

Small Words, Big Picture. A Stylistic and Cultural Analysis of Diminutives in the English Translation of the Short Story Collection *The Last Wish* by Andrzej Sapkowski

Julia Nowak

Pedagogical University of Krakow, Poland
julia.nowak@student.up.krakow.pl

Agnieszka Mierzejewska

Pedagogical University of Krakow, Poland
agnieszka.mierzejewska@student.up.krakow.pl

Katarzyna Pelc

Pedagogical University of Krakow, Poland
katarzyna.pelc2@student.up.krakow.pl

Abstract

*This study attempts to analyse the stylistic and cultural role of diminutives using examples from the short story collection *The Last Wish* by A. Sapkowski. With the rising popularity of the computer game series as well as the Netflix series based on *The Witcher Saga*, so rose the interest of the English-speaking world in the Slavic culture. The role of diminutives can present a serious linguistic and cultural barrier for any translator as they may or may not be present in the translator's native tongue. Translating a text to a language in which diminutives play a significantly smaller role than in the original requires not only a robust lexical knowledge, but also the ability to express each of the four distinct functions of diminutives in an appropriate manner. The method chosen for this study involves compiling all the diminutives and hypocorisms from a given short story and comparing them with corresponding phrases chosen by the translator, as well as evaluating the techniques used and providing alternatives where applicable. The authors believe that a close look at the translation of diminutives will allow the public to fully appreciate the depth and nuance of meaning characterising the work steeped in Polish and Slavic tradition to such extent.*

*Keywords: diminutives, hypocorisms, *The Witcher*, pragmatics, translation, fantasy*

Streszczenie

Drobne słowa wiele znaczą. Analiza stylistycznej i kulturowej roli zdrobnień w angielskim tłumaczeniu zbioru opowiadań „Ostatnie Życzenie” Andrzeja Sapkowskiego

Niniejsza praca podejmuje próbę przeanalizowania na poziomie stylistycznym oraz kulturowym roli tłumaczenia zdrobnień w literaturze na podstawie wybranych opowiadań ze zbioru „Ostatnie życzenie” A. Sapkowskiego i angielskiego przekładu autorstwa Danusi Stok. W czasie, gdy słowiańska kultura stała się przedmiotem zainteresowania anglojęzycznej publiczności wraz z rosnącą popularnością gry komputerowej i serialu opartych na Sadze o Wiedźminie Andrzeja Sapkowskiego, uwydatniła się bariera językowa i kulturowa, z którą musi się zmierzyć każdy tłumacz, niezależnie od tego, czy język, którego zdrobnienia są częścią, jest dla niego rodzimy. Przetłumaczenie tekstu na język, w którym zdrobnienia nie odgrywają tak znaczącej roli jak w oryginale, wymaga nie tylko dobrej znajomości leksyki, ale również umiejętności wyrażenia każdej z czterech różnych funkcji zdrobnień w odpowiedni sposób. W pracy zebrano wszystkie zdrobnienia i spieszczenia z wybranego opowiadania, a następnie porównano je z odpowiednimi frazami w anglojęzycznym tłumaczeniu, aby dokonać oceny technik zastosowanych przez tłumaczkę oraz zaproponować ewentualne alternatywne rozwiązania. Autorki są przekonane, że dokładne spojrzenie na tłumaczenie zdrobnień pozwoli szerszej publiczności docenić niuanse znaczeniowe, które oddają wyjątkowy charakter dzieła jakże zanurzonego w polskich i słowiańskich tradycjach, które zdrobnięciami są przesiąknięte i czynią z nich tak powszechny jak i literacki użytek.

Słowa kluczowe: zdrobnienia, spieszczenia, Wiedźmin, pragmatyka, przekład, fantasy

1. Introduction

This paper focuses on the issue of translating diminutives from Polish to English, specifically in two short stories from *The Last Wish* story collection by Andrzej Sapkowski. It is meant to determine whether diminutives are transferred in any way to the English version and, therefore, whether English-speaking readers can experience this feature of the Polish language or if the diminutives were translated literally and nothing was used to mark them.

The introduction of *The Witcher*'s plot, especially in the two short stories chosen to be analysed, is followed by a brief description of the existing research. Next, the research problem of this paper is presented, and afterwards there is a commentary on both Polish and English diminutives, as well as their formation. In the following section, the paper focuses on the list of purposes attributed to diminutives that was established for this research and described in detail with examples provided. Next, the collected data from *The Last Wish* is presented with a thorough description of various instances of diminutives together with their assigned purposes and meanings. Once particular examples from the book are examined, the conclusion

provides a general commentary on the translation of the diminutives and the outcome of the research.

