Slovenian diminutive adjectives and the adjectivizer *-ast*

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Diminutive suffixes in Slovenian

- Diminutive suffixes can appear in different categories.
- To diminutivize a verb or a noun, you just need to add a diminutive suffix to the structure.

(1) bož-a-ti   bož-**k**-a-ti
stroke-TV-INF stroke-K-TV-INF
'to stroke'   'to stroke in a
loving manner'

(2) zob   zob-ə**k**
tooth tooth-K
'tooth' 'small/adorable tooth'

(3) stop-a-ti   stop-**ic**-a-ti
step-TV-INF step-IC-TV-INF
'to step' 'to make small steps'

(4) hiš-a   hiš-**ic**-a
house-NOM.SG hiš-IC-NOM.SG
'house' 'small/adorable
house'

Making diminutive adjectives in Slovenian

- Diminutive adjectives, on the other hand, seem to be created by adding a diminutive and an adjectivizing suffix:

(5) sam sam-**c-at**
    alone alone-C-AT
    'alone' 'almost alone'

(6) čevelj čevelj-**c**
    shoe shoe-C
    'shoe' 'small shoe'

(7) las las-**at**
    hair hair-AT
    'hair' 'long-haired'

(8) siv siv-**k-ast**
    gray gray-K-AST
    'gray' 'grayish'

(9) fant fant-ə**k**
    boy boy-K
    'boy' 'small boy'

(10) sluz sluz-**ast**
     slime slime-AST
     'slime' 'slimy'

Focus of the talk: *-kast* I

- In diminutive adjectives, items like *-k* and *-ast* need to appear together.
  - Potentially the motivation for the claim in traditional grammars, e.g., Toporišič 2000 that *-kast* is a single suffix – see Sicherl 2016 for an overview.

  (8′) siv   siv-k-ast   *siv-k   *siv-ast
        gray   gray-K-AST   gray-K   gray-AST
        'gray' 'grayish'

- Are we dealing with *-k* and *-ast* or *-kast*?
  - On the one hand, we see that *-k* and *-ast* are independent suffixes.
  - On the other hand, their inseparability in diminutive adjectives suggests a single suffix *-kast*.

The goals & the road-map for this talk

- We will focus on a diminutive adjectives in Slovenian, in particular *-kast* (the most common such suffix).
- We will argue that *-kast* is in fact the combination of *-k* and *-ast*.

1. We will analyze *-k* and *-ast*:
   - *-ast* is a categorically flexible adjectival suffix expressing some kind of relation to its base.
   - *-k* is a categorically flexible diminutive suffix.

2. We will show the structure of diminutive adjectives.

3. We will explore why the diminutive suffix needs to appear with an adjectivizing suffix in adjectives.
   - Adjectives ending in *-k* cannot inflect, and *-ast* makes them declinable.

Establishing *-ast* as a suffix: Verbs

- Toporišič 2000: *-ast* is an augmentative verbal suffix

  (11) lom-i-ti   lom-ast-i-ti
        break-TV-INF break-AST-TV-INF
        'to break'   'to trample'

- But there are only a few verbs with the suffix.
- Not productive (any more), we leave this aside.

Establishing *-ast* as a suffix: Adjectivizing roots

- Sometimes *-ast* attaches to bases that only appear in bound form.
- Thus, we assume *-ast* can adjectivize roots:

(12) *mut   mut-ec   mut-ast   (13) *škil   škil-i-ti   škil-ast
        mute mute-EC   mute-AST   squint squint-TV-INF squint-AST
                'mute person' 'mute (adj.)'   'to squint'   'cross-eyed'

- We assume the root has a meaning upon which the adjective's meaning is built.
  - 'Related to the property expressed in the root'.

- Adjectives with *-ast* can express similarity with the base noun in terms of color, (14), shape, (15), consistency, (10), behavior, smell or taste, (16).
  - Ambiguity: *jagodast* can mean 'strawberry shaped', 'strawberry colored', or 'tasting of strawberries'

(14) žafran   žafran-ast
     saffron   saffron-AST
     'saffron' 'saffron-colored'

(10) sluz   sluz-ast
     slime   slime-AST
     'slime'   'slimy'

(15) disk   disk-ast
     disc   disc-AST
     'disc'   'disc-shaped'

(16) jagod-a   jagod-ast
     strawberry   strawberry-AST
     'strawberry' 'strawberry-like'

- All of these examples have simple nouns as bases.

