigg.). As far as in some languages a plant's name is written in capital letters, in others – in small, following the strict rules of the botanical term structure, which is always double, with the first element denoting the generic name in a capital letter and a specific synonym coming after it in a small letter, I write in all considered languages the first element of the plant's name in a capital letter.

The research had several stages. Using the field approach all the selected phytonyms were classified in a specific way, i.e., they were sorted into three large groups: literary, common, and scientific names with further subdivision. Structural-semantic analysis followed by the onomasiological and cognitive analyses were applied only to literary and common names. For this research from the total corpus of examples only examples containing diminutive suffixes have been chosen. While analyzing their role in phytonymic lexis, the author combines structural-semantic and onomasiological analyses. Where it was necessary to make proper interpretation of the motivational onomasiological features, contextual and cognitive analyses were applied. Let us consider these stages in detail.

#### 3.1 *Field approach*

Sorting such a vast corpus of phytonyms into categories by the programme "Flora" displayed the necessity to use field approach. Functional-semantic fields, also known as semantic fields

or semantic domains, are used in linguistics to categorize and organize words, lexemes, or concepts based on their meaning or function within a language. These fields help linguists and language researchers study the relationships and associations between words and how they are used in different contexts (Schur 1974). The work of Schur is based on the universal hypothesis about the inclusion of any element into a certain group and the presence of a system of such groups. This inclusion allows you to more consistently learn the connections and relationships between elements and concepts, analyze the opposition and understand their ontological essence.

The field has linguistic and extralinguistic differential features of its elements. A functional principle lies at the heart of extralinguistic grouping. In 1974, Bondarko introduced the notion of functional-semantic fields, which appeared to be very useful for understanding lexical and semantic relationships within a language or, as in my case, a group of Romance, Germanic, and Slavic languages. He also introduced the terms “close and distant periphery” of the functional-semantic field (Бондарко 1983).

Taking into account the field approach, I divide all the lexis under consideration into several groups: literary names, scientific (botanical and pharmacognosic), common (colloquial and dialect forms) (see Figure 1).

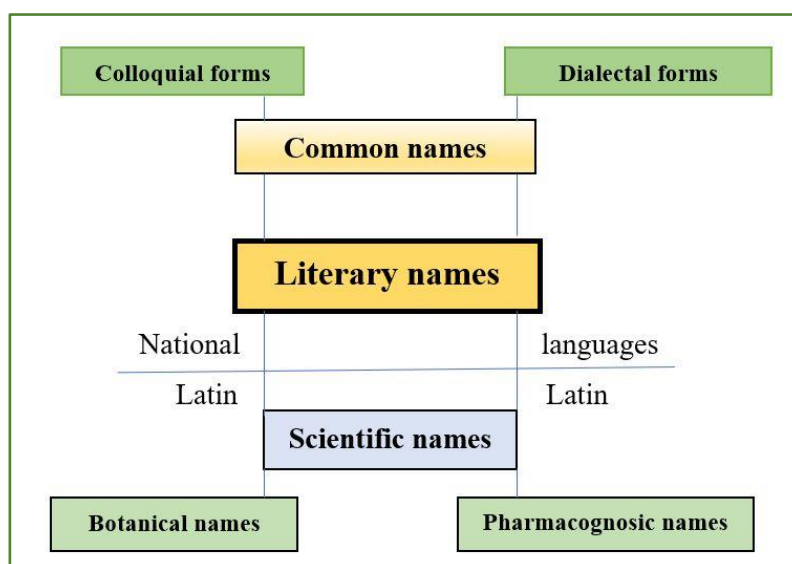


Figure 1: Field approach to the phytonymic lexis. Source: own processing

As it comes from Figure 1, literary names of the MP constitute the centre of the field. Common names and scientific names constitute close periphery, whereas colloquial and dialectal names together with botanical and pharmacognosic names form distant periphery. Such a classification has some reasons. Literary names form the basic vocabulary in national languages and are familiar to many people. Scientific names are known only to a narrow circle of specialists.

My analysis shows that MPs’ names belonging to the folk (common) layer of vocabulary, which characterizes spoken language, colloquial forms, dialectal and obsolete words, are marked by significant expressiveness. While reading this article some people may think that some words have wrong spelling. It mainly concerns Czech and Slovak, Russian and

Ukrainian phytonyms. Firstly, the borders of the countries were changing and the examples in one language shifted to another. We must also bear in mind that around state borders we may come across so called “parallel lexicon”: words with identical meaning with slight or strong difference in spelling. Several examples in the text are accompanied by the note dial. – dialectal.

Words containing emotive-expressive or evaluative features serve to denote the subjective attitude of the speaker (author of the plant’s name) to the herb, its physical and therapeutic properties, appearance, etc. Let us illustrate this classification with some examples.