2. The Witcher

The Witcher has been chosen as the topic of this research due to its connections with the Polish culture and heritage. Because of that, it aligns perfectly with the importance of diminutives in the Polish language. It is a literary universe consisting of 15 short stories, a pentalogy, and a standalone novel. For the author, Andrzej Sapkowski, the journey with the Witcher began in the 1980s in the form of a series of stories published in the *Fantastyka* magazine. These evolved into the two short story collections, namely *The Last Wish*, on which this analysis was conducted, and the *Sword of Destiny* (Purchase 2017). The protagonist of the series is the famous Geralt of Rivia, a mutant monster-hunter, killing to earn a living, who continues his adventures in *The Witcher Saga*, the prequel novel *the Season of Storms*, a number of spin-offs – particularly *Claws and Fangs*, and several adaptations, such as a Netflix's TV series, an animated film, as well as some board and video games. *The Witcher* became an immense international success after the release of *The Witcher III: Wild Hunt* video game, proven by over 40 million copies having been sold (CD Projekt Red 2021). This story-driven, role-playing game lets the player explore the world of the witchers from the perspective of the main character – Geralt himself. The world depicted within the game resembles the one in the books, which is a huge advantage for the fans who already knew *The Witcher*, but also helps the beginners get accustomed to the universe better. Both of these settings are presented as brutal and naturalistic, and transmit the same atmosphere due to dialogues which seem comparable with those in the books. Additionally, as far as the folklore in *The Witcher* is concerned, when the game was first released, it seemed like the Slavic culture transpired to be something fresh, undiscovered, and of great interest to foreign readers and players. The dialogues are one of the features that contributed to their rising curiosity. This, however, is an effect of stylization and archaization – linguistic tools, which the author used in order to create such result in the reception of his work. To put it simply, *The Witcher* does not include historically accurate medieval dialogues in any way. Nonetheless, for the Polish audience, they do sound so. What is intriguing, diminutives may seem to be excluded from a Pole's perception of this stylistic endeavour, for they are so common in everyday use. Though, English audience could read diminutives as a part of the stylization, if only they were to appear in the translation. Other reason for the attraction towards the culture was, for instance, the way Sapkowski has taken

inspiration from the Slavic mythology to create most of the monsters in his universe (Cutali 2015). Noonwraiths, rusalkas, strigas, witches, and such are creatures about which almost every Pole knows a scary legend. Most of these were not as apparent in popular culture abroad, except for witches, so it appears natural that people were eager to know more. It is worth emphasising that Slavic folklore to many is indeed very original and something to be proud of. Moreover, the stories, often not solely concerning slaying monsters, presented a well-received duality, criticizing immoral – even monstrous – behaviour of humans (Cutali 2015). Perhaps, a popular motif that “to be able to kill monsters, you need to become one” recurring throughout Geralt’s life has also had its contribution to the rising reputation.

Moreover, the context in researching the use of diminutives is just as important, as the words themselves. This is why it was decided for the short summaries of the two stories to be put in this paper for the more novice readers, only just introduced to *The Witcher*. In the first short story, titled *The Lesser Evil*, Geralt visits a small town in hope of selling a carcass of a freshly killed kikimora, which he carries with him. The mayor of the town, his friend, admits that he has no way of paying the witcher for the monster and suggests that Geralt should seek payment from the wizard that lives nearby. After meeting him, Geralt recognizes Stregobor – a wizard chased by a cursed princess looking for revenge. He learns she is brutal and unpredictable but refuses Stregobor’s offer to kill her, due to his own moral code of not interfering in cases that do not involve him directly. Later, Geralt meets the princess Renfri, also known as Shrike, in a pub, after which the mayor orders her and her company to leave the town. The woman has no interest in obeying him and later that same night breaks into Geralt’s room to convince him to kill Stregobor. She mentions Tridam ultimatum, but the witcher has no clue what it refers to and refuses again. After a long conversation, the Shrike agrees to leave in the morning. The next day Geralt realizes her actual plan, when the mayor tells him that Tridam was a mass murder event. In order to stop her from the slaughter she has intended to instigate, Geralt decides to choose the lesser evil and kill her together with her accomplices. This ends in a bloody massacre and Geralt’s permanent banishment from the town. By choosing to take action, the witcher also breaks his own code and torments himself because he cannot seem to be able to ever help without simultaneously causing hurt.

Geralt experiences the second adventure with a companion this time – Dandilion, a bard. It is worth mentioning that Dandilion is also known as Jaskier in the original as well as in the TV series, thus there are two different ways of referring to him known to the foreign audience. For coherency’s sake, the translated name Dandilion is going to be used in this paper, since the

research is based on Danusia Stok's translation of the book. Both the witcher and the troubadour are fishing in the river, when they discover a mysterious jar entangled into their net. Dandilion claims it is a djinn's lamp. Geralt wants to see it and both men begin to struggle. In consequence, a seal comes off the jar and a genie appears. Dandilion immediately starts to exclaim his three wishes, but before he can tell the last one, the djinn attempts to strangle him. Geralt stops him, however, Dandilion is already unconscious and the witcher is unable to help him, so he takes him to the nearby town. They cannot enter because it is late at night, but a knight and two half-elves decide to show compassion and invite them into the barbican. However, it appears the men are clueless and the only one that can save the bard is the sorceress Yennefer. Geralt goes to ask her for help, although she is not happy to have a guest this early. Despite this fact, she agrees to help him and orders him to first take a bath, where she joins him and listens to him explaining what happened to Dandilion. When they arrive back in the barbican, the sorceress successfully treats the bard, but requests the seal from the jar in return, so she can use it to control the creature. Geralt gives it to her, but during the conversation realises she put a spell on him in order to use him to get revenge on a few people in town that did her wrong. In consequence, the witcher is locked in jail together with an elf who tried to help him. The elf, Chireadan, tells Geralt that their fate depends on whether the person judging them will be his friend, the mayor, or a man Geralt assaulted. They are tortured by an executioner but Geralt tells him to burst and suddenly he does. Luckily for both of them, the mayor arrives with a priest and calls for the prisoners to hear what happened. They both agree Yennefer is at fault in that situation. At the same time, Yennefer forces Dandilion to make a wish that everybody would believe Geralt is innocent. Then, she throws him through a portal and he lands in a room with the mayor, Geralt, and Chireadan. The sorceress tried to catch the genie in a circle, however fails because it is not possible until the person ordering it makes all their three wishes. Geralt then realises he is the djinn's master, because he was the first one to claim the seal from its lamp. He already used two of his wishes, one of them being stopping djinn from suffocating Dandilion, and the other making the executioner burst back in the cell. The djinn destroys the town while trying to free itself, Geralt tries to stop Yennefer but the woman tells him she wants to capture the creature at all costs. After the witcher admits he is the master, he makes the last wish he and the sorceress were together. The genie fulfils the last order and escapes. Everyone manages to survive the deadly ordeal and the newly formed pair expresses their love to each other.

