

## Diminutives in Russian at the early stages of acquisition

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Two Russian children, a boy and a girl, were observed during the first steps of their use of diminutives. Having a different language proficiency and strategy of learning, the children under observation demonstrated a clear difference in the acquisition of diminutives: the early speaking girl Varja (as well as her mother) shows a high frequency of diminutives already at 1;6, whereas the later speaking Filipp reaches his maximum only about 2;0.

It is argued that the most important pragmatic function of consciously used diminutives in CDS as well as in CS is the creation of a familiar, personal world. The mothers try to familiarize the children with the surroundings, to make the world good for their children and to stress the relative smallness of the things that surround the children in contrast to those of grown-ups. Such distinctions are, in the Russian world, important both for the instruction and for the emotional comfort of a child.

In addition, diminutives play an important role in facilitating the acquisition of case system: in the early phases both children use more indirect case forms of diminutives than of simplex nouns. This may be explained by the fact that diminutives end with similar codas. After children get a good command of using nominal case suffixes, this advantage of diminutives is of no help anymore.

### Introduction

Russian is known as a language with rich morphology and an elaborated diminutive system. Researchers such as Wierzbicka (1984) claim that diminutives are typical markers of Russian emotionality. It appears to be relevant to analyse whether the various diminutive types are equally represented in every single acquisition history, or whether they vary significantly. What provokes diminutive insertions and what is the context of their use? We argue that diminutives in child language have a general pragmatic value indicating intimacy and endearment, making the direct environment familiar and loyal to the child, helping her/him feel acquainted with objects manipu-

lated or taken into account by caretakers (Protassova 1999, 2001a; Voeikova 1998). We will try to show that the diminutive system is under construction in this phase and that the phonological form of lemmas may influence the preference by caregivers and children either for a diminutive or for a simplex. Thus, early diminutives come into the mental lexicon of a child as inseparable units and are later reanalysed, after a child has understood the pattern-building mechanisms. This stage is indicated by the increase and diversity of the child's diminutives and by back-formations.

Our paper describes diminutive patterns in adult Russian and studies the acquisition of diminutives by two Russian children, Filipp and Varja, at the very beginning of their development, from the first words to the first mini-paradigms. We juxtapose the findings and compare the acquisition paths. We will show that diminutives are used in a different way by the caregivers of our subjects and, therefore, play a different role in the language development of each child. Our goal is to assemble examples and comment them on various nuances that could allow us to realize peculiarities of diminutive use at this early age.<sup>1</sup>

## 1. Description of the adult target system

Diminutives are productively formed from Russian nouns by adding suffixes and combinations of suffixes to a stem (productive diminutive suffixes are given in Table 1), e.g. *syn-ok-Ø*, *syn-oček-Ø*, *syn-ulj-a* 'son-DimMasc/Masc/Fem' from the simplex *syn* 'son' (in colloquial Russian, also *syna*, *synočka* as formal feminines). Diminutives may also be formed from parametric and perceptual adjectives and adverbs, but these are not as frequent as noun diminutives. They may denote the same features as the corresponding simplex with the additional meaning of smallness or endearment, e.g. *bel-en'k-ij* 'white-Dim' means, in fact, 'white and small', or 'white and pretty (dear, attractive)'. It is not by accident that diminutive adjectives almost always refer to diminutive nouns (so to say *belen'kij* also implies to pick out *dom-ik* 'house-Dim' or *zaj-čik* 'hare-Dim' instead of the simplicia). Vinogradov regarded this tendency as "emotional agreement", saying that "evaluative forms are infectious" (Vinogradov 1947: 113). Most scholarly work has examined the semantics of diminutives in emotive language, including smallness, endearment, tenderness, special suffixes and higher pitch in intonation, and evaluative or expressive morphology. Surprisingly, it was often found that diminutivization does not relate to certain visual characteristics, as relatively small size or young age (Fentsova 1985; Polteraueer 1981; Volek 1987; Wierzbicka 1980; Worth 1987). This brings us again to the non-linguistic question of whether child emotions (at least, some of them) are innate and develop under circumstances or whether they are learned, maybe together with certain verbal expressions or independently of them.

### 1.1 Diminutives from different parts of speech

It may be due to the emotional component that other parts of speech also are used in a quasi-diminutive form without any semantic indication of smallness. Several verbs in motherese may obtain diminutive suffixes. A good example is the verb *kuš-en'k-at* 'eat-Dim' from *kuš-at* 'eat'; *kuš-en'k-a-em*, *kuš-en'k-a-et* in 1Pl and 3Sg etc.<sup>2</sup> Other verb-like diminutives lose the verb markers and may not be conjugated (cf. *spat-en'ki* 'sleep-Dim:Pl', *rost-en'ki* – 'grow up-Dim:Pl') where the diminutive suffix *-en'k-* follows the infinitive marker. They are used in certain games and everyday rituals instead of the corresponding simplex infinitives. Even if not many examples were found in the corpus, this type of language play may still be used in a family-dependent way.

Uninflected words, such as particles, pronouns, interjections and the already mentioned adverbs, are also objects of diminutivization, e.g.: *netuški* 'no-Dim:Pl' from *net* 'no', *tutočki* 'here-Dim:Pl' from the adverb *tut* 'here', and *ajuški* 'ah-Dim', *xorošenečko* 'accurately-Dim-Dim' from the adverb *xorošo* 'well'. Typical of these forms is the suffix *-i* comparable to the false plural *-i* in exclamations such as *mamočki* 'lit. mommy-Dim:Pl' from *mama* 'mommy'. Thus, prototypical diminutives are nouns, and even if other parts of speech are diminutivized, it is due to the features of the objects under description and to the emotional attitude of the speaker to these objects.

**Table 1.** Productive diminutive suffixes of nouns

Masculine	Feminine	Neuter
-ik, -ok/-ek, (-onok/-jonok): kot-ik, kot-ok 'cat-Dim, kot- jonok 'baby-cat'	-k (-ičk-, -on'k-/en'k-, -ečk- /-očk-, -ušk-, -išk-), uš-: lis-ka 'fox-Dim', lis- ička, lis-on'ka 'fox-Dim:Dim'	-c-, -k (-yšk-, -ušk-, -ečk-): okon-ce, oko-ško 'window- Dim', soln-yško – 'sun-Dim'

Some of these suffixes are semantically specialized, e.g. *-onok/-jonok* serves to name small animals, e.g. *slonjonok* 'baby elephant' from *slon* 'elephant'<sup>3</sup>. The consonant *-k-* is a common part of most diminutive suffixes, except the suffix *-ce* in the neuter. Prototypical diminutive suffixes are combinations of the suffix *-Vk* with other suffixes, which are accompanied by historic changes of preceding consonants. The consonant *-k* occupies a stable position before the vowel of the inflectional ending, thus changing all inflectional endings by the syllable *-kV*; compare the Nominative-Genitive opposition of simplicia and the corresponding diminutives: *dver'*/*dver-i* 'door-Nom/Gen' vs. *dver-ka*/*dver-ki* 'door-Dim:Nom/Gen', *ulic-a*/*ulic-y* 'street-Nom/Gen' vs. *uloč-ka*/*uloč-ki* 'street-Dim:Nom/Gen', and *stol*/*stol-a* 'table-Nom/Gen' vs. *sto-lik*/*stol-ika* 'table-Dim:Nom/Gen'. In the simplex bases, vocalic inflectional endings are preceded by various consonants that may make them phonologically opaque. Contrarily, the vocalic inflectional endings of the diminutives are always preceded by *-k-* and thus become phonologically clear and salient.

In suffixed diminutives some forms require a consonant alternation ( $c \rightarrow \check{c}$ ,  $k \rightarrow c$ ). The suffix vowels *-e-* and *-o-* in masculine diminutive suffixes are unstable, e.g. *petušok* ‘cock-Dim:Nom’ and *petuška* ‘cock-Dim:Gen’. Thus, especially masculine diminutives may have an even less transparent inflectional paradigm than their simplex bases. The unstable *-e* and *-o* in diminutives allow the speaker to keep the same number of syllables in all forms of the paradigm. To the contrary, the vowel *-i* in diminutive suffixes remains intact in all forms (cf. *mjačik* ‘ball-Dim:Nom’ and *mjačika* ‘ball-Dim:Gen’). Whether the maintenance of syllable number plays any facilitating role in the acquisition of forms is not clear. In most cases, diminutivization does not change the gender of nouns, but indeclinable neuter nouns of foreign origin become feminine, e.g. *taksiška prišla* ‘taxi-Dim came-Fem’.

## 1.2 Diminutives and hypocoristics

The *-k-*suffixation is typical of diminutives but is not obligatory for hypocoristics which may not only be formed by the diminutive suffixes but also use the “truncation model” with and without suffixation, e.g. the quasi-suffixes *-ša* and *-nja* in *Saša*, *Sanja* from *Alexander*, or *Maša*, *Manja* from *Maria*, or a zero suffix accompanied by palatalization and a shift of the declension class: in *Kolja* from *Nikolaj*, and *Petja* from *Petr*. (The adding of *-a* ending with the preceding consonant palatalization changes the masculine 1st declension class into the masculine-feminine 2nd declension class.) Not all widespread Russian short names should be treated as hypocoristics unlike their diminutive derivatives; however, all of these forms have some semantic diminutive nuances, and children often make use of the whole scale, including non-shortened and rare variants and transpose the models acquired onto other examples. Thus, names of people may be considered as a very important field of morphological training. One common feature of diminutives and hypocoristics is the fact that they usually exhibit similar and predictable phonological sequences at the end of the word compared with the simplicia.