German lit. *Frühlings Adonisröschen* /spring adonis roses + dim./, common *Bergadonisröslein* /mountain adonis roses + dim./, English lit. Spring adonis, bot. Latin *Adonis vernalis* L., pharmacognosic Latin *Herba Adonidis vernalis*.

Russian dial. *Улыбушка* /smile + dim./ (dialect of Mid Urals), lit. Wild pansy, bot. *Viola tricolor* L., pharmacognosic *Herba Violae tricoloris*.

Though the center of this functional-semantic field is formed by literary names of the plants, registered in dictionaries and reference books and known to many people, the most interesting examples can be found in the group of common names, which also includes dialectal and colloquial forms. To the greater degree it concerns diminutives, which are the object-matter of my research.

### 3.2 Structural-semantic analysis

Structural-semantic analysis, also known as structural semantics or structuralist semantics, is a linguistic and semiotic approach to the study of language and meaning. It combines elements of structural linguistics and semantics to analyze how the structure of language influences the meaning of words, phrases, and sentences. As I have mentioned above, this analysis was very popular in linguistics during the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. Structural-semantic analysis often involves the examination of semantic fields, which are groups of words or concepts that are related to each other in meaning. Analyzing these fields helps uncover the network of associations and connections between words and their meanings. This analysis was applied to the LSG “Medicinal plants” because it also recognizes the importance of context in decoding MP’s name and properly understanding hidden in it information.

As it comes from the results of structural-semantic analysis, this LSG includes simple words, derivatives, compounds, complex-compound words, multi-word units and phrases. Some examples: **simple words** – German *Erika* – Heather (*Calluna vulgaris* (L.) Hill.), English *Brier* – Dog rose (*Rosa canina* L.); **derivatives** – Ukrainian *Царючка* /queen + suff./ – Deadly nightshade (*Atropa belladonna* L.), Slovak *Jazyček* /tongue + dim./ – Common yarrow (*Achillea millefolium* L.); **compound words** – Polish *Gorzykwiat* /bitter flower/ – Spring adonis (*Adonis vernalis* L.), **complex-compound words** – German *Denkblümchen* /small flowers of memory/ – Wild pansy (*Viola tricolor* L.), Russian *Носочистка* /smth. that cleanses the nose/ – Common yarrow (*Achillea millefolium* L.); **multi-word units** – Czech *Benediktův kořen* /Benedict’s root/ – Wood aven (*Geum urbanum* L.), Slovak *Tatárska tráva* /Tatar grass/ – Sweet flag (*Acorus calamus* L.) and **phrases** – French *Tue chien* /kill a dog/ – Autumn crocus (*Colchicum autumnale* L.), English *Kiss behind the garden gate* – Wild pansy (*Viola tricolor* L.).

To understand some examples, contextual analysis should be applied. Mentioned above Slovak phytonym *Tatárska tráva* /Tatar grass/ appeared after the Tatar invasion. The armies of the Mongol conqueror Genghis Khan in the 13<sup>th</sup> century invaded the lands of the Kievan Rus,

Hungary, Poland, etc. The invaders were called by the Europeans Tatars. For the disinfection of water Tatars threw into it cut roots of Sweet flag, which later spread out and occupied considerable water territories. It explains why in many languages (Russian, Ukrainian, Byelorussian, Polish, Hungarian, Czech, Slovak and some others) this MP has the element 'Tatar' in its names with corresponding word-forming models: derivative words (Tatar + suff.) – Russian *Татаринник*, *Татарник*; Ukrainian *Татарка* (a female Tatar); Polish *Tatarak*, *Tatarczack*; Czech *Tatarák*; multi-word units (Tatar + potion, root) – Russian *Татарское зелье*; Ukrainian *Татарове зілля* + two more local variants; Polish *Tatarskie korzén*, *Tatarskie ziele*; Russian *Татарский сабельник* (sabre + suff.).

Phrases need thorough contextual analysis. Some reflect peculiarities of the plant's structure, like Russian *Шапочка*, *дунуть – плешка* /a cap + dim., to blow off – a patch + suff. of bald/ – Dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale* Wigg.); English *Kiss behind the garden gate* – Wild pansy and many other phrases have cultural-historic context. To extract encoded in them information properly, it is necessary to find the answer in special references books.

Not all the revealed designation models, but only derivatives and compounds, complex-compound words, and multi-word complexes were subjected to onomasiological analysis.

### 3.3 Onomasiological analysis

The word formation act completes the designation process. It summarizes everything that previously happened in consciousness: the qualification of a phenomenon as an object, action, quality allows you to refer to a group of word-forming models of a certain part of speech. The nominative possibilities of the language lead to the emergence of various variants of the names of the same MP.

Analysis of the phytonyms' onomasiological structure makes it possible to specify nominative possibilities of derivatives and complex-compound words, multi-word units, as well as to establish semantic and onomasiological features of these nominative units. The use of onomasiological analysis of phytonyms helps identify how certain concepts presented in the semantics of these linguistic units are combined and thereby comprehensively characterize this LSG.

My study of phytonyms is based on the binary OM offered by Dokulil (1962), which was further developed by Kubryakova (1994; 2001) who offered the ternary model of derivative and compound words, according to which this model includes an onomasiological basis (OB), an onomasiological feature (OF) and a predicate-connector or an atomic predicate, which are hereinafter referred to simply as a basis, feature and predicate. Predicates are not considered in this article.

The surface structure of derivatives, compound words and multi-word units is two-component, with a right- and left-sided basis. The structure of the OM is associated with typical methods of word formation in a particular language. In Germanic and Slavic languages right-sided bases prevail, e.g.: OF + OB English *Marshwort* – Cranberry (*Oxycoccus palustris* Pers.), Russian *Желтуха* /yellow + suff./ – Dyer's greenweed (*Genista tinctoria* L.). Left-sided bases prevail in literary names, as well as in French and Polish common names: OB + OF – French *Canne aromatique* – Sweet flag (*Acorus calamus* L.), Polish *Rozmarin czeski* /Czech rosemary/ – Marsh Labrador tea (*Ledum palustre* L.). In multi-word units and complex-compound words the surface structure may be two- or three-component, in which two features are attributed to the basis. This is the structure that can be considered typical of many languages, e.g., OF + OB Slovak *Biely sliez* /white + the plant's name/ – Common marshmallow (*Althaea officinalis* L.);

OF + OF + OB Russian *Красномолочник* /red + milk + suffix/ – Greater celandine (*Chelidonium majus* L.), interpretation: something, presented by a formal basis (-ник), in our case a MP, has milky sap (OF of evaluation, namely plant's physical properties), which has red colour (feature of appearance).

The deep analysis of OM involves the recognition of hidden components of the model (i.e., not represented in their surface structure) and more detailed descriptions of each of the onomasiological components in ternary models. Let us consider the English example *Adam's flannel* – Common mullein (*Verbascum thapsus* L.). Its surface OM includes OF + OB (the basis is fabric + feature of alienate possession). According to the Bible, Adam, the first man on the Earth, did not wear any dress, thus flannel refers to his skin (a case of metaphoric designation). This plant is used to treat skin diseases; therefore, the plant is effective, and when used, a person will have clean and velvety skin, like Adam had. Deep structure of the OM includes such hidden features as **evaluative features** (*a plant's physical properties*, i.e., leaf surface texture – flannel), **functional purpose** (treatment of a human), **object of exposure** – skin, and **high treatment effectiveness**.

The onomasiological analysis of phytonyms vividly demonstrates the presence of a basis zone and a feature zone, which can be characterized both in their structure and in their content. Since I am more interested in the feature zone, I describe the semantic nature of the features, which includes features of appearance, temporal features, locatives indicating the place where plants grow or spread, evaluative, features of alienate/inalienate possession, emotive-expressive, and some others. Diminutives bringing additional meaning to the name of a phytonym can be found mainly in the group of the last three features.

## 4 Results

Let us discuss how diminutives are represented in each of the languages I consider (French, German, Russian, Ukrainian, Polish, Czech, and Slovak). As far as there are few examples with diminutives in the English lexis, this language is excluded from this study. Comparing the number of examples with diminutives in my corpus, it is obvious that numerous examples are found in Slavic languages. Each language has a set of diminutives, which I discuss below.

**French.** In French, the number of diminutive suffixes is limited as compared to Slavic languages. In my language material, this is suffix *-ette* (f.) and *-et* (m.). Steinberg (1976: 96-97) notes that diminutive suffixes, including *-ette*, have two different functions: the diminutive proper, often combined with the expression of the emotive-evaluative characteristic, which the author calls formative, and the word-forming, when derivatives denote a different object than the one indicated by the original word: *maison* – *maisonette* /house – small house/. In the example *banc* – *banquette* diminutive changes the meaning of the word, because *banquette* differs from *bench* not only in size.

French examples are not numerous and contain features of positive evaluation combined with the features of appearance, i.e., the identification of the herb's size:

**word-forming model** – derivative, **OM** – basis + feature: artefact + dim.: *Madriettes* /bars + dim./ – Monkshood (*Aconitum napellus* L.), *Molette* /wheel + dim./, *Malette* /a travelling bag + dim./, *Boursette* /purse + dim./, *Moufette* /borrowing from German Muffe, i.e. muff + dim./ – Common shepherd's purse (*Capsella bursa pastoris* (L.) Medik.); *Coussinet* /cushion + dim./ – Cranberry (*Oxycoccus palustris* Pers.). All these examples are metaphors. The metaphorical shift is based on the similarity of features of appearance (shape of leaves,

seeds, flower, etc.) with artefacts: bar, purse, bag, etc. Such a feature of the MP's appearance as form is revealed in these examples. Connotational meaning of the diminutives – something small, nice, and pleasant.

The **OM** of two examples below is different. In the first one it is basis (an animal) + feature: *Porcelet* /piglet/ – Black henbane (*Hyoscyamus niger* L.); the connotational meaning of the diminutive – merging of the notions of small and young. The **OM** in the second example is feature + basis: *Surette* /French *sur, e* – sour + dim./; it is an interesting case, in which there is a formal basis presented by a suffix and that suffix is a diminutive, which has its own connotational meaning. In my corpus of language material, I have come across some cases when there is a shift of a basis into the feature zone and vice versa. The interpretation of this MP's name is as follows: smth., i.e., a plant (a formal basis represented by a suffix) is sour (a feature of physical properties); it is also nice (evaluative feature) and small (feature of plant's appearance – size). This example vividly illustrates how each phytonym was processed and properly interpreted.

Common name of Black elderberry *Seuillet* /threshold + dim./ is a case of metonymy; it denotes the place where this shrub is best planted; **word-forming model** – derivative, **OM** – basis + feature.

Another group of French examples has the following attributes: **designation type** – multi-word unit, **OM** – basis + feature (dim.) + feature: *Bassinnet blanc* /white pannikin/ – European wood anemone (*Anemone nemorosa* L.); the basis is artefact (kitchen utensil), to which features of appearance (small size, form, and colour) are attributed. As Schneider claims, “diminutives express smallness” (2015: 462). There are many good examples illustrating this thesis in my corpus and it is one of them.

**Designation type** – multi-word unit, **OM** – basis + feature (dim.) + feature: *Clochette des champs* /field bell + dim., small bell/ – Corn bindweed (*Convolvulus arvensis* L.); the basis is an artefact, to which features of appearance (small size and definite form) are attributed accompanied by the feature of location.

**Designation type** – multi-word unit, **OM** – feature + basis + feature (dim.): *Petit liset* /small lily/ – Corn bindweed (*Convolvulus arvensis* L.); the basis is a plant, to which the features of appearance (size) and form (lily) are attributed. In this phytonym smallness is enhanced by an adjective *petit* /small/ and by the diminutive, which has the connotative meaning of admiration.

From the examples presented above we see that most frequent are OMs containing derivatives. Stepanova made a significant contribution to the development of the theory of word formation. She points out that suffixation is a very ancient and at the same time productive way of word formation in modern German. A suffix not only creates a new word, but also formalizes the corresponding part of speech, in some cases accurately determining the nature of it before changes (1953: 74).

**German.** Typical German diminutives are *-chen* and *-lein*. Variants of these suffixes in colloquial speech of the southern dialect of the German language are suffixes *-(e)li*, *-(e)le*, *-li*, *-le*, *-el*, *-erl*; in northern and western and central German dialects, diminutive suffixes are the following: *-kin*, *-ke(e)n*, *-ike(n)*, *-kes*, *-ske(n)*, *-sche(n)*, *-tje(n)*, *tsje(n)* (Sevastyanova 1972).

In German phytonymic lexis prevail examples with diminutives located in complex-compound words and multi-word units: **word-forming model** – complex-compound word, **OM** – feature + basis + feature (dim.): *Judenhütlein* /Jew's small hats/ – Yellow balsam (*Impatiens noli-tangere* L.); feature of alienate possession + basis ‘artefact’ + size; connotational meaning of the diminutive – jocular, smallness; **OM** – feature + basis + feature



(dim.): *Feldmütterchen* /forest stepmother + dim./ – Wild pansy (*Viola tricolor* L.): locative + person + dim.; connotational meaning of the diminutive – comic, jocular; **OM** – feature + feature + basis + feature (dim.): *Buschwindröschen* /bush + wind + roses + dim./ – European wood anemone (*Anemone nemorosa* L.); interpretation of this phytonym: a small plant (feature of appearance, namely size) that looks like a bush (feature of appearance), has flowers that look like a rose (feature of appearance, namely the resemblance with the known plant), which starts blossoming when warm winds blow (temporal feature); connotational meaning of the diminutive – smallness, sympathy, admiration;

**designation type** – multi-word unit, **OM** – feature + feature + basis + feature (dim.): *Weißes Waldhänchen* /white forest cockerel/ – European wood anemone (*Anemone nemorosa* L.): colour + locative + animal + dim; connotational meaning of the diminutive – merging of the notions of small and young; *Blaues Eisenhütchen*, *Blaues Eisenhütlein* /blue small iron hats + dim./ – Monkshood (*Aconitum napellus* L.). In these two examples we see that the diminutiveness is created by different suffixes that have identical meaning. The basis in this phytonym is artefact (hat), to which features of appearance, namely colour and physical properties, i.e., hard to tear, and one more feature of appearance (size) are attributed. The connotational meaning of the diminutive is smallness; we can't claim that it includes sympathy, because it is a very poisonous plant.

Another interesting example, which demands detailed interpretation is *Gewöhnliches Apostelröhrlein* /common apostle's pipe + dim./ – Dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale* Wigg.). Its **designation type** is multi-word unit, **OM** – feature + feature + basis + feature (dim.). The basis is artefact or nature fact (pipe), to which the feature of evaluation (common) together with the feature of alienate possession are attributed. The use of the biblicism "apostle" has positive connotation and leads us to the Gospel (see Panasenکو 2014). It is again the case of shifting the basis to the feature zone, because the basis "pipe" (artefact) also has the metaphorical meaning of the peculiarities of the MP's structure (features of appearance), which has hollow stem. The diminutive suffix *-lein* has the meaning of smallness.

**Russian.** Positive evaluation in Russian can be expressed with the help of numerous suffixes: *-ок, -к, -ич, -ек, -иц(а), -це, -чик, -чк(а)*, etc. From the point of view of onomasiology, these and other suffixes are onomasiological features attributed to the basis, which in this LSG we can denote as a person, artefact, creature (animal, bird, insect, mythic creature), and plant. Most interesting examples are given below:

**word-forming model** – derivative, **OM** – basis + feature: person + dim.: *Попёнок* /Orthodox priest + dim./ – Corn bindweed (*Convolvulus arvensis* L.); *Акулинка* /obsolete female name + suf./ – Mullein dock (*Verbascum thapsus* L.); connotational meaning of the suffixes in both examples – ironic, jocular; artefact + dim.: *Суконьшико* /cloth + dim./ – Mullein dock; connotational meaning of the diminutive – smth. nice and pleasant (to touch); animal + dim.: *Зайчик* /hare + dim./ – Saint John's wort (*Hypericum perforatum* L.); connotational meaning of the diminutive – merging of the notions of small and young; plant + dim.: *Гречушка* /buckwheat + dim./ – Common yarrow (*Achillea millefolium* L.); facial expression + dim.: *Улыбушка* /smile + dim./ – Wild pansy (*Viola tricolor* L.); connotational meaning of the diminutive in the last two examples – nice and dear, admiration.

Analysis of the group of phytonyms from a cognitive point of view shows that information procession channels are reflected in their names (for details see Panasenko 2021a: 589-590 and 2021b).<sup>1</sup> It can be illustrated by the following examples:

**word-forming model** – derivative, **OM** – feature + formal basis: adjective of taste + dim.: *Горчинка, Горчишка* /bitter + dim./ – Water-pepper (*Polygonum hydropiper* L.); *Кисличка, Кислушка* /sour + dim./ – Wood sorrel (*Oxalis acetosella* L.); *Вонюшка* /stinking + dim./ – Spring adonis (*Adonis vernalis* L.). In these examples we have features of physical properties (taste, smell) attributed to the formal basis presented by the diminutive, which adds to these phytonyms the meaning of something nice and pleasant, notwithstanding unpleasant smell.

In multi-word units, the adjective very often means belonging to someone/something, i.e., alienate/inalienate possession. Diminutive suffixes serve to indicate a small size of the object, which can be combined with a metaphorical designation of the shape of leaves, inflorescences, seed boxes, etc.:

**designation type** – multi-word unit, **OM** – feature + basis + feature (suf.): *Боговы грабельки* /God's rake + dim./ – Meadow cranesbill (*Geranium pratense* R. Knuth); feature of alienate possession + basis (artefact) + feature of small size (dim.). Biblicism 'God' adds a feature of positive evaluation and accentuates that this MP is not poisonous (see Panasenko 2014: 173); *Волчьи ушки* /wolf's ears + dim./, *Верблюжьи ушки* /camel's ears + dim./: feature of inalienate possession + basis (part of body) + feature of small size (dim.); connotational meaning of the diminutive in these examples – sympathy and smallness.

**Ukrainian.** Like any other language, Ukrainian has specific features of the functioning of diminutives in phytonymic lexis. Attention is drawn to the lexical basis denoting a known plant, which, in combination with diminutive suffix, serves to denote another MP: **word-forming model** – derivative, **OM** – basis + feature (dim.): *Береза* /birch/ vs. *Берізка* – Corn bindweed (*Convolvulus arvensis* L.); *Гречка* /buckwheat/ vs. *Гречечка* – Common shepherd's purse (*Capsella bursa pastoris* (L.) Medik.); *Пижмо* /tansy/ vs. *Пижмочка* – Common yarrow (*Achillea millefolium* L.); connotational meaning of the diminutive – sympathy, positive attitude to the MP.

Another large group of examples includes the following diminutives: *-чик, -ик* and *-ушк(а)*; **word-forming model** – derivative, **OM** – basis + feature (dim.): *Барончик* /baron + dim./, *Солдатики* /soldiers + dim./ – Dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale* Wigg.); *Товстушка* /a plump female + dim./ – Three-lobed beggarticks (*Bidens tripartita* L.); diminutives as emotive-expressive suffixes attributed to the basis 'person' in these examples have ironic, comic, or jocular meaning.

Multi-word units containing diminutives demand thorough analysis and interpretation: **designation type** – multi-word unit, **OM** – feature + feature + basis + feature (suf.): *Жовті котячі лапки* /yellow cat's paws + suf./ – Dwarf everlasting (*Helichrysum arenarium* (L.) Moench.): feature of colour in combination with feature of inalienate possession are attributed to the basis 'part of animal's body'; dim. suffix *-к* accentuates small size; the choice of the animal (a cat) testifies to the fact that the plant is not poisonous. In some cases, we can see the

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<sup>1</sup> Information procession channels is the basic notion of cognitive linguistics, which studies how a human being receives information via them, processes it, makes the information processing (metaphor and metonymy) and sends it further by communicative channels. There are five information procession channels: vision, touch, smell, taste, and hearing and in the LSG "Medicinal plants" they are presented in a different way.

shifting of the basis into the feature zone, like here. Cat's paw also indicates the form of the flower (feature of appearance). Diminutive suffix *-κ* has the meaning of sympathy.

**Polish.** As Wierzbicka claims, expressive Polish word formation in many aspects (richness and diversity) resembles Russian (1997: 158). From the etymological point of view, expressive suffixes are very similar to Russian, but they also have a number of differences. Let us discuss Polish examples of diminutives in phytonyms:

**word-forming model** – derivative, **OM** – basis + feature (dim.): *Bratek* /brother + dim./, *Wdowki* /widows + dim./, *Sierotki* /orphans + dim./, *Macoszka* /stepmother + dim./, *Żeniszek* /bridegroom + dim./ – Wild pansy (*Viola tricolor* L.); connotational meaning of the diminutive in these examples is nice and dear; emotive-expressive feature is attributed to the basis 'person'. In *Żeniszek* the diminutive has ironic and comical meaning;

**word-forming model** – derivative, **OM** – basis + feature (dim.), basis is artefact: *Kocyzczko* /basket + dim./ – Common vervain (*Verbena officinalis* L.); connotational meaning of the diminutive – sympathy and smallness; basis is 'an animal': *Świnki* /pigs + dim./ – Spiny cocklebur (*Xanthium spinosum* L.); connotational meaning of the diminutive – merging of the notions of small and young;

**word-forming model** – complex-compound word, **OM** – feature + basis + feature (dim.): *Złymniszek* /angry monk + dim./ – Monkshood (*Aconitum napellus* L.). This phytonym has the following interpretation. The basis in the OM is 'a person'; diminutive suffix makes the name sound ironical. The form of the flower looks like the dress of a catholic monk and is of small size (features of appearance); evaluative feature "angry" reminds us that it is an extremely poisonous plant.

**Czech.** In Czech, like in other Slavic languages there is a set of diminutives: *-ičk(a)*, *-ček*, *-k*, *-ec*, *-ešk(a)*, *-ek*, which are attributed to different onomasiological bases. Detailed analysis of Czech diminutives was made by Fenclová (1985). My analysis shows that the most frequent suffixes are *-ček* for the nouns of masculine gender and *-k*, *-ešk(a)* for the nouns of feminine gender. It should be noted that in Czech, all the examples with the diminutives I have considered express only a positive assessment. In fact, either in Czech or Slovak a diminutive can be added to any word; some examples are not only original but "sudden" (Arutyunova (1990: 17, 20) calls such cases "a metaphorical surprise"), which is proved by the following examples:

**word-forming model** – derivative, **OM** – basis + feature (dim.): *Pleška* /bald spot + dim./; the basis is part of the human body; this phytonym reflects the peculiarities of the plant's structure and indicates inflorescence of the Dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale* Wigg.) with shed petals; connotational meaning of the diminutive – sympathy; *Radostka* /joy + dim./ – Dwarf everlasting (*Helichrysum arenarium* (L.)); in this example the OB is feeling; connotational meaning of the diminutive – appraisal and admiration; (dial.) *Joseňka* and in multi-word units *Jesienka obyčejná* /common autumn + dim., contorted dial. from Slovak *jeseň*; the basis 'season of the year' is the metonymic form of the MP's designation after its flowering time; *Smetanka* /sour cream + dim./ – Dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale* Wigg.); the basis 'foodstuff' reflects physical properties of the Dandelion, which contains milky sap; connotational meaning of the diminutives in the last two examples – sympathy and admiration;

**designation type** – multi-word unit, **OM** – feature + basis + feature (suf.): dial. *Swini veška* /pig's louse + dim./ – Hemlock (*Conium maculatum* L.); the basis is (in)alienate from the animal possession indicating appearance of the MP covered with dark specks; connotational meaning of the diminutive – ironic, jocular; *Husí jazýček* /goose's tongue + dim./, *Husí ocásek* /goose's tail + dim./, *Myší ocásek* /mouse's tail + dim./ – Common yarrow (*Achillea*

millefolium L.); in these examples the basis is inalienate from the animal possession; it indicates the form of the plant's young sprout; connotational meaning of the diminutive – sympathy and admiration.

**Slovak.** Diminutives in Slovak have a number of prominent features (see (Furdík & Ološtiak 2004). If in Ukrainian phytonyms a known plant with the help of a diminutive suffix is shifted to another class, then in Slovak examples we deal with the same plant, however, these suffixes convey the meaning of sympathy:

**word-forming model** – derivative, **OM** – basis + feature (dim.): *Repíč* → *Repíček* – Common agrimony (*Agrimonia eupatoria* L.); *Polín* → *Polínek*, *Políněk*, *Polynka*, *Polyňky*, *Polynok*, *Polyňok* – Southernwood (*Artemisia abrotanum* L.); *Pol'ná ruta* → *Rutka*, *Rutička* – Fumewort (*Fumaria officinalis* L.);

**word-forming model** – derivative, **OM** – basis + feature (dim.): *Nechtík* /nail + dim./ – Pot marigold (*Calendula officinalis* L.); the basis is part of human body, connotational meaning of the diminutive – sympathy. The basis denotes the form of the petals, whereas the diminutive indicates its size; *Starček* /old man + dim./ – Common agrimony (*Agrimonia eupatoria* L.); the basis is a human being of definite age; connotational meaning of the diminutive – sympathy and caress, as traditional attitude to old age in Slovakia and many other countries.

I have combined unusual bases into one group and named it “other”. Many interesting examples can be found in Slovak phytomymic lexis: **word-forming model** – derivative, **OM** – basis + feature (dim.): *Rosička* /dew + dim./, *Suknička* /skirt + dim./ – Lady's mantle (*Alchemilla vulgaris* L.); *Sobotka* /Saturday + dim./ – Oregano (*Origanum vulgare* L.); *Perliček*, *Perlička* /pearl + dim./ – Lily-of-the-valley (*Convallaria majalis* L.). Though bases in these OMs are different (nature phenomenon, day of the week, type of dress and carbonate mineral), connotational meaning of the diminutive is identical: cordiality, warmth, and admiration. Another unusual group of bases combines different pastry: *Pagáčki* (pagáč – type of cookies of round shape from the puff salty pastry + dim./; *Syrčeky* /cookies made from cheese + dim./, *Tvarožky* /cookies made from cottage cheese + dim./ – Common mallow (*Malva silvestris* L.). Though MP's seeds look like cookies very popular in Slovak cuisine, they are not edible, thus diminutives have ironic and jocular connotational meaning.

In Slovak phytonyms, it is possible to identify a large group of different OMs: **designation type** – multi-word unit, **OM** – feature + basis + feature (suf.): *Psi jazíček* /dog's tongue + dim./ – Ribwort plantain (*Plantago lanceolata* L.); *Husí nôžka* /goose's foot + dim./ – Lady's mantle (*Alchemilla vulgaris* L.); the basis in these **OMs** is ‘part of the animal's body’ combined with the feature of inalienate possession, which indicates the specific form of the MP's parts; diminutives have the connotational meaning of sympathy; *Pánbožkove chlebičky* /God's breads + dim./ – Common mallow (*Malva silvestris* L.); in this example feature of alienate possession is attributed to the basis ‘foodstuff’. As I have already mentioned, this plant is not edible but not poisonous. During hard times, war periods, famine, etc. people boiled green seed of this MP and consumed it. Diminutive is not only in the basis (*chlebičky*), but in the feature as well (*Pánbožkove*) adding the feature of positive evaluation. Great gratitude to God who saved many people from hunger is hidden in this phytonym; diminutive has the connotational meaning of sympathy and appraisal.

Coltsfoot (*Tussilago farfara* L.) has unusual leaves: one side is smooth and velvet, another side is rough, which is reflected in Russian phytonym *Мать-и-мачеха* (Mother-and-stepmother). In Slovak, these plant's properties are reflected in the name *Matkino líčko* /mother's face + dim./. Feature of inalienate possession is attributed to the basis ‘part of human

body’; we may also single out the feature of physical properties (smooth and velvet surface) connected with such an information procession channel, as touch; diminutive has the connotational meaning of sympathy.

As I mentioned above citing Schneider “diminutives express smallness” (2015: 462). Smallness is their primary meaning. Like many other words (*home, cloakroom, cheap*, etc.) diminutives may also have connotational meaning, which is beyond their explicit or literal definition, i.e., smallness. Connotations are often associated with emotions, which can be positive and negative, cultural nuances, or personal interpretations, and they can influence how people perceive and respond to language. Connotations can vary across different cultures, contexts, making them an important aspect of effective interpretation. The analysis of MPs’ names demands deep penetration into history and culture of the countries where the languages under consideration are spoken; good knowledge of the MP’s appearance and its medical or useful properties, local traditions and legends.

The results of my analysis show that it is possible to trace in some phytonyms in some languages various connotational meanings corresponding to traditional approach (emotions and evaluation) and some others (see Table 1).

Table 1: Primary and connotational meanings of diminutives in phytonymic lexis.

Language	French	German	Russian	Ukrainian	Polish	Czech	Slovak
<b>Meaning of the diminutive</b>							
<b>Primary meaning</b>							
<b>Smallness</b>							
smallness	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
<b>Connotational meanings</b>							
<b>I. Positive attitude to the plant and its medical properties</b>							
sympathy		+	+	+	+	+	+
admiration	+	+	+			+	+
nice and dear, pleasant		+	+	+	+		
smth. nice and pleasant (to touch)			+				
appraisal and admiration						+	+
caress					+		+
cordiality							+
smth. small, nice, of original form						+	+
<b>II. Ironic evaluation of the MP</b>							
comic, jocular		+		+			
ironic, jocular			+	+		+	+
ironic					+		+
ironic, comic					+		
jocular		+					

III. Merging of the notions of small and young							
merging of the notions of small and young	+	+	+	+	+	+	+

## 5 Conclusion

The analysis of word-formation and onomasiological structure of phytonyms allows to reconstruct nominative human activity and to establish some principles of the designation, which are formed on the basis of generalization of motivation features of already known plants and lay the base for new names. In the structure of OM, diminutives, which are attributed to such bases as plant or its used part, person, artefact, creature (an animal, a bird, an insect), substance, part of a human body and an animal, feeling, etc., serve as emotive-expressive and evaluative features.

Diminutives, without changing essence of the MP's name, add to it an additional shade. In general, their connotational meanings may be grouped in the following way: diminutives that serve to render the characteristic of the MP and diminutives conveying subjective evaluation. Though these are different approaches, in phytonymic lexis their borders overlap. In many cases by smallness the appearance of the plant is described and this characteristic implies positive evaluation, which testifies to the fact that evaluative morphology plays a crucial role in expressing nuances of meaning, emotions, and attitudes in language, in our case, to a MP. Thus, revealed meanings of the diminutives can be grouped like this: primary meaning – smallness; connotational meanings: 1) positive attitude to the plant and its medical properties (sympathy, caress, cordiality; praise and admiration; fine and pleasant, lovely,); 2) ironic evaluation of the MP (comic, playful, jocular), and 3) merging of the notions of small and young. In each of the considered languages this or that connotational meaning prevails (see Table 1).

The ways of forming phytonymic lexis are diverse and related to the grammatical structure of the language. The suffixes of each particular language form their own specific systems and do not function haphazardly in the language. It allows to people who name the plants to convey not just the literal meaning of words but also to put in their subjective evaluations, adding depth and richness to newly coined phytonyms. The specific ways in which evaluative morphology is realized vary widely from language to language.

The results of my research presented in Table 1 reflect methods and approaches I have employed. Sorting literary and common names (field approach) vividly demonstrates that 90% of my examples are borrowed from common names, their colloquial and dialectal forms. In the text of the article, each example is accompanied by the OM it constitutes. It helps visualize the role of the diminutive in this model; mainly it is a feature but in some cases the OM includes a formal basis presented by the suffix.

Though derivatives, compound, and complex compound words together with multi-word unit were treated as OMs, the proportion of their distribution in the languages under consideration is different. I have not found examples with the diminutives in English phytonymic lexis, only few derivatives in German, and large number of the derivatives in Slavic languages.

The obtained data very often required cognitive interpretation. It is necessary to explain what motivational features underlie the designation of the MP. In some cases, it is necessary to

take into account the cultural aspect or conduct a special etymological study.

### List of abbreviations

dial. – dialectal  
dim. – diminutive  
lit. – literary  
LSG – lexico-semantic group  
MP(s) – medicinal plant(s)  
OB(s) – onomasiological basis (bases)  
OF – onomasiological feature  
OM(s) – onomasiological model(s)

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