

MORPHOLOGICAL PECULIARITIES OF DIMINUTIVE SUFFIX -ETTE IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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This paper focuses on the description of the functional-semantic fields of diminutive unit -ette or words of affection, and, in particular, on the suffix, which, on the basis of the analysis of the texts taken from literary texts, proves to be the most widely-used one in English literature.

Diminutive formation is a type of modification, rather than derivation proper, as diminutives are considered to be “variants of existing words” due to the fact that they “can be replaced by their base forms in many contexts”. They are “nouns formed from nouns”.

There are two major ways of forming English diminutives. They are obtained either analytically by using lexical elements such as little and small in English, or synthetically by adding diminutive suffixes such as -ie, -ette, -let, -kin or -s to a noun. So we are going to analyze some diminutive suffixes in sythetical approach:

Schneider distinguishes fourteen diminutive suffixes in contemporary English: — suffixes which are considered “the most productive diminutive suffixes in English today”: -ie, -ette, and -let;

— originally Germanic suffixes: -kin and -ling;

— originally Irish English the suffix -een;

— suffixes “referred to as ‘familiarity markers”, which Schneider describes as expressive, affective or evaluative, as they all denote an attitude but not smallness: -s, -er, -o, -a, and -le;

— suffixes rarely mentioned in the literature: -poo, -pop, and -peg.

Suffix -ette

Object: He was filled with the most extreme terror he had ever known and he felt as guilty as a child who has been caught smoking a cigarette [Stephen King “Misery”: 24];

Object: The Sidewinder Gazette had reported in November of that year the discovery of the body of a young man called Andrew Pomeroy [Stephen King “Misery”: 44].

Person: To the astonishment of her Muggle guards, who were later tried for helping the witch to escape, Lisette vanished from her prison cell the night before she was due to be executed. Although it has never been proven that Lisette was an Animagus who managed to squeeze through the bars of her cell window, a large white rabbit was subsequently seen crossing the English Channel in a cauldron with a sail fitted to it, and a similar rabbit later became a trusted advisor at the court of King Henry VI [“Babbitty Rabbitty and her Cackling Stump”: 81] It is used for diminutivisation of object nouns, that is nouns referring to architecture, interior design, furnishings, and furniture (e.g. balconette, kitchenette), which gain the feature of being small. Furthermore, it is used in case of nouns referring to genre names (e.g. novelette, letterette) which denote ‘a short specimen of the respective category’ or ‘a specimen which fails to meet the qualitative criteria of the respective genre’.

All forms of this suffix may occur in free variation that is all of them can be attached to the same word. The usage of a particular suffix depends on individual preferences. In the text

some inconsistencies can also be found, especially when taking into account first (i.e. Christian) names: there occurs the form Charlie on one hand, but on the other one – Johnny and not Johnnie. Diminutives of –ie type are bisyllabic nouns stressed on the first syllable. They may be derived from monosyllabic (e.g. handy, Johnny) or polysyllabic words and then they are truncated (e.g. Elizabeth – Elsa – Elsie, William – Will – Willie). According to the analysed examples we identified one more diminutive suffix – ette which adds to the personal names, however Sheinder reminds that just –ie, –y, and –ey suffixes form diminutiveness: Lisette.

The suffix –ette is attached to nouns referring to persons and concrete objects. Among diminutive formations in the nursery rhymes, the following subclasses of nouns referring to persons were identified:

a) Proper nouns – first names occur more frequently than last names, e.g. Lisette.

b) Size terms – it refers to the small the size of normal objects (e.g. cigarette, gazette);

Although suffixal derivation is a productive means of forming diminutives in English, the investigation of the corpus of literary text indicates that diminutives of this type do not constitute a considerable part of the English lexicon. What is more, diminutive suffixes are polysemous and can be used in numerous contexts, depending on the speaker and discourse situation. Furthermore, they can be added to various types of bases.

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