Normally, several diminutives or hypocoristics having different semantic nuances may be formed from one and the same noun, e.g. *set-ka* from *set* ‘net’, or another diminutive (historically, a double diminutive) such as *set-oč-ka* ‘net-Dim-Dim’. The first diminutive Dim-1 sometimes has a pejorative (depreciative) meaning. It may also replace the corresponding simplex, whereas the simplex gets another meaning and only the Dim-2 really means a small and/or beloved thing/person. In the given example the simplex *set* ‘net’ is used in all possible meanings including ‘net, network, system, scale’ etc., the first diminutive is used to denote a string-bag of normal size and only the second Dim-2 really expresses the idea of endearment and/or smallness. The semantic nuance of endearment does not need any extra expression except diminutive suffixes. The pure idea of smallness is often expressed by the combination of diminutive suffixes with the adjective *malen’kij* ‘small’. Thus the most common meaning of diminutives is endearment, and only the next important semantic feature is smallness.

The same tendencies are characteristic of hypocoristics: truncated forms are used for informal naming (*Filja* from *Filipp* or *Varja* from *Varvara*); forms ending in *-ka* are depreciative or strongly informal, whereas the addition of the second suffix makes them tender, e.g. *Fil'ka* 'Filipp-Dim', *Var'ka* 'Varvara-Dim' (depreciative) vs. *Fil-ečka*, *Fil-juša*, *Fil-juška*, *Fil-jušen'ka*, *Var-ečka*, *Var-juša*, *Var-juška*, *Var-jušen'ka* (tender). Not only personal names but also kinship terms and some names of animals may serve as a base for hypocoristics, e.g. *deda* 'grandfather-Hyp', *kisa* 'cat-Dim:Fem', *kotja* 'cat-Dim:Masc' etc. Masculine nouns take the inflectional ending *-a* that moves them to the 2nd (mostly feminine) declension class, but without gender shift. Normally, hypocoristics are shorter (have less syllables) than the given name, whereas diminutives mostly have one extra syllable (except feminine diminutives/depreciatives from *-a* nouns formed by *-k-*).

### 1.3 Diminutive grammar

Grammatically, all diminutives belong to the productive declension classes of nouns. Table 2 shows the regular shift of the declension class by diminutivization. Nouns belonging to productive feminine *-a* class 2 and masculine consonant class 1 usually do not change their class except for some rare masculine nouns that shift to the non-productive masculine *-a* class. This is a clear structural disadvantage that needs explanation. Feminine nouns of the unproductive consonant class 3 shift to the productive feminine *-a* class. This fact has been a reason for claiming that diminutives facilitate the system of Russian declension (Olmsted 1994; Kempe, Brooks & Pirott 2001; Kempe, Brooks 2005).

**Table 2.** Shift of declension classes by diminutivization

No change	No change	Disadvantage (opaque gender)	Advantage (non-pro- ductive → productive)
Fem Cl. 2 (+P) = Fem Cl. 2(+P)	Masc Cl. 1 (+P) = Masc Cl. 1(+P)	Masc Cl. 1 (+P) → Masc Cl. 2 (-P)	Fem Cl. 3 (-P) → Fem Cl. 2 (+P)
sobaka → sobačka 'dog-Dim'	mjač → mjačik 'ball-Dim' zajac → zajčik 'hare-Dim'	zajac → zajka 'hare-Dim' medved' → miška 'bear-Dim'	mys' → myška 'mouse-Dim' dver' → dverca and dverka 'door-Dim'

In general, Table 2 shows the strengthening of the 2nd declension class as a result of diminutive use. Other informal nouns may also contribute to the enrichment of the 2nd declension class. For example, some nouns of foreign origin remain indeclinable. They do not form diminutives in literary Russian; colloquial diminutives of these nouns, however, are feminine and belong to the 2nd productive class (cf. *metroška-*

Fem from *metro*-Neut 'metro'). Such diminutives are very informal and occur mostly in the slang of children and teenagers. Nowadays, this diminutive type is growing in importance. Feminine diminutives like *apelsinka*, *pomidorka*, *morožka*, *suvenirka* 'orange-Dim:Fem\*', *tomato-Dim:Fem\**, *ice cream-Dim:Fem\**, *gift-Dim:Fem\** frequently occur instead of solely permissible previous masculine and neuter variants *apel'sinčik*, *pomidorčik*, *morožence*, *suvenirčik*.<sup>4</sup>

The majority of lexemes have a restricted number of diminutives which are normally used and may enter dictionaries as constant derivatives, even if in reality a much larger variety of them are used in spoken Russian. Besides, some very frequent words, like *malen'kij* 'small', *malčik* 'boy', and *devočka* 'girl' contain inseparable diminutive pseudo-suffixes. Children try to form false back-formations from non-evident lexicalized diminutives, like \**loga* < *ložka* 'spoon'.

#### 1.4 Augmentatives and other related affixes

Augmentatives are formed from nouns and adjectives by suffixes which are attached to the stem such as *-ušč-/-jušč-*, *-išč* (cf. *bolš-ušč-aja sobač-išč-a* 'big-Aug:Fem dog-Aug' from *bolš-aja sobak-a* 'big dog'). The suffix *-išč-* (with the corresponding consonant alternations) is accompanied by the inflectional ending *-e* for masculine and neuter, and *-a* for feminine nouns, and the suffix *-in-* has the ending *-a* for all genders (cf. *kozlišče* and *kozlina* 'goat-Aug:Masc' formed from the root *kozjol* 'goat&Masc').<sup>5</sup>

There are other suffixes and prefixes that attenuate the meaning of the words, expressing different degrees of quality or pejorative meaning. Other suffixes and prefixes denoting the degree of quality have an extenuating meaning, e.g. *gorelyj* 'burned down (completely)' vs. *pod-gorelyj* 'burned down (partly)', and *ryžij* 'red' vs. *ryž-evatj* 'red-dish'. Since all these forms are very productive in modern colloquial Russian, occasionally formed combinations (including prefixes and suffixes) can display a large palette of meanings, as e.g. *pod-syr-ovat-yj* 'having a tendency to be rough', from the adjective *syr-oj* 'rough', and *bolš-evat-ist-yj* 'giving an impression of being too big', from the adjective *bolš-oj* 'big'. However, these tiny nuances may only occur in the speech of little children after they get the first idea of the degree of quality expressed by prototypical diminutive suffixes. Semantic and emotional suffixes have a different representation in the input of our subjects: the mother of Varja uses a great variety of combinations of derivatives from the girl's name and also from some other animated nouns. The mother of Filipp, on the contrary, uses many diminutives but almost no augmentatives and other expressive derivatives from personal names except for the name of her son.

#### 1.5 Diminutive use

A good command of using diminutive suffixes manifests language mastery. Nevertheless, native speakers repeatedly report that diminutives are overly loaded expres-

sively and therefore may seem irrelevant, false, or in bad taste. Some native speakers frequently personalize their manner of speech by using diminutives or hypocoristics of proper names. According to the Academic Russian grammar (Švedova 1980: 208), the values expressed by diminutives are as follows: personal, evaluative, caressing, hypocoristic, and pejorative. It is stressed that the meaning of smallness is usually accompanied by the semantic nuance of endearment, but in many cases expressive meaning is the only semantic function of diminutives.

What meaning the speaker attributes to a diminutive depends to a greater degree on his intention and on context than on the semantic potential of a morpheme. The small size usually causes affection, and after some adjectives with the meanings 'small, nice, pretty' etc. the use of a diminutive suffix is highly expected. You can only say *malen'kaja ruka* 'little hand' about the small hand of an adult, whereas the hand of a child is supposed to be called *malen'kaja ručka* 'little hand-Dim'. Some diminutive forms are lexicalized but still not found in the dictionaries. Some are nominations for special things, e.g. *zajka* 'hare-Masc:Dim' serves as a tender name for a woman, therefore in some contexts it gets the illegal feminine agreement, *zajka moja* 'hare-Fem:Dim my-Fem', whereas in literary tradition it should remain masculine, as in the famous children's verse by A. Barto *Zajku broсила xozzajka, pod doždjom ostalsja zajka* ('The host has thrown her hare-Dim:Masc away, the hare-Dim:Masc remained-Masc under the rain').

The analysis of everyday spoken language demonstrates that child- or pet-centred situations as well as eating and taking care of one's body provoke the use of excessive diminutives even in adults. (This fact was stated in numerous studies on the Russian language.) They also mark irony and self-irony, insignificance of request, and politeness towards a customer rather than expressing smallness. Thus, the teacher addressing a group of pre-school children would not use the diminutive *ručka* 'hand-Dim'; she would use a simplex *ruka*, as it is prescribed in the official day care centre curriculum. However, coming closer to a certain child and especially wanting to appease, reassure or to set him/her at ease or at rest, she would certainly say *ručka* and name all surrounding objects in a diminutive form. The same is characteristic of adults in different intimate situations. If the interlocutor misinterprets this ambivalence, or if a caress is not taken intimately, a request may become an order, as in *Skoren'ko!* 'quickly+Dim'. The threat is expressed by the lexical choice itself, and the suffix definitely does not increase this threat, but rather mitigates it.

The pragmatic use of diminutives is due to the emotional closeness, and physical proximity, focusing on everyday use. The diminutivization manifests the idea of "things for us" versus "things for everybody / for the others". There is no study of priming effects for diminutives in Russian compatible with Clahsen et al. (2003), but in the Russian grammatical tradition, starting from the 19th century, several grammarians like Aksakov, Potebnja and Šaxmatov claimed that diminutive suffixes should be defined as inflectional rather than derivational, since they do not change the lexical meaning of the words and their gender assignment (Vinogradov 1947: 112–116). At the early phases of language acquisition, diminutives are item-based and may not yet

be regarded as fully productive models. For both of our subjects we can only make some claims about the relation between diminutives and their simplicia based on the use of oppositions in the input and in the output. These data show that some of the diminutives never occur in oppositions, and replace the corresponding simplicia in child-centred situations.

The multiformity of diminutives outlines this phenomenon as a field of potential linguistic play; yet, they are neither universal nor compulsory, and some people, being perfect speakers of the language, do not employ them at all. It is a non-obligatory speech refinement.

## 2. Material

### 2.1 Previous studies on Russian child diminutives and augmentatives

The well-known diary study of the acquisition of Russian by Gvozdev reports that the first. Productive diminutives occurred in the speech production of his son Ženja at about age 1;9, next to the singular-plural and nominative-accusative distinction (Gvozdev 1961: 399ff.). Šaxnarovič and Jurieva (1990) claim that suffix formation in children develops rather early – they suggested the age 2;6 as the overall starting point – and stage by stage. They proposed the following sequence: 1) phonology-based orientation, 2) morpheme-based orientation, 3) real relationship to the object precedes the abstract representation of the surrounding world in the word. They found as well that children do not necessarily understand diminutive and augmentative suffixes as indicators of a real small or large size. Lepskaĵa (1997: 89–90) assumed that diminutives and hypocoristic words are semantically neutral in children’s speech, and argues for this with numerous non-existent back-formations of the type \*čaxa from čaška ‘cup’, and \*oduvan from *oduvančik* ‘dandelion’. In the same study, she observed superfluous childish suffixes in \*sobač-on-oč-en’k-a ‘dog-Dim-Dim-Dim’, and counted three times more diminutives in adults’ child-directed speech than in their adult-directed speech. Diminutives also play an important structural role in facilitating the system of noun declension: when children were shown pictures of familiar and novel animals and were asked to describe them after hearing their names, they produced fewer agreement errors for diminutive than for simplex nouns (cf. Olmsted 1994; Kempe et al. 2003).

Andrews (1996, 1999) writes that the diminutive and endearing characteristics can sometimes overlap and in some cases be quite separate; the meaning is expressed by the appropriate context and intonation. Her data on the use of complex morphological substantive forms in CDS collected in St. Petersburg show that women were more likely to admit diminutives than men. However, the age effect (the older the subject, the less diminutives) was more statistically relevant than the gender effect. In her survey, she pointed out that *-k-a*, *-ik*, *-ok*, *-jonok*, *-očk-a* were the most popular suffixes in the specific family use.

The semantics of the productive augmentative in *-in-* also includes the idea of quantity, but it underlines the uniqueness of the object, a sort of definiteness, otherwise absent in the Russian language. Although these suffixes are not augmentative or “uniqueness” suffixes *per se*, they are used as such because the homonymous suffixes are mixed. For example, a girl aged about 3 years named a big toy pig *svinina*, while normally this means ‘pork’. This suffix appears to be productive in colloquial Russian with hypocoristic animal names: *sobač(at)ina* for dog, *košatina*, for cat etc. (Addressing an animal by the potential name of its meat makes it dear, a sort of rude tenderness.)

Previous research indicates that the regularizing features of diminutives enhance categorizations, first of all, for gender and declension. With the focus on the features of CDS vs. child-produced speech we may find what really can facilitate language learning.

## 2.2 The present study

Our subjects were the girl Varja investigated by E. Protassova from 1;6 to 2;10 and the boy Filipp investigated by M. Voeykova from 1;4 to 2;8.<sup>6</sup> Varja was an early-talking child; the age of development of Filipp corresponds to his biological age. Filipp was tested with the KID Scale (Reuter & Woznick 1966; Reuter & Gruber 2000; Čistovič & Šapiro 2000) at the Institute of Early Intervention in St. Petersburg at the age of 2;5. Both children were tape-recorded at least once a month, normally, once every 2–3 weeks. At the time of lexical spurt the corpus of Filipp reaches a high density level (more than 1000 utterances of the child per session from 1;5 to 1;9). The data for Varja are available in CHILDES. The observations on Varja’s language development were documented also in a diary (about 500 000 signs), whereas for Filipp we rely on the tape recordings.

The children under investigation differed not only by sex and developmental level but also had quite a different strategy in acquisition. Varja was talkative and creative, whereas Filipp used a repetitive strategy and did not initiate the conversation, especially during the first sessions (1;4–2;0). The use of diminutives is also different: from the very beginning of tape recording, Varja often produces several different diminutives from one and the same word, her speech is emotional and she knows how she can express her emotions. Therefore we could not establish when the first diminutives occurred in her speech (Protassova 1997). Filipp uses diminutives as if they were the unique name for the object. There are no diminutive-simplex oppositions in his speech until 1;8, and even after they emerge, their number does not exceed 21 pairs, which means that more than 50% of all diminutives are used without an opposition (see the total number of diminutive types in Table 4 below). At the same time, Filipp starts to develop the system of noun declension and agreement between adjective and noun (Voeykova 1998). As we expect, a high percentage of diminutives in his speech helped him to cope with the system of nominal declension.

### 2.3 Frequency of diminutives in the speech of children and caregivers

This analysis aims to show whether there is a correlation between the number (percentage) of diminutives in the speech of children and their mothers and what phases in the acquisition and use of diminutives could be defined.

#### 2.3.1 *Quantitative characteristics of diminutives: the case of Varja*

In general, diminutives are constantly growing in types, but diminishing in tokens per discourse unit. The majority of them is formed and used correctly, and there is no abuse of them. Varja uses a number of diminutives from the very beginning of the sessions; later on, they become more differentiated. The analysed data show that the number of diminutives depends on the subject of speech. Some concepts (such as body parts, meals, clothing, dolls and other toys) stimulate diminutive use. The variety of the items studied, both types and tokens, grows in both adult and child, and the child uses diminutivization more and more intentionally.

**Table 3.** Quantitative analysis: Varja and her mother. (Varja's sessions had the same time length, but were growing in word length from month to month)

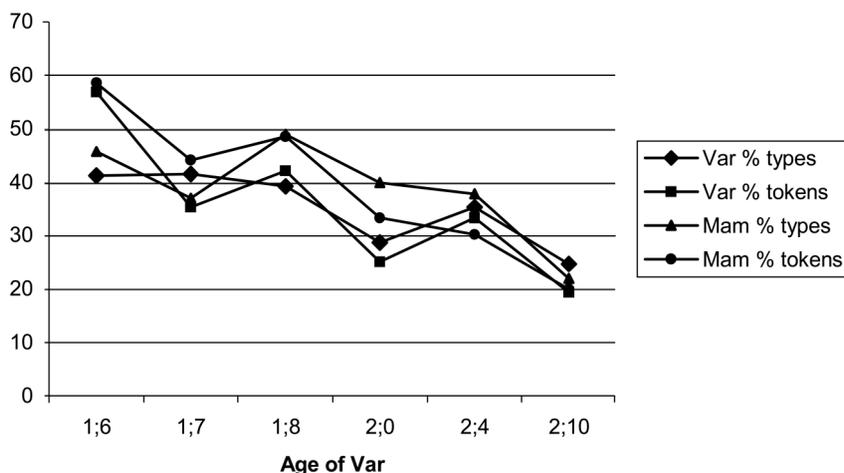
Age	CHILD DIMINUTIVES			ADULT DIMINUTIVES		
	Proper Nouns: Types/ Tokens/ TTR	Common Nouns: Types/ Tokens /TTR	Total Nouns: Types/ Tokens /TTR	Proper Nouns: Types/ Tokens /TTR	Common Nouns: Types/ Tokens /TTR	Total Nouns: Types/ Tokens / TTR
1;6	1/57/ 0.02	41/64/ 0.64	42/121/ 0.35	8/26/ 0.31	53/87/ 0.61	61/113/ 0.54
1;7	3/50/ 0.06	56/128/ 0.44	59/178/ 0.33	8/37/ 0.22	55/137/ 0.40	63/174/ 0.36
1;9	3/16/ 0.19	67/201/ 0.33	70/217/ 0.32	8/33/ 0.24	98/251/ 0.39	106/284/ 0.37
1;10	1/19/ 0.05	70/134/ 0.52	71/153/ 0.46	6/13/ 0.62	48/91/ 0.53	54/104/ 0.52
2;0	3/3/ 1.00	48/80/ 0.6	51/80/ 0.64	2/2/ 1.00	51/100/ 0.51	53/102/ 0.52
2;4	0	76/152/ 0.47	76/152/ 0.47	7/9/ 0.78	52/90/ 0.58	59/99/ 0.60
2;10	0	51/74/ 0.70	51/74/ 0.70	3/5/ 0.60	62/79/ 0.78	65/84/ 0.77

The proper names used by speech partners are mostly the names of the addressees, and they show a large scale of variants, especially for the name of the child. The self-given

name of the child is *Aja*, *Ain'ka*, and it is picked up and repeated by adults. Still, in the adults' speech the most frequent hypocoristic noun is *Varen'ka* (a variant that has given birth to the above-mentioned self-reference), but also *Varjunja*, *Varjun'ka*, *Varčun*, *Varčuš*, *Varjušonec*, *Varčušon* (the last four being masculine), *Varjunečka*, *Varjuša*, *Varjušen'ka*, *Varčušečij* (this being a masculine adjective), and *Varjona*. The adjectives were only few in the sessions studied. In the first sessions, when the child had not yet acquired the personal pronoun of the first singular, self-reference was made mostly in a diminutive form (*Aika*, *Ain'ka*). In CDs, 3rd person singular reference was commonly made by diminutives (*Varen'ka*, *Varjuša*, *Varjušon* etc.).

Graph 1 shows the percentage of diminutives in the speech of Varja and her mother. There is a clear correspondence in the speech of a child and her caregiver: the percentage of diminutives decreases in both partners with the growing age of a child. Comparing these parameters to the ones of Filipp and his mother (Graph 2) we assume that Filipp never reaches the same density of diminutives as Varja demonstrated in the first. Phases of the period observed: maximal percentage for Filipp does not exceed 40%, whereas Varja starts with almost 60 % of diminutives both in types and in tokens. This may show that Varja's use of diminutives is intentional and may have another reasons than the one of Filipp.

Percentage of Diminutives Types/Tokens to all Nouns  
(MAM/VAR)



Graph 1. Diminutives in the speech production of Varja and her mother

The maximal percentage of diminutives in Varja's speech is registered in the very beginning of the observation. From that point on, she uses them productively. Her con-

scious use of diminutive patterns has much to do with emotional sphere and with the slight semantic nuances that she is able to express.

There is more imitation of the child's diminutives by adults than vice versa, i.e. adults pick up the word said by the child and repeat it: for example, the words for bread, bottle etc. The child cases of imitation (non-spontaneous uses) are rare. Thus, after having heard *top-top po dorožke* 'go-go along the road-Dim', a piece of a poem, the child says *top-top po doroge* 'go-go along the road', indicating that the diminutive was understood as another form of the same word. Instead, quite often a diminutive is used shortly after a base form (e.g. *kulič-kuličik* 'sand cake'), or the base form is derived from the diminutive. *Jagodki* 'berries-Dim' is a plural form of *jagodka*. It was pronounced as *jagyki* by the child at that time (according to her phonetics), and the base form should be *jagoda*, but the child says *jagyki*, *jagyk*, *jaga* deriving the plural form from the fictive masculine or a non-existent base *jaga* with unclear gender.) In a couple of cases the child uses the base form after the adult has used a diminutive, as in adult: *jaičko* 'egg-Dim', child: *jaico* 'egg'. Almost all of these examples were found in the first session (1;6). Thus it is clear that the very first occurrences of diminutives must have appeared in the speech production of Varja before 1;6.

Among the diminutives used by both communicators are adjectives (names of colours, characteristics of softness, warmth, goodness), adverbs (with the meaning clean, fast, some) and sometimes verbs.

Nouns like *korzinka* 'basket-Dim', *knižka* 'book-Dim', *kosička* 'plait-Dim', *myška* 'mouse-Dim' are felt as if they were the adequate variant for everyday life. We did not find the correspondent dictionary base variants *korzina*, *kniga*, *kosa*, *myš*. We count *jožik* 'hedgehog-Dim' as a base form, because it is doubtful that the child could hear the simplex *jož* with any frequency. *Trusiki* 'slip-Dim:Pl', plurale tantum, is the only form in the first sessions, but the base form *trusy* occurs afterwards; it was also first used and perceived as a diminutive. According to our analysis, the use of different suffix types reflects the general co-relation of the same suffixes in spoken Russian. (Those with *-n'k-* are the most common, then come those with *-čk-*).

Diminutive nouns are more frequent than diminutive adjectives, next come interjections and adverbs. Diminutives are mostly used in the nominative and accusative, but also in the instrumental case. Filling in all the cells in the morphological tables demands that the child makes extensions, false starts, truncations and back-formations, some of them doomed as blind alleys.

### 2.3.2 Quantitative characteristics of diminutives: the case of Filipp

The sessions of Filipp had different lengths; therefore we give absolute numbers (Table 4), as well as percentages of diminutives in relation to all noun types and tokens for every age bracket (Graph 1). We counted separately the use of diminutives for common and proper nouns as well as the special vocatives formed from animal names and/or personal names. The use of hypocoristics in the speech production of the child was not extensive (the maximal number being 3 types and 8 tokens).

The first important change in the speech production of Filipp is at 1;7–1;8, when he proceeds from sporadic repetition of diminutives to their spontaneous production. Then also the first simplex-diminutive oppositions occur. The quantitative characteristics of diminutive formation in the speech of Filipp becomes similar to the one of Varja after he reaches 2;0.

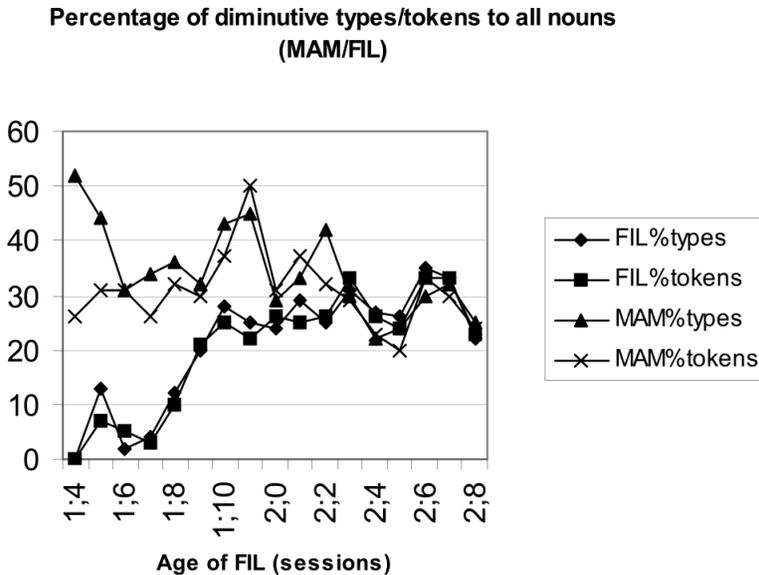
**Table 4.** Quantitative analysis: diminutives of Filipp and his mother

Age	CHILD DIMINUTIVES			ADULT DIMINUTIVES		
	Proper Nouns: Types/ Tokens/ TTR	Common Nouns: Types/ Tokens/ TTR	Total Nouns: Types/ Tokens/ TTR	Proper Nouns: Types/ Tokens/ TTR	Common Nouns: Types/ Tokens/ TTR	Total Nouns: Types/ Tokens/ TTR
1;5-	4/6/	6/14/0.42	10/20/	8/40/	180/493/	188/533/
1;6	0.66		0.5	0.2	0.37	0.35
1;7-	3/8/	20/32/	23/40/	6/16/	236/478/	240/388/
1;8	0.38	0.62	0.56	0.38	0.43	0.62
1;9-	1/1/	55/117/	56/118/	3/7/0.43	154/282/	157/289/
1;10	1	0.47	0.48		0.55	0.54
1;11-	0	45/75/	45/75/	8/11/	131/223/	139/234/
2;0		0.6	0.6	0.73	0.59	0.59
2;1-	0	111/239/	111/239/	8/20/	255/445/	263/465/
2;2		0.46	0.46	0.4	0.57	0.57
2;3-	4/11/	107/229/	111/240/	14/38/	157/267/	171/305/
2;4	0.36	0.47	0.46	0.37	0.58	0.56
2;5-	3/3/	76/160/	79/163/	2/4/	115/222/	117/226/
2;6	1	0.48	0.48	0.5	0.52	0.52
2;7-	2/2/	94/206/	59/121/0.	6/13/	187/290/	115/193/
2;8	1	0.46	49	0.46	0.64	0.60

At this time the number of diminutive tokens increases to 30 and the TTR becomes stable (approx. 0.40–0.50). At the same age, a real qualitative and quantitative change occurs. However, common nouns remain the main source of his diminutive formation. Also, the number of diminutives in the speech production of Filipp's mother is especially high before and a bit after 1;8, decreasing later on. All these characteristics indicate that the mother's active usage of diminutives is a precursor of their spontaneous use by the child.

Graph 2 (below) shows that the percentage of diminutive types and tokens in the speech of Filipp and his mother coincides for the first time at the age of 2;0 when Filipp starts to use them frequently. The number of proper names and hypocoristics in the speech of Filipp's mother is higher than in the speech of the child. She uses from 7 to

18 different proper noun lemmas per session, whereas the maximal number of proper noun tokens per session is 137.



**Graph 2.** Diminutives in the speech production of Filipp and his mother

Before that, the mother uses more diminutives than afterwards: their percentage in her speech is about 50% at the time when Filipp only starts to speak. These are almost exclusively diminutives formed from common nouns. Interestingly, the percentage of diminutive tokens in the mother's speech is almost always lower than the one for diminutive types (except for the age 1;11). This means that she repeats more simplex tokens and, at the same time, uses many different diminutive lemmas (types). This gives the child an idea of the morphological pattern, which helps him to construct diminutives from different noun stems. This is one more reason to explore the simplifying function of diminutives in the building of the system of declension (cf. Olmsted 1994; Kempe et al. 2003).

### 2.3.3 Comparison of the two children

Filipp's use shows a clear difference from the speech style of Varja, who uses many diminutive tokens from only a few types (e.g. 3 types vs. 50 tokens at 1;7 in Table 3 above). This feature may be explained by several factors: 1) from the earliest sessions onwards Varja is at a more advanced phase of language acquisition than Filipp, who only starts to utter his first words; 2) she is creative in inventing new words and combinations, whereas Filipp repeats a lot after his mother. Comparing the speech production of both children to that of their caregivers, we also notice a striking dif-

ference between the two mother-child pairs: the number of diminutives in the speech of Varja may even exceed the corresponding number in her mother's speech, whereas Filipp never approaches the quantity of diminutives used by his mother. In both Filipp and his mother the number of diminutive tokens derived from proper nouns is relatively small in comparison with Varja: especially at the beginning of the recording (1;6–1;7) she may use these diminutives in different forms more than 50 times (see Table 3 above). Both Filipp and his mother never overuse diminutives of proper nouns; actually, they only form them from the name of the boy and his cat. The TTR in mother's speech is almost never significantly influenced by proper nouns. Apparently Varja is at the stage of productive use of diminutives from the very beginning.

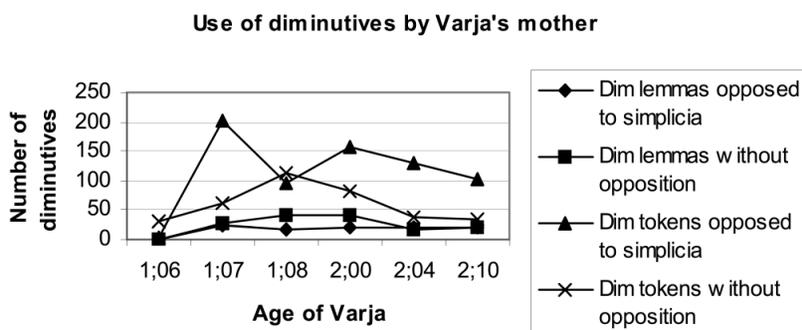
Unlike Varja, Filipp does not use his own name or other hypocoristics for a long period after he has already started to use diminutives. After 2;3 the diminutive percentage curves in the speech production of Filipp and his mother demonstrate a close coincidence for both types and tokens.

From the beginning up to the age of 2;0 there is no direct correlation between the mother and the child in the percentage of diminutives among all nouns. When the percentage of diminutives in the speech of the child is low, the mother uses extremely many diminutive types (52%). On the contrary, after Filipp started to use diminutives productively, his mother's use slightly decreases both in types and in tokens. This corresponds to the general instructive style of Filipp's mother: when she feels that the child is ready to acquire some new linguistic skill she increases the number of corresponding word-forms in her speech. The same trend was found in her use of adjectives (Voeikova 2002: 214–228). Although this common fact is true for different syntactic forms in the mother-child interactions for Varja (e.g., for embedded clauses of different types, Protassova 1988), it is not true for diminutives, because Varja's mother does not like this type of noun use and does not stimulate the use of diminutives consciously. For both children, usually, the decreasing frequency of a unit in CDS means that it has been already acquired.

In order to examine the similarities and differences between both caregivers more carefully, we compared the use of diminutives with and without an opposition in their speech (see Graphs 3 and 4). We calculated diminutive lemmas having a corresponding simplex in the same recording, as well as the number of tokens for such lemmas. We counted diminutives (and hypocoristics) of nouns and adjectives for both subjects. However, diminutives of adjectives occurred only in the speech of Varja's mother, and their number was rather low (5 adjective tokens to more than a hundred noun tokens at 1;8, with similar proportions for other ages). Graph 3 shows the results for Varja's mother.

The number of diminutive lemmas used without opposition slightly exceeds the number of those that were used in opposition to their simplicia between 1;7 and 2;4. (Before and after that period they coincide.) However, the number of diminutives used in opposition to their bases is obviously higher than the number of non-opposed tokens. This means that the child hears the names of objects used in both forms much more frequently than other, non-opposed diminutives. This happens partly because

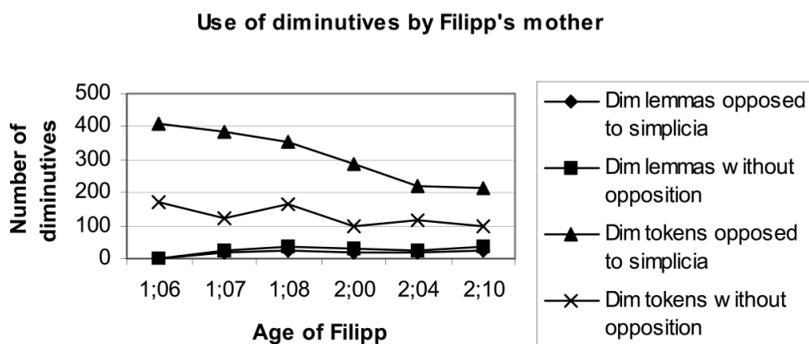
of the high frequency of the girl's name used in different diminutivized and specially constructed forms. Other diminutives frequently used together with their simplicia are mostly the names of animals, toys, food and vehicles, whereas many non-opposed forms refer to objects used in everyday activities. Thus, the most important participants of the playing sessions are consistently named both by simplicia and by diminutives. This also supports the importance of pragmatic reasons for using diminutives.



**Graph 3.** Diminutives used with and without an opposition: Varja's mother

Graph 4 shows the same calculations for Filipp. We took only the corresponding age intervals from Filipp's recordings in order to make both graphs comparable.

The same tendency may be seen in the speech of Filipp's mother. The difference in number between the opposed and non-opposed tokens is even more evident than in the speech of Varja's mother. For both subjects, the frequency of diminutives and their simplicia used in opposition is higher. This shows that both mothers consistently show the difference between diminutives and their simplicia for some nouns and use diminutives of other nouns as the only names of certain objects.



**Graph 4.** Diminutives used with and without an opposition: Filipp's mother

In the input of both mothers the absolute number of diminutive tokens slightly decreases after the age of two although the mothers have a different style of talking and the children are at a different stage of language acquisition. Several explanations are possible: 1) the older the child, the less emotional conversation is, 2) the mothers stop using too many diminutives after children start to produce them appropriately, or after the first case markers were used correctly.

#### 2.4. Semantic, pragmatic and structural functions of diminutives

In this section we examine the main functions of diminutives in the speech of both children, taking into consideration that they differ in their developmental strategy. The description of Varja's first steps in diminutive use is based upon the diary data of her mother. From the earliest stages onwards, Varja tries to build various lemmas and to form oppositions with various suffixes. Surprisingly, the first oppositions occur at 1;2. This is unusually early in comparison with the mean age of development: according to Čistovič and Šapiro (2000: 47ff.) only 38% of Russian-speaking boys and 44% of girls are able to use 5 different authentic words at the age of 1;3. Filipp is more typical in the speed of his language development. His use of diminutives may presuppose that he rather benefits from their structural properties.

##### 2.4.1 *Semantic and pragmatic role of diminutives (Varja)*

In this subsection, we demonstrate the most typical and untypical situations in which diminutives are used, mostly in chronological order. Varja's first words at the age of about one year were marked by the pseudo-suffixes *-ka*, *-pa*, *-ba* that occur in babbling. In the very first diminutive formations like *tjukaka* and *tjutjoki* (from *cvetovek*, *cvetocki* 'flower-Dim, flower-Dim:Pl') the suffix and the opposition of singular and plural were expressed, however, according to the wrong declension class pattern (1st declension class instead of the 2nd).

The early diminutive forms (between 1;0 and 2;0) were probably memorized, because no corresponding simplex forms were found, but the suffixes drawn out from the input and regularized were absolutely her own: sometimes *apa* instead of *apaka* (in the adult language only *šapka* 'hat' and *šapočka* 'hat-Dim' are used), *kitika* instead of *kika* (*kryška* 'cover', *kryš-ečka* 'cover-Dim') as well as *gazetika* (*gazet-očka* 'newspaper-Dim', in spite of the fact that only other forms like *gazetka*, *gazetjonka* were produced by adults). All these examples illustrate the productive use of diminutives by Varja in this early period. On the other hand, some formations change gender: *pitik* (masculine, instead of *ptica* 'bird', feminine in adult speech, in colloquial Russian, *ptička* 'bird&Fem-Dim' is common), *kotik* (masculine, instead of feminine *kofta* 'jacket', diminutive *koftočka* can be found in the input), and *pitik* (*butylka* 'bottle', probably derived from *pit* 'to drink'; diminutive *butyločka* was registered in the input). The unstable (mobile) vowels in suffixes sometimes remain where they should not, as in *na pisotike* for *na pesočke* 'on sand-Masc:Dim-Sg:Gen'. This mistake also shows Varja's creative way of using pat-

terns because the unstressed suffix *-ek-* sounds like *-ik* in the nominative and thus does not undergo a vowel drop. In Varja's speech, some adult diminutives, like *mamaka* for *mamočka* 'mummy-Dim', and *kapuka* for *kapustka* 'cabbage-Dim', appeared at the very beginning as base forms. The self-invented *kanjaka* (Fem. 1st declension class at 1;1, confused in gender at 1;9, afterwards Masc.) for *karandaš* 'pencil&Masc' shows the use of this pattern. *Kanjaka* was picked up and used by the caregivers in various cases. Later on, *kanjasik* and *kajandasik* occurred, the first reduced and diminutivized, and the second representing a usually diminutivized form *karandašik* from *karandaš*, as well as derived from *kanjaka*, *kanjakočka* 'pencil-Dim' in various case forms. At 1;11, Varja added an explanation *ja znaju, konjaka – eto kon', lošad', eto karandašik* 'I know, konjaka [from *kon'* 'steed'] is a steed, a horse, this is a pencil.

As Varja learned to name body parts, she started to use parallel diminutives for each word, such as *uka* / *ut'ka* for *ruka* / *ručka* 'hand / hand-Dim'. A bit later (1;2) while trying to repeat the word *platoček* 'handkerchief-Dim' the child uses familiar morphological structures: *pataka*, *patoc'k*, *patocika*; however, only the variant *patotik* declined as *patotika*, *patotiki* persisted in spontaneous speech. Other early diminutives are *kaxetika* or *kasetika* for *konfeta*, *konfetka*, *konfetočka* 'sweet-Dim' and the adjective *goiki* for *golen'kij* 'naked-Dim:Masc', used for all genders and numbers, which persisted in that form for some time.