Establishing *-ast* as a suffix: Adjectivizing nouns II

- The base can also be a compound or a complex noun:

(17)	slad-o-led	slad-o-led-ast	(18)	dež-n-ik	dež-n-ik-ast	
	sweet-O-ice	sweet-O-ice-AST		rain-N-IK	rain-N-IK-AST	
	'ice cream'	'ice cream–like'		'umbrella'	'umbrella-like'	

- The structural type of the base (simple/complex/compound) does not seem to correlate to the meaning of the adjective.
- In all cases, the adjective's meaning is related to that of the base.

Establishing *-ast* as a suffix: Adjectivizing nouns III

- If the base denotes a person with a specific property, *-ast* adjectives have a dispositional reading.
  - ▶ A propensity/tendency towards a particular behavior defined by the base noun (Fabregas 2020: 174, via Rauner 1999)

(19) cmer-a cmer-ast
crybaby-NOM.SG crybaby-AST
'crybaby' 'behaving like
a crybaby'

(20) trap trap-ast
fool fool-AST
'fool' 'foolish'

- Toporišič 2000 also mentions meanings 'covered with/abundance of' and 'illness'.
  - A lot of overlap.

(21)	kock-a	kock-ast
cube-NOM.SG	cube-AST
'cube'	'checkered/ cube-like'

(23)	akn-e	akn-ast
acneNOM.PL	acne-AST
'acne'	'acne-covered'

(22)	pik-a	pik-ast
dot-NOM.SG	dot-AST
'dot'	'(polka-)dotted'

(24)	rak	rak-ast
cancer	cancer-AST
'cancer'	'cancerous'

Establishing *-ast* as a suffix: Adjectivizing nouns V

- When the base noun denotes a type of material, the *ast*-adjective means 'made of x'.
    - Depending on the context, also 'related to the property of the base'.

(25) bron   bron-ast
      bronze   bronze-AST
      'bronze' '(made of) bronze'

(26) gumi   gumij-ast
      rubber   rubber-AST
      'rubber' '(made of) rubber'

- For this meaning, other more common adjectivizers like *-en* and *-ov* are more typical:

(27) les   les-en
      wood   wood-EN
      'wood'   'wooden'

(28) brez-a   brez-ov
      birch-NOM.SG   birch-OV
      'birch'   'made of birch'

Competition with other adjecitivizers

- When the base can take both *-ast* and a more common adjectivizer (*-en* or *-ov*), the *-ast* adjective gets the meaning 'related to'

  (29)   jagod-en   sok   jagod-ast   sok
            strawberry-EN juice   strawberry-AST juice
            'strawberry juice'   'juice tasting of strawberries'

  (30)   bresk-ov sok   breskv-ast sok
            peach-EN juice   peach-AST juice
            'peach juice'   'juice tasting of peaches'

  (31)   jagod-ast   bresk-ov sok
            strawberry-AST peach-EN juice
            'peach juice tasting of strawberries'

- All denominal adjectives with *-ast* express relation to some property of the base.

Adjectivizing adjectives

- The suffix *-ast* can modify adjectives, but these are either . . .
    - derived:

        (32) vod-a   vod-en   vod-en-ast
              water   water-EN   water-EN-AST
              'water' 'watery'   'watery'

    - or loanwords – specifically, a subset of indeclinable adjectives:

        (33) roza   roz-ast
              pink   pink-AST
              'pink' 'pink'

- But these are relatively rare compared to both denominal *-ast* and deadjectival *-k-ast*.
- In these examples, *-ast* doesn't change the meaning of the base.

Overview of *ast*-adjectives

- Adjectives with *-ast*, extracted from Gigafida 2.0 (more than 5 tokens)
  - Annotated for the category of the base
  - Excluding adjectives with the suffix *-k*

category of the base	number	example	
bound root	11	*pocast*	'gooey'
noun	882	*mrežast*	'netted'
verb	2	*spreminjast*	'changeable'
adjective	10		
derived	7	*vodenast*	'watery'
loan-words	3	*rozast*	'pink'

Summing up *-ast*

- The suffix *-ast* can adjectivize roots, nouns and adjectives.
  - While the set of adjectivized nouns is non-uniform, adjectival bases only include derived and loaned bases.

- The meaning of denominal (and deradical) *-ast* adjectives is best paraphrased as 'related to a property of the base'.

- Put differently: *-ast* doesn't have a lot of semantic content, it simply adjectivizes the base.

