

One type of verbal diminutives in Russian: verbs ending in -n'kat'

Об одном типе глагольных диминутивов в русском: глаголы на -н'кать

Abstract In the present article I offer a corpus-based analysis of Russian -n'kat' verbs such as *zven'kat'* 'ding' and argue that they are verbal diminutives. I demonstrate that -n'kat' verbs resemble nominal diminutives in three major ways: 1) they have diminutive semantics and refer to events of low intensity and events that the speaker has affectionate attitude toward, 2) they reveal diminutive morphology, since the -n'kat' element is related to the prototypical diminutive marker /k/, and 3) they are used in contexts characteristic of diminutives, such as informal, affectionate and polite communication as well as communication with and/or about children. Couched in cognitive linguistics, my analysis indicates that the Russian system of diminutives extends to verbs and that -n'kat' verbs can be straightforwardly integrated in this system.

Аннотация В статье представлен корпусный анализ русских глаголов, оканчивающихся на -н'кать, таких как *звенькать*, и предлагается их анализ как глагольных диминутивов. Глаголы на -н'кать обнаруживают сходство с именными диминутивами в трех аспектах: 1) их характеризует диминутивная семантика, так как они описывают события пониженной интенсивности и события, к которым говорящий испытывает симпатию, 2) они имеют диминутивную морфологию, так как компонент -н'кать связан с прототипическим диминутивным маркером /к/, и 3) они используются в контекстах, типичных для диминутивов, как то неформальная, вежливая и проникнутая симпатией коммуникация, а также коммуникация с детьми или о детях. Основывая свой анализ на инструментарии когнитивной лингвистики, я заключаю, что русская система диминутивов распространяется на глаголы и что глаголы на -н'кать могут быть легко встроены в эту систему.

1 Overview

For Russian, diminutives formed from nouns, adjectives, and adverbs are well described in the literature, and there are a number of similarities in diminutives across different parts of speech. First, there are parallels in meaning: the semantics of small size and the metaphorically related meanings of low intensity and affection are attested in all diminutives. Second, we observe recurring morphological patterns in the formation of diminutives: diminutives are formed via suffixation in various parts of speech. The most widespread suffix associated with diminutives is -k- and its variants. The third similarity among diminutives from different parts of speech pertain to their use. Diminutives are used in contexts characterized by informal register and affection toward communication partners and topics of communication.

If diminutives are so widespread in Russian, why is it the case that verbal diminutives have not received much attention in the scholarly literature on

Russian? Is it possible that a system with such a wide range of nominal diminutives does not extend to verbs? In the following I show that there are indeed diminutive verbs in Russian. I argue that verbs in *-n'kat'* such as *zven'kat'* 'ding' are verbal diminutives — for three reasons. First, the *-n'kat'* verbs display diminutive semantics of the same type we find in diminutives of other parts of speech. Second, I show that the suffix *-n'k* is closely related to the prototypical morphological marker of diminutives, the suffix *-k-*. Third, *-n'kat'* verbs display the same spheres of use as non-verbal diminutives. In other words, my findings indicate that the Russian language system does include verbs that display essentially the same diminutive patterns that are attested for other word classes.

My argument is structured as follows. In section 2 I provide a brief overview of diminutives in Russian. In section 3 I present the hypothesis and the data for the present study. In sections 4, 5 and 6 I turn to Russian *-n'kat'* verbs and analyze their semantics, morphology and sphere of use arguing that *-n'kat'* verbs are diminutive verbs, and therefore fill in the gap in the system of Russian diminutives. Section 7 includes general discussion and conclusions.

2 Russian diminutives

Although diminutives in Russian are formed from nouns (e.g., *dom-domik* 'house-little house'), adjectives (e.g., *sinij-sinen'kij/sinevatyj* 'blue-nice and blue/bluish'), adverbs (e.g., *slabo-slaben'ko* 'weak-faintly') and even occasionally from other parts of speech (e.g., *počemu-počemušen'ki* 'why-why_{DIM}' and *net-netuški* 'no-no_{DIM}'), in the following I will concentrate on the most prototypical diminutives, namely substantival diminutives. As demonstrated in Makarova (2014), diminutives can be insightfully represented in terms of a radial category where nominal diminutives are the prototype and other types of diminutives are related to the prototype by metaphorical and metonymic links in the spirit of Lakoff (1987). In order to set the stage for further analysis of Russian *-n'kat'* verbs, in sections 2.1-2.3 I will provide an overview of Russian substantival diminutives, their semantics, morphology and sphere of use.

2.1 Russian substantival diminutives: semantics

As pointed out by Wierzbicka, reference to size is prototypical for diminutives cross-linguistically, "*Ex definitione*, the meaning of any diminutive [...] must be somehow related to the concept 'small'" (1980a: 55). All other uses of diminutives are related to the prototype via extensions from the prototypical meaning of "small" (Wierzbicka 1984, Dressler & Merlini Barbaresi 1994, Jurafsky 1996). For the analysis of Russian nominal diminutives, I identify two key cognitive mechanisms involved in the development of diminutive functions in nouns: metaphor and metonymy (Lakoff & Johnson 1980, Lakoff 1993, Peirsman & Geeraerts 2006). Our attitude toward children who are small and nice at the same time motivates the CUTE IS SMALL metaphor. The CUTE IS SMALL metaphor relates the two major domains characteristic of diminutives, the physical domain of size, which serves as the source domain for the metaphor, and the domain of emotions, which is the target domain for the metaphor. Furthermore, objects and our attitude towards these objects are related

metonymically. Although metonymy does not itself explain the shift between the different cognitive domains, it facilitates this shift relating the different domains. Let us now see how these theoretical points can be illustrated by Russian data.

In Russian, substantival diminutives are most typically formed from nouns denoting concrete physical objects (*korobka-korobočka* 'box-little box'), however, diminutives can also be formed from abstract nouns (*leksikon-leksikončik* 'vocabulary-vocabulary_{DIM}') and proper names (*Sonja-Sonečka*).ⁱ One can distinguish between three groups of diminutives based on their semantics: diminutives that describe size, diminutives that express attitude, and diminutives that describe size and express attitude at the same time. Examples (1)-(3) illustrate the point:ⁱⁱ

- (1) Под бильярдным столом, на котором свалены кучей вишневые **деревца**, стоит кукольный **домик** с крыльцом и **лошадка** перед ним. [Прошло сто лет... (2004) // «Театральная жизнь», 2004.06.28]
'Under the billiard table, where small cherry trees are piled, there is a dollhouse with a porch and a horse in front of it.'

In (1) it is clear from the context that diminutives describing the tree (*derevce*), the house (*domik*) and the horse (*lošadka*) primarily refer to the size of these objects, since we are dealing with a doll house, which is smaller than usual houses, as it even fits under the billiard table. The trees and the horse that are located next to the dollhouse are also smaller than standard trees and horses. Thus, diminutives in (1) focus on the size of the relevant objects. Contrastively in (2), the diminutive *domik* 'small house' conveys affection:

- (2) Вася закатывает глаза и представляет себе двухэтажный **домик** с садом и детскими качелями под старой яблоней. [Ольга Андреева. Правильный дом для правильного человека // «Русский репортер», № 45 (173), 18 ноября 2010, 2010]
'Vasya rolls his eyes and imagines a two-storied house with a garden and a swing for children under the old apple-tree.'

In (2) the person is daydreaming imagining a two-storied house with a garden. Rather than indicating the size of the house, *domik* in (2) describes the positive attitude toward this house.

In most cases, however, it is hard to tease apart the two types of diminutive meaning and classify a given diminutive as only referring to size or only conveying affection. The two semantic components often co-occur, which is not unexpected given the fact that the two are clearly related. Consider (3) for illustration:

- (3) В любом горе можно было меня утешить, если подарить резинового носорога, слона или **лошадку**. [Вальтер Запашный. Риск. Борьба. Любовь (1998-2004)]
'One could console me in any distress by giving me a rubber rhinoceros, an elephant or a horse as a present.'

The diminutive *lošadka* 'horse' that refers to a cockhorse is ambiguous, because it can either describe the small size of the horse or the fact that the horse is nice. Moreover, the diminutive could include both types of semantics and describe a horse that is both small and nice. Thus, primary and metaphorical semantics can naturally coexist in one potentially polysemous or ambiguous linguistic unit. If speakers of Russian want to emphasize that the object described by a diminutive is small, they usually add an adjective *malen'kij* 'small' (Rusakova 2012: 360).ⁱⁱⁱ

Simplifying somewhat, one can conclude that Russian substantival diminutives are characterized by a variety of meanings within two major domains: the domain of physical size and the domain of emotions and attitudes. In the domain of size diminutives indicate reduction along the scale of size, and describe smaller size than a contextually given standard. In the domain of emotions diminutives indicate more emotion than normal, describe affectionate attitude, and signal "reduction" in register, since, as will be shown in 2.3 they are characteristic of informal communication.

2.2 Russian substantival diminutives: morphology

The set of diminutive morphemes used with Russian nouns is varied and counts more than 30 different suffixes and suffix combinations (Stankiewicz 1968, Lönngren 1978, Volek 1987, Kalasniemi 1992 and Andrews 1996). The following suffixes are listed among other diminutive suffixes in Russian as the most productive: *-k-* (*spina-spinka* 'back'), *-c-* (*okno-okonce* 'window'), *-(o)k-* (*nos-nosok* 'nose'), *-ik-* (*dom-domik* 'house'), *-čik-* (*škaf-škafčik* 'wardrobe'), *-očk-* (*krovat'-krovatočka* 'bed'), *-iš-k* (*pal'to-pal'tiško* 'coat'). As follows from the lists of possible diminutive morphemes provided in the scholarly literature, the majority of the diminutive suffixes in Russian represent various combinations with the *-k-* component or /c/ and /č/, which are related to /k/ through morphophonological alternations. This is hardly a coincidence, because as pointed out by Jurafsky (1996: 538 and 565-569), **-ko-* and related suffixes are reconstructed as associated with diminutive semantics in Proto-Indo-European, furthermore, *-k-* is clearly associated with diminution in modern languages (cf., for instance, van der Meer 1989 on Germanic languages).

2.3 Russian substantival diminutives: sphere of use

Russian substantival diminutives, as well as Russian diminutives in general, are very typical for child-directed speech, i.e. are used in cases where one can identify a positive attitude toward the communication partner. Also, diminutives are characteristic for speech about children, i.e. communication on a topic that the speaker has an affectionate attitude toward. The two types of contexts that represent the most natural habitat for diminutives are characterized by friendliness, informal attitude, and represent a highly colloquial phenomenon.

Diminutives extend their scope to contexts where children are not involved, but where the attitude remains the same – affection toward communication partner or topic. Diminutives often mitigate the effect of the message, and can therefore

be interpreted as more polite. Diminutives furthermore signal that the message is informal or intimate, and frequently have ironic readings:

- (4) На самом деле деньги просто утекают в резервации – коттеджные поселки с **домиками** за 25 млн рублей и выше. [Наталья Зайцева. Путешествие. Оренбург // «Русский репортер», № 1-2 (080-081), 22-29 января 2009, 2009]
 ‘In fact, the money is simply leaking away into the reservations – cottage towns with houses_{DIM} that cost 25 million roubles or more.’

In (4), the ironic effect can be attributed to the fact that the diminutive *domik* ‘little house’ refers to luxurious villas, which is clear from the price – 25 million roubles.

Although the variety of contexts diminutives are attested in, is quite large, two major observations can be made: 1) diminutives are used in informal contexts, and 2) diminutives thrive in child-related situations. With this in mind, let us turn to the analysis of the Russian *-n’kat’* verbs.

3 Hypothesis and data

The purpose of the present article is to demonstrate that the system of Russian diminutives is not limited to nominal parts of speech, but includes verbs. The hypothesis I propose is as follows:

- (5) Russian verbs ending in *-n’kat’* are verbal diminutives.

If Russian *-n’kat’* verbs are diminutive verbs, we expect them to be parallel to other diminutives in Russian, such as substantival diminutives described above. In other words, in order to be classified as diminutives, *-n’kat’* verbs need to reveal similarities with other diminutives in terms of semantics, morphology and sphere of use. In order to see whether the hypothesis is confirmed by the data, a data sample was culled from the Russian National Corpus (www.ruscorpora.ru, RNC). In the RNC, there are 292 attestations of verbs ending in *-n’kat’*, and 63 different verbal lemmata with token frequencies varying from 1 to 115.^{iv} 43 verbs from the sample are only attested once in the RNC, which is not surprising given the fact that it is normal that hapaxes constitute 50% of a corpus (Kuznetsova 2013). Table 1 presents the complete list of the *-n’kat’* verbs attested in the RNC. The verbs are sorted according to their token frequencies, the most frequent being on top. The column Verb lists *-n’kat’* verbs culled from the RNC, the column Gloss includes English translations (a question mark is used in cases where establishing the meaning of a given verb from the context was problematic), and the No. of att. column contains the number of attestations of the verb in the RNC.

Verb	Gloss	No. of att.	Verb	Gloss	No. of att.
<i>tren’kat’</i>	thrum	115	<i>zaklin’kat’</i>	start clinking	1
<i>zatren’kat’</i>	start	33	<i>zapin’kat’</i>	start clinking	1

	thrumming			
<i>ten'kat'</i>	thrum	18	<i>zateren'ten'kat'</i>	start clinking 1
<i>bren'kat'</i>	clink	11	<i>zateren'kat'</i>	start clinking 1
<i>dzin'kat'</i>	clang	10	<i>zaxin'kat'</i>	start clinking 1
<i>zven'kat'</i>	ding	9	<i>zezen'kat'</i>	ding 1
<i>tryn'kat'</i>	thrum	6	<i>kušin'kat'</i>	eat 1
<i>zadilin'kat'</i>	start dinging	6	<i>pan'kat'</i>	? ^v 1
<i>zaten'kat'</i>	start	6	<i>pen'kat'</i>	ping 1
	thrumming			
<i>tin'kat'</i>	thrum	5	<i>pobren'kat'</i>	clink 1
<i>dzen'kat'</i>	clang	4	<i>podzen'kat'</i>	ring 1
<i>tilin'kat'</i>	cling	4	<i>poteleben'kat'</i>	cling 1
<i>dilin'kat'</i>	clang	3	<i>potryn'kat'</i>	ding 1
<i>pin'kat'</i>	chirp	3	<i>poxin'kat'</i>	complain 1
<i>proten'kat'</i>	thrum	3	<i>proklin'kat'</i>	cling 1
<i>rastryn'kat'</i>	spill, spend	3	<i>pronjun'kat'</i>	feel, find 1
<i>dren'kat'</i>	clang	2	<i>procen'kat'</i>	cling 1
<i>klin'kat'</i>	rattle	2	<i>rastrin'kat'</i>	spill, spend 1
<i>teten'kat'</i>	cling	2	<i>sdryn'kat'</i>	ding 1
<i>zatin'kat'</i>	start clinging	2	<i>telin'kat'</i>	cling 1
<i>bain'kat'</i>	sleep	1	<i>teren'kat'</i>	cling 1
<i>zadzelen'kat'</i>	start clinging	1	<i>teren'ten'kat'</i>	cling 1
<i>vzbren'kat'</i>	start clinking	1	<i>tren'bren'kat'</i>	ding 1
<i>dlin'kat'</i>	clang	1	<i>uxan'kat'</i>	swoosh, spend 1
<i>dryn'kat'</i>	clang	1	<i>fen'kat'</i>	crackle 1
<i>zabren'kat'</i>	start clinking	1	<i>fun'kat'</i>	?physiology 1
<i>zabelen'ben'kat'</i>	start clinking	1	<i>xaxan'kat'</i>	giggle 1
<i>zadzen'kat'</i>	start clinking	1	<i>xyn'kat'</i>	wine 1
<i>zadzin'kat'</i>	start clinking	1	<i>cven'kat'</i>	cling 1
<i>zadlin'kat'</i>	start clinking	1	<i>čilin'kat'</i>	clang 1
<i>zadrin'kat'</i>	start clinking	1	<i>din'kat'</i>	clang 1

Table 1. Verbs ending in *-n'kat'* in the RNC

Even though that the data sample is not very large, it enables us to draw some conclusions about the status of the *-n'kat'* verbs in Russian and test the hypothesis in (5). Based on the sample of corpus examples, in sections 4-6 I examine the truth-value of three predictions that follow from the hypothesis.

4 Verbs in *-n'kat'*: semantics

In the present section I test the prediction of the hypothesis in (5) pertaining to the semantics of the Russian *-n'kat'* verbs and show that the prediction is borne out by the data. The prediction is provided in (6):

(6) Russian *-n'kat'* verbs have diminutive semantics.

All verbs from the sample described in section 3 were tagged for semantic classes. Semantic tags were based on semantic annotation provided in the RNC. For cases where no such annotation was available, semantic tags assigned in the RNC to synonyms of the verbs in the sample were extrapolated to the verbs from the sample. In this way, the verb *bain'kat'*, which is not tagged for semantic class in the corpus, was tagged 'physiol' (verbs denoting physiological processes),

because this is the semantic tag provided for the verb *spat'*, which can substitute *bain'kat'* as its synonym.^{vi} The *-n'kat'* verbs culled from the RNC can be grouped according to their meanings as presented in Table 2.

Semantic group	No. of attestations (token frequency)	No. of lexemes in the class (type frequency)
sound	276	53
physiology	3	3
miscellaneous	13	7

Table 2. Semantic groups of the *-n'kat'* verbs

In what follows, I will limit my analysis to the most characteristic cases and concentrate on two rather homogeneous groups of verbs with clearly identifiable semantics: verbs that describe sounds and verbs that name physiological processes. First, let us take a closer look at sound verbs. Sound verbs in the sample describe quiet, low-intensity and in general insignificant sounds. Consider example (7) for illustration:

- (7) Ключарев еще только спустился до горловины (до середины), а пуговицы уже летят вниз много прежде него, и даже слышно, как они там внизу **звенькают**. [Маканин. Лаз (1991)]
 'Kljucharev has only climbed down to the opening (halfway), but the buttons are already flying down much ahead of him, and one can even hear them ding at the bottom.'

In (7), the verb *zven'kat'* describes the dinging sound produced by the buttons from the clothing that are falling down. Clearly, the buttons cannot make a lot of sound. The verb *zven'kat'*, therefore, describes a delicate sound. Compare *zven'kat'* to the morphologically and semantically related verb *zvenet'*, which, on the contrary, describes sounds that are clearly discernible:

- (8) Учитель ставил мне в журнал хорошую оценку, **звенел** звонок, и все были довольны. [Искандер. Начало (1969)]
 'The teacher would give me a good mark in the grade-book, the bell would ring, and everyone was happy.'

The past-tense form *zvenel'rang'* in (8) refers to a bell, which signals the beginning and the end of class in school. It is supposed to be heard by everyone everywhere in the school, and is therefore quite loud. Clearly, the difference between *zvenet'* and *zven'kat'* is scalar. While *zvenet'* describes some standard ringing, *zven'kat'* refers to a sound that is less intense, in other words lower along the volume scale. Note that this is also reflected in the frequencies of the two verbs: the neutral *zvenet'* has 5370 attestations in the RNC, while the lower-intensity *zven'kat'* only has 9.^{vii}

Many of the frequent sound verbs in the sample are related to onomatopoeic words. A case in point is the verb *xaxan'kat'* 'giggle' that is related to the onomatopoeic *xa-xa* 'ha-ha':

- (9) Глядишь, и **хаханькать** стала бы помене. Че это тебе все смешно-то?
 [Валентин Распутин. Прощание с Матёрой (1976)]
 'Would probably start giggling less. Why is everything so funny to you?'

Although there is no morphologically related verb that can serve as a standard of comparison for *хахан'кат'* in (9), there are neutral verbs like *smejat'sja* 'laugh' that *хахан'кат'* could be juxtaposed with. The relationship between *smejat'sja* 'laugh' and *хахан'кат'* 'giggle' is similar to that between *zvenet'* 'ring' and *zven'кат'* 'ding', since *smejat'sja* describes a much more determinate and full-scale action than *хахан'кат'*. In other words, giggling can be regarded as low-intensity laughing.

In most cases, not only the *-n'кат'* verb but also the related onomatopoeic word refer to sounds that are quiet, hard to notice and in general not very significant. Note that sometimes the scale that the *-n'кат'* sound verbs are implying can be more than just that of the intensity of the sound (volume). Verbs like *tren'кат'* and *bren'кат'*, both meaning 'ding', for instance, extend their use from just denoting a quiet sound to playing a musical instrument. However, not any type of playing can be characterized by this verb, only poor or "insignificant" playing. Consider the following example:

- (10) У него имелась балалайка, паршивая, расстроенная в ладах балалайка, и умение кое-как **тренькать** на ней. [Г. Г. Белых, А. И. Пантелеев. Республика ШКИД (1926)]
 'He had a balalaika, a lousy one, an out-of tune balalaika, and the ability to clumsily strumming it'

Also cases as exemplified in (10) lend themselves to an analysis in terms of diminutives. Verbs like *tren'кат'* and *bren'кат'* referring to poorly strumming a guitar or another instrument (often making less sound than "normal" playing), and used instead of *igrat'* 'play' that would be neutral in the context can be interpreted as 'not quite playing, not playing properly', in other words also facilitate a 'reduction along a scale' reading. The scale in this case is that of the quality of performance, which in *tren'кат'* and *bren'кат'* is worse than standard. Thus, this scalar difference is compatible with diminutive meanings described above.

As illustrated in (7)-(10), the meaning of the Russian *-n'кат'* verbs that describe sounds can be straightforwardly analyzed as diminutive. In most cases *-n'кат'* sound verbs describe sounds that are quiet and less intense than some normal sounds, or they can also describe sounds that are lower than some other sounds along a different scale, such as that of the quality of the sound. Sound verbs described above can also have affectionate interpretations, but the affectionate semantics is inseparable from the low-intensity semantics. It is, for instance, possible to argue for an affectionate interpretation of *хахан'кат'* 'giggle' in (9) and *tren'кат'* 'strum' in (10), since the speaker can have affectionate attitude toward the persons carrying out the relevant actions. In any case, two types of meanings, the low-intensity and the affectionate relate the *-n'кат'* verbs under scrutiny to diminutives.

Let us now turn to the other semantic group of *-n'kat'* verbs, verbs that refer to various physiological processes, such as *bain'kat'* 'sleep' and *kušin'kat'* 'eat'. This class of verbs is very productive and in colloquial speech *-n'kat'* verbs occur in connection with a large variety of physiological (and other) processes, primarily associated with children. Google searches return hundreds of examples of *gulen'kat'* 'walk', *spaten'kat'* 'sleep', *pitin'kat'* 'drink', *duman'kat'* 'think', etc.^{viii} Whether or not the *-n'kat'* physiological verbs describe events of low intensity is an open question. One could, for example, argue that children, being smaller and less experienced than adults, carry out actions in a less intense way than adults. Children eat smaller portions of food, sleep for shorter intervals, and walk slower. These speculations, however, are too disputable to be used for the purposes of a linguistic analysis. In other words, even though the *-n'kat'* verbs referring to physiological processes could theoretically describe low-intensity actions, this is not necessarily the case. What is beyond doubt, though, is the fact that these verbs are used affectionately. The affection is directed either towards children or others involved in the described events or to the events as a whole:

- (11) Мамо́чка сходит проверить, не напачкал ли там, а то опять соседи заругают; а потом и **кушинькать!** [Татьяна Толстая. Ночь (1983)]
 'Mommy will go and check if he has left a mess, otherwise the neighbors will be angry again; and then eat!'

In (11) a mother is talking to her child, whom she has an affectionate attitude toward, which is emphasized by the use of the diminutive *мамо́чка* 'mommy'. The mother is talking through a plan of what she and her child are going to do, and eating, described by the verb *kušin'kat'* instead of the neutral *est'* 'eat', will be performed by the child. Although especially characteristic for child-directed contexts, *-n'kat'* verbs can also be used about adults that the speaker is emotionally attached to:

- (12) А как вы, девиньки, засветла повечеряли, так тоже ступайте **баинькать**, — сказала мать Они обеим девушкам. [Д.Л. Мордовцев. Москва слезам не верит (1885)]
 'And since you, girls, have had your dinner while it was still light, you may now go to sleep, said Onja's mother to both girls.'

In (12) the woman is talking to two young women; one of them is her own daughter. From the context we know that these are not little children, still, the mother uses a diminutive form to address the young women (*devin'ki* 'girls'), and her speech is undoubtedly affectionate. The woman sounds warm and caring; her sentence is very much mother-like.

In both (11) and (12) the *-n'kat'* verbs do not describe low-intensity events, rather, they indicate the speaker's positive and affectionate attitude towards the events and their participants, who at the same time are communication addressees. This is similar to prototypical substantival diminutives, as well as diminutives of other parts of speech that have metaphorical extensions from

more concrete to more abstract, affectionate uses. As we know from Wierzbicka's studies (1980, 1984), diminutives develop their affectionate uses because they primarily occur in child-related situations. Not only are children small and nice, but also watching children may evoke positive emotions and tenderness towards them as well as to the event as a whole.

To sum up the observations concerning the semantics of the Russian *-n'kat'* verbs, we have seen that the *-n'kat'* verbs can have a more direct and a more metaphorical interpretation. The direct interpretation is well attested in *-n'kat'* sound verbs that describe low-intensity sounds, i.e. sounds that are less discernible than the corresponding "normal" sounds. The metaphorical interpretation is more relevant for verbs referring to physiological processes, where *-n'kat'* verbs have affectionate interpretations. All in all, *-n'kat'* verbs involve essentially the same metaphorical extensions as nominal diminutives: what in the domain of concrete physical objects is size, in the domain of events is intensity. What in the domain of objects is affectionate attitude is affectionate attitude in the domain of events, too. This parallel is facilitated by the well-established EVENTS ARE OBJECTS metaphor (Janda 2006). Due to the similarities between both the more concrete and more abstract types of diminutive semantics and the semantics of the *-n'kat'* verbs, it is felicitous to analyze the semantics of the *-n'kat'* verbs as diminutive. The prediction in (6) is therefore borne out by the data.

5 Verbs in *-n'kat'*: morphology

The next prediction of the hypothesis in (5) concerns the morphology of the *-n'kat'* verbs in Russian:

- (13) Russian *-n'kat'* verbs have diminutive morphology.

The question I address in the present section, therefore, is whether the *-n'k* in *-n'kat'* verbs and the *-k-* suffix attested in Russian diminutives are related. I argue that the answer to this question is *yes* and show that the relationship to non-verbal diminutive morphology can be captured in terms of so-called product-oriented generalizations.

In most diminutive nouns it is quite straightforward that there is a suffix that carries a diminutive meaning. In *ryba – rybka* 'fish – small fish' it is the addition of the suffix *-k-* to a non-diminutive base that yields a word with diminutive semantics. The default pattern of forming diminutives in Russian is summarized in (14):

- (14) Non-diminutive base + diminutive suffix (*-k-*) → diminutive

The pattern in (14) with some variation in the shape of the diminutive suffix is characteristic for substantival, adjectival, adverbial and even occasionally other diminutives. Can *-n'kat'* verbs be analyzed in a similar fashion? As will be shown below, the case of *-n'kat'* verbs is more complex than (14), since we do not find a single procedure that takes us from a non-diminutive base to a verb with

diminutive semantics, moreover, identifying the base is problematic in some cases. Let us, however, start with examples parallel to (14). Consider the verb *kušat* ‘eat’, where the addition of $-(V)n'k$ yields *kušēn'kat*, which, as shown in section 4, displays diminutive semantics. Note that for the majority of the $-n'kat$ verbs, which represent a highly oral phenomenon, the spelling is not normalized and both *kušan'kat*, *kušēn'kat* and *kušin'kat* are attested. For this reason instead of using a particular vowel, I use V to indicate that there is a vowel preceding the $-n'k$ in $-n'kat$ verbs. Whether or not the vowel is part of the suffix is tangential to the argument and will not be discussed. The pattern we observe in verbs like *kušēn'kat* is summarized in (15):

(15) Non-diminutive verbal base + $(V)n'k \rightarrow$ diminutive $-n'kat$ verb

The $-(V)n'k$ element in verbs like *kušēn'kat*, therefore, qualifies as a diminutive marker similar to the $-k-$ and its variants in nouns and other parts of speech where diminutives are an established category. The $-(V)n'k$ element in $-n'kat$ verbs includes the $-k-$ and is therefore related to the $-k-$ diminutives in other parts of speech. For verbs like *kušēn'kat* the prediction in (14) is correct. There are, however, other types of verbs in the $-n'kat$ sample. Another type of $-n'kat$ verbs includes verbs that are derived from onomatopoeic bases, such as *tren'k*, *dzin'k*, *ten'k*, *pen'k*, *tilil'k* and many others. The onomatopoeic bases often already contain $-k-$ as does *tren'k*: *tren'k* ‘ding’ + *at* \rightarrow *tren'kat* ‘ding_{VERB}’. The resulting verb has diminutive semantics. The formation of the $-n'kat$ verb with diminutive semantics for such bases is summarized in (16):

(16) Onomatopoeic word + *at* \rightarrow diminutive $-n'kat$ verb

The verb *tren'kat*, for example, has the relevant diminutive semantics, but arguably no diminutive suffix related to $/k/$ has been added to a base because the base already has the $-k-$. Still, I argue that even in verbs like *tren'kat* the $-(V)n'k$ is a diminutive marker. First, although most of the onomatopoeic bases already have the $-k-$, there are a few examples of onomatopoeic words that do not include the $-k-$. This is the case of *xaxa*, which lacks the $-k-$, but for which there is a clearly related verb *xaxan'kat* ‘giggle’ (see example (9)). Second, the presence of $-k-$ in the related words is hardly problematic for the diminutive analysis of the $-n'kat$ verbs due to the fact that also in the onomatopoeic words like *tren'k*, *dzin'k*, *ten'k*, *pen'k*, and *tilil'k* the $-k-$ can have a diminutive reading. These onomatopoeic words describe delicate sounds, as opposed to words like *bax*, *bux* and others that describe loud and noticeable sound and for which no **baxan'kat* or **buxan'kat* are attested. In what follows I will argue that what we are dealing with here is an example of a product-oriented generalization, which unites all attested patterns. However, before we can develop this analysis, it is necessary to consider a more complicated pattern.

In addition to verbs like *kušēn'kat* with verbal bases and verbs like *tren'kat* with onomatopoeic bases, there are a number of verbs that represent ambiguous cases, for which we can assume two bases. Consider, for instance, the verb *zven'kat* ‘ring’ from example (7), which can either have a verbal base (*zvenet*) or

There is considerable evidence that product-oriented generalizations are pervasive in natural language. Studies on phonology and morphology reported in inter alia Stemberger 1981, Bybee and Slobin 1982, Menn and MacWhinney 1984, Köpcke 1988, Lobben 1991, Wang and Derwing 1994, Albright and Hayes 2003 indicate that humans are able to make product-oriented generalizations, i.e. they see similarities across linguistic items, although these items have different relationships to the bases they are formed from. Bybee (2001:128) points out: “[m]any, if not all, schemas are product-oriented rather than source-oriented. A product-oriented schema generalizes over forms of a specific category, but does not specify how to derive that category from some other.” In other words, language users may produce forms, “overusing” some common output patterns, and can derive new forms and words in otherwise not attested ways in order to produce output forms that fit into a generalized category. My analysis of the Russian *-n’kat’* verbs as a case of product-oriented generalization is well motivated by the data: we observe verbs that are formally similar as they all end in *-n’kat’*, and all the *-n’kat’* verbs have diminutive semantics. I therefore argue that the *-n’kat’* verbs have diminutive morphology, since we witness a consistent relationship between the presence of *-k-* and diminutive semantics. Moreover, if we assume a product-oriented generalization for the Russian *-n’kat’* verbs, the issue concerning the status of the bases for these verbs becomes less important.

I further argue that cognitive linguistics’ toolbox enables us to present various types of diminutives as a unified category of interrelated schemas. Schemas generalize over their instantiations without saying anything about how they are obtained from a source, and are therefore designed to capture product-oriented generalizations (Bybee 1985, Nessel 2008). My analysis of how *-n’kat’* verbs can be integrated in the system of Russian diminutives is summarized in Figure 1. In the figure, each box is a schema (Langacker 2008). The most general schema that captures that *-k-* is associated with diminutive semantics, is presented in the box on top of the figure. Instantiations, i.e. categorizing relations between a type and a subtype, are represented by solid arrows. Such solid arrows connect the general schema with its major subtypes: verbs, nouns, adjectives and adverbs. For the sake of space, the patterns attested for different parts of speech are presented in a condensed fashion, by providing concrete examples. Diminutives of other parts of speech are included in order to illustrate that verbal diminutives belong to the same category in Russian as other diminutives. The following instantiations of the general schema represent diminutives of their respective parts of speech: *rybka* ‘fish’ represents substantival diminutives, *sinen’kij* ‘blue’ represents adjectival diminutives, and *slaben’ko* ‘weak’ represents adverbial diminutives. Dashed arrows mark extension relations, i.e. relations between schemas that are partly compatible, but where neither is a subtype of the other. Dashed arrows connect interrelated instantiations of the general schema as well as words that do not bear a direct relation to the general schema to instantiations of the general schema.

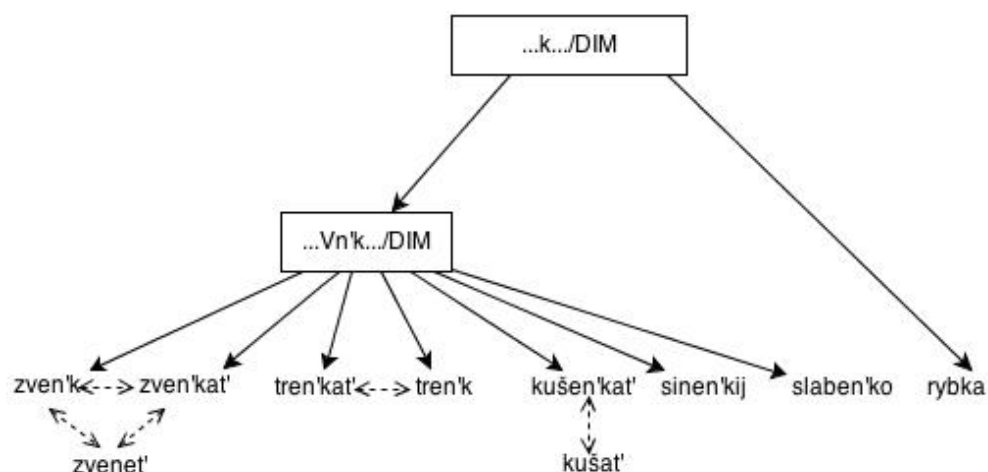


Figure 1. Russian *-k-* diminutives as a category of interrelated schemas

Figure 1 captures the following generalizations: there is a general diminutive schema [-k-/DIM], shared by all members in the networks, which has a schematic [-Vn'k/DIM] instantiation as well as more specific instantiations like *rybka* 'fish'. Words like *zven'k*, *tren'k*, *zven'kat'*, *tren'kat'* 'ding' and *kušēn'kat'* 'eat' are related to the [-Vn'k/DIM] schema. The [-Vn'k/DIM] schema captures that the *-n'k* component and diminutive semantics is shared by all instantiations related to this schema. The *zven'k* group includes an onomatopoeic word (*zven'k*), a verb ending in *-n'kat'* (*zven'kat'*) and a verb without the *-n'kat'* (*zvenet'*). Two of the three members in the *zven'k* group are instantiations of the general schema, and *zven'kat'* is related to both *zven'k* and *zvenet'*. Although *zvenet'* is not an instantiation of the general schema, it is included in the figure as an extension of both *zven'k* and *zven'kat'*. The *tren'k* group only has two members as there is no verb without *-n'kat'* in this group. Both members of the *tren'k* group instantiate the general schema. The *kušēn'kat'* group does not have a related onomatopoeic word, and only one of the members in the group instantiates the general schema, namely the verb *kušēn'kat'*. The analysis I propose in Figure 1 captures the asymmetries between the individual *-n'kat'* verbs showing that these verbs may have one or several morphologically and semantically related words.

The network in Figure 1 illustrates two important points. First, it captures the product-oriented generalization about the relationship between *-(V)n'k* and diminutive semantics. Second, it enables us to explicate the relationship between diminutive verbs in *-n'kat'* and non-verbal diminutives. As shown in the figure, the schema [...Vn'k.../DIM] covers not only verbal diminutives in *-n'kat'*, but also adjectival and adverbial diminutives, such as *sinen'kij* 'blue' and *slaben'ko* 'weak'. The schema [...k.../DIM] at the top states that both diminutive verbs in *-n'kat'* and substantival diminutives like *rybka* 'fish' share the form-meaning relationship. In other words, the network in Figure 1 captures that *-n'kat'* verbs are an integrated part of Russian diminutive morphology since they reveal the same form-meaning patterns as diminutives in other parts of speech.

Figure 1 further suggests that there is an iconic relationship between diminutive marking and parts of speech, since adjectives, which are traditionally considered to be more closely related to verbs than nouns, display the same diminutive

marker $-(V)n'k$ as diminutive verbs. If we follow Langacker (1990: 78 and 2008: 103-128), who assumes that verbs and adjectives express “relations”, we could analyze words with $-(V)n'k$ - as “relational diminutives”, while nouns with the $-k$ -suffix such as *rybka* would be examples of “non-relational” diminutives. It is true that substantival diminutives with $-(V)n'k$ - occur, e.g. *stupen'ka* ‘stair-step’, *dereven'ka* ‘village’, *djaden'ka* ‘uncle’, *teten'ka* ‘aunt’, and hypocoristic names as *Nasten'ka*, *Mašen'ka*. However, these are marginal and most of $-(V)n'k$ nouns are limited to the use as forms of address.

My analysis of verbs ending in $-n'kat'$ as including diminutive morphology comes with an additional benefit: it does not force upon us arbitrary morphological segmentation into “building blocks”, i.e. morphemes. The network in Figure 1 accounts for the pervasiveness of /k/ in diminutives without forcing us to decide whether $-(V)n'k$ is one or several suffixes. Whether $-k$ - comes from the base or is added is not crucial. What is crucial, though, is that there is the $-k$ - and that the verbs in $-n'kat'$ reveal diminutive semantics.

Summing up the discussion of the morphology of the Russian $-n'kat'$ verbs, we can say that three types of verbs are attested in the corpus. Verbs of the first type have verbal non-diminutive partners; these are verbs like *kušat'-kušēn'kat'*. Second, there are verbs in $-n'kat'$ with onomatopoeic bases, for which no verbal partner can be found, like *tren'kat'*. Third, there are intermediate cases like *zven'kat'* where the $-n'kat'$ verb can be analyzed as both having a verbal base *zvenet'* and an onomatopoeic base *zven'k*. For cognitive linguistics this heterogeneous situation is not problematic, since we are dealing with a product-oriented generalization that can be captured by a schema in a radial category. There is a consistent and systematic form-meaning relationship and we observe parallels with other parts of speech that indicate that the $-k$ - in the $-n'kat'$ verbs is related to the diminutive $-k$ in other parts of speech. I therefore conclude that the prediction in (13) is correct and Russian $-n'kat'$ verbs have diminutive morphology.

6 Verbs in $-n'kat'$: sphere of use

The final prediction that follows from the hypothesis in (5) concerns the sphere of use of the Russian $-n'kat'$ verbs and is presented in (18):

- (18) Russian $-n'kat'$ verbs have diminutive sphere of use.

In the present section I demonstrate that Russian $-n'kat'$ verbs are used in contexts characteristic of diminutives, such as informal communication and communication with or about children, and that the prediction is borne out by the data.

The fact that the corpus only provides a sparse number of examples suggests that either the phenomenon under scrutiny is marginal or highly oral. Google searches indicate that Russian $-n'kat'$ verbs are in fact very well attested, and are therefore far from marginal, but rather represent a colloquial and informal phenomenon. The majority of the $-n'kat'$ verbs in the sample are sound verb.

Onomatopoeic sound verbs ending in *-n'kat'*, as onomatopoeia in general, belong to informal settings. In more formal contexts a more descriptive vocabulary is usually preferred to onomatopoeic imitation of sounds. Other *-n'kat'* sound verbs are also used informally, or in emotionally loaded communication where affection is expressed:

- (19) В воздухе теплынь, опять везде неумолчная капель стояла: цокали, **звенькали**, перебулькивались капельки. [В. Я. Шишков. Угрюм-река. Ч. 1-4 (1913-1932)]
 'The air was warm, there was again the never silent drip-drop everywhere: the little drops were clinking, dinging and bubbling with one another.'

In (19) the author describes the scene with distinct affection, which is emphasized by the use of the diminutive *kapel'ki* 'drops' that are presented as almost animate, since they *perebul'kivalis'* 'bubbled with one another' as if they were talking.

The *-n'kat'* verbs that describe physiological processes are most naturally used about children. Examples (20)-(22) are from the Internet:

- (20) пошла вас почитаю пока доченька **баинькает**
 [<http://www.probirka.org/forum/viewtopic.php?f=149&t=28802&sd=d&start=12705>]
 'I'll go and read some of you while the daughter is sleeping'

In example (20) the mother is describing her daughter sleeping, and uses the verb *bain'kat'*, i.e. using the *-n'kat'* verb is natural for her when talking about her child whom she has an affectionate attitude toward. The use of *-n'kat'* verbs is not limited to contexts where children are the main participants or addressees. The *-n'kat'* verbs extend their uses to contexts where those who carry out the action described by the *-n'kat'* verb are considered especially sweet and cute. This was the case in example (12) above where a mother was talking to her grown-up daughter and another young woman. In example (21) a woman describes her cat and what the cat eats every day. There are several diminutives in the context, such as *govjadinka* 'beef' and *kotik* 'cat'. Diminutives indicate the affectionate attitude towards the cat and everything that is related to this cat:

- (21) Кушает говядинку (вырезку) каждый день [...] Я уже сама хочу быть нашим котиком...)))
 [veselopogovorim.ru/viewtopic.php?id=353&p=7]
 'Eats beef_{DIM} (filet) every day [...] I would like to be our cat_{DIM} myself now...)))]'

When the physiological *-n'kat'* verbs are used about adults and in communication with adults, they indicate a high degree of familiarity between communication participants, and can be used ironically. The ironic effect is achieved due to the cognitive clash whereby a lexeme, which typically describes

children, is used about adults. Consider example (22) from the Internet where a blogger concludes a post by stating that he is going to bed:

- (22) Пошел я **баинькать**
[<http://newsforums.bbc.co.uk/ws/vi/complaint!default.jspa?messageID=1353138&complaintThreadID=11016>]
'I'm going to bed'

The examples cited above show that the *-n'kat'* verbs are used informally, represent an oral phenomenon, and can have pragmatic functions, such as irony. Also, Russian *-n'kat'* verbs often occur in the same context with other diminutives. All this is also typical for other types of diminutives, so the prediction in (18) is borne out by the facts: verbs in *-n'kat'* share the sphere of use of other diminutives.

7 Conclusions. Verbs in *-n'kat'* as verbal diminutives

In the present article, I suggested that Russian *-n'kat'* verbs represent an example of verbal diminutives. To see if *-n'kat'* verbs reveal similarities to well-established diminutives in Russian, such as substantival diminutives, I checked whether *-n'kat'* verbs have diminutive semantics, morphology and sphere of use.

Semantically, the *-n'kat'* verbs form two major groups. Verbs like *tren'kat'* 'ding' describe events of low intensity, and therefore are similar to nominal diminutives that describe small size or adjectival diminutives that describe low intensity of a property. Verbs like *kušen'kat'* 'eat' refer to events that the speaker has an affectionate attitude toward, thus these verbs are similar to metaphorical uses of substantival and other diminutives.

Morphologically, verbs in *-n'kat'* do not represent a homogeneous group of verbs, as they have different types of bases. Some of the verbs have verbal bases without the *-k-* element, some of the verbs have onomatopoeic non-verbal bases that already include the *-k-*, and some of the verbs have either of these bases. I argue that the heterogeneity in the *-n'kat'* verbs is not problematic, as it can be accounted for by means of a product-oriented generalization. Regardless of the type of the base, the resulting verbs all include the *-(V)n'k* and are all interrelated. Moreover, they are all related to the other diminutives in Russian revealing similarities with adjectives, nouns and other parts of speech.

The analysis of the sphere of use of the Russian verbs in *-n'kat'* has shown that these verbs are used in contexts typical for diminutives in general. Verbs ending in *-n'kat'* are attested in child-directed speech, in informal contexts, and affectionate communication. Thus, the analysis of sphere of use of the *-n'kat'* verbs supports the results of the analysis of their semantics and morphology and indicates that the hypothesis is correct, and the *-n'kat'* verbs are indeed diminutive verbs in Russian.

Theoretically, the findings of the present chapter are interesting since they suggest that Russian diminutives represent a large category, which is attested

across parts of speech and even extends to verbs — a point that has not received much attention in the scholarly literature on diminutives in Russian. Moreover, diminutives in Russian seem to be a unique category in Russian insofar as the relevant semantics is expressed in different parts of speech by the same morphological element, *-k-*. In general, Russian nouns and verbs combine with morphological markers that represent different categories. The diminutive category, on the other hand, manifests itself as a radial category network with identical or related morphological markers across parts of speech. The radial category I proposed in Figure 1 in the present article captures similarities and differences between different types of diminutives in different parts of speech in Russian. Thus, not only do verbal diminutives in Russian exist, but they are also well integrated into the system of diminutives.

ⁱ The latter group is beyond the scope of the present study, since hypocoristic names, i.e.

ⁱⁱ Unless specified otherwise, all examples are taken from the Russian National Corpus. All spelling is preserved.

ⁱⁱⁱ The fact that diminutives co-occur with adjectives denoting small size does not undermine their ability to refer to objects of small sizes, rather, such co-occurrences are examples of semantic overlap that, along with redundancy, are typical for language in general (see Janda et al. 2013 for discussion of semantic overlap).

^{iv} The searches were performed in September-October 2013. The complete dataset is available via The Tromsø Repository of Language and Linguistics at <http://opendata.uit.no/>.

^v A question mark is used in order to mark cases where establishing the meaning of the verbs and hence the semantic class was problematic based on the examples available in the RNC.

^{vi} See <http://ruscorpora.ru/en/corpora-sem.html> for a detailed description of semantic tagging in the RNC.

^{vii} Corpus searches were performed in June 2014.

^{viii} Note that words like *bain'ki* and *spaten'ki* that in Makarova (2012) are analyzed as diminutives represent a related phenomenon, however, they are beyond the scope of the present article.

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