A Comparative Study of Diminutive Forms in English and Arabic

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المستخلص

يتناول البحث الحالي أشكال التصغير في اللغتين الانكليزية والعربية من حيث الشكل و العملية الصرفية وأقسام الكلام التي تشملها . كما يلقي البحث بعض الضوء على المع اني المختلفة لهذه الأشكال في كلتا اللغتين. وينتهي البحث إلى أن اللغتين متشابه تان إلى حد ما من حيث أقسام الكلام والمعنى ولكنهما مختلفتان اختلافاً كبيراً من حيث العملية الصرفية . فالانكليزية تعتمد الإلحاق أساساً ثم الاسباق بينما تعتمد العربية كلياً على الاحشاء والذي يتم طبقا لقواعد ثابتة تحددها البنية الصرفية للكلمة المراد تصغيرها .

Abstract

The present research studies the diminutive forms in English and Arabic as far as form, morphological process and parts of speech are concerned. Further, it sheds some light on the meanings of these forms in English and Arabic. It has been found that the two languages are similar to some extent with regard to the parts of speech and meanings of these forms. However, they are drastically different concerning the morphological process involved. English basically uses suffixation and prefixation while Arabic depends entirely on infixation where some strict patterns that are essentially determined by the morphology of the words to be diminuted are followed.

1 – Introduction:

The term "diminutive forms" refers to the addition of a derivational suffix, mostly to a noun, which results in a new noun form conveying the general meaning of 'little' whether literally or metaphorically (Crystal,

1985:94). For example, 'kitchenette' is a small kitchen and 'booklet' is a small book. Moreover, the new form is quite capable of expressing the feeling with which the person or thing referred to is regarded (Internet). Accordingly, this form can express intimacy, familiarity, endearment and even lack of respect (Aziz, 1985:145). On the other hand, in speech this form can be used as a replacement form (Clark &Clark, 1977:322; Ibrahim, 2003:28). However, mere smallness devoid of some or any kind of feeling, to some extent, is to be found somewhere else, i.e. in adjectives like: minute, tiny, few, low, minor, less (Zandvoort, 1972: 302).

Diminutive forms exist in many languages; yet each language has its own unique way of realizing and expressing these forms. For instance, in Arabic the diminutive form of 'bāb' (a door) is 'buwayb' (a small door). Anyhow, the diminutive forms underlie, in one way or another, some important process of word formation and they are undoubtedly loaded with a rather wide range of meaning besides smallness, of course.

2. Aim

Since the diminutive forms exist in many languages, the present research is crucially intended to compare and contrast these forms in the two unrelated languages English and Arabic in an attempt to investigate how they are formed, which morphological process they undergo and which parts of speech they incorporate. Consequently, some points of similarity and difference will be highlighted. Moreover, the research is also expected to shed some light on the meaning (s) these forms impart.

3. Data Collection

The material which could adequately serve as a basis for the present research stems largely from some authentic data extracted from many available relevant references in the two languages under study.

4. Diminutive Forms in English

Most linguists distinguish four major processes of word formation: prefixation, suffixation, compounding and conversion (Zandvoort, 1972: 298; Adams, 1973: 120; Crystal, 1988: 209; Katamba, 1993: 41; O'grady et al, 1996: 340). Consequently, a large number of nouns in English is created or produced by the combination of a free morpheme and a derivational suffix (Scott et al, 1968; 25). Diminutive forms are no exception in that they are formed by the addition of a diminutive suffix like: - ette, - et, let, etc. to a noun. Most of the nouns that can be diminuted are either personal proper nouns as in 'Bobbie' or common nouns as in 'leaflet'. A distinction between noun and name implies that

noun refers to a single word while name 'may consist of more than one word(Quirk et al, 1985: 259).

A personal noun in English usually includes the first name which is primarily used to express the basic concept of address (Aziz, 1985: 144; Broughton, 1990: 85). This first name is taken to comprise the following: first name 'Robert', abbreviation 'Bob' and the diminutive form 'Bobbie' (Brown& Ford, 1964:236). It is important to indicate that the abbreviated and the diminutive forms are almost always confined to familiar styles and may involve some degree of lack of respect (Aziz, 1985:145). Further, Brown & Ford (1964:236) have maintained that male first names rarely occur in full forms; they are either abbreviated or diminuted, whereas female first names are most often left unchanged.

As far as common nouns are concerned, they usually involve the singular count nouns, animate or inanimate, as in the following: duckling, circlet, booklet, etc.

4.1 Diminutive Suffixes

One way by which diminutive forms can be realized is through the use of derivational diminutive suffixes. It is often emphasized that the attachment of a derivational suffix to a base may result in some major grammatical change involving shifting the base from one word class to another as in 'milkless' where:
'less' turns a noun into an adjective (Katamba, 1993: 48). However, in some cases the change may be so minor that it only shifts the base form to a different sub-class within the same word class as is the case with the diminutive suffixes. In this sense, the diminutive suffixes do not affect the word class and other properties of the words to which they are attached (Haspelmath, 2002: 95).

English exhibits a remarkable set of diminutive suffixes including: -een, -erel (rel), -et, -ette, -ie (-i, -y), -kin (-ikin, -kins), -ling and -let (Marchand, 1969: 269; Zandvoort, 1972: 298). Nevertheless, the number is minimized to six only due to the fact that the first two are not really in actual use nowadays (Stageberg, 1971: 102).

Now, it seems quite convenient to tackle these suffixes in some detail:

1.- een

This suffix is of an Anglo-Irish origin used with individualizing or diminutive force. It exists only in few coined words (Marchand, 1969: 269). Here are some examples:
squire squireen
girl   girleen
jack   jackeen
It is noticeable that this suffix is attached exclusively to nouns.

2. –erel; rel

This suffix is typically originated in loan words from French (ibid: 281). It does exist in many nouns, mostly denoting animals, as in the following:

kest	kestrel
cock	cockrel
mack	mackerel

3. –et

This suffix is also of a French origin and it exists in words like the following:

cabin	cabinet
circle	circlet

It is mainly used with common nouns and it is partly diminutive and partly individualizing (Zandvoort, 1972: 304).

4. –ette

It comes from French and it is still in active use (Marchand, 1969: 281; Stageberg, 1971: 102) [1]Here are some examples:

sermon	sermonette
room	roomette
statue	statuette

5. –ie; - y

This suffix has a Scottish spelling and it is uniquely added to many nouns, proper and common in particular, and sometimes very occasionally added to adjectives implying affection, intimacy and endearment (Zandvoort, 1972: 303). Thus, it is largely restricted to familiar contexts (Quirk & Greenbaum, 1973: 437; Sinclair,n.d.: 188). For illustration, below are some instances:

John	Johnny
Ann	Annie
Robert	Bobbie
Catherine	Kitty
bird	birdie
sweet	sweetie
dark	darkie

From these instances, it is evident that this suffix is added to masculine and feminine personal proper nouns, common nouns and adjectives as well.

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[1] . It is significant to mention that some of the diminutive suffixes have homphones that can be a source of confusion; particularly –ette, -y, -ie, and- ling. See Stageberg (1971: 102) for more details .

6. –kin ; -ikin ;-kins

This suffix is equally used with personal proper nouns besides common nouns (Marchand, 1969: 321; Zandvoort, 1972: 303). Here are some examples:

Simon	Simkin
Thomson	Tomkin
cat	catkin

7. – ling

For Marchand (1969: 210) this suffix is simply the extended form of the -ing suffix; particularly with stems ending in 'l'. It is extensively used with different kinds of words denoting animals and plants (Zandvoort, 1972: 304). Further, it is added to many word classes, i.e. nouns, adjectives and verbs, usually to convey a mildly contemptuous flavour (Quirk& Greenbaum, 1973: 437). Below are some examples:

prince	princeling
nurse	nurseling
weak	weakling
suckle	suckling

8. – let

It is frequently used with nouns denoting things rather than persons (Zandvoort, 1972: 303), as in the following:

leaf	leaflet
stream	streamlet
book	booklet

From the preceding survey of the English diminutive suffixes, it is apparent that nearly all of them are often attached chiefly to nouns except for '–ling' and '–ie' where the former can be attached to adjectives and verbs and the latter to adjectives, of course in addition to nouns. It is also noted that '-ie' and '-et' are referred to as being highly productive, whereas the others are rarely if ever attached to new nouns. On the other hand, in some words like 'cabinet' and 'toilet', the basic meaning of the diminutive suffix has faded away to little or no significance (Stageberg, 1971: 102).

In addition to these suffixes, Stageberg (ibid: 103) states that a handful of other suffixes have come into English as borrowed words. Actually, they are diminutive suffixes in their parent language but non-morphemic in English. These include examples like: mosquito, flotilla, scalpel, particle, puppet, morsel, capsule, quartet, citadel, muscle, cookie, colonel, falsetto, etc.

4.2 Diminutive Prefixes
Besides the diminutive suffixes discussed so far, a large number of diminutive prefixes are used concurrently to refer to the concept of smallness in size and status, and relative smallness as well. Now, we proceed to shed some light on these prefixes.

1. Demi-
This prefix occurs in many words to imply smallness in size, meaning 'half' or 'partly' in particular, and it is usually added to nouns (Sinclair, n.d.: 34), as in the following:
demigod and demidevil.

2. Hemi-
This is originally a Greek prefix added to nouns to convey the meaning of 'half' as in: 'hemi sphere' (Eckersley & Eckersley, 1960: 430; Hornby, 1974: 400).

3. [2]Micro-
It is usually attached to nouns to indicate smallness and it is often found in technical and scientific terms as in these instances:
microorganism, microbe, microwave, etc (Sinclair, n.d.: 110).

4. Mini-
This prefix combines freely with nouns to form new nouns, as in: minimarket, minibus, miniskirt (Quirk et al, 1985: 1542).

5. Mono-
This prefix is of Greek origin and it implies the meaning of single as in: 'monocle, monogram', etc (Eckersley & Eckersley, 1960: 430). Further, it not only combines with nouns, but with adjectives as well, as in: 'monolingual, monogamous', etc (Hornby, 1974: 547).

6. Semi-
adjectives to form new counterparts. Words formed in this way often express the idea that something is partially equal or is equal to one half of something else (Sinclair, n.d.: 152), as in these instances: semi circle, semi-circular, semi-tone and semi-annual.

7. Sub-
This prefix combines with both nouns and adjectives. Words formed in this way refer to or describe people or things that are inferior to smaller or less powerful than whatever is referred to or described by the

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[2] . This prefix is listed with the English prefixes. See Hornby (1974: 1017).

original nouns or adjectives (ibid: 161), as in the following: subcommittee, subtitle, subnormal and subsonic.

8. Under-

This prefix means 'too little' and it combines largely with many parts of speech, namely nouns, verbs and adjectives (Quirk et al , 1985: 1542),as in:
Under-provision, underpayment, under-act, undercharge, underbid, underfed, underpaid, under-privileged, etc.

9. Uni-

It basically means 'one' and in this sense it is possibly the same as 'mono'. It can be attached to nouns and adjectives equally (Hornby, 1974: 1017) as in these examples: unicycle, unilateral, unidirectional.

10. Vice-

This prefix is frequently attached to nouns to convey the meaning of being secondary, deputy, i.e. being lower in rank and status (Quirk& Greenbaum, 1973: 435). Here are some examples: vice president, vice chairman, vice captain.

Obviously, the above stated prefixes can combine with nouns, common nouns in particular, to give the meaning of smallness. However, some of them, i.e. 'mono, semi, sub, uni' can combine with adjectives as well, and only 'under' can combine with verbs besides nouns and adjectives. Moreover, they are unlike suffixes since they are unlikely to combine with personal proper nouns.

5 . Diminutive Forms in Arabic

Diminutive forms like 'buwayb' (a small door), ''ubayd' (a little servant) and ''ukhay' (my little brother) occur in Arabic and they are defined as the forms (mostly nouns) that are derived from other forms (i.e. nouns) to express many meanings including: smallness, familiarity, endearment and contempt (An-Nailah, 1988: 270). The morphological process which the diminutive forms undergo is known as infixation or minor derivation (Abu-Mughli,1987: 411). Actually, this process involves the insertion of an affix within the root of a given word (Al-Khuli, 1982: 113; Crystal,1985: 10). In this respect it is of utmost importance to say that much of the word formation in Arabic takes place internally, i.e. infixing and modification of the root, rather than the stringing together of discrete morphemes, are usually the norm (Katamba, 1993: 163). However, such a process is not random, but it follows some fixed patterns totally in accordance with the morphological structure of any given form to be diminuted.

Arabic presents a system of consonantal roots most of which are triliteral, but there are others much smaller in number, which consist of two or more consonants (Moscati, 1969: 71). In fact this very structure is the determining factor in the formation of the diminutive forms on the one hand and the whole process concurrently reveals an outstanding feature of Arabic, viz. derivation, on the other (As-Salih, 1960: 335). Therefore, the formation of any diminutive form is wholly governed by whether it is derived from a triliteral root or not.

Most Arab linguists agree that diminutive forms are formed according to three basic patterns. The first pattern is 'fu'ayl' for the triliteral root, as in: 'jabal' (a mountain) which is diminuted as 'jubayl' (a small mountain). The second pattern is 'fu'ay'il' for the quadriliteral root as in: "aqrab' (a scorpion) which becomes "uqayrib' (a small scorpion). As for the third pattern, it is 'fu'ay'eel' and it is used with quinqueliteral roots as in: "usfur' (a sparrow) whose diminutive form is "usayfeer' (a small sparrow) (Al-Ghalayīni, 1971: 87; Wright, 1971: 166; Nahr, n.d.: 179; Sībawayhi, 1999: 460).

With regard to meaning, 'Ibn 'Usfūr (1972: 80) states five principal meanings:

1) Minimizing the number of something, as in: 'durayhimāt' (few dirhams).
2) Minimizing the status of someone or something, as in: 'shuway'ir (a little poet) and 'buwayt' (a small house).
3) Showing contempt, as in: 'rujail' (a little man).
4) Approximating of time, as in: 'qubayl' (a little before) and 'bu'ayd' (a little after).
5) Approximating of place, as in: 'fuwayq' (a little above).

To these meanings, Al-Ghalayīni (1971: 86) adds the expression of endearment and affection, as in: 'bunayy' (my little son) and 'sudayq' (a special male friend). However, Arabic has some words that can convey the meaning of being small, whether in size or status, as in: 'jānibyy, far'yy, thānawyy, (secondry) and, 'mu'āwin, musā'id, nā'ib, wakīl' (assistant).

It is obvious that for the formation of diminutive forms in Arabic, the morphological structure is immensely important. What is more to be considered is the part of speech of the word to be diminuted. A close look at the examples presented above reveals that more than one part of speech is involved. Therefore, it seems quite convenient at this point to proceed to discuss the relevant parts of speech in sufficient detail.

5.1 Diminutive Forms and the Parts of Speech

In the formation of diminutive forms, the nouns are prominently distinguished. However, some other parts of speech are also involved, namely pronouns, adjectives and adverbs. The first type of nouns that can be diminuted is the personal proper nouns or names. [3]Structurally speaking, these nouns have many forms. Let us first start with the masculine proper nouns.

These nouns can be simple like 'Hamīd', 'Hasan', 'Yahya', "Adil', or may be compound as in: "Abdullāh' and 'Shamsu d-dīn'. It is worth mentioning in this respect that the compound type has three distinct forms: the predicative compound which is very rare and it often consists of a verbal element followed by a nominal one as in: 'Ta'abbata sharran' and 'Jādal-haqq'(Dawood & Farhan, 1989: 46). The second type of compounds is manifested by the construct relation as in 'Abdullāh', where the relation between the components is that of genitive. As for the third type, it is called the 'fusional' or the mixed compound since its components are completely fused together as in: 'Sībawayhi' and 'Ma'dikarb', where the relation between the components is either the same as the latter type or is unknown simply because most of these nouns are of foreign origin (Kharma & Hajjaj, 1989: 50).

Moreover, masculine proper nouns can have the infinitive form as in: 'Shukr' and 'Ikrām', and some derivative forms, namely the nomen agentis as in: 'Ādil' and 'Hāmid'; and the nomen patientis as in: 'Mahfūdh' and 'Mas'ūd'. Furthermore, it can even have an adjective form like, 'Sa'īd' and a verb form like, 'Yahya' (Ghayati, n.d.: 72). Finally, it can have a feminine termination, as in: "Utba' and 'Talha'. As far as diminutive forms are concerned, all these forms of masculine proper nouns can be diminuted following the three patterns presented earlier. Below are examples denoting all the types discussed:

Hasan   Husayn
Shukr   Shukayr
'Ādil   'Udayl
Mahfūdh   Muhayfīdh
Sa'īd   Su'ayd

It is important to state here that some place proper nouns can be diminuted as in 'Bu 'aylibak' and 'Hudayrimāw' (Wright, 1971: 169).

 Abdullāh   'Ubaydullāh
Ma'dikarb   Mu'aydikarb
Mu'away   Mu'ayya

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[3] . It is important to state here that some place proper nouns can be diminuted as in 'Bu'aylibak' and 'Hudayrimāw (Wright, 1971: 169).

Yahya	Yuhayy
Salmān	Sulaymān

Apparently, no example of predicative compounds is detected, i.e. it does not have a diminutive form, whereas the other two types can be diminuted where the first part is involved and the second is left unaltered. Moreover, all the examples presented are in the singular form, nevertheless the dual as well as all the plural forms are subject to be diminuted in the same manner. Here are some instances:

Shukayrān

Udaylān

Husaynūn

Similar to the masculine proper nouns, the feminine proper nouns fall into many types depending largely on their termination, i.e. whether they end in 't', 'a' or 'a'. Accordingly, 'Fātima', 'Salmā' , 'Hind' and 'Baydā', can be diminuted as follows: 'Futayma, Sulayma, Hunayda and Buwayda' (Wright, 1971: 169). Additionally, all the possible dual and plural forms are subject to be diminuted, as in the following:

Futaymatān

Futaymāt

The second type of nouns includes the common count nouns which have three forms as far as number is concerned and all these forms can be diminuted.

(ibid: 170). Let us consider the following examples:

tall	(a hill)	tulayl
ʾayn	(an eye)	'uyayna
sadīq	(a male friend)	sudayq
sadīqa	(a female friend)	sudayqa
sadīqān	(two male friends)	sudayqān
sadīqatān	(two female friends)	sudayqatān
sadīqāt	(female friends)	sudayqāt
'asdiqā'	(male friends)	'usaydiqā'
dūr	(houses)	duwayrāt
'adlu'	(ribs)	'udayli'
'a'mida	(pillars)	'u'aymida

As illustrated above, the examples incorporate all the number forms in Arabic, i.e. the dual and the various forms of plural.

With regard to the non-count nouns, Wright (ibid: 173) mentions the following instances:

ta'ām	(food)	tu'aym
dam	(blood)	dumay
mā'	(water)	muway

Another type of nouns that can restrictedly be diminuted is the numerals starting from three to ten as in the following:

Khamsu (five, showing feminine gender) khumays
Khamsatu (five, showing masculine gender) khumaysatu
　　　The infinitive is not exempted from being diminuted. Thus 'wa'd' (promise) can be diminuted as (wu'ayd) and "atā' 'a gift' as "utay' (ibid)
　　　In addition to all these types of nouns, some derivative nouns, the nomen agentis and the nomen patientis can have diminutive forms as in the following examples:

rāfi'	(raising)	ruwayfi'
fāris	(a horse man)	fuwayris
mansūr	(victorious)	munaysīr
maktūb	(written)	mukaytīb

　　　Adjectives constitute the second part of speech that can be diminuted as shown below:

jamīl	(beautiful)	jumayl
mayyit	(dead)	muyayt
sha'ik	(bristling)	shuwayk

　　　It is commonly known that adjectives in Arabic share many features with nouns, namely number and gender. Consequently, all the resulting forms can be equally diminuted as demonstrated below:

jamīla (beautiful, denoting a feminine gender)	jumayla
jamīlatān (beautiful, denoting a dual number)	jumaylatān
jamīlāt (beautiful, denoting feminine plural)	jumaylāt

　　　The third part of speech that can be diminuted includes pronouns; to be precise, some demonstrative and relative pronouns (Al-Hamalāwi, 1965: 31; Ghayati, n.d.: 73-74). The demonstrative pronouns involved include the following:

dhā	(referring to masculine singular)	dhayā
dhān	(referring to masculine dual)	dhayān
ta	(referring to feminine singular)	tayā
tān	(referring to feminine dual)	tayān
'ulae	(referring to masculine and feminine plural)	'uliya'

　　　As for the relative pronouns, Al-Hamalāwi (1965: 31) states the following:

’alladhi	(referring to masculine singular)	’alladhiya
’allātī	(referring to feminine singular)	’allatiya
’alladhān	(referring to dual masculine)	’alladhayān
’allatān	(referring to dual feminine)	’allatayān
’alladhīn	(referring to plural masculine)	’alladhiyoon.

　　　It is noticeable in this type that only the second part of the word is diminuted
(Sībawayhi, 1999: 540).

The last part of speech in this concern is the adverbs (Wright, 1971: 167). However, only some adverbs of time and place are included as shown in the examples below:

qabl (before) qubayl
ba'd (after) bu'ayd
fawq (above) fuwayq
dūn (below) duwayn

Despite the obvious fact that the diminutive forms in Arabic are rather extensive, in the sense that they comprise a large number of the parts of speech, sometimes they are completely not admitted or they are blocked. Al-Hamalāwi (1965: 31) clearly presents these cases which include the following: the Attributes of Almighty Allah, the Attributes of the Prophet (PBUH), the Holy Books, the Holy Places, the names of the days, and months. Moreover, verbs, letters, some words like 'kull, ba'd, ghayr, siwā, sawā'' and predicative compounds as well are all not admitted.

6. Comparison of Diminutive Forms in English and Arabic

Having presented the diminutive forms in both English and Arabic, it can be said that each language has its own unique way of constucting these forms. English has evidently shown an uncontroversial tendency to implement two distinct morphological processes, i.e. suffixation and prefixation. As for the first process, eight suffixes are distinguished, five of which, namely '–een, -erel, -et, -ette and –let' are often attached to common nouns in particular, whereas the other three, i.e. '-ie, -kin, and –ling' are equally added to proper and common nouns. Moreover, '–ling' can be added to verbs and '-ie' to adjectives.

As far as prefixes are concerned, they surpass suffixes in number on the one hand and in being attached to more than one part of speech, i.e. nouns, adjectives and verbs, on the other. More specifically, the prefixes 'mono-, semi- , sub- and uni 'are mostly combined with both nouns and adjectives, whereas 'under' can further combine with verbs. On the other hand, the remaining prefixes are exclusively combined with nouns. It is worth mentioning that some suffixes can combine with proper nouns as is the case with '–ie' and 'kin', but such a case is not detected concerning prefixes.

In respect of meaning, diminutive forms in English usually show smallness, endearment, familiarity and, very rarely, contempt.

On the other hand, in Arabic the diminutive forms are expressed and realized by following some fixed or rather strict procedures, i.e. patterns that are unlikely be violated. In this respect, three clear-cut patterns are identified according to the morphological structure of any word to be diminuted. In other words, it is the root,whether it be triliteral

or not, which determines which pattern is applicable. These patterns are: fu'ayl, fu'ay'il and fu'ay'īl. The morphological process involved, here, is referred to as infixation since an internal change is actually taking place.

It is notable that the diminutives forms in Arabic incorporate a wide range of parts of speech. Besides adjectives, some adverbs, some pronouns and all nouns, irrespective of number, gender and whether it is count or non – count can freely be diminuted in accordance with the patterns stated before. Nevertheless, some diminutive forms are not admitted at all. Conversely, in English only some parts of speech can be diminuted, i.e. the singular number of the proper and count nouns is only pointed out. Furthermore, not many instances of diminuted adjectives and verbs are revealed. No instance of a non-count noun is detected.

As for meaning, the diminutive forms in Arabic have shown a plethora of meaning not merely expressing smallness, endearment and familiarity but also contempt, approximating of time and place and minimizing of number and status.

7-Conclusion

From the preceding discussion, it becomes clear that the diminutive forms in English can be produced either by suffixation or prefixation where only some parts of speech are included to express some affective meanings. On the other hand, these forms in Arabic are exclusively produced by infixation where many parts of speech are involved to express, to a large extent, many other meanings besides smallness.

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