Establishing -*k* as a suffix: The categorizing -*k*

- Nominalizing -k:

  (34) iz-del-a-ti   iz-del-ək
      out-work-TV-INF out-work-K
      'to make'   'product'

  (35) rdeč rdeč-k-a
      red.A red-K-F.NOM.SG
      'red'   'chickenpox/fire ant'

    ▶ A feminine agent suffix:

      (36) pev-əc   pev-k-a
            sing-EC   sing-K-F.NOM.SG
            'male singer' 'female singer'

- Adjectivizing -*k*

  (37) *šib   šib-i-ti   šib-ək
      weak weak-TV-INF weak-K
          'to weaken' 'weak'

  (38) tež-a   tež-ək
      weight-NOM.SG weight-K
      'weight'   'heavy'

Establishing -*k* as a suffix: The modifying -*k*

- Diminutive -*k*: with nouns, verbs and adjectives.
    - Preserves the category of the base.
    - In nouns, gender is also preserved.

(39) fant-Ø   fant-ək-Ø
     boy-M.NOM.SG boy-K-M.NOM.SG
     'boy'   'small/adorable boy'

(40) ptic-a   ptič-k-a
     bird-F.NOM.SG bird-K-F.NOM.SG
     'bird'   'small/adorable bird'

(1) bož-a-ti   bož-k-a-ti
    stroke-TV-INF stroke-K-TV-INF
    'to stroke'   'to stroke in a
            loving manner'

(41) ljub   ljub-ək
     dear   dear-K
     'dear'   'cute'

- (41) is an exception: -*k* in adjectives tends to appear with other suffixes.

The modifying -*k* in diminutive adjectives I

- Despite the one exception, modifying suffixes in adjectives appear with other suffixes.
- In most cases -*k* appears with -*ast*, but other adjectivizing suffixes are possible.

  (42) prid-ən   prid-k-an
       good-N   good-K-AN
       'well-behaved'   'well-behaved (dim.)'

- As already shown, with adjectival bases -*ast* also requires a modifying suffix like -*k*.
  - Exception: Loanwords and a few complex adjectives.

  (8′) siv   siv-k-ast   *siv-k   *siv-ast
       gray   gray-K-AST   gray-K   gray-AST
       'gray' 'grayish'

Interpretation I

- *-k-ast* modifies an existing adjective to express a lower degree of the property in the base (that is, 'slightly adjectival', like English *-ish*).
  - ► Purely scalar meaning, unlike in Czech diminutive adjectives, which are expressive (Vanden Wyngaerd, Caha & De Clercq 2024).
  - ► This reading is typical of deadjectival adjectives, as noted in Fábregas 2014.

(43) plav-k-ast
blue-K-AST
'bluish'

(44) rdeč-k-ast
red-K-AST
'reddish'

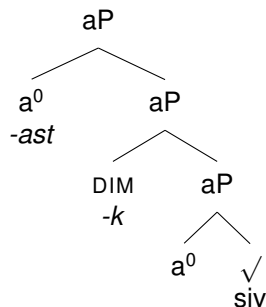(45) rumen-k-ast
yellow-K-AST
'yellowish'

Interpretation II

- There are minimal pairs showing that the diminutive reading comes from -*k*.

  (46) vod-en-ast   vod-en-k-ast
        water-EN-AST water-EN-K-AST
        'watery'   'slightly watery'

- -*k* is a modifying diminutive suffix.

The structure

(47)

```
              aP
            /    \
          a⁰      aP
         -ast    /  \
               DIM   aP
               -k   /  \
                   a⁰   √
                       siv
```

- Simplified structure.
  - ► The DIM in the tree is a vague representation
  - ► Maybe: *-k* realizes [scale] and [low degree], like *-ke* and *-tje* in Dutch (following De Belder 2011).
- The diminutive suffix is a modifier adjoined to the structure.
  - ► It always preserves the category of the base (and in nouns the gender).
    - ★ We take it to be a specifier (see e.g. Steriopolo 2008, Steriopolo, Markopoulos & Spyropoulos 2021).
- The suffix *-ast* re-adjectivizes the structure.
  - ► We return to this.

Another look at the data

- Extracted from Gigafida 2.0, adjectives ending with *-ast* (more than 5 tokens)
  - Including adjectives with *-k*

category of the base	number	example	
bound root	12	*pocast*	'gooey'
verb	2	*spreminjast*	'changeable'
noun w/o *-k*	882	*mrežast*	'netted'
noun w/ *-k*	47	*žepkast*	'pocketed'
adjective w/o *-k*	10	*vodenast*	'watery'
adjective w/ *-k*	22	*sivkast*	'grayish'

- Like other derived nouns, nominal diminutives with *-k* can be the base of an *-ast* adjective.
    - In these the presence of one suffix does not hinge on the presence of the other.

(48)   igr-ač-a   igr-ač-ast
      play-AČ-NOM.SG play-AČ-AST
      'toy'   'toy-like'

(49)   igr-ač-k-a   igr-ač-k-ast
      play-AČ-K-NOM.SG play-AČ-K-AST
      'small toy'   'small toy-like'

- Applies to diminutive suffixes other than *-k* as well:

(50)   igl-a   igl-ast
      needle-NOM.SG needle-AST
      'needle'   'needle-like/
                  covered with
                  needles'

(51)   igl-ic-a   igl-ič-ast
      needle-IC-NOM.SG needle-IC-AST
      'small needle'   'needle-like'

- Note that the meaning here is *not* 'slightly *noun*-like', but rather 'related to a small *noun*'.

But there is *-kast* in denominal adjectives II

- In fact, both the categorizing and the modifying *-k* can appear as a part of the base.

  (52)   žar   žar-ək žar-k-ast
           glow glow-K glow-K-AST
           'glow' 'ray'   'ray-like'

- Some items can be interpreted as adjectives made from deadjectival nominals or as diminutive adjectives (the more prominent interpretation).

  (53)   rdeč rdeč-k-a   rdeč-k-ast
           red   red-K   rdeč-K-AST
           'red' 'chickenpox/fire ant' 'reddish/covered in chickenpox'

- The take-away:
  - In deadjectival adjectives: *-k* and *-ast* come in a pair.
  - In denominal adjectives: the presence of one does not hinge on the other.

Pieces of *-kast*

- Given that adjectives get the 'slightly' reading only when *-k* is in the structure, we conclude that *-k* in *-k-ast* is the diminutive suffix.

- Given that *-ast* is in most cases an adjectivizer that has only a vague meaning of relation to the base, we conclude that *-ast* in *-k-ast* is the adjectivizer.

Next question

Why does the diminutive *-k* require an adjectivizer in adjectives?

- Diminutive adjectives ending in *-k* are well-formed syntactically and semantically but not *morphologically*.
- *-ast* makes them declinable.

Default inflection

Diminutive adjectives ending in *-k* are morphologically ill-formed.

- Inflection class follows *linear adjacency*: a stem's inflectional suffixes are determined by its *rightmost* morpheme (cf. Gouskova & Bobaljik 2022).
- Thus, the inflection of diminutives depends on the inflectional properties of *-k*, not the root/base.
- *-k* is unspecified for inflection class and thus receives *default* inflection given syntactic properties.
- While nouns and verbs have default inflection, adjectives do not – so *-k* is stuck.

Default nominal inflection

Most masculine nouns have the inflection class of *zdravnik* 'doctor'

		'doctor'
SG	NOM	zdravnik
	LOC	zdravniku
PL	NOM	zdravniki
	LOC	zdravnikih

Default nominal inflection

Most masculine nouns have the inflection class of *zdravnik* 'doctor' – this is the *default* masculine noun class.

		'doctor'	'taboo'
SG	NOM	zdravnik	tabu
	LOC	zdravniku	tabuju
PL	NOM	zdravniki	tabuji
	LOC	zdravnikih	tabujih

- Indeclinable nouns are very rare – loan words typically get this inflection even when phonologically ill-suited (e.g. end in a high vowel).

Default nominal inflection

Most masculine nouns have the inflection class of *zdravnik* 'doctor' – this is the *default* masculine noun class.

		'doctor'	'taboo'	'tooth'	'tooth (dim.)'	'Aljoša'	'Aljoša (dim.)'
SG	NOM	zdravnik	tabu	zob	zobək	Aljoša	Aljošək
	LOC	zdravniku	tabuju	zobu	zobku	Aljoši	Aljošku
PL	NOM	zdravniki	tabuji	zobje	zobki		
	LOC	zdravnikih	tabujih	zobeh	zobkih		

- Indeclinable nouns are very rare – loan words typically get this inflection even when phonologically ill-suited (e.g. end in a high vowel).
- Nouns with irregular inflection revert to this default when diminutivized.

