

2. DIMINUTIVES

2.1. *The Meaning of Diminutives*⁷

2.1.1. Crosslinguistically, the term diminutive⁸ is interpreted as expressing smallness and endearment. However, one of the differences in the treatment of the term found in the literature is that the two senses are often separated. Most research views smallness as the basic meaning of the diminutive, whereas connotations which are associated with emotions and assessment are dealt with in the field of pragmatics (cf. Sifianou 1992, Dressler 1994, Dressler & Merlini 1994, Jurafsky 1996, Gillis 1997, Stephany 1997).

2.1.2. In Lithuanian linguistics the diminutive is defined as a derivative noun (i.e., formed from other nouns) usually having a general meaning of 'little'. The diminutive suffixes are claimed to perform a very distinct modifying function. To quote Urbutis (1978: 168), 'the notion expressed by the derivative noun always falls within the limits of the initial concept; however, the diminutivised form differs in its quantificational (small size or big size) or qualitative (showing affection or attenuation) connotations, or both'.

2.1.3. According to Lithuanian linguistic tradition, the study of diminutives does not distinguish between semantic and pragmatic senses characteristic of this type of noun; one reason for such a treatment is that these meanings are often very closely interrelated. The use of the diminutives may depend on the speech situation: they mainly occur in child-directed speech or are used to talk about small children; lovers would be another category in this sense. Adults use diminutives when they talk to good friends, and this is especially true of women talking to their girlfriends⁹; we also talk like this to our loved ones, usually parents or grandparents. It is obvious that the situations just mentioned are not formal situations; on the contrary, they relate to friendly or intimate ex-

⁷ In this study into the term of *diminutive* hypocoristics are included as well.

⁸ In Italian linguistics (cf. Dressler 1998) the term 'alteratives' is used for diminutives, augmentatives, and pejoratives, whereas the term 'diminutives' is applied if the basic semantic meaning of the item is smallness.

⁹ Specific features of language used by women (diminutives including) are discussed in Tannen (1989, 1994).

changes, and Dressler & Merlini (1994: 218) define them ‘not serious’ situations. Therefore, the prevailing meaning of diminutives is closely related to emotions, love and kindness in particular, when the addressee in a speech act is a dear person, especially a small child. As pointed out by Dressler & Merlini (1994: 212), the meaning of kindness belongs to the relationship of sympathy and empathy ‘accompanied by emotions referring to the continua of attachment, interest, and pleasure’.

2.1.4. Diminutives become especially numerous when a mother talks to her child. A child-directed speech is filled with love and pleasant emotions, hence the abundance of diminutives, e.g., *Rūtyte, atnešk mamytei tą žaisliuką* ‘Rūta:DIM, bring that toy:DIM to your Mother:DIM’ (Mother). It is clear that when small children constantly hear such derivative nouns, they start using them as well, e.g., *Rūtytė mažytė* ‘Rūta:DIM the small:DIM one’, *Pauliuko meškutė* ‘Paulius:DIM:POSS teddy-bear:DIM’, *Rūtytės lėlytė* ‘Rūta’s:DIM:POSS doll:DIM’ (Rūta).

Jurafsky (1996) claims that the origins of the diminutive crosslinguistically lie in words semantically or pragmatically linked to children. Wierzbicka (1984) and Dressler & Merlini (1994) are unanimous in positing that it is a particular type of adult behaviour towards children that lies at the basis of the use of diminutives in terms of pragmatics. Adults use diminutives more rarely, except in child-directed speech.

2.1.5. According to Dressler & Merlini (1994: 395), diminutives can modify the whole speech act since their use adds a variety of meanings to the act, which can range from love and attraction to irony. Moreover, diminutives can ‘soften’ an order or reduce the strictness of a statement (Sifianou 1992). Therefore, we can not speak about the meaning of diminutives separately, without reference to the context they appear.

The diminutive is often associated with a number of pragmatic senses crosslinguistically. This fact led Dressler & Karpf (1995) to question the statement which many linguists make to the effect that ‘smallness’ is the main meaning which diminutives express. Moreover, the latest evidence from early language acquisition supports the assumption that pragmatic connotations of diminutives precede their semantic senses (Dressler & Merlini 1999).

2.2. *The Development of Diminutives in Rūta’s Speech*

2.2.1. Hypocoristics and diminutives are used in child-directed speech more often than in adult speech. According to Ferguson (1977: 224), the ‘most prominent expressive feature of BT (Baby Talk) probably

is the hypocoristic affix'. The statement is supported by research into a number of languages, Lithuanian included, which has demonstrated that diminutives are especially frequent when talking to children (Wójcik 1994, Savickienė 1998, 1999).

It stands to reason, then, that due to the direct influence of adult language diminutive suffixes are among the first morphemes that a child acquires (cf. Dressler & Kiefer 1990, Dressler & Merlini 1994, Rūķe-Draviņa 1993, Dressler & Karpf 1995, Gillis 1997, Stephany 1997, Ceccherini et al. 1997, Savickienė 1998, 2001).

2.2.2. Section 2.2 is devoted to the description of the process of diminutive usage in Rūta's and Mother's speech; our analysis will focus mainly on the quantitative and qualitative characteristics. This latter area includes the discussion of morphological, semantic, and pragmatic aspects.

2.2.3. Let us consider Rūta's use of diminutives first. Table 2.1 below displays the ratio of diminutives with respect to types and tokens in Rūta's speech.

Table 2.1: The ratio of diminutives (including hypocoristics) relative to the number of nouns (types and tokens) in Rūta's speech

Age	Noun types		Noun tokens	
	Total number of nouns	Diminutives (%)	Total number of nouns	Diminutives (%)
1;7	17	21	52	29
1;8	67	51	339	33
1;9	170	34	1028	33
1;10	224	39	1174	50
1;11	146	36	863	48
2;0	198	37	1000	72
2;1	181	40	1010	60
2;2	212	48	1118	62
2;3	241	46	1159	55
2;4	231	39	1168	51
2;5	251	39	942	51

Several items deserve additional comment. First, Rūta has been using diminutives since the very beginning of the recording. A closer inspection of the data reveals (see Table 2.1) that the number of diminutive types in her speech grew from 21% to 51% within the period of one month, i.e., from 1;7 to 1;8. Next, it is important to note that after a month, at the age of 1;9, the numbers dropped to 34%. The spurt of diminutives was

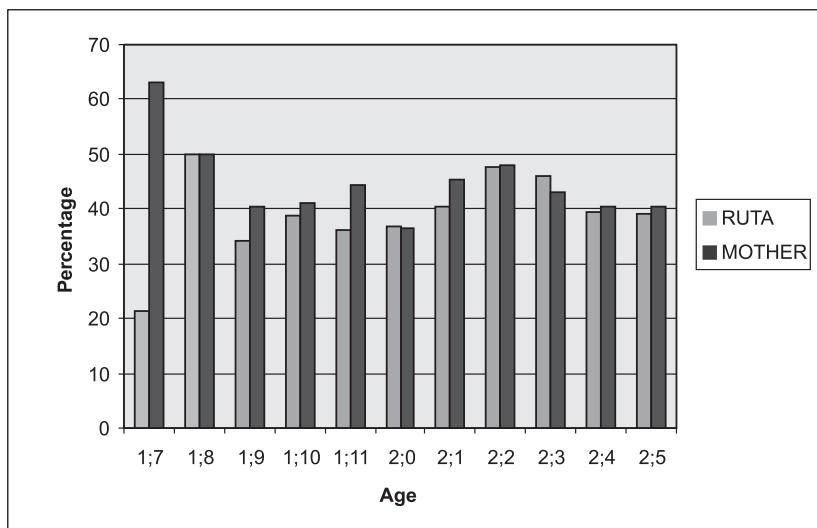


Figure 2.1: The frequency of diminutive (types) in Rūta's and her Mother's speech (1;7-2;5)

recorded only at an early phase of word learning (1;8); afterwards, simplicia nouns prevail. It could be suggested then that at the beginning of lexicon formation the appearance of simplicia (49%) and diminutives (51%) achieves almost equal rates. Later on, the use of diminutives drops down: from 1;9 onwards the diminutives (types) make up approximately 40%.

Compared with the respective data from other languages, such as Russian, Polish, our data show an idiosyncratic tendency on the part of the Mother and Rūta to use an extremely great number of diminutives – the frequency of diminutive usage in their speech surpasses all expectations. This phenomenon is not difficult to explain: Rūta's extensive use of diminutives is influenced by the frequent appearance of diminutives in Mother's speech. As can be seen from Figure 2.1, at the age of 1;7 (i.e., at the very beginning of the recording) the number of diminutives used by the Mother was 65% versus Rūta 21%. This is the largest index of using diminutives throughout the period from 1;7 to 2;6.

Table 2.1 shows, that Rūta, who has just started to talk, learnt a lot of new words (both diminutives and simplicia) in two months' time. With respect to the frequency of their usage, it should be pointed out that diminutive tokens show a higher percentage of occurrence at the age of

2;0. The number of diminutive types throughout the period is relatively stable (with the exception of 1;8) which is approximately 40%, whereas the frequency of diminutive tokens increases during the period of 2;0 and remains high enough, i.e., from 70% to 50% (Table 2.1). It is difficult to say whether this frequent use of diminutives is characteristic of Lithuanian children and their mothers' behavior at the initial phase of language acquisition, or whether this is just the girl's individual feature.¹⁰ There is no doubt, however, that the period up to the age of three is the 'peak' in terms of diminutive usage and that in later periods this usage undergoes a sharp decline. The relevant data from other languages show that diminutives occur most frequently in the speech of a two-year-old child, and then, with time, they become rare, e.g., in Polish (Smoczyńska 1997).¹¹

2.2.4. Rūta starts using diminutives very early. The ratio of the diminutives used by Rūta and her mother displayed in Figure 2.1 clearly shows that at the age of 1;8 Rūta starts using the same numbers of diminutives as her mother does. After period 1;8, which is considered to be a productive beginning of diminutive usage, the girl uses derivatives regularly, at approximately 40%. What is more, Rūta sometimes exceeds Mother's usage of diminutives. The question we are faced with at this moment is: what are the reasons for such frequent usage of diminutives in the speech of Rūta and her mother?

One possible answer is that this is simply due to the fact that the Mother's speech influences the girl's speech: i.e., Rūta often uses the diminutives she hears from her mother. What I would venture to suggest in these contexts is that the famous statement by Ferguson (1977) to the effect that baby talk is a simplified register does not hold for Lithuanian. Diminutives in the Lithuanian language are not easier to learn than the respective nouns with basic forms. First, diminutives are longer; conse-

¹⁰ Interesting data on the frequency of diminutives in Latvian and Lithuanian songs can be obtained from Kangere's (1990) research. The data provide similar results with respect to diminutive types (230 in Lithuanian and 194 in Latvian), however, there is a considerable difference in the frequency of tokens in the two languages, namely, 463 tokens in Latvian against 847 (almost twice as many) in Lithuanian. That a relatively frequent use of diminutives must be an idiosyncratic feature of Baltic languages is supported by the folklore of the two nations. For an impressive analysis of the variety of meanings and nuances that diminutives are assigned to in Latvian see Rūķe-Draviņa (1959: 120–165).

¹¹ In Russian, on the contrary, diminutives are relatively rare, especially in child-directed speech. The statistics are as follows: only 4% of diminutives at the period of 1;4, 12% during the 1;6 period and 8% at 2;6 (Voeikova 1998).

quently, it is more difficult to produce them, especially at a younger age. It has been noted on several occasions that mothers start using more complicated words unconsciously. This is due to the fact that, talking with their baby, mothers use diminutives in order to convey their love rather than consciously thinking of the need to create a simplified system of the language (Pine 1994). As far as a child is concerned, it can be suggested that the use of morphologically complicated forms by the mother creates an advantageous situation for her offspring: in a month or two the child will have acquired the correct inflectional case endings.

2.2.5. What could explain Rūta's preference for the more complicated words? A closer analysis of the Lithuanian noun declension classes may be helpful in this respect. We distinguish 2 macroclasses with 7 microclasses for macroclass I (masculine) and 4 microclasses for macroclass II (feminine) (see Table 5.1) in the system of noun declensions. Diminutives fall only into three microclasses: microclass II.3 is reserved for the feminine gender, whereas the other two (I.1 and I.3) encompass masculine nouns. When using diminutives, Rūta avoids the complicated task of choosing one particular noun form from numerous endings available and attributes all the nouns of the masculine gender to the microclass I.1 (the nominative *-as* ending) and the microclass I.3 (the nominative *-is* ending). Nouns of the feminine gender occur within one microclass (II.3) with the nominative ending *-ė*. However, only one masculine microclass – the most frequent one, with the nominative ending *-as* – is preferred by Rūta. The predominance of this microclass is determined by a frequent use of the diminutive suffix *-uk-*: nouns of the masculine gender with the suffix *-uk-* are always assigned the nominative ending *-as*. Therefore, using one suffix, Rūta simplifies the system of case marking to a greater extent just by choosing diminutives falling under the two most frequent microclasses. The I.1 microclass marked by the inflectional ending *-as* (masculine nouns) is exemplified here by such nouns as *šuniukas* 'dog: DIM', *namukas* 'house: DIM', *ežiukas* 'hedgehog: DIM'. Microclass II.3 encompasses feminine nouns with *-ė*¹², as in *sesutė* 'sister: DIM', *meškutė* 'teddy-bear: DIM', *bitutė* 'bee: DIM' (Savickienė 2001).

¹² In Finnish, the choice of diminutive nouns in child language also helps to avoid the use of complicated inflectional endings (Laalo 1998).

2.3. The Use of Diminutive Suffixes in Rūta's and Mother's Speech

2.3.1. According to Lithuanian grammars, the most frequent diminutive suffixes in terms of their derivational potential are as follows: *-elis, -elė; -ėlis, -ėlė; -(i)ukas, -(i)ukė; -(i)utis, -(i)utė; -aitis, -aitė; -ytis, -ytė; -ulis, -ulė* (cf. LKG I 1965, Ambrazas et al. 1997).

The analysis of the diminutive suffixes used by Rūta demonstrates that their choice and frequency is closely related to the respective usage by the Mother. The two tables below present the percentage of the frequency of noun lemmas relative to diminutive suffixes and tokens (Table 2.2 for feminine nouns and Table 2.3 for masculine nouns).

Table 2.2: Frequency of feminine nouns (types/tokens) relative to diminutive suffixes in Rūta's and Mother's speech (1;7-2;5)

Feminine suffixes	Rūta				Mother			
	Types		Tokens		Types		Tokens	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
-ytė	343	64	1933	76	252	53	3175	75
-elė	38	7	80	3	55	12	277	7
-ėlė	29	5	38	1	43	9	106	2
-utė	120	22	434	17	107	23	621	15
-ukė	1	0	1	0	4	1	4	0
-aitė	9	2	58	2	14	3	72	2
Total	540	100	2544	100	475	100	4255	100

Table 2.3: Frequency of masculine nouns (types/tokens) relative to diminutive suffixes in Rūta's and Mother's speech (1;7-2;5)

Masculine suffixes	Rūta				Mother			
	Types		Tokens		Types		Tokens	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
-elis	77	13	228	11	96	16	461	18
-ėlis	32	5	85	4	55	9	110	4
-ukas	434	74	1703	79	375	64	1640	65
-ytis	6	1	35	2	3	1	22	1
-utis	41	7	113	5	53	9	294	12
-aitis	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0
Total	590	100	2164	100	583	100	2528	100

The data with respect to Rūta's and Mother's usage are similar: the most frequent suffix of the feminine gender is *-ytė*; the second is *-utė* and the third one is *-elė, -ėlė*. The most frequent suffix of the masculine

gender is *-ukas*; then follow *-elis* and *-utis*. The preference for these diminutive suffixes has been established both in Rūta's and her mother's speech.

Let us first discuss the diminutives of the feminine gender (see Table 2.2). It has to be pointed out that there are some differences in Rūta's and Mother's usage of feminine diminutives, whereas the tendencies of the masculine diminutive usage are similar. Nouns with the suffix *-ytė* amount to 343 types in Rūta's and to 252 types in her mother's speech. Among the diminutives that appear in Mother's speech, 55 types are with the suffix *-elė*, while the respective number in Rūta's speech is only 38. Mother uses 43 types of diminutives with suffix *-ėlė*, while Rūta produces only 29 types, i.e., this is much less than in her mother's speech. The results demonstrate that more than half of diminutives of the feminine gender in Rūta's speech are with the suffix *-ytė*, and the second half of diminutives are with other suffixes, i.e., *-utė*, *-elė* and *-ėlė*. The differences of usage are not just in terms of types. The token frequency of the feminine diminutives differs even more both in Rūta's and Mother's speech (see Table 2.2).

The analysis of the data with respect to masculine diminutive noun types (see Table 2.3) show similar tendencies in Rūta's and Mother's speech. The most productive suffix is *-ukas*: 434 types for Rūta and 375 for Mother; then comes *-elis*, with Rūta's 77 and Mother's 96 types; other suffixes hardly reach the line of 10%. Token frequency of diminutives with the suffix *-ukas* scores 1703 in Rūta's speech and 1640 in her mother's speech. However, the latter outstrips her daughter in using diminutives with the suffix *-utis* (with Mother's 294 and Rūta's 113).

The diminutive suffixes that Rūta and Mother use are among the most frequent ones that appear in fiction. According to LKG (1965: 254), the suffixes *-elis* and *-elė* are the most frequent in newspapers, fiction, folklore etc. It is interesting to note that Rūta's and her mother's speech does not conform to this pattern: other suffixes, i.e., *-ytė* and *-ukas*, show highest frequency. Thus, the most frequent and most productive suffixes *-ytė* and *-ukas* predominate in the girl's speech throughout the 1;7-2;5 period.

2.3.2. It is important to note that Rūta starts to use two or three different diminutive suffixes for the same lemma very early, e.g., *T-elė*, *T-ytė* (*Rūt-elė*, *Rūt-ytė*) (1;7); *mešk-iukas* (5), *mešk-utė* (6), *mešk-ytė* (1) 'teddy-bear:DIM'; *med-ukas* (5), *med-utis* (1) 'honey:DIM' (1;8); *kač-iukas* (1), *katin-ėlis* (1), *kat-ytė* (10) 'cat:DIM'; *mašin-ėlė* (1), *mašin-ytė*

(3) ‘car:DIM’ (1;9); *arbat-ėlė* (3), *arba-tytė* (2) ‘tea:DIM’ (1;10); *kišk-utis* (4), *kišk-ytis* (1) ‘hare:DIM’; *rank-utė* (1), *rank-ytė* (1) ‘hand:DIM’ (2;0). The examples show that this is against Clark’s principle of contrast (Clark 1995). This tendency is not usual in other languages where children learn diminutive suffixes one after another (Gillis 1997, De Marco 1998).

2.3.3. The formation of diminutives with two suffixes quite common in modern Lithuanian, e.g., *dal-el-yt-ė* (particle:DIM), *žmog-el-iuk-as* (man:DIM), *saul-ut-ėl-ė* (sun:DIM). Our data do not show a frequent usage of diminutives with double suffixation in Rūtas’s or in Mother’s speech, e.g., *ošk-yt-ėl-ė* ‘goat’, *diev-ul-iuk-as* ‘god’, *žmog-el-iuk-as* ‘man’, *Rūt-ut-ėl-i* ‘Rūta:VOC’, *Rūt-yt-ėl-e* ‘Rūta:VOC’, *trup-uč-iuk-q* ‘a little’ (a noun used as an adverb) (Mother); *trup-uč-iuk-q* ‘a little’, *žmog-el-iuk-as* ‘man’ (Rūta). Double suffixation reinforces diminutives meanings, both semantically (*trupučiuką* ‘a little’) and pragmatically (the other examples).

2.4. The Distribution and Semantics of Diminutives

2.4.1. For a reliable analysis of diminutives, it is important to establish whether there are certain words that a child uses only as diminutives or only as simplicia. Next, it will be significant to find out if there are any words that appear in both forms. We suggest that if a child has not yet perceived the basic semantic distinction of diminutives, that is, ‘little, small’ as opposed to ‘normal-sized, large’, and if he/she has not yet grasped the pragmatics of their usage, diminutive and simplicia nouns will not cooccur. Our research data show that in Rūta’s lexicon there are nouns which are used as either simplicia or diminutives. Some nouns were used in both forms. According to Clark (1993), a child relates the difference in meaning to the difference in form and vice versa. It follows that a child may perceive two different forms of the same word – its basic meaning and the derived diminutive – having two different meanings. With this principle of contrast in mind, Clark (1995: 394) assumes that the speaker will have to relate a difference in form with a difference in meaning.

Figure 2.2 summarises the distribution of different noun types, i.e., simplicia (simplex), diminutives (dim), and both forms, in Rūta’s speech.

It can be seen from Figure 2.2 that Rūta uses the same noun either as a diminutive (approximately 35%) or as a simplex (approximately

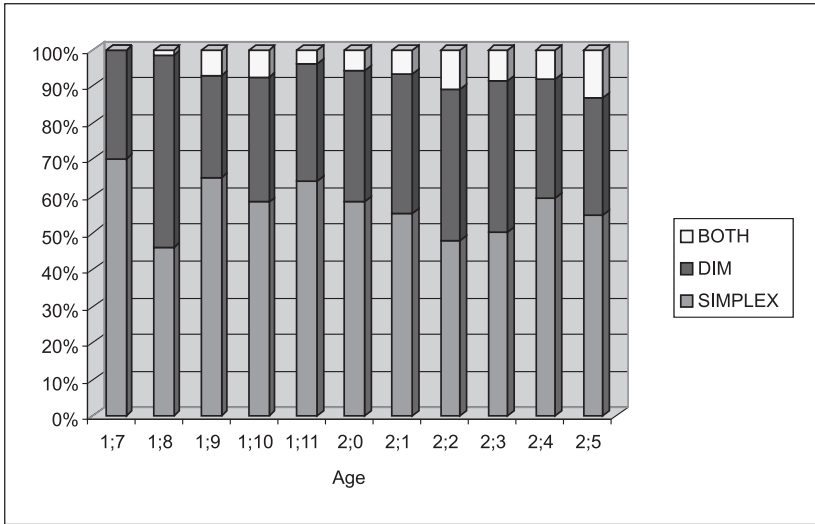


Figure 2.2: The distribution of noun types (percentage) used as either diminutives or simplicia or both in Rūta's speech (1;7-2;5 period)

55%). The percentage of nouns used in both forms is rather low, just 8%. In contrast to types, the number of tokens of nouns that appear in both forms show different frequency of occurrences, i.e., diminutives are much more frequent. Examples are:

kamuolys 'ball' (5) – *kamuoliukas* 'ball:DIM' (53),
koja 'leg' (2) – *kojytė* 'leg:DIM' (10),
ausis 'ear' (1) – *ausytė* 'ear:DIM' (10)
nosis 'nose' (1) – *nosytė* 'nose:DIM' (6)
batas 'shoe' (3) – *batukas* 'shoe:DIM' (11)
lėlė 'doll' (2) – *lėlytė* 'doll:DIM' (43), etc.

It is also worth noting that Rūta uses diminutive as well as simplex forms of the same noun to denote the same thing; she does not attribute different semantic meanings to different forms. Thus, Clark's (1995) assumption to the effect that different forms have different meanings is not corroborated by our data (cf. Dressler 1997b, Dressler & Merlini 1999).

2.4.2. Throughout the period of observation Rūta preferred diminutives to other nouns: she had been using them spontaneously and correctly (in form) since the beginning of recording. Even when her mother

used *simplicia*, Rūta used a diminutive (see example 2.2 below). This choice might be explained by the assumption that diminutives had predominated in Rūta's speech due to Mother's influence well before the recording was started. As our data show, diminutive suffixes are almost exclusively stressed (especially in the flow of speech); this explains the fact that they are easily distinguished and memorised by the girl. In contrast to findings with children of many other languages Rūta does not prefer trochaic diminutives, e.g., *niukas*, or diminutives with two trochees, e.g., *vandeniukas* 'water:DIM', but trisyllabic forms with the stress on the second syllable. Examples are: *akýtė* 'eye:DIM', *duonýtė* 'loaf of bread:DIM', *kojýtė* 'leg:DIM', *lėlytė* 'doll:DIM', *berniukas* 'boy: DIM', *šuniukas* 'dog:DIM', *kiškiukas* 'hare:DIM'. Once accustomed to somewhat longer words and to their particular sound pattern, later on Rūta chooses diminutives consciously.

The following examples illustrate the use of diminutives and *simplicia* in Rūta's speech:

(2.1)

M: *Ne, čia kamuolys.* 'No, here is a ball'.

R: *Nauja.* 'New'.

M: *Kas naujas?* 'What is new?'

R: *Kamuolys raudonas* 'The red ball'. (1;10)

The above example demonstrates the way Rūta follows Mother's utterances, i.e., she uses the basic noun (*kamuolys* 'ball') her mother used. However, she utters the diminutive spontaneously, as is shown in (2.2):

(2.2)

M: *Ką Rūtytė pirko?* 'What did Rūta:DIM buy?'

R: *Kamuoliuką didelį raudoną.* 'A ball:DIM, big and red'. (1;10)

R: *Kas čia?* 'What's this?'

M: *Meška?* 'Bear?'

R: *Meškutė.* 'Bear:DIM'. (1;9)

M: *Nepūsk baliono, skruosčiukai sprogs.* 'Don't blow up the balloon, your cheeks: DIM are going to burst.'

R: *Balioniukas, balioniukas.* 'Balloon:DIM, balloon:DIM'. (2;4)

M: *A, mergaitė ne su džinsais, žiūrėk, su pėdkelnėm, su sijonu.* 'The girl isn't wearing jeans; look, she's wearing tights and a skirt'.

R: *Su suknytėm.* 'In dresses:DIM'. (1;10)

R: *Statyk namą.* 'Build a house'.

R: *Namuką.* 'House:DIM'. (1;10)

R: *Išsimaudė veidą*. ‘She has bathed (i.e., washed) the face’.

R: *Veiduką*. ‘The face:DIM’. (1;11)

The above examples allow us to make the assumption that Rūta has already acquired diminutive formation rules as they exist in adult language. She is not only able to spontaneously produce both noun forms, those of *simplicia* and diminutives, but she also uses the diminutive in its correct form (i.e., diminutives actually used in adult speech); instances of incorrect diminutive formation were never noted. Evidently, this early acquisition of diminutive forms is facilitated by the uncomplicated system of diminutive derivation in Lithuanian: to get a diminutive, one of the diminutive suffixes has to be attached to the root of the noun (e.g., *balion-as* ‘ballon’, *ballion-ėlis*, *balion-iukas*, *balion-ytis*, *balion-aitis* etc.; these diminutive suffixes are actually used in adult speech, but some of them not very frequently).

In cases when Mother used a new word in the basic form, at the beginning Rūta uses it in the same way, e.g., *žuvis* ‘fish’, *bitė* ‘bee’, *namas* ‘house’, *kiškis* ‘hare’, *saldainis* ‘sweet’, *mašina* ‘car’, *balionas* ‘balloon’. However, all these words, with the exception of *namas* ‘house’, appeared as diminutives in Rūta’s usage after just a few months. It is interesting to compare the relevant frequencies: 1;7 *žuvis* (5) – *žuvytė* (1), and 2;4 *žuvis* (2) – *žuvytė* (5); 2;3 *balionas* (24) – *balioniukas* (1), and after a month, during the 2;4 period, we find *balionas* (7) – *balioniukas* (13); the same applies to *saldainis* (26) – *saldainiukas* (1) at 2;3 and *saldainis* (11) – *saldainiukas* (11) at 2;5.

One more example related to Rūta’s preference for diminutives should be discussed. The first noun which appears in both forms, diminutive and simplex, is *batas* ‘shoe’. At 1;7 Rūta spontaneously utters this word in the basic form twice. After a month the girl used the diminutive form too, only the simplex is still more frequent, e.g., *batas* (4) – *batukas* (2) (1;8). However, from the period of 1;9 onwards the diminutive occurs more frequently, e.g., *batas* (1) – *batukas* (3) (1;9); *batas* (4) – *batukas* (5) (1;10); *batas* (3) – *batukas* (11) (2;0).

It seems that in Rūta’s case we could also speak about her inclination to use longer words. Due to phonetic difficulties, she is not able to pronounce the whole word in all contexts correctly, but the diminutive suffix is always retained, e.g., *teniukas* (*vandenukas*) ‘water:DIM’, *kaliukas* (*auskariukas*) ‘ear-ring:DIM’, *etiukas* (*kamuoliukas*) ‘ball:DIM’ (until 2;0). Most children find it difficult to produce the sound /r/, thus Rūta omits the first syllable in her own name, *Tytė* (*Rūtytė*). This sound is claimed to

be acquired by children last (cf. Rūķe-Draviņa 1990, Crystal 1993: 240-241).

2.4.3. The discussion of the semantics of diminutives entails answering the question whether Rūta uses diminutives in reference to small objects. In our examples where Rūta uses both words, a simplex and a diminutive, there is no such difference in semantic meaning, e.g.,

(2.3)

R: *Turi, kamuolys, kamuoliukas, duok.* ‘You have got it; a ball, a ball:DIM; give it to me’. (2;1)

R: *Čia guli meška, meškiuka.* ‘Here is a bear lying, a bear:DIM’. (2;2)

There are cases in our data where the girl repeats the noun used by Mother in a changed version, that is, she uses the simplex form of her mother’s diminutive or vice versa – she replaces *simplicia* by diminutives. Such a phenomenon is not easy to explain. The relevant examples are presented below:

(2.4)

M: *Taigi jau nusiplovėm kojų, nereikia plauti.* ‘We have already washed the leg: DIM; there’s no need to wash it’.

R: *Koją.* ‘The leg’. (1;11)

M: *Kas čia?* ‘What is this?’

M: *Meška?* ‘Is it a bear?’

R: *Meškutė.* ‘A bear:DIM’. (2;5)

M: *Labai gražus balionas.* ‘It is a very nice balloon.’

R: *Balioniukas, balioniukas.* ‘A balloon:DIM, a balloon:DIM’. (2;4)

In view of the above it could be suggested that when the girl uses both words referring to the same item in the same speech situation, they do not exhibit any differences in semantic meaning. It is interesting to note that the same tendency of referring to the same object by both, a simplex and a diminutive form, is very frequent in Mother’s speech as well. Consider the following variations (always within the same speech situations):

(2.5)

M: *Ar pieną gers?* ‘Is she going to drink milk?’

M: *Gers pienelį mergaitė?* ‘Is the little girl going to drink the milk:DIM?’

M: *Ar gersi pieniuką?* ‘Are you going to drink the milk:DIM?’

M: *Padainuok, kad jie užmigtu visi, arba pasek pasaką apie pelytę.* ‘Sing a song so that they would fall asleep, all of them, or tell a tale about the mouse:DIM’.

M: *Pasakėlę.* ‘The tale:DIM’.

M: *Kas padėjo tokį kiaušinuką, putpelė?* ‘Who laid such an egg:DIM, a quail?’

M: *Ir Pauliukas valgys kiaušinį.* ‘Paulius is going to eat egg too’.

M: *Pasakyk mamytei, kai reikės nosį nuvalyti, gerai?* ‘Tell your mummy when to wipe the nose, will you?’

M: *Papūsk nosytę.* ‘Blow your nose:DIM’.

Rūta must have understood that her mother uses both forms (simplex and diminutive) to express the same denotative meaning at a very early age. Thus, the girl distinguishes between different meanings when the words have different roots, whereas the diminutive suffixes that she uses do not influence the basic meaning. The reason is that the meaning of a root is much more concrete than that of a suffix (cf. Bybee 1985), and this holds particularly for diminutives.

As was shown above, diminutives used by Rūta are not assigned the meaning of ‘smallness’ yet. To denote this meaning, the most frequent strategy is to use the adjective *mažas* ‘small/little’ either in combination with the diminutive itself, or separately (cf. Sinclair 1996, Gillis 1997, Stephany 1997). Consider the relevant examples:

(2.6)

M: *O Rūtytė mažytė?* ‘And what about Rūta:DIM, is she small:DIM?’

R: *Mažytė, mažytė.* ‘Small:DIM, small:DIM’. (1;8)

M: *Mažytis vilkutis ar didelis?* ‘Is the wolf:DIM small or big?’

R: *Mažytis.* ‘Little:DIM’.

M: *Mažytis, mažytis, taip?* ‘Little:DIM, little:DIM, right?’ (1;8)

M: *Kokio dydžio šuniukas tas mažas buvo?* ‘How big was that little dog:DIM?’

R: *Matiuka (mažiukas).* ‘Small:DIM’.

M: *Žiūrėk, vežimėlyje lėlytė jau miega maža.* ‘Look, a little doll:DIM is sleeping in the pram:DIM’.

M: *Maža lėlytė miego nori.* ‘The small doll:DIM wants to sleep’

R: *Te (čia) lėlytė.* ‘Here doll:DIM’. (1;8)

(2.7)

M: *O kas čia?* ‘And what is this?’

M: *Kamuoliukas?* ‘The ball:DIM?’

R: *Kamuoliukas.* ‘The ball:DIM’.

M: *Mažas, mažas.* ‘Little, little’.

R: *Ne.* ‘No’.

M: *Didelis kamuoliukas?* ‘Is this ball:DIM big?’

R: *Didis (didelis).* ‘Big’. (1;8)

M: *O Akvilytė didelė ar maža?* ‘Is Akvilė:DIM big or small?’

R: *Dide (didelė).* ‘Big’. (1;9)

M: *Tu jau didelė?* ‘Are you big?’

R: *Dide* (*didelė*). ‘Big’. (1;9)

M: *Ar didelį saldainį?* ‘Is candy big?’

R: *Didis* (*didelis*). ‘Big’. (1;9)

During the so-called phase of one-word utterances (up to the age of two), Rūta rarely produces two-word utterances. Thus noun phrases consisting of adjective+noun are used frequently only later (approximately after 2;0). The examples in 2.6 (with the adjective *mažas* ‘small’) and 2.7 (with the adjective *didelis* ‘big’) show that these two adjectives enable Rūta to emphasise the actual size of the object. The diminutive suffix in Rūta’s speech does not have the meaning of *mažas* ‘small’; therefore, it is the adjectives that specify whether the object is actually small or big, even in the cases when Rūta is referring to the ‘ball’ by using its diminutive form. The cases when Rūta used the adjective *dide* (for feminine) *didis* (for masculine) (*didelė*, *-is*) ‘big’ (see examples 2.7) enable us to assume the possibility of back formation (i.e., *did-is* vs. *did-el-is*:DIM). This would be a proof of a creative use of diminutive formation (adjective, not noun), but no other cases of back formation were noted.

In view of the facts discussed above, the hypothesis can be advanced that at an early age the child is able to use only formal diminutive derivation rules. The examples demonstrate convincingly that there is no difference in the semantic meaning between diminutives and simplicia in Rūta’s speech. In cases when it is necessary to indicate the distinction of either *mažas* ‘small’ or *didelis* ‘big’, the child uses an adjective, i.e., an analytic phrase. Such a model of defining the meaning of ‘smallness’ on Rūta’s part is influenced by Mother. Hence, at a very early age, the child uses the adjective *mažas* ‘small’ or *didelis* ‘big’ rather than the diminutive to specify the size of the object.

2.5. The Pragmatics of Diminutives

2.5.1. In order to understand the acquisition of diminutives in child language, it is important to analyse not only their derivation and semantics, but also their pragmatic functions. Since the use of diminutives depends on the speech situation, the pragmatic meaning of kindness or politeness may appear irrespective of the denotative component of ‘smallness’ (Stephany 1997).

2.5.2. The use of diminutive suffixes in child language is mainly determined by pragmatics. As pointed out by Dressler & Merlini (1994: 224), diminutive suffixes are ‘firstly attributed to the nouns which

describe the child, the parts of his body, or other objects which belong to that child'. The comparison of frequencies for diminutives and simplicia shows that with respect to diminutives, the most frequent lexico-semantic groups (LSG) which appear in Rūta's speech are 'Animals', 'Toys' and 'Body parts' (see Table 2.4).¹³

Table 2.4: Frequency of simplicia and diminutives relative to LSGs in Rūta's speech

LSG	Simplicia		Diminutives	
	Types (%)	Tokens (%)	Types (%)	Tokens (%)
Animals	46,6	33,4	53,4	66,6
Toys	62,9	38,9	37,1	61,1
Body parts	21,2	28,2	78,8	71,8
Food	59,8	62,2	40,2	37,8
Persons	59,8	48,6	40,2	51,4
Other things	62,1	75,4	37,9	24,6

Table 2.4 demonstrates that diminutives dominate particularly in token frequency within the lexico-semantic groups 'Body parts', 'Toys', 'Persons', and 'Animals'. In contrast, nouns from the groups such as 'Other things' and 'Food' occur mostly in the simplex form. It is worth to mention that the percentage of simplifier in the group 'Other things' is very high, which suggests that a lot of new words (part of them used only just once) falls into this category. The group 'Persons' presents quite interesting results: the data show that Rūta uses a lot of simplex nouns (types). The majority of these are the names of Rūta's friends, relatives, and acquaintances. All the nouns denoting family relations are used by Rūta like proper nouns, e.g., mother, daddy, sister, grandma, grandpa; they are assigned this function in the speech act. On the other hand, the high percentage of diminutive token frequency testifies that the girl uses the diminutive forms of more familiar, more common words. Naturally, the diminutive form of Rūta's name makes up a large number of diminutive tokens. It is characteristic of children to use their own name very frequently, especially in its diminutive form. Children can choose several diminutive forms of their name as a standard variant (e.g., *Rūtele*

¹³ According to the 'MacArthur Communicative Development Inventory' (1992–1993) and Smoczyńska (1998), 16 lexico-semantic groups (LSG) of nouns have been determined, the most frequent of which are discussed in this work. LSG of 'Other things' comprises those nouns that appear as diminutive not frequently and belong to LSG 'Furniture', 'Vehicle', 'Clothes' etc.

and *Rūtytė*); such forms can be used by family members and friends as well. However, in our data there are instances when a particular diminutive form of the name was used only once in a very specific speech situation: a case in point is *Rūtuliukas* and *Rūtužėlis* (gender shift to masculine) uttered by Mother. Such diminutive forms of names are used by people who are very close to each other, and children as a rule do not use them to refer to themselves (cf. Sifianou 1992).

The relevant research in other languages does not show that hypocoristics are equally frequent in a child's and his/her parents' speech. Moreover, it appears relatively late, as research on child language in Russian (Voeikova 1998), Greek (Stephany 1997), Hebrew (Ravid 1998), or Italian (Ceccherini et al. 1997) shows. It is only Latvian that demonstrates the frequent use of hypocoristic forms of proper names; this is especially relevant when children or parents address each other during a dialogue (see Rūķe-Draviņa 1976, 1982, 1993).

One interesting fact with respect to hypocoristics should be discussed at this point. Hypocoristics are chiefly used to express the warm feelings of love and kindness. Nevertheless, the basic forms of names in our data are not rare at all. Actually, the girl's name used by her mother in the basic form acquires a different pragmatic value, e.g.,

(2.8)

M: *Matai, vėl išpylei*. 'You see, you have spilt it again'.

M: *Tėvelis pyksta?* 'Is Daddy angry?'

R: *Nepyta (nepyksta)*. 'He is not angry'.

M: *Nepyksta, kai Rūta pripila?* 'Isn't he angry when Rūta spills things over?'

M: *O ką tu čia darai?* 'And what are you doing here?'

M: *Nekratyk galvytės*. 'Don't shake your head:DIM'.

M: *Rūta!*

M: *Negalima, Rūtyte, nukrisi nuo čia*. 'No, Rūta:DIM, you are not allowed, you are going to fall down from here'.

M: *Rūta!*

Situation: Rūta has fallen down and is crying:

R: *Skauda*. 'It hurts'.

M: *Neskauda, nelipk, Rūta, tikrai bus kampas*. 'No, it doesn't hurt; don't climb up here, Rūta; there'll be an angle there for sure'.

M: *Nelįsk, nelįsk prie rozetės, Rūta!* 'Don't, don't get close to the socket and don't play with it, Rūta!'

M: *Negalima*. 'You are not allowed to do this'.

M: *Išbarstei viską, oi tu Rūta, Rūta*. 'You have spilt everything, oh, my, Rūta, Rūta.'

In all the situations cited above Mother used the basic form of the name in order to discipline the girl, whereas in other situations Mother mostly uses the hypocoristic name to emphasise her love and tender feelings. Thus, the basic form of the name used in such situations acquires an entirely different – negative – pragmatic meaning. When Mother calls her daughter *Rūta*, she stresses the fact that the girl is doing something wrong and is not a good girl anymore.

Addressing her mother, *Rūta* also uses diminutives very frequently. Let us analyse some cases when the girl uses simplicia.

(2.9)

R: *Ateik čia, ateik*. ‘Come here, come’.

R: *Statom statom*. ‘Let’s build, let’s build’.

R: *Mamyte, statom*. ‘Mummy, let’s build’.

R: *Mama!* ‘Mother!’ (2;4)

R: *Mama, mama, ajisk (užrišk) mesiukai (meškiukui)*. ‘Mother, Mother, tie it up for the bear:DIM’. (2;5)

R: *Mama, statom mes, va*. ‘Mother, we are building, here’.

R: *Mama, statyk dar*. ‘Mother, go on building’. (2;5)

R: *Mama, neužsimerk, žiūrėk*. ‘Mother, don’t close your eyes; look’. (2;5)

The comparison of the situations clearly demonstrates that they reflect the demand directed to Mother to do something, which is accompanied by an imperative verb form. In addition to the demand, a new nuance of discontent emerges, and it is indicated by the simplex form of the address. In the first dialogue, the diminutive appears as the first item but the simplex follows immediately; moreover, the simplex is used with a specific intonation conveying impatience, irritation, and discontent within the demand; all these emotions express negative connotations.

Such difference in pragmatic meaning is evident only with respect to these two names, *Rūta* and *mama* ‘mother’. It can be suggested then that in such cases diminutives appear as unmarked items, whereas simplicia are marked in terms of the pragmatic meanings they convey, such as seriousness, reproach, reprimand, or anger. This is a good example of pragmatic markedness reversal.

2.5.3. In child-directed speech, the things that surround children are often diminutivised. In such cases diminutives not always mean warm feelings; parents simply try to tell children that the world is friendly towards them (see Sifianou 1992). Hence, the names of huge or predatory animals are used with diminutive suffixes in order not to frighten the child, e.g., *meškiukas* ‘bear:DIM’, *meškutė* ‘bear:DIM’ instead of *meška*

‘bear’, *lokys* ‘bear’; *kengūriukas* ‘kangaroo:DIM’ instead of *kengūra* ‘kangaroo’; *arkliukas* ‘horse:DIM’ instead of *arklys* ‘horse’; *kiaulytė* ‘pig:DIM’ instead of *kiaulė* ‘pig’, etc. No doubt, the names of certain animals are used mostly in the simplex form, and these include such words as *begemotas* ‘hippopotamus’ or *beždžionė* ‘monkey’. Some of the reasons of such usage may be the length of the word as well as its complex phonetic characteristics.

Another aspect of diminutive usage is related to situations which are unpleasant for the child. Rūta’s mother uses diminutives when she does not want to frighten the girl, or when she wants to alleviate the unpleasant situation, e.g.,

M: *Rūtyte, eisim kirpti nagučius*. ‘Rūta:DIM, we are going to cut the nails:DIM’.

M: *Reikia gerti vaistukus*. ‘It’s time to take the medicine:DIM’.

What is meant by this usage is to convince the child that, for example, to cut nails or to take medicine is not terrible at all and that such activities do not hurt. It can be concluded then that appropriate use of diminutives reduces the feelings of fear (i.e., mitigation) and encourages the child to carry out some unpleasant activity (i.e., the intended perlocutionary sequel).

2.5.4. Another interesting fact of diminutive usage in Rūta’s and Mother’s dialogues was found in the following distribution of diminutives and simplicia. Let us analyse several examples:

Situation: Rūta is leafing through a picture book.

M: *Čia laputė ir vilkas*. ‘This is a fox:DIM and this is a wolf’.

M: *Lapė neša gaidelį*. ‘The fox is carrying a cock:DIM’.

In the first case the diminutive *laputė* ‘fox:DIM’ and the simplex *vilkas* ‘wolf’ are used; this usage suggests that the fox is considered weaker in comparison with the wolf. In the second sentence we have the same referent *lapė* ‘fox’ used as a simplex, because *gaidelis* ‘cock:DIM’ in this situation is weaker than the fox *lapė* and therefore it is he, the cock, that deserves sympathy. Both utterances contain a hint as to who is better (in terms of sympathy); and better is the one who has the endearment suffix. The fox *lapė* is better and weaker than the wolf *vilkas*, hence it becomes *laputė* ‘fox:DIM’. However, later it turns into a bad strong *lapė* ‘fox’ because there appears a much weaker *gaidelis* ‘cock:DIM’.

Similarly, in another example we have:

M: *Nepūsk baliono, skruosčiukai sprogs*. ‘Don’t blow up the balloon, your cheeks: DIM will burst’.

In this case *balionas* ‘balloon’ is the one to blame because *skruostai* ‘cheeks’ hurt and are getting red, next to explosion, while blowing the balloon up. Consequently, *balionas* ‘balloon’ is bad; hence, the basic form *balionas* appears rather than the diminutive *balioniukas* ‘balloon: DIM’, and *skruostai* ‘cheeks’ suffer, they hurt, they are weak; similarly, *skruosčiukai* ‘cheeks: DIM’ become diminutive.

Examples of diminutive formation in Rūta’s speech within similar contexts were recorded as well, e.g.,

R: *Numetei?* ‘You threw it down?’

R: *Dal (dar) kengūraq.* ‘Even kengooroo’.

R: *Kengūrytei skauda, skauda kakytę (kakytę).* ‘It hurts kangaroo: DIM, hurts forehead: DIM’.

R: *Skauda maselei (vargšelei).* ‘It hurts poor: DIM’. (2;5)

R: *Matai, meskiukas (meškiukas) vasiukas (vargšiukas).* ‘You see a poor: DIM bear: DIM’. (2;5)

We see that Mother and Rūta use diminutives when they speak about those who are weak, sick or helpless. In view of the above we can posit one more pragmatic meaning of diminutives, that of sympathy for weakness.

Therefore, Dressler’s (1994) and Dressler’s & Merlini’s (1999) hypothesis to the effect that the pragmatic meaning of diminutives is acquired earlier than the meaning ‘smallness’ is corroborated by Rūta’s use of diminutives on the one hand; on the other hand, the input shows systematic effects of pragmatic factors which allow Rūta to acquire pragmatic meanings of diminutives.

2.5.5. The analysis of our data allows us to draw several important conclusions. Rūta’s data confirms the central tenets of the theory of natural morphology in that:

1. The formation of diminutives in child language emerges during early (premorphological and protomorphological) periods. It is already during these periods that Rūta uses basic rules of this nonprototypical type of derivational morphology (cf. 2.4.2).

2. Diminutive suffixes are the first morphemes that Rūta starts to use. She acquires diminutive suffixes earlier than inflectional endings. Such early emergence might be determined by the saliency, i.e., transparency and frequency of diminutive morphemes.

3. Diminutive nouns and their basic forms are first used side by side without any tangible difference in meaning (cf. 2.4.3, 2.5.2).

4. The diminutive forms that appeared first and were used most frequently are derived from basic nouns from the lexico-semantic groups of ‘Animals’, ‘Toys’ and ‘Body parts’ (cf. 2.5.2).

5. The only tangible meanings of diminutives are associated with pragmatic meanings (cf. 2.5.2, 2.5.4), whereas ‘smallness’ is expressed via the use of the adjective *mažas* ‘small’ as a part of a noun phrase (cf. 2.4.3).

6. It is due to their pragmatic meaning that diminutives are acquired first, since, in general, children acquire meanings contextually, in a pragmatic rather than semantic format.

All the above generalisations are treated as universal since they were corroborated crosslinguistically. However, several important differences in the use of diminutives by Rūta deserve to be pointed out as well:

1. Rūta’s and Mother’s speech is marked by the high frequency of diminutive use. The data obtained from other languages do not show such a high frequency of diminutives both in child language and input (even more than in Dutch, cf. Gillis 1997).

2. In general, diminutives in Rūta’s speech appeared earlier than their basic forms. This is determined by the frequent use of diminutives by Mother and by phonological and morphological factors.

3. Rūta starts to produce several diminutive suffixes simultaneously rather than gradually, one after another.

4. In Rūta’s case, the most frequent and earliest to appear lexico-semantic groups (i.e., ‘Animals’, ‘Toys’, and ‘Body parts’) are enlarged by one more group, that of ‘Persons’. It is a noteworthy fact that in other languages this group usually consolidates much later.

5. Although Rūta’s material confirms the universal statement 3 (see above), there is an exception to it: the nouns *Rūta* and *Mother* are used in the simplex form to express negative emotions. Thus these nouns used as simplicia acquire a negative meaning, whereas their diminutive forms always convey positive connotations. Ironic, sarcastic and offensive uses of diminutives are likely to be acquired later.