3. Existing research

There exists a body of research on the translations of *The Witcher* into different languages (mostly English, but also French, German and Chinese among others). They cover both the books, and their game and TV adaptations, with the last one being underrepresented due to the source material being relatively new. A substantial fraction of those papers constitutes Bachelor's and Master's theses, rather than published articles and therefore are relatively hard to find and research. Still, all those works focus largely on either the peculiarities of Sapkowski's own style, such as neologisms and his distinctive sense of humour, or various aspects of the crossover between language and culture, for example the names of creatures and monsters, often sourced from the Slavic mythology and folklore. While the subject of this study fits broadly in this latter category, to the best of our knowledge, the topic of diminutives in *The Last Wish* has not been exhaustively explored.

4. Research problem

The aim of this paper is to analyse all the diminutives and their translations in the two chosen short stories: *The Last Wish* and *The Lesser Evil* from the short-story collection *The Last Wish* by Andrzej Sapkowski, present their intended purposes and meanings, and compare it with the English version's outcome.

As a consequence of the Polish language being rich in diminutives, there arose a need to analyse them in a piece of Polish writing which proved to be both extremely popular in its motherland, and abroad, in English speaking countries, in order to determine whether the English translation of diminutives maintains their intended purpose and meaning. The most important factor when choosing the stories to analyse was *The Witcher's* closeness to Polish people and the Slavic culture, which is widely known to the enthusiasts of Andrzej Sapkowski's books. The rising popularity of *The Witcher Saga* resulted in the growing consciousness of cultural details; however, the use of diminutives is characteristic of the Polish language, therefore the English-speaking readers may not experience it fully due to language limitations.

5. Diminutives in Polish

Diminutives in Polish are the most productive word-formation category (Lasowski 1991). They occur mostly as variants of already existing base words and do not have separate entries in the dictionary (Biały 2017). Their usage is widespread in informal speech, although quite popular

even in some semi-formal settings. Diminutivisation concerns mainly nouns, but also adjectives, and to a lesser extent, adverbs. Even verbs can be diminutivised, although mostly ironically or as babytalk (Kucała 1991). Formation of diminutives occurs mainly synthetically through adding suffixes, or, less commonly, analytically by adding one of several adjectives with the meaning of ‘small’ before the given word. Truncation is possible as well, which occurs through deleting a part from the base word, and usually only concerns proper names (Biały 2017). This device can be enhanced by the user’s personal preferences regarding the use of suffixes, or phonological alteration. With regard to suffixation, the suffix inventory in Polish is very robust and applied consistently, as they vary according to the grammatical gender of the subject (Długosz 2009). Double diminutivisation is also common in the Polish language, which serves the purpose of expressing stronger emotions, or doing it more precisely – multiple suffixes attached to the same base word are feasible then. What is more, the choice of the suffix used often does not change the meaning of the diminutive (Biały 2017).

Listed below are some of the most commonly used suffixes for each grammatical gender, the first one being the basic variant, with some alternatives/extension variants in increasing order of hypocoristic meaning attached where relevant (Długosz 2009).

- Masculine
 - ek, -yk eg., *domek* ‘house-DIM’
 - eczek eg., *domeczek* ‘house-DIM-DIM’
 - uszek eg., *placuszek* ‘pancake-DIM’
- Feminine
 - ka eg., *chwilka* ‘moment-DIM’
 - eczka eg., *chwileczka* ‘moment-DIM-DIM’
 - unia eg., *chwilunia* ‘moment-DIM-DIM’
- Neuter
 - ko eg., *drzewko* ‘tree-DIM’
 - eńko eg., *cudeńko* ‘wonder-DIM’
 - etko eg., *poletko* ‘field-DIM’
- Plural and plurale tantum
 - ki eg., *plecki* ‘back-DIM’
 - iczki eg., *drzwiczki* ‘door-DIM’
 - uszki eg., *poduszki* ‘pillows-DIM’

6. Diminutives in English

In comparison to Polish, the English language is limited in its use of diminutives. It is less of a productive language when it comes to diminutive formation, with one of the most common suffixes being *-y/-ie*, *-let*, and *-ette* (Dressler 1994). There are about 50 existing affixes that allow for the creation of diminutives; however, they are rarely used, and the nouns are not lexically productive (Jarniewicz 2014). Due to English being mostly an analytical language, although there are many more suffixes forming diminutives, there are still fewer diminutives than in Polish, which is mostly a synthetic language. Diminutives in English can be formed in two ways: (Pytlik 2018)

- Synthetic formation:
 - Affixation – attaching either suffixes or prefixes to nouns.