Adult words such as *šar* 'ball', *šarik* 'ball-Dim', although representing the basic word and the derived diminutive respectively, may refer both to a globe, balloon, ball, beads or marbles, and only the context allows us to decide whether we speak about a large or a small thing of the same shape. In Varja's discourse, this difference is maintained; she names large and small things respectively with different words. The word *soska*, *sosočka* 'dummy', 'dummy-DIM' (1;6) has two realizations in Varja's speech: *sosaka* and *sosika*, with maybe the first variant reflecting the basic form and the second reflecting the diminutive form.

By 1;7 the following phrases illustrate the diminutive use: *dam kam-us-it-ik* 'I'll give the stone-Dim-Dim-Dim', a word that does not occur in CDS, while Varja is asking her mother to give her the stone *kam-us-yk*, *kuda pitijajsja?* 'stone-Dim-Dim, where are you lost?' (looking for the stone). As is typical of pragmatics, the request coming in a form of suggestion nearly implies a diminutive in such a context. When a four-syllable neuter form *koljosiko* 'wheel-Dim:Neut' was uttered with its word-final phonetic realization [a], which is a typical unstressed feminine ending, Varja reduced it into *kaseka*, yet the suffix was kept. The suffix *-k-* followed by the ending *-a* is the most frequent word-form ending in Russian, thus even erroneous forms follow this pattern.

The majority of acquired words entered the same morphological model, and the ending *-ka* prevailed. The next frequent diminutive type was formed with unstressed *-ik*: *gasjotik* for *goršoček* 'pot-Dim', *kamanik* for *karmančik* 'pocket-Dim' and with the stressed *-ok*: *pisikok* for *pojasok* 'belt-Dim' (at 1;7 also *piisjok*, *piisjotik*), and *kisikok* for *košel'jok* 'purse-Dim', lexicalized, where the form is adapted to the phonetic abilities of the child. Still, it was followed by *von kukaka izit*, *kukaka goikaja*, *i Vaika goikaja* 'there

is a doll-Dim, the doll-Dim is naked-Dim, and Varja-Dim is also naked-Dim. Varja says it, firSt. Pointing to the naked doll on the floor, and then uncovering her own belly.

Neuter diminutives with unstressed inflectional endings are understood as feminine. This becomes clear from the fact that children form the illegal feminine accusative ending with *-u* from these nouns, e.g. *sitečku* from *sitečko* 'sieve&Fem\*-Acc' instead of the correct *sitečko* 'sieve&Neut-Acc' (2;4,5). The preference for the accusative forms with *-u* can be perceived also in some masculine nouns, e.g. *kusjotiku* 'piece&Fem\*:Dim-Acc' instead of *kusoček* 'piece&Masc:Dim-Acc', *takanik-u* 'glass&Fem\*:Dim-Acc' for the regular *stakančik* 'glas&Masc:Dim-Acc' (1;6). Another candidate for such shift is the genitive ending with *-i* instead of the correct *-a*, e.g. *u sanjonk-i* 'at the elephant&Fem\*-Dim:Gen' for *u sanjonka* 'at the elephant&Masc-Dim:Gen'. Even by 1;9 Varja says *sapos'ku* 'boot&Fem\*-Dim:Acc' instead of *sapožok* 'boot&Masc-Dim:Acc'. The inverse shift is rare but occurs in the nominative: *kapeik* 'kopeck&Masc\*:Nom' instead of feminine *kopejka*.

Another mistake is overgeneralization in plural formation, when some suffixes should be changed, e.g., *cypljonkam* instead of *cypljatam* 'to the chicken&Masc-Dim:Pl:Dat' (1;9). At 2;5 Varja still wants to apply the suffix *-jonok*, regularly deriving the names of small animals directly from the names of adult animals instead of using the different standard lexemes: *barašonok* instead of *barašek* or *jagnjonok* 'lamb' and later *korovjonok* for *teljonok* 'calf' from *korova* 'cow'.

A false accent is present in *IUčik* instead of *lučOk* 'onion-Dim' (1;10).<sup>7</sup> A strange diminutive participle is found in *poxudelen'kij* 'having lost the weight-Dim'. The stacked *tjupan'tin'ki* 'tulip-Dim:Dim-Pl' is not present in CDs. At 2;0 Varja invents the diminutivized adjective *čern-ovat-yj* 'slightly black', but most of the colour diminutivized adjectives have the suffix *-en'k-*. At 2;6 Varja confounds the adult suffixes and says *zel-en-ušk-a* instead of *zel-jonk-a* 'green liniment'.

Two or three diminutive suffixes are combined in the same word to form a double diminutive non-existent in CDs: *tit-ot-in'k-ami* for *cvetočen'kami* 'flower-Dim-Dim:Instr' (at 1;4–1;5), *bant-it-ik* from *bant* 'bow-Dim-Dim', *san-jon-yt-ik* from *slon* 'elephant-Dim-Dim-Dim' (at 1;9), *pit-et'-ki* for *ptičečki* from *ptička* 'bird-Dim-Dim' (1;10), and *kal-eč-ečk-i* from *kol'co* 'ring-Dim-Dim:Pl:Nom' (2;10,5). At 1;9 she engages in a self-invented game of using successive variants of diminutive suffixes, for example *mamat'ka-mamuset'ka* from *mama* 'mummy', and *kamisyk-kamusitik-kamusik-kamik* from *kamen'* 'stone'. An example of a self-made diminutive singulative is *pyl-juš-ečka* with two suffixes, a singulative derived from *pyl'* 'dust', which appeared in CDs at 2;4,5. A specific pronominal adverb form is *tutoček* 'here' (2;0), made from a colloquial diminutive in *-i tutočki* (base *tut* 'here'). After the adult proposes a diminutive *xozjajuška* 'host-Fem-Dim', two different base forms *xozjajka*, *xozjaek* 'host-Fem, host-Masc\*' appear (2;4) in the child's speech. Varja produces an innovation *na minut-Masc\*:Acc* instead of *na minut(k)u* 'for a minute-Fem:Acc' (2;10,5).

This may be a back-formation, like *loga* from *ložka* 'spoon', where the alternation is potentially correct. In family discourse, back-formation or reduction of the suffix *-jonok*

to *-jon* is common, and therefore picked up by the child. Thus the child produces a fictive simplex *midvizon* 'bear' (2;10) from the diminutive *medvežonok* 'baby-bear'. Some truncations and back-formations could be understood as de-diminutivization markers, maybe increasing the object in form or meaning, or maybe just putting it to the norm.

At 2;2 Varja suggests that *gus'ka* (non-existent in CDS) is a sort of *gusenica* 'caterpillar' and produces *batatišče* as 'grandmother-Aug' from *batata* (the home name of her granny). Being small, Varja called her *nagunik* instead of *nagrudnik* 'bib' (from *na* 'on'+ *grud* 'čest' + suffix *-nik*); by the age of 2;6 she tried to make a joke by establishing an etymological connection. She asked whether *nagunik* is a kind of *noga* 'leg' (since the first vowel is unstressed, it is pronounced as *nagA*). Rare in child speech, but common for adults is the augmentative *žarišča* from *žara* 'heat' (at the age of 2;10).

Varja (at 2;5) suddenly uses a diminutivized form of her name that her parents have never heard before, i.e., *Varjunček*. Puzzled, they ask who says it, and Varja answers that it is her nanny (which is, by the way, doubtful). Immediately afterwards she produces the non-existent hypocoristics for the other family members with the same pattern: *mamunček*, *papunček*, *batatunček*, and *dedunček*. Although the word should be written with *-ik*, because only *-i* in *-ik* does not disappear during declension, whereas *-e* in *-ek* does, we prefer to write it with an *-e-*, because Varja pronounces it here as *-ek* even in its unstressed form. It could be a case of hypercorrection; it did not last.

In all periods of development, Varja rarely reduced and simplified adult forms; she rather used other, innovative diminutives. She overgeneralized non-diminutive and diminutive forms as in *mamuika*, *papuika*, *asjat'ka*, *xaosiki*, *kajosiki*, *batatin'ka* (for 'mommy, daddy, horsy, goody, wheels, granny') etc. According to Gavrilova (2002: 85–90), such gender shift in general is one of the favourite strategies in Russian CDS.

The pragmatic/semantic meaning in the use of diminutives can be illustrated by phrases such as: *Eto sumočka moja, vidiš', u menja sumka, ja sumku nadela* (1;9) 'This is my bag-Dim, you see, I have got a bag, I have put the bag on.' The bag is here a belonging; the item taken makes the child grow in her own eyes; she is already wearing an adult's accessory, and the non-diminutive after the diminutive is marking it.

Diminutives were not strongly associated with female speech. In the sessions where her father vs. her mother and grandmother are involved, the male input also offers quite many salient non-standard diminutives.

Augmentatives are probably acquired later than diminutives, yet their function is first fulfilled by back-formations from diminutives. Without the diminutive suffix, the noun becomes the symbol of a bigger object, e.g., *bub* for *bublik* 'donuts' or *jog* for *jožik* instead of *jož* 'hedgehog', confused with 'yoga' (after 2 years).

All in all, the developmental hierarchy seems to be as follows: 1) imitation of a whole word, 2) individual suffixes *-ti*, *-ka* applied to various words without an opposition to the base noun, 3) a small number of unspecified suffixes with *-k-* as formational element applied to all possible words, 4) multiple suffixation and its productivity in stacking many suffixes in one stem, 5) consideration of gender of the noun before and after diminutivization with all possible semantic and pragmatic implications of gender

changes. Various morphophonemic aspects of diminutive formation, such as consonant mutation or dissimilation, were associated with certain steps in general phonological (or even articulatory) development. Considering the fact that in colloquial Russian, gender shifts are common as a special marker of tenderness (for animate and less common for inanimate referents), we might expect that the cases of transition from one gender to another could be classified as a developmental phenomenon. Most of the examples in the corpus conformed to the general use of diminutives, but as we can conclude from the data collection, deviations can be sporadically registered in gender, form, animacy, declension, semantics and pragmatics. Some forms are present in CDS, some are innovative and competing with already existing units.

#### 2.4.2 *The structural role of diminutives (Filipp and Varja)*

Unlike Varja, Filipp uses diminutives at first unproductively. Since no diary data is available we cannot give a detailed picture of his acquisition of diminutives step by step. Based on the recordings we may only discuss the data found in his spontaneous speech. The first contrastive instances occur at 1;8. Even after this age many words are used only in the diminutivized form without corresponding simplex forms; for example *zajka* 'hare-Dim', *pupok* 'navel-Dim', and *miška* 'bear-Dim' never occur as simplex until 2;3. The explanation may be that the simplex forms of all these nouns contain rare codas: there are only 29 Russian nouns ending in *-up* like *pup* 'navel', 20 words ending in *-ed'* like *medved'* 'bear', and only 6 words ending in *-jac* like *zajac* 'hare' (Zaliznjak 1977). Rare codas do not allow a child put the word into a phonological connection with other nouns by rhyming it with other words as in nursery rhymes or counting rhymes. The simplex form of these nouns is opaque in declension. Adding vocalic case endings to *medved'* 'bear' thus requires the change of the word-final voiceless [t'] to the voiced [d']. The form *zajac* 'hare' loses the last *-a-* of the stem in most indirect cases, e.g. *zajca* 'hare-GEN'. Diminutive forms make both words rhyme and allow for learning and declining of them easily and correctly in similar way (cf. *miš-ka* / *miški* 'bear-Dim:Nom / Gen' *zaj-ka* / *zaj-ki* 'hare-Dim:Nom / Gen' instead of having two different morphological patterns for 'bear' and 'hare'). Our suggestion is that using diminutives without oppositions helps mothers to organize the lexicon in such a way that most nouns sound similar and may be united into phonologically homogeneous groups. This helps later to build declension patterns.

For example, the famous Russian tale "Turnip" provides a strong pattern for building the accusative from the nominative. When telling the story every child must repeat the accusative of six different words. All these words are diminutives, or hypocoristics of the 2nd class ending in *-ka*: *Dedka za repku, babka za dedku, vnučka za babku, žučka za vnučku, koška za žučku, myška za košku – vytaščili repku* 'grandfather-Dim:Nom after turnip-Dim:Acc, grandmother-Dim:Nom after grandfather-Dim:Acc, granddaughter-Nom after grandmother-Dim:Acc, žučka-Hyp:Nom after granddaughter-Acc, cat-Dim:Nom after žučka-Hyp:Acc, mouse-Dim:Nom after cat-Dim:Acc – pulled out the turnip'. The tale in this form has a strong rhythmic connection and all the

words rhyme, which makes it easy to remember. Most nouns from this tale occur in the first miniparadigms.

If we retell the story using simplex forms, the rhythmic structure and the rhyming of the forms get lost: *Ded za repu, babuška za deda, vnučka za babušku, žučka za vnučku, koška za žučku, myš' za košku*. Therefore, not only the productivity of a pattern is important here but also the rhyming codas of the 2nd class diminutives.

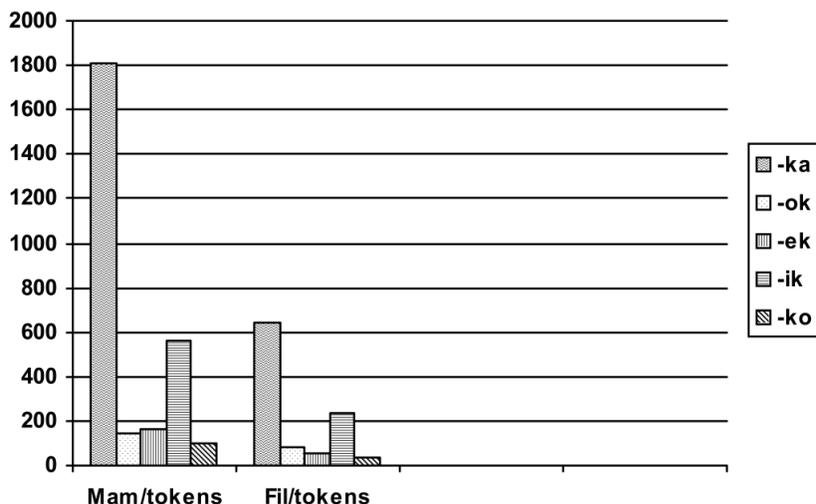
After 2;3 new and rare case forms first occur in diminutives, e.g. the instrumental case that is usually acquired later than other case forms (Gvozdev 1961: 390). Compare example (1) from Filipp's recording at 2;3:

- (1) \*MAM: A kto eto idet, bol'šoj?  
 %eng: and who is coming, so big?  
 \*FIL: eto medved' cvetočkom.  
 %eng: it is a bear (with the) flower-Dim:Instr

Even a rare simplex *medved'* 'bear' that was never used before, occurs in the example (1). However, the lately acquired instrumental case is first formed from the diminutive *cvetoček* 'flower'. More than half of the nouns in Filipp's speech are still used in their base form.

He almost never makes commission errors, except for errors in unstable suffix vowels. Note that the suffixes *-ek* and *-ok* lose the vowel when the inflectional case ending is added (*petuška* 'cock-Dim:GEN', *zamočka* 'lock-Dim:GEN') whereas *-ik* remains unchangeable (*ključika* 'key-Dim:GEN'). Which of these patterns is preferred? The longer but transparent forms in *-ik*, or the shorter but opaque forms in *-ok/-ek*? Graph 5 shows the cumulative distribution of suffixes (measured in tokens from 0 to 1800) in the speech of Filipp and his mother.

The absolute dominance of the feminine *-ka* suffix is characteristic of the speech of both Filipp and his mother. All in all, the mother has used more than 1800 tokens of nouns containing this suffix. The distribution of masculine suffixes is as follows: Filipp used 24 words with the stressed *-ok*, 18 three-syllabic words with the unstressed *-ek* and 45 words with *-ik* (more than both *-ok/-ek* taken together). The unstressed *-ek*, in fact, sounds like *-ik*, so that the child is not aware of the difference in unmarked nominative singular.<sup>8</sup> Diminutives with the *-ik* suffix are also more productive in the speech of Filipp, who uses them for all vehicles (*avtobusik* 'bus-Dim', *vertoletik* 'helicopter-Dim', *korablik* 'ship-Dim', *vagončik* 'wagon-Dim'). In all data of Filipp, only diminutives with *-ik* (*bantik*, *palčik*, *mjačik*, *zajčik*) occur in the dative and genitive case, which shows that transparent formation is preferable. We did not register any erroneous formations in which the unstable *-e-* or *-o-* vowel would be conserved. However, the overgeneralization of this rule was observed by Gvozdev (1961: 397) and such examples occur in published data (*kniga bez\* epilka* 'a book without epilogue:GEN' where the word *epilogue* is erroneously treated by a child as a Russian diminutive with the suffix *-ok*, cf. Voeikova & Eliseeva 1993).



Graph 5. Cumulative distribution of diminutive suffixes in the speech of Filipp and his mother

#### 2.4.3 Comparison of the two children

As in many studies on child diminutives, the mothers' and children's imitations of their interlocutors' diminutivized words promoted a similar overall diminutive use. The difference between the two children studied lies in the age of suffix appropriation and in the strategy of acquisition – creative and emotional in Varja but repetitive and not motivated by pragmatic and semantic factors in Filipp. The latter was shown by the low percentage of diminutive-simplex oppositions in the boy's speech and by the fact that he rather uses diminutives from common nouns than from personal names. However, our findings do not support previous studies on gender differences in the parental use of diminutives. Some nouns never occur as simplex forms until a certain age. The simplex forms of all these nouns contain rare codas. The strategies which children use in the acquisition of the form and pragmatics of diminutives are variable. Consequently, diminutivization is a sphere where individual properties of the person's verbal and cognitive style come to the fore. In particular, children differ in their choice between constructed and ready-made forms.

Table 5 shows how this pattern helps Filipp to acquire the inflectional endings of nouns. Percentage of base forms (PBF) is a measure of nominative-like tokens of all noun forms (Voeikova & Gagarina 2002). Other noun tokens are marked either for case or for number. The decrease of PBF shows the growing mastery of morphology by a child.

Table 5 shows that the PBF for diminutives is constantly lower than for all nouns from 1;8 to 2;3 – before 1;8 there are no inflected forms of nouns – when a child ac-

quires the first mini-paradigms. The situation changes starting from 2;3. From this age on, the PBF in diminutives is always higher than in the simplicia. Since this situation is homogeneous before and after this turning point we may look for the explanation in the system of case oppositions at that time. Starting from 2;2 Filipp is able to produce all possible case forms both in the singular and in the plural (e.g. *v mashinax* ‘in car-pl:loc’, *medvezhat* ‘baby-bear-pl:gen’, *petuxov* ‘cock-pl:gen’) that did not occur in any of the preceding recordings.

**Table 5.** PBF of all nouns and diminutives in the speech production of Filipp

Age	PBF all Nouns %	PBF Dim %	Total N tokens	Total Dim tokens
1;8	91%	89%	303	37
1;9	86%	72%	363	88
1;10	83%	77%	104	30
1;11	79%	63%	85	22
2;0	63%	38%	204	53
2;1	60%	55%	451	134
2;2	61%	50%	406	105
2;3	64%	49%	420	137
2;4	63%	68%	398	103
2;5	61%	72%	373	90
2;6	59%	64%	208	73
2;7	51%	53%	353	121
2;8	48%	72%	352	87

After 2;3 almost all possible case forms from different stems occur in every recording. This period is, thus, characterizing Filipp’s growing mastery in the production of case forms. Therefore, as we assume, he no longer needs the help by diminutive productive pattern, and indirect case forms from diminutives lose their leading role in his system of paradigm formation.

The detailed information from the diary of Varja shows that she uses diminutives even more frequently than her mother. She is aware of the semantic and pragmatic difference between diminutives and corresponding simplicia because she often produces several different diminutives from one and the same word. Also, already in the first recordings Varja is able to use several case or number forms from one and the same noun. Therefore we could expect that the simplifying structural function of diminutives does not play such an important role in her speech. Nevertheless, we examined the PBF value for all noun tokens and for diminutives separately for Varja’s speech in the same way as we did for Filipp. The results are given in Table 6 below.

**Table 6.** PBF of all nouns and diminutives in the speech production of Varja

Age	PBF all Nouns %	PBF Dim %	Total N tokens	Total Dim tokens
1;6	89%	90%	144	121
1;7	71.7%	60%	505	178
1;9	70.1%	51%	616	217
1;10	67.1%	42%	308	104
2;0	60%	15%	478	80
2;4	51%	36.2%	427	152
2;9	57%	18.9%	517	74

In spite of the difference between the two children under observation, the decrease of PBF value in all nouns is very similar (from 89% to 57% for Varja compared to 91% to 48% for Filipp). However, with Varja, this process starts earlier: Filipp reaches the value of 79% at 1;11, whereas Varja uses about 30% of nouns in non-base form already at 1;7. This is natural, taking into consideration her earlier language development in general. As for the distribution of PBF in diminutives, it looks different in the data of the two children. With the exception of the first recording, in which the value for all nouns and for diminutives is the same, Varja constantly uses more non-base forms from diminutives than from all nouns together. At 2;0 and 2;9 the PBF value is lower than 20%, which is unusual even for spoken adult Russian, for which the percentage of nominatives is about 30% (according to Krasil'nikova 1990). Most diminutives used by Varja in these recordings are either plurals or indirect case forms. For Filipp, the dominance of diminutives in non-base forms is only obvious until 2;3. In the speech of Varja during the period of observation diminutives are not only of utmost importance for the establishing of psychological contact but also for the expression of case and number marking. The restricted amount of data and the fact that there are some gaps in the corpus of Varja do not allow statistical assessment of these findings. However, they may be seen as a tendency that needs further investigation.

As to emotionality, the diminutive use was accompanied by special intonation and coloured the utterances with endearment, but it also always had a smack of exploration and play.

Our suggestion is that diminutives not only help to avoid the unproductive 3rd feminine declension class but also organize masculine nouns rhythmically, providing them with similar rhyming codas. This helps to learn the 2nd declension patterns. As for the masculine 1st declension, both children use more nouns with the transparent suffix *-ik*, compared to the non-transparent *-ek* and *-ok* suffixes. This tendency is especially clear in the speech of Filipp and his mother. However, overgeneralization errors made by Varja also go in this direction. Conservation of one and the same stem is preferable even when the resulting forms become longer.

### 3. Discussion and conclusions

Diminutives help generalizing the use of grammatical markers, but this tendency is not absolute and in any case it is much more complex than was previously argued (Kempe et al. 2003). To serve as a trigger of a declension system is not their real purpose; they play other important roles in some semantic and morphological spheres, and this can be demonstrated with the help of abundant longitudinal data. Kempe et al. (2003) examined how diminutives common in Russian child-directed speech affect gender learning. In their study, Russian children aged 2;9–4;8 produced fewer agreement errors for diminutive than for simplex nouns. In general, this is true, except for the fact that not all adults use diminutives, the growing tendency in modern Russian to employ alternative forms on *-ka* may produce an even greater effect on the acquisition of nouns belonging to the 2nd declension class. Diminutive forms are certainly more emotional and more salient, and at the same time more regular than the simplex forms. It is shown and illustrated statistically that in the early stages of development the system of declension develops faster with diminutives than with simplicia, at least with some children. However, our subjects Varja and Filipp do not always use them correctly. Diminutives may be one of the means to generalize the use of grammatical markers.

Children may switch from one productive declension pattern to another, but the words that tend to change their gender belong to the masculine minority in the material. This may trigger agreement errors in hypocoristics of the type *\*moja Petja* ‘my-Fem Petja-Masc’ that are especially frequent in the speech of boys. However, our subject Filipp does not make such mistakes, maybe because of his general imitative strategy. The comparison of our two subjects shows that Varja produced more non-existent but legal diminutives that did not occur in CDS. This may be shown by the fact that such diminutives occur first without the corresponding simplex forms both in her speech and in CDS.

As to the pragmatics of diminutives, we would suggest an important function for them in adult-child communication, which lasts even after childhood. This is the distinction of the “things for us” versus “things for everyone / the others”: diminutives must turn objects (referents) to be good towards the child, to make the child happy, not to be his/her enemies (Protassova 1999, 2001a, 2001b). Our study shows that the pragmatic function of diminutives is complex: on the one hand, the mother uses diminutives to make the world look nice for her child, on the other, diminutives reflect the fact that a child lives in a world of small object.

The data of the two Russian children show different strategies in the acquisition of diminutives. This is maybe due to their sex (feminine vs. masculine endings become accordingly more frequent in CDS), level of language development (in the early stages, the early-talker Varja has broader phonological possibilities than the later-talker Filipp), the strategy of the caregivers (to use emotional speech or to remain more restrained) and the children themselves (to imitate the way the adults behave verbally or to invent games on their own). This specificity concerns the percentage of proper

and common nouns and the general correlation between the number and percentage of diminutives in the speech of the child and his/her caregiver. These percentages correspond in Varja's data (Table 3), whereas the mother of Filipp uses diminutives very frequently in the early period when the child himself does not yet produce them. Only after Filipp starts to use diminutives productively, does the percentage of diminutive types and tokens in the speech production of the child and his mother coincide (Graph 1). However, the frequent use of diminutives in CDs is characteristic of both dyads. Also, in spite of a big difference in the speech style of both caregivers, their use of diminutives is rather similar: there are more diminutive lemmas used without an opposition to their simplicia in the speech of both mothers (Graphs 3, 4). Nevertheless, the opposed forms are much more frequent if measured in tokens rather than diminutives without an opposition.

There are also several structural reasons for using diminutives. They usually move nouns from the unproductive and marginal declension classes to the productive ones, as feminine nouns with the ending *-ka*. Even without the change of a declension class they help to grammatically organize the lexicon in a way that makes unknown words sound like familiar ones. This may be shown by the fact that many Russian diminutives without corresponding simplex forms are produced from words with a phonologically unusual right edge. The repetition of such rhyming words facilitates the acquisition of inflectional patterns. The use of these properties was especially important for Filipp. He did not tend to be very emotional during the recordings; therefore we could not find many examples of a clear pragmatic use of diminutives. However, his system of declension develops faster first with diminutives than with simplicia (Table 5).

One of the most comprehensive considerations for diminutive use in adults comes to us through their developmental history. They are used individually, both in CDs and in child language; they have personal imprints, and they serve as a tool to train and try out grammatical and pragmatic phenomena. In addition, they accumulate culturally loaded emotional contexts.

## Notes

1. We thank Ineta Savickienė and Wolfgang U. Dressler for their helpful comments and suggestions on earlier versions of our chapter. We are also grateful to the anonymous reviewers for their proposals that helped to improve the paper.
2. The simplex verb *kušat'* is already pragmatically loaded: it is used by educated people only in the 2nd and 3rd person and is not recommended for use in the 1st person singular referring to an adult speaker.
3. The suffix *-onok* which is regularly used for the derivation of nouns designating baby animals cannot be indeed treated as diminutive *sensu stricto*, but it is used in this sense by children; this can be proved by the use of the suffix for inanimate objects.
4. In parallel, new contracted from phrases and suffixed words have the same structure: *vstrečnaja polosa* – *vstrečka* ‘centre strip’, *proščal'nye slova* – *proščalka* ‘concluding remarks’, as well as productive *-nik* for masculine: *platnyj student* – *platnik* ‘student who pays for his studies’. The dominance of the feminine declension is strengthened by the non-accentuated endings of the neuter which are understood as *-a*.
5. It is also important for acquisition that there are other possibilities to express intensification of the quality, e.g., augmentative prefix in the adjectives *pre#sladkij* ‘Aug#sweet’ from *sladkij* ‘sweet’. Such augmentatives are usually used in reduplicative form with their simplexes, e.g. *bolšaja-prebolšaja* ‘big-Aug-big’, or simply *bolšoj-bolšoj* ‘very big’, lit. ‘big-big’.
6. Filipp was tape-recorded especially for the Cross-linguistic Project on Pre- and Protomorphology in Language Acquisition coordinated by W.U. Dressler on behalf of the Austrian Academy of Sciences.
7. Capital letters indicate a stressed vowel.
8. This may be the explanation also for Varja’s form *na pesotike* ‘on the sand-Dim’, where the unstable vowel remains intact.

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