Default nominal inflection

Likewise in the feminine:

		'linden'	'wing'	'wing (dim.)'
SG	NOM	lipa	perut	perutka
	LOC	lipi	peruti	perutki
PL	NOM	lipe	peruti	perutke
	LOC	lipah	perutih	perutkah

- Nouns with irregular inflection revert to this default when diminutivized.

Default verbal inflection

Many imperfective verbs have the theme vowel *a* throughout their inflection

	'lift'
INF	dvig**a**ti
PTCP.M.SG	dvig**a**l
PRES.1SG	dvig**a**m

Default verbal inflection

Many imperfective verbs have the theme vowel *a* throughout their inflection – this is the *default* verbal theme vowel, at least in the imperfective.

	'lift'	'Google'
INF	dvig**a**ti	gugl**a**ti
PTCP.M.SG	dvig**a**l	gugl**a**l
PRES.1SG	dvig**a**m	gugl**a**m

- Loan verbs typically get the theme vowel *a*.

Default verbal inflection

Many imperfective verbs have the theme vowel *a* throughout their inflection – this is the *default* verbal theme vowel, at least in the imperfective.

	'lift'	'Google'	'laugh'	'laugh (dim.)'
INF	dvig**a**ti	gugl**a**ti	smej**a**ti se	smejčk**a**ti se
PTCP.M.SG	dvig**a**l	gugl**a**l	smej**a**l se	smejčk**a**l se
PRES.1SG	dvig**a**m	gugl**a**m	smej**e**m se	smejčk**a**m se

- Loan verbs typically get the theme vowel *a*.
- Diminutive verbs take *a* throughout their paradigm, even when their bases don't (though this is very rare).

No default adjectival inflection

Native simplex and derived adjectives almost all have the same inflection:

		'young'
	M	mlad
NOM.SG	F	mlada
	N	mlado

No default adjectival inflection

Native simplex and derived adjectives almost all have the same inflection:

		'young'	'pink'
	M	mlad	roza
NOM.SG	F	mlad**a**	roza
	N	mlad**o**	roza

- However, loan adjectives are often indeclinable

No default adjectival inflection

Native simplex and derived adjectives almost all have the same inflection:

		'young'	'pink'	'matte'
	M	mlad	roza	mat
NOM.SG	F	mlada	roza	mat
	N	mlado	roza	mat

- However, loan adjectives are often indeclinable . . . even when phonologically well-suited (end in a consonant) – there is no default adjectival inflection.

No default adjectival inflection

Native simplex and derived adjectives almost all have the same inflection:

		'young'	'pink'	'matte'	'pink'	'matte'
	M	mlad	roza	mat	rozast	matast
NOM.SG	F	mlada	roza	mat	rozasta	matasta
	N	mlado	roza	mat	rozasto	matasto

- However, loan adjectives are often indeclinable . . . even when phonologically well-suited (end in a consonant) – there is no default adjectival inflection.
- These can be made declinable with *-ast* (as seen previously).

No default adjectival inflection

Native simplex and derived adjectives almost all have the same inflection:

		'young'	'pink'	'matte'	'pink'	'matte'	'grayish'
	M	mlad	roza	mat	rozast	matast	sivkast
NOM.SG	F	mlada	roza	mat	rozasta	matasta	sivkasta
	N	mlado	roza	mat	rozasto	matasto	sivkasto

- However, loan adjectives are often indeclinable . . . even when phonologically well-suited (end in a consonant) – there is no default adjectival inflection.
- These can be made declinable with *-ast* (as seen previously).
- The same is true of diminutive adjectives.

Non-default inflection

-ast makes diminutive adjectives declinable.

- *-k* (and other diminutive suffixes) trigger default inflection.
- Adjectives (unlike nouns and verbs) have no default inflection, so adjectival diminutive *-k* cannot be inflected.
- *-ast* is the typical adjectivizer used to make indeclinable adjectives declinable.
- That is its role in diminutive adjectives.

Summary

We looked at adjectival diminutives ending in *-kast*.

- This decomposes into the diminutive *-k* and the adjectivizer *-ast*.
  - *-k*, like other diminutives in Slovenian (and other Slavic languages), is a syntactic *modifier* that attaches to categorized items and preserves their syntactic properties.
  - *-ast* attaches to adjectives and other categories to create adjectives expressing relation to some property of the base.
- The diminutive *-k* contributes the scalar modification meaning of *-kast* adjectives, while *-kast* changes neither the syntax nor the semantics.
- Instead, *-ast* plays a *morphological* role: without it, *-k* adjectives are underspecified for inflection class and cannot inflect properly.

Acknowledgements

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