A list of examples of suffixes by Stageberg and Oaks (2000):

-ie, *-y*, e.g., *doggie*,
-ette, e.g., *novelette*,
-kin, e.g., *lambkin*,
-ling e.g., *princeling*,
-et, e.g., *cabinet*,
-let, e.g., *piglet*.

Examples of prefixes:

Mini-, e.g., *minibus*, *minivan*,
Micro-, e.g., *microfilm*.

- Reduplication – hypocoristics, terms of endearment (Biały 2017); repeating the base word with a rhyming word, e.g., *Jenny-Penny* (Biały 2017)
- Compounding – e.g., *baby birds*, *baby boy*
- Truncation – e.g., *Meghan* – *Meg*, *football* – *footer* (sometimes a suffix needs to be added)
- Analytic formation

To form diminutives analytically, an adjective is added before the base word. The adjective that marks the diminution belongs to the word field *small*, such as *little*, *tiny*, *teeny*, *petite* (Pytlik 2018), e.g., *little girl*, *tiny flower*.

7. Purposes

After the differences between the diminutives in Polish and in English were established above, it was essential to create a list of all the possible roles that diminutives can play in a language. In this work those roles are called purposes. Each entry on the list becomes a tag to facilitate categorisation during the data collection part of the research. Given the versatility of the language, one use of a diminutive can serve multiple purposes in the text (Bartmiński 1973) which is why the purposes are not mutually exclusive. The intention is for the aforementioned list to be exhaustive and as complete as possible, to allow for a text-wide comparison without being too preoccupied with the minutia of the shades of meaning that each word can take on. A separate column in the spreadsheet is dedicated to comments on those finer details of meaning when comparing each translation individually, while the purposes are intended to possibly find trends and patterns in the text.

The entries on the list are therefore a middle ground. Some only distinguish diminutives *sensu stricto*, that is denoting a small size as an intellectual category and hypocorisms as an emotional category, allowing still for some crossover (Bartmiński 1973). Others put emphasis on the pragmatic functions of diminutives in communication (Dressler 1994). While important, those analyses put emphasis on interpersonal communication and its pragmatic connotations. *The Last Wish* and *The Lesser Evil* both have no shortage of diminutives in narrative, not just dialogue. Which is why existing classifications based on the pragmatics of the speech events and their participants, such as in Dressler 1994 or Biały 2017 were decided against.

The naming convention that was implemented requires an explanation. The authors feel that the name ‘purpose’ is the closest to reflect the objective that the items on the list were meant for. At the same time, given that the list is a synthesis it seems best to avoid the names already in use for different sets of items as implemented in some of the sources, such as *funkcje* in *Encyklopedia Języka Polskiego*, which numbers the following ‘functions’: diminutive, expressive and specifying (pl. *konkretyzująca*) (Lasowski 1991), the latter of which was ultimately discarded from the purposes list, more on which later. Others divide their material into groups that perform a given purpose and just use the term ‘group’ (Dobrzyński 1988). Some sources use the term ‘meaning’. To avoid confusion this term is left to specify the shades of meaning within the ranges of positive and negative connotative meaning (Biały 2017) for the entries attributed with the purpose of expressing those emotions.

7. 1. Indicating smallness

Regarding the list of purposes itself, the first category on which we agreed is indicating smallness. The name is intentionally kept simple, because it functions as a supercategory to a number of smaller ones: encompassing small size, young age or short timeframe. It functions as the most basic semantic meaning for diminutives in most languages. The aim of these subcategories is the same, thereby the purpose should also be common.

7.2. Expressing positive emotions

For the purposes of this analysis, the expressive category, which a number of sources (Bartmiński 1973, Pytlik 2018) keep as one, has been split into two different purposes: expressing positive and negative emotions. The distinction is worth emphasizing since it has been observed that different ideas are expressed by either positive and negative emotions. Particularly, given that these represent ranges of differing emotions, a separate category of ‘meanings’ was established to make the distinction within those purposes. The same statement with the same use of diminutives can be either negative or positive, and it depends on the aims of the user and the meaning behind their words. Usually, when expressing positive emotions, the speaker is genuine, straightforward, and conveys feelings such as admiration or delight. In other words, when the true meaning of a diminutive is expressed, it serves this purpose. An example of diminutive communicating positive emotions in a complement is *Ta bluzeczka jest cudna!* – ‘This blouse-DIM is gorgeous!’ (Biały 2017).

7.3. Expressing negative emotions

However, at the same time it is possible for the diminutives, though seemingly harmless, when used ironically or sarcastically, to become insulting (Dressler 1994). Insults like this are driven by anger, disrespect, annoyance and aim for diminishing the interlocutor (Biały 2017). An example of such usage is *Ty świnko* (‘pig-DIM’)! *You little pig!* where the user’s feeling of distaste at certain demeanour is visible. Diminutives in these cases increase the negative value (Biały 2017), contrary to the assumption that they might be alleviating emotions behind them. Although communicating strong anger with diminutives is impossible (Dressler 1994), it does not mean it is not functional. These are just different processes that the words need to undergo. Another possible case of this usage is in a situation where a person pretends to be polite, but has no intention in it. Then, the positive value of diminutives is also pretended, therefore not

real (Dressler 1994). Some of the meanings this category may convey are mainly irony and sarcasm, but dismissiveness, belittlement as well as understatement.

