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*Diminutive suffixes in the German language:
an investigation of the -chen and -lein morphemes
in the Baby Talk*

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Agli infiniti volti dell'amore,
a quelli già conosciuti e a quelli ancora da incontrare

A Padova e alla nostra bellissima storia d'amore

A mamma, a papà e a Francesco, pilastri della mia persona

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Abstract

The German language is one of those languages that allow the formation of the diminutive form, which is created - according to the grammar books – by adding either the suffix *-chen* or *-lein* to the noun. Even if the grammar allows it, the frequency of use is not so high as in other languages. Hence, German native speakers tend to use other constructions to conceive a similar meaning., e.g., the use of the adjective *klein* before the noun to emphasize the differences in terms of size.

The starting point of the present work finds its roots in the accurate study by W. U. Dressler – L. Merlini Barbaresi (1994), that presents the evaluative morphology of the German language in a cross-linguistical point of view. However, this paper will offer an outline of the German evaluative morphology in its own language system, especially, observing and analyzing the German spoken language. The analysis on which the paper is based has been carried out through a questionnaire that has been submitted to native German speakers – for a matter of reliability – and in particular to those German people that are mainly parents of very young children or that in some way have kids in their everyday life. By this questionnaire it has been possible to detect many features about the frequency of use of the diminutives and their differences of use according to a given context. Therefore, two contexts of communication have been considered: the first one should reassemble a normal everyday context in which adults have conversations with their peers, while in the second one adult find themselves in a conversation with children. The reason of the choice of this target linked to the main hypothesis from which this work is born: German diminutive forms are mainly used in the baby talk.

Introduction

The current work focuses on an in-depth study about the use of diminutives in the German language, specifically on how the morphological process of the diminutivization perform in the Baby Talk. Indeed, according to the theoretical background, German is one of those languages that allow the formation of diminutives by the morphological process of the suffixation, adding hence the diminutive suffixes to the base form. However, the frequency of use of the diminutive forms is not that high in the German language, if compared to others – like e.g., Italian. One of the reasons may be the poor morphological availability of diminutive morphemes, which are mainly two, namely *-chen* and *-lein*, besides their regional and childish variants. However, there are some specific speech situations that accept the diminutives and that necessarily triggers them for pragmatic purposes. According to Kiefer (1998), the reason finds in the assumption that the diminutivization process cannot be entirely defined only as mere morphological process, but that there is other also some pragmatical conditions that would trigger this process. Moreover, Dressler's theory, unlike the other theories that delimit the diminutivization only to a mere morphological process, claims that the selection of an evaluative suffix depends not only on the inherent features of the lexical morpheme, but also on the pragmatic/discursive context, that in turn may alter the inherent features in order to create the most suitable conditions to make the diminutive suffix attach to the base form. The diminutives have therefore specific speech situations in which they typically are triggered, and these are the child-centered, pet-centered, and lover-centered speech situations. In this work, the child-centered speech situation is the core of the analysis, but also the animal-centered speech situation will be considered. Moreover, it is important to define what a *child-centered speech situation*, because it is one the keystone of this work. Indeed, according to Dressler/M.Barbaresi (1994) it is a every speech situation in which a child – prototypically a small child – participates as either a) speaker, b) addressee, c) side-participant, or d) as a (non-present) topical referent. Alongside these theoretical assumptions, some other more have been cited throughout the Chapter 1.

The aim of the current work is to detect if the German speakers produce a greater number of diminutive forms in a child-centered speech situation rather than in any other speech situations, assuming that it is this specific speech situation alongside the degree of

familiarity of one word that triggers a diminutive suffix. To be more precise, the element of familiarity is found in all the words that remind on the idea of family and that hence have a strongly marked [+kinship] feature (e.g., family members mother, father, sister, and so on), are pet (e.g., dog, cat, and others), or all of those objects – hence words having a [-animate] feature – that can be potentially found in a household for the everyday-life usage (e.g., fork, bottle, and so on). The main hypothesis is hence that such items would be more incline to accept a diminutivization process because of the semantic-lexical features of their base forms, and because of the context in which they are inserted, i.e., the child-centered speech situation. For a counterproof, some *fillers* (i.e., some words that have an opaque or totally absent degree of familiarity, hence words belonging to technical field or special languages) will be used in the test to observe if the specific context is as strong as to trigger the diminutive forms also without the support of the degree of familiarity.

In order to demonstrate this hypothesis, it has been necessary to make an investigation to detect if 1) diminutives are used with a higher frequency by adults when addressing very young children, especially when a certain degree of familiarity takes place in one speech situation, rather than in other contexts and, that 2) diminutive suffixes might be triggered also for those nouns with an opaque or absent feature of familiarity if pronounced in a child-centered speech situation, and that 3) the higher the degree of familiarity the higher the possibility that the German speakers opt for a diminutive variant is. Therefore, after having considered several methodologies, I have opted for a questionnaire addressed to adult German native speakers (also with German as L2), better if having children or that are close to them in their everyday life (e.g., aunts, uncles, grandparents, and more, teachers, caretakers, and so on). Furthermore, the questionnaire is based on a psycholinguistic test, namely “The Cologne Picture Naming Test (CoNaT) (Carolin Weiss Lucas, 2021)”, because of the use of pictures as a trigger to make the speakers name what they see, without proposing any other any other graphical representations (e.g., synonyms, alternative expressions, and so on) that would interfere with the final choice. Also, this test suggests using common words of the everyday life because they can be more easily recognized in an objective way, and then named after. Hence, the idea for the questionnaire finds its root here and develops then according to the purposes the investigation aimed to reach. The structure of the questionnaire alongside the items

contained will be explained in detail in Chapter 2; however, it is worth to anticipate something. Therefore, the questionnaire contains thirty-six items belonging to four different categories, namely, (1) family members, (2) animals, (3) objects, and (4) *fillers*. These items are proposed twice to the participants, each time for each condition detected, namely the *isolation* and the *in-context*. In fact, the questionnaire is made up of two big main sections, which are in turn divided into two sub-questions, that repeat themselves in form and for the items proposed, but with two different contents. In fact, each sub-section presents its own leading question that is valid for all the tasks proposed afterwards. In the first main section hence, the participants are asked to name the items considering them as isolated, namely, in no specific context, but just as the images propose them, while in the second main section the same items are repeated, and the participants are asked to name them considering that they are inserted in a child-centered speech situation. In this way it will be possible to observe if the items behave differently or not in the two conditions and therefore, if they diminutive forms appear in a higher frequency in the *in-context* rather than in the *isolation*. If so, it would mean that even if the German language presents a very sterile diminutive paradigm and a very little frequency of use of the diminutive forms, in such a speech context involving children, these results will change, and the diminutives would have a wider range of use and become more incline to be used by the German speakers. Furtherly all the phenomena taking part of this alteration in the use of the diminutives will be provided and of course explained, following the data retrieved for this work.

In Chapter 3 the results of this questionnaire will be retrieved and shown in order to observe whether the initial assumptions have been confirmed or not. The analysis will be provided by observing the data retrieved at a quantitative level, namely, from the percentages that each option has obtained. In this way, it will be possible to verify for each condition if the options chosen are those expected or not, and if not, the factors that have been determined these variations will be observed and further discussed. Then, a comparison between the two conditions will be done in order to check if the *in-context* has produced a higher number of diminutives or not. Finally, the features of the items will be observed in order to verify if their inherent features have been modified or not from one condition to the other. The features that will be taken in consideration for the analysis are [+/-kinship] [+/-human] [+/-animate] [+/-inalienable] [+/-body-part] [+/-small] [+/-

young] [+/-affective]. Each of them will be furtherly explained in the same chapter. The last thing to say about the analysis is that it follows the division for categories, namely family members first and animal, object and fillers as it follows, and that for each category the items will be discussed one by one, comparing them also for the two conditions. Moreover, at the end of each of the four parts some final considerations will be proposed.

In the last part of this work, all the final considerations will be done and a general discussion about the obtained results will be led. Moreover, all the further unexpected data that came out from the questionnaire will be part of the final conclusions. In this way it will be possible to answer the questions at the basis of this work and verify if the research supports the leading hypothesis.

1. Theoretical background: diminutives

The present chapter aims to introduce to the diminutives, starting from a general outline of the morphological operation involved and with a further focus on their system in the German language. Therefore, the first part concerns a short discussion of the most important theories about the uses and behaviors of the diminutives, taking as the main reference Dressler/M. Barbaresi (1994)'s work, but describing also further theories in order to offer the widest view possible – despite the poor literature. In the second part, there will be given an outline of the diminutives in the German language, offering first an analysis of how they mainly behave in the language system, showing the morphemes that take place for the diminutive suffixation. Moreover, it will be described their frequency of use, their geographical distribution – also with some hints of their (regional) variations – and finally their word-formation processes. The third and last part of this theoretical introduction is reserved to describe how the diminutives are used in the German Baby Talk, analyzing also if and when semantic and pragmatics influence their use in one speech situation.

1.1 General features of diminutives

Diminutives are found in a big amount of language systems and the German language is one of those, even if their paradigm is very small and poor. Before going deep into the German system of the diminutives, it is worth having an outline of the general features of the diminutives. Dressler, M. Barbaresi (1994)¹ point out a list of properties that all diminutives generally have. First, the authors state that diminutives are derivational, because there is no sufficient justification to separate the diminutive forms from derivation and inflection and putting them in a distinct third class alongside these two, as Scalise (1984) postulates. He namely suggests the hypothesis that since diminutives share features both with inflection (IM) and derivation (DM), they would not belong to neither of them, but would instead create a “third morphology”, that he calls “Evaluative morphology (EM)”. Assuming this new class, the evaluative affixes would

¹ Dressler Wolfgang U., M. B. (1994). *Morphopragmatics. Diminutives and Intensifiers in Italian, German, and Other Languages*. Berlin, New York: Moutin de Gruyter, pp.92-93.

be set as independent, likewise all of its rules related to the word-formation, that would be found between the other two morphologies, i.e., IM and DM.² Therefore, as mentioned before, Dressler/M. Barbaresi disagree with Scalise's assumption because they state that even if diminutive suffixes are non-prototypical representative of the derivational morphology, they still have no enough properties to share and very inhomogeneous rules to allow them to be set in a distinguished third category. Second, the two authors state that the diminutives are alterative because their word formation rules do not change neither the subcategorization nor the selective restrictions, while the denotative meaning show changes only limited to a quantity gradation. For example, for the Italian word for book, *libro*, it is possible to observe that wheatear diminutivized or augmented, the two new words are still two nouns – like their base form – but have changed only a few denotative features. In fact, *libricino* (book[DIM]) denotes generally a “smaller book”, hence a book of few pages, while *librone* (book[AUG]) denotes a “bigger book”, hence a book with more pages than a common-size one. The third property of diminutive is their tendency to generate a positive connotation, if there is one; on the other hand, augmentative tend to have a negative connotation. For example, the Italian *pranzetto* (lunch[DIM]) indicates a lunch with fine and sophisticated dishes – expressing hence a positive meaning, while its augmentative, i.e., *pranzone*, refers to a heavy lunch, perhaps too exaggerated. Of course, the negative connotation though must not be confused with pejoratives. The fourth one is linked to some diminutives that seem to violate Aronoff's (1976) “Unitary Base Hypothesis”³. This is since diminutives can be generated both from nouns and adjectives, therefore they do not have a unique categorical base.

After having analyzed all the general properties and behaviors of the diminutive affixes, it is now worth to continue and extend the analysis of how diminutive work in the German language system. This is what will be discussed in the next paragraph.

² Scalise. (1986). *Generative Morphology*. Dordrecht - Holland/Riverton - U.S.A.: FORIS PUBLICATIONS, pp. 132.

³ Aronoff, M. A. (1976). *Word formation in generative grammar*. Cambridge: MIT Press, pp.47.

1.2 German diminutives

German diminutives show a very poor and small paradigm if compared to other languages; hence, the German diminutives are formed mainly by two suffixes, that are *-chen* and *-lein*. According to (Lameli, 2018), the two German diminutives has been preserved for hundreds of years and today result to be interchangeable both in their semantic function and in their syntactic construction and showing a high frequency of use in spoken language more than in written language. However, their usage has not always been the same; in fact, in the Early New High German Period (ENHG, ~1350-1650) the suffix *-lein* was the most used one between the two. Then, during the 18th century the situation overturned, having hence *-chen* as the predominant, and still is today. However, the *-lein* suffix still exists, but is less used and preferred specifically in particular genres, like the fairy tales. The nowadays situation sees the suffix *-chen* mainly used in the north of Germany and it is found in the diminutives like e.g., *Süppchen* (soup[DIM]) or *Häuschen* (house[DIM]), while the *-lein* suffix is used more in the south and found in the diminutives like e.g., *Türlein* (door[DIM]) or *Englein* (angel[DIM]). Moreover, the *lein* suffix has further produced two variants in the Austrian colloquial German, which are *-l* and *-erll/-tscher*, e.g., *Mutterl* (mother[DIM]). Alongside the main two, there is the “childish” suffix, i.e., *-i* with its variants *-li* and *-tschi*, found in the diminutives *Mami* (mother[DIM]) and *Papi* (father[DIM]). According to Dressler/M. Barbaresi (1994) the use of the diminutives is not homogeneous in all areas where the German language is spoken; in fact, it seems that the diminutives are more used in the South of Germany – rather than in the North, and in Switzerland and Austria⁴.

Fleischer/Barz state that the diminutives correspond to the *Verkleinerungsbildung*, i.e., the construction of the short forms, and that the German language uses a special and specific system to build the affixation forms, which is called *Kompositionsprinzip*, that could be the equivalent of “composition principle”.⁵ Moreover, the two authors have observed that the choice between *-chen* and *-lein* depends on several factors, such as

⁴ Dressler Wolfgang U., M. B. (1994). *Morphopragmatics. Diminutives and Intensifiers in Italian, German, and Other Languages*. Berlin, New York: Moutin de Gruyter pp.103.

⁵ Fleischer Wolfgang, B. I. (1995). *Wortbildung der deutschen Gegenwartssprache*. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, pp. 178.

phonological, diatonic, or textual, and therefore it is not casual. In fact, at a phonological level, there is a systematic tendency by which specific endings require either the *-chen* or the *-lein* suffix, or in some cases, both of them are allowed. Therefore, nouns endings with *-l(e)* take the *-chen* suffix, e.g., *Vogel* > *Vögelchen*, while nouns ending in *-ch*, *-g*, and *-ng* take the *-lein* suffix, e.g., *Bach* > *Bