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**EXPRESSIVE SPEECH ACTS WITH DIMINUTIVES
(BASED ON LITERARY PROSE FOR CHILDREN IN ENGLISH)**

**ЕКСПРЕСИВНІ МОВЛЕННЄВІ АКТИ З ДЕМІНУТИВАМИ
(НА МАТЕРІАЛІ АНГЛОМОВНОЇ ХУДОЖНЬОЇ
ДИТЯЧОЇ ПРОЗИ)**

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The present research deals with the analysis of the use of diminutives from the perspective of one of the five basic speech acts (hereafter SA) highlighted by J. Searle [4], expressive speech act, and is based on literary prose texts for children, which are abundant in synthetic (*‘What a wonderful big dolly with golden ringlets!’* (J. Wilson: *The Dare Game*, p. 128)), analytical (e.g., *‘You’re mum’s little treasure’* (J. Wilson: *The Dare Game*, p. 169)), and hypocoristic (e.g., *‘Well done, Brucie! Good for you, Brucie! You’ve won a gold medal, Brucie!’* (Roald Dahl: *Matilda*, p. 131)) diminutive forms selected by means of employing the ‘philological method’ [2, p. 1616], i.e. extracted manually from the fiction material constituting more than 1800 pages.

The illocutionary function of this class of speech acts is expressing interlocutors’ psychological attitudes and conditions, and it is verbalized by means of the verbs *to thank, to greet, to congratulate, to apologize, to sympathize, to regret, to insult*, etc. K. Schneider regards expressives as highly conventional illocutionary acts, it accounts for the limited number of their patterns [5, p. 201].

There exist various taxonomies of expressives. For example, N. Norrick distinguishes the following kinds of expressive illocutionary acts: apologizing, thanking, congratulating, condoling, deploring, lamenting, welcoming, forgiving, and boasting [3]. According to another study there are “two general types: self-centred, pertaining to the speaker/writer’s feelings; and other-centred, focusing on the addressee’s feelings” [1, p. 187]. Following the classification of expressives suggested by J. Searle [4], there have been found such diminutive-based SAs: compliment, insult, sympathy and greeting/congratulating, among which SAs of *compliment* and *insult* proved to be the most numerous.

SAs of compliment usually render positive emotions, therefore, they can be referred to SAs of politeness. They support the positive “face” of the addressee and can be employed by the strategies of positive politeness [5, p. 201]. In this regard, there occurs at least one positively charged lexeme (as a rule it is an adjective) among language means which are realized in SA of compliment. Such adjectives can be either strongly (*tremendous, breathtaking*) or slightly (*good, nice*) emotionally charged. In children’s literary prose diminutives are usually found in phrases with slightly charged evaluative adjectives. E.g., ‘*What a dear little girl!*’ said Mrs. Morris. ‘*Come here and tell me your name. Why, you look like a lily astray in a bed of buttercups. Is it possible Mr. Stephen L’nderhill is your brother?*’ (A. M. Douglas. *A Little Girl in an Old New York*, p. 59).

As a rule, diminutives in SAs of compliment are formed analytically. E.g., ‘*My goodness me, you’re right!*’ Cried Mr. Fox. ‘*What a thoughtful little fellow you are! Take ten bunches of carrots*’ (R. Dahl. *Fantastic Mr Fox*, p. 56). ‘*You don’t mean to say that child can knit lace? And oak-leaf, too, I do declare! What a smart little girl!*’ (A.M. Douglas: *A Little Girl in an Old New York*, p. 135).

Generally, SA of compliment is based on the strategies of minimizing or maximizing praise. However, the present research shows that in prose for children SAs of compliment are based on the strategy of maximizing praise. Presumably, minimizing praise, on the one hand, is not highly emotionally charged, and, on the other hand, it may fail to be adequately perceived by a young reader (i.e. as evidence of sincere attitude). The following example demonstrates SA of compliment which complements SA of congratulation: ‘*Well, I’ll be jiggered! I never would ‘ave thought a little nipper like you could come up with such a fantastical brainwave as that! Young man, I congratulate you!*’ (R. Dahl. *Danny the Champion of the World*, p. 186).

As a rule, compliments refer to addressees and their environment (e.g., personal qualities, family members, clothes, actions). Thus, the next example illustrates the emotional reaction of the addresser-boy to the behavior of the addressee-girl, who bravely fought against the assailants: ‘*You’re a fierce little fighter, Tracy,*’ said Football (J. Wilson: *The Dare Game*, p. 219).

In the example that follows, addresser and addressee use diminutives in their expressives, whereas they both use synthetic forms of diminutives to make the utterances more emotional: ‘*Yes, nice doggy,*’ said the Inspector. ‘*Nice dad-Dad,*’ said Sara (J. Wilson. *Mum-Minder*, p. 44).

SAs of insult render negative emotions, therefore, they threaten the positive “face” of the addressee [283, c. 201]. It is notable that if the SA of compliment can be described in terms of politeness, SA of offence implies not just *absence of politeness*, but *presence of utter impoliteness*. *Insults* usually present an emotional reaction to the addressees’ personality, their behavior or

appearance. E.g., *'Eat! She shouted. 'Greedy little thieves who like to eat cake must have cake! Eat faster boy!'* (R. Dahl: Matilda, p.128). As is seen in this example, the diminutive expresses the addresser-principal's emotional reaction to the behavior of the addressee-boy who ate a piece of her cake. The illocution of this group of SAs is to insult the addressee, thus, they are realized in a straightforward way: *'You ignorant little slug!'* *The Trunchbull bellowed* (R. Dahl: Matilda, p.148).

As the present research shows, diminutives used in SA of insult are mainly formed analytically. E.g., *'You're a stuck-up little squirt, Ernie said. 'That's exactly what you are, a stuck-up little squirt'* (R. Dahl. The Wonderful Story of Henry Sugar and Six More, p. 81). However, occasionally, there occur synthetic diminutives in SA of offence. E.g., *'Ooowww! My ankle! You're the greatest biggest booted bully!'* (J. Wilson: The Dare Game, p. 180).

It is notable, that when diminutives are formed synthetically, they serve exclusively for the mitigation of perlocutionary effect. In order to strengthen negative emotions in SA of offence, adjectives with a strong negative semantics can be used (e.g., *nasty, stupid*): *'I shall have her for that, you see if I don't! What's she look like? Nasty little worm, I'll be bound'* (R. Dahl: Matilda, p. 85).

In general, the use of diminutives in offences indicate that the addresser strives to demonstrate his/her superiority and humiliate the addressee as the former often occupies a superior communicative position than the latter. E.g., *The wicked witch looked at Dinah Price and scowled, 'You're a skinny little thing, ain't you?'* (A. Ahlberg. Ten in a Bed, p. 19). As is seen from this example, the addresser-witch is trying to show her power and superiority with the help of the diminutive *little*, amplified by the adjective *skinny*, which also implies a small size of the addressee. In addition, if the addresser is an adult and the addressee is a child, the diminutive is used not for amplifying the offence and indicating the superiority of the addressee. On the contrary, it is used for mitigating negative assessment expressed by the noun. In this case, no evaluative adjectives are used. It is true only on condition that communication is aimed at being cooperative. E.g., *'No one in the world could give the right answer just like that, especially a girl! You're a little cheat, madam, that's what you are! A cheat and a liar'* (R. Dahl: Matilda, p.55).

In the empirical material of the research, there also occurred a few examples of realization of SA of congratulation (1) and sympathy (2).

(1) *'Three cheers for Siggy, cried Tim* (J. Strong: Viking at School, p. 65).

(2) *'Oh, you poor little scrumplet!'* *Cried the BFG. 'Is you not missing them very badly?'* (R. Dahl. The BFG, p. 38).

In example (1), the diminutive (in its hypocoristic form) demonstrates a short social distance between the interlocutors and emphasizes positive

affectionate attitude of the addresser to the addressee. In example (2), sympathy and empathy are intensified by means of the diminutive which amplifies the expression of strong inner emotions.

As a result of the analysis it has been stated that the most frequently used diminutive-based expressive SAs are those of compliment and insult, among which complement slightly prevail. SAs of insult serve for expressing the addresser's superiority and the interlocutor's inferiority. Whereas SAs of compliment occur in literary prose for children in phrases with weakly charged evaluative adjectives. Moreover, it has been found that these SAs are based on the strategy of maximizing praise.

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