7.4. Indicating irrelevance

The diminutives that indicate irrelevance do not focus on positive or negative meanings of the entity that is being described, but specifically on the insignificance of it (Underhill 2013). This category differs to a large extent from the one conveying negative emotions, as its purpose is to paint a picture, describe the state of an entity, an item or a place; it usually is a transient, short reference, the speaker does not indicate a negative meaning. An example of a commonly used word is *dziadunio*, ‘old man-DIM’. *Dziadunio* is derived from the word for ‘grandfather’ and implies how weak, irrelevant and insignificant the person can be without being judgemental about those characteristics.

7.5. Frozen diminutives

The so-called frozen diminutives have been tackled by some researchers (Chamonikolasová and Rambousek, 2007). Frozen diminutives are words that exist as separate ones in dictionaries and have their own meaning that is not a diminutive, different than the word they originate from. Chamonikolasová and Rambousek (2007) describe frozen diminutives as "words that have the morphological features of diminutives but have lost the original diminutive meaning" (p. 39). For instance, the word *tablet* contains the suffix *-let*, which is one of the most commonly used when forming diminutives, but it is not a diminutive, but its own word with its own neutral meaning. Frozen diminutives do not actually function as diminutives regarding their meaning but maintain their structure.

7.6. Conveying politeness/courtesy

Diminutives that convey politeness or courtesy are quite commonly used, mostly in formal situations. It is essential to distinguish this category from expressing positive emotion, since when using honorific diminutives, the speaker does not necessarily have positive feelings towards the recipient, but rather wants to convey the required politeness, for instance in a workplace, or in a staff-customer relationship, where the lack of courtesy can have negative consequences on the speaker. In the Polish culture it is expected to express politeness towards a person one does not know well, and it is often achieved through honorific diminutives. An example of it could be a situation in which a boss wants to ask his assistant or an employee, especially female, for a favour – then, he would say "Pani Kasiu (‘Katarzyna-DIM’), czy

mogłaby Pani przynieść mi kawkę ('coffee-DIM')?" "Mrs./Ms. Katie, could you please bring me a coffee". The diminution present both in the name of the recipient and the word *coffee* make the sentence sound more innocent and likely to achieve the speaker's will.

Wierzbicka (1999) creates a comparison between the Polish and the Anglo-Saxon cultures, and brings light onto the fact that Poles actually focus on whether they feel their interlocutor is polite towards them. If that is the case, this implies good attitude and results in exchange of courtesy. In contrast, the English are more considerate of other people's feelings. Wierzbicka also comments on Polish emphasis on affection and endearment through, among others, hypocorisms. This leads us to a conclusion that perhaps this may be one of many reasons English lacks diminutives, and Polish contains so many. No person familiar with Polish will be surprised by the fact that this language is quite emotional, however not many may consciously realise this process of selection of language when expressing politeness, and how much of a difference the diminutives can in fact make.

7.7. Excluded categories

One of the purposes excluded from the list was 'specifying', meaning describing an object being made of something or a piece of something (Lasowski 1991). To our understanding it largely coincided with meronymy, but was nebulous in its range. That is to say, the examples given could easily be attributed as either indicating smallness or as being a frozen diminutive, without losing any meaning, so it was considered redundant and ultimately discarded.

The other purpose was eliminated because it pertained mostly to the language of folklore, particularly songs as well as other verse texts and was referred to as *magical*. It was used euphemistically, with the intention to detract from the terror or ugliness of such words as *death*, *war* or *robbery* by diminutivising them (Bartmiński 1973). Given the very narrow implementation as well as its apparent absence from standard Polish, this purpose was also not considered.

8. Data collected

The process of collecting and processing the data consisted of the following:

- All the diminutives in the Polish version of the text of the stories *The Last Wish* and *The Lesser Evil* were singled out. Only the ones that were created synthetically (using a suffix) and not analytically were considered further. If the same diminutive of a word

appeared multiple times per story it was only counted once, unless it changed its purpose.

- They were put into a spreadsheet sequentially with each story getting its own sheet.
- Each one was given a page number for the ease of navigation, a purpose attribution (one or more), as well as a distinction whether a given diminutive was a part of narrative or dialogue and if the latter was the case – the character who uttered the phrase.
- The English version of the text was then scanned for the relevant translation of each word that in the Polish version was a diminutive, allowing for analytical diminutives if one could be found. They were placed in the next column of the spreadsheet, along with a commentary, if one was necessary. There were cases where the given word did not appear in the translation at all.

Table 1. An excerpt from the spreadsheet for *The Last Wish*

Polish	Page #	Narrative/ dialogue	Purpose	Meaning (If expressing positive/negative emotions)	English	Commentary
pantofelek	174	Narrative	expressing positive emotions	Cuteness/ fondness	slipper	
falbankami	174	Narrative	indicating smallness		frills	
calutką	176	dialogue, Geralt	conveying politeness/ courtesy		all (night)	Singular example of the honorific diminutive
maleńkim	177	Narrative	indicating smallness & expressing positive emotions	playfulness	tiny	The purpose expressed lexically
zydelku	177	Narrative	indicating smallness		stool	
ceberka	177	Narrative	indicating smallness		bucket	
łańcuszkiem	180	Narrative	indicating smallness		chain	
ogonek	181	dialogue, Chireadan	expressing negative emotions	sarcasm	tail	Same diminutive with different meaning
galeryjki	182	Narrative	indicating smallness		gallery	

głosik	183	dialogue, Yennefer	expressing negative emotions	mockery	voice	
drobnostkę	185	dialogue, Yennefer	indicating irrelevance		trifle	The purpose expressed lexically
wiedźminku	185	dialogue, Yennefer	expressing negative emotions	mockery	little witcher	Analytical diminutive

Table 2 Instances of repetition of a given diminutive

<i>The Last Wish</i>		<i>The Lesser Evil</i>	
linka	7	uliczka	4
sakiewka	3	derka	4
pantofelek	2	tłumek	2
falbanki	2	miasteczko	4
łańcuszek	3	stryszek	2
staruszek	3	dziewczynki	3
dziadunio	3	kaftanik	4
czarnulka	4	izdebka	3
		bukłaczek	2
		osiółek	2
		wózek	2

There were notes made on the repetition of the diminutives. They were counted disregarding changes in their inflection. They usually appeared in narrative, rather than dialogues, occurring in clusters and referring to the same object. For that reason, the repeated words were counted as one for the rest of the research unless the purpose or the referent changed. Simultaneously, one diminutive can have more than one purpose attributed to it.

With that in mind, there were 85 diminutives counted across 72 total pages of the original text. The outcomes were surprisingly consistent regarding the distribution of the purposes.

Table 3. Distribution of the purposes

Purpose	# in <i>The Last Wish</i>	# in <i>The Lesser Evil</i>
indicating smallness	15	19
expressing positive emotions	8	11
expressing negative emotions	8	11
indicating irrelevance	6	4
specifying	0	1
frozen diminutives	6	13
conveying politeness/courtesy	1	0

While useful for comparison's sake, the category of frozen diminutives will largely not be considered further. They sound like diminutives to a Polish ear, but are distinct from their base word through time passage and word formation processes (Chamonikolasová and Rambousek, 2007). As such they cannot be expected to be represented in translation as diminutives.

Most of the diminutives in both short stories fulfil the purpose of denoting smallness. This was to be expected, since it is the most basic, lexical (Lasowski 1991) or intellectual, semantical-grammatical (Bartmiński 1973) role fulfilled by them in the language. Overall, 74% of them was used in the narration, rather than dialogue. This leads to the conclusion that they are useful to set the scene and create a certain image in the reader's head, exemplified by *wozy i wózki* 'carts and carts-DIM' being translated as *wagons and carts*. Notably, the use of diminutives diminishes considerably in the descriptions of more brutal and violent scenes across both stories. In most cases, the English translation does not provide any diminutive marker. For 34 examples, only 8 (23%) were in any way marked, 4 with the word *little*, 2 with the word *small* and 2 unique ones, *kropelki* 'drops-DIM' as *droplets*, which is a rare example of an already existing English diminutive using the suffix -let, and *maleńki* as *tiny*, more on which later.

In contrast, the diminutives conveying emotions, both positive and negative, were more on the side of dialogue, with negative emotions exclusively in that category. The ones with the purpose of expressing positive emotions had a wider range of specific meanings that the authors distinguished as cuteness, youthfulness, fondness, playfulness, child speech and intimacy. The range was somewhat tighter for negative emotions, oscillating around sarcasm, mockery and belittlement.

Table 4. Selected statistics regarding the use of diminutives in dialogue

Diminutives	Whole text	dialogue
All	86	36
Expressing positive emotions	19	11
Expressing negative emotions	19	18

For the hypocorisms, most of the words were again translated with no diminutivisation whatsoever. For 20 times total, the word *tiny* was used twice and the one time the translation was done analytically, the word *little* was used, as opposed to *small*, which is preferred, because it can take on some positive emotional connotations (Jarniewicz 2014).

Interestingly, a very broad range of characters in *The Last Wish* employ diminutives to mock and belittle. The sorceress Yennefer excels in that, because she is in a position of power and she can afford to taunt other. Still, five different characters (but notably, not the main protagonist, Geralt) engage in this practice. The number for *The Lesser Evil* is somewhat inflated, since 6 of its 11 negative diminutives are a part of a single speech, that will be further explored later in this work. *Little* was used twice again for the words with the purpose of expressing negative emotions, namely mockery: *wieźminek* as *little witcher* and *loszek* as *our little dungeon*. Other entries from this category were not translated as diminutives in any way, which constitutes probably the biggest loss in meaning, not compensated for in the English translation with other expressions of sarcasm and irony.

An interesting case is to be made for the 10 diminutives that were determined to be indicating irrelevance, none of which were translated as diminutives in the English version. As previously mentioned, they occupy a space between denoting smallness, and a negative emotion of dismissiveness and disregard. Most of the examples were used as a part of the narrative, rather than dialogue, and Sapkowski did not seem to want to convey any strong negative emotions to a bed- *wyrko* or a corner- *kącik*. At the same time, it was understood through context, that pointing out the small size was not the intended purpose either, rather, insignificance and the lack of value (Underhill 2013) were conveyed.

The rest of the purpose categories are small enough not to warrant a group analysis. Instead, a small number of specific examples from the text that proved especially interesting or challenging in their use of diminutives will be inspected.

9. Chosen examples

An interestingly representative example of diminutive from *The Last Wish* is *male raczki* translated as *little crabs*. It carries two functions – indicating smallness (physical size and youth of age) and expressing positive emotion (hypocorism). It is a double diminutive, the diminution is marked through the adjective before the noun which was successfully and literally transferred to English, and is marked in the word *raczki* ‘crab-DIM’ derived from *raki*, which was not diminutivised in English. In consequence, instead of a double diminution there is only one and it only partly conveys the intended meaning.

In a dialogue between two characters, Geralt and Chireadan, a word *ogonek* (translated as tail, the diminution was not marked) is used to express a negative emotion. Chireadan uses it in a sarcastic way, diminutivising *scorpion's tail* in order to make it sound as if scorpions are

tiny, adorable creatures with cute little tails. This meaning was essential for this sentence's tone, and it was not in any way conveyed in the English translation.

Because of its very meaning the word *maleńki* 'small-DIM', present once in both stories, and both times translated as *tiny*, besides expressing positive emotions was also qualified as indicating smallness. In that case the translation was indeed good. The word does appear on the list of adjectives that can be sometimes used for expressing diminutives analytically instead of *little* and *small* (Biały 2017), however in this case the semantic meaning of both the base and the suffix in the word *maleńki* could be expressed with this one-word translation.

The phrase *calutka noc* 'whole-DIM night' was the single entry in the category of expressing politeness and as such deserves a closer look. In this scene Geralt is pleading with Yennefer, who is the only person in town with enough knowledge and skill to magically heal his dying friend. Circumstance forces him into employing the tone of politeness and platitude in explaining his long wait at the city gates. Despite being the main character, this is the only time in *The Last Wish* that Geralt can be seen using a diminutive; he is visibly trying to strike a balance in being convincing without incurring the wrath of a sorceress for disturbing her morning sleep. No steps were made to convey that in the translation, which only rendered the phrase in question as *all night*.

A particular contrast can be seen in the phrase *spory tłumek* 'quite a big crowd-DIM' translated simply as *quite a crowd*. It is almost oxymoronic in nature, given the juxtaposition of the first word meaning something big in size and the second one containing a suffix capable of denoting a small size. It is used by Chireadan to describe the number of witnesses to Geralt's mind-controlled rampage that landed them both in jail. The purpose attributed to it was expressing negative emotions, particularly irony. While the phrase *quite a crowd* could potentially sound ironic with the right voice, the whole utterance takes on more matter-of-fact tone and the contrast in the original version is lost.

Another example can be found in the *Lesser Evil*. The original *cosik* 'something-DIM' is translated as *wee something*. *Cosik* is used by a simple villager, who delicately, indirectly suggests that the mayor is liable to take bribes, the bribes in question being the *wee something*. This is an excellent translation, because *cosik* does not actually mean anything, it is such an irrelevant thing, it barely exists. *Wee something* successfully conveys this exact message, because not only it is just 'something' – nothing in particular, it is also described as 'wee', meaning something small. This particular version of a word from the category of expressing smallness is described as childish, informal and colloquial (Biały 2017), fitting in with the

social background of the speaker. In this case, of course, the category chosen for this instance was indicating irrelevance and the translation serves the same purpose. This is, in our opinion, an accurate translation.

However, an instance of a diminutive for which translation is not found, but is somewhat relevant in Polish, occurs in the same chapter. That is *latka* ‘years-DIM old’, used while recollecting how much time ago an event had happened. In the original, the speaker ensures it must have happened about three years ago, and he remembers it because his daughter was two at the time. *Latka* refers to his daughter who has been mentioned, but the entire sentence is not included in the translation. It is typical and natural for the Polish to use diminutives with topics and things relating to children, which is why it is quite a loss. Other than that, this serves as an example of babytalk as a hypocorism.

There is also a particularly memorable example consisting of four diminutives used in a single statement by one person. These are uttered in sequence *sukienki, buciki, błyskotki, kucyk, rybki* translated as *dresses, shoes, trinkets, ponies, goldfish*.

“– Geralt – powiedziała – ja byłam księżniczką, ale w Creyden. Miałam wszystko o czym zamarzyłam, nawet prosić nie potrzebowałam. Służbę na każde zawołanie, sukienki, buciki. Majtki z batystu. Klejnoty i błyskotki, bułanego kucyka, złote rybki w basenie. (...)”

Wiedźmin: Ostatnie Życzenie, Sapkowski, A. [1993], p.102

“Geralt,” she said, “I used to be a princess. I had everything I could dream of. Servants at my beck and call, dresses, shoes. Cambric knickers. Jewels and trinkets, ponies, goldfish in a pond. (...)”

The Last Wish, Sapkowski, A. (2007), English translation by Danusia Stok, p.94

The reason it is such a fascinating instance is that all of these words convey positive and negative emotions at the same time. The reason is that although they are used in a retrospection of good childhood times, the speaker – Renfri, who is also a mutant with a history of aggression towards the innocent, speaks with spite due to her unlucky past: she was hunted for her crimes. The words she used describe how irrelevant the things seem to her now because she cannot have them anymore since she is a runaway, which presents a compelling case of irrelevance as a meaning, not a purpose. The lack of diminutives in English loses the childlike aspect, making the list ordinary. It also removes the repetition, which acts as a literary device, used to emphasize the feelings of the speaker. In consequence, some of the emotions conveyed in the

conversation are lost or muted. On its own *sukienki* is a frozen diminutive derived from *suknie*. Both words are (in-universe) used interchangeably.

A few sentences later, spoken by the same person there is the word *diademik* 'tiara-DIM', which is not translated. Thus, the sentence omits what it is that was robbed from Renfri. Diminutivisation indicates that it was probably a particularly small tiara, given that Renfri was a little girl back then.

10. Closing remarks

A detailed analysis of both versions of *The Last Wish* short story collection shows that a vast majority of the diminutives were not translated. On the one hand, it is to be expected, since they are not a prevalent feature of the English language. On the other, there is a lot of meaning lost when the purpose of a given diminutive is not expressed in some other way. Danusia Stok's translation is serviceable, but not enough care was taken to carry the diverse roles played by diminutives into the translation, so the book loses that important aspect.

An opportunity for further research in this field exists. *The Lesser Evil* was adapted into the episode 1, *The Last Wish* into the episode 5 of the first season of the Netflix series and the latter also gives its name to a side quest in the video game *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt*. According to IMDb, while the listed writers for the game are Polish and have probably used the original, the screenwriters for the series are mostly American so it is likely they used this translation and it is the only official one. The authors are interested to check the possible presence of diminutives in the English version and in particular, whether the Polish subtitles for the relevant episodes contain the diminutives present in the book, or if they were completely erased in the circular flow of the source material.

References

- Bartmiński, Jerzy (1973) *O języku folkloru*, Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Ossolineum.
- Biały, Paulina (2017) *Polish and English Diminutives in Literary Translation: Pragmatic and Cross-cultural Perspectives*, Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego.
- Chamonikolasová, Jana, Jiří Rambousek (2007) *Diminutive Expressions in Translation*, Brno: Masaryk University.
- Cutali, Daniele (2015) *Interview with Andrzej Sapkowski* <https://sugarpulp.it/en/26893/> (Accessed 22.04.2022).

- Długosz, Natalia (2009) *Słowotwórstwo polskich i bułgarskich deminutywów rzeczownikowych*, Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie
- Dressler, Wolfgang. U., Lavinia M. Barbaresi (1994) *Morphopragmatics: Diminutives in Italian German and Other Languages*, Berlin, New York: De Gruyter Mouton.
- IMDb, The Witcher- Full Cast & Crew https://www.imdb.com/title/tt5180504/fullcredits/?ref=tt_cl_sm, (Accessed 19.04.2022).
- IMDb, Wiedźmin: Dziki Gon - Full Cast & Crew https://www.imdb.com/title/tt2993508/fullcredits?ref=tt_ov_wr_sm Accessed 19.04.2022
- Jarniewicz, Jerzy (2014) "Czy tłumacz może pozwolić sobie na czułość? Spieszczenia a ekwiwalencja emocjonalna w przekładzie literackim" *Poznańskie Studia Polonistyczne, Seria Literacka*, 23 (43); 293-304.
- Kiciński Adam, Piotr Nielubowicz, Michał Nowakowski (2021) *CD PROJEKT Group FY 2021 Earnings*, <https://www.cdprojekt.com/pl/wp-content/uploads-pl/2022/04/fy-2021-presentation.pdf> (Accessed 23.04.2022).
- Kucała, Marian, Roman Laskowski (1991) „Zdrobnienia”. [In:] Stanisław Urbańczyk (ed.) *Encyklopedia Języka Polskiego*, Wydawnictwo Ossolineum; 403.
- Majdzik, Katarzyna, Daniel Słapek (2015) *Narzędzia analizy przekładu*, Toruń: Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek.
- Purchase, Robert (2017) *Meeting Andrzej Sapkowski, the Writer Who Created The Witcher* <https://www.eurogamer.net/meeting-andrzej-sapkowski-the-writer-who-created-the-witcher> accessed 22.04.2022.
- Pytlik, Radosław (2018) *Diminutives in Polish, English and German: Formation, Function, State of Research*, Państwowa Wyższa Szkoła Zawodowa w Tarnowie.
- Sapkowski, Andrzej (1993) *Ostatnie Życzenie*, Warszawa: SuperNowa.
- Sapkowski, Andrzej (2007) *The Last Wish*, New York: Orbit.
- Stageberg, Norman. C., Dallin D. Oaks (2000) *An Introductory English Grammar*, Boston: Harcourt College Publishers.
- Tokarski, Ryszard (2014) "Słownictwo jako interpretacja świata". [In:] Jerzy Bartmiński (ed.) *Współczesny język polski*. Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS

- Underhill, James W. (2013) "Reflections upon Bartmiński's Ethnolinguistic Approach to Language and Culture" [In:] Adam Głaz (ed.) *The Linguistic Worldview. Ethnolinguistics, Cognition, and Culture*, London: Versita
- Wierzbicka, Anna (2003) *Cross-Cultural Pragmatics: The Semantics of Human Interaction*, Berlin, New York: De Gruyter Mouton.
- Wierzbicka, Anna, Jean Harkins (2001) *Emotions in Crosslinguistic Perspective*, Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton.
- Wierzbicka, Anna (1999) *Emotions Across Languages and Cultures: Diversity and Universals*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press and the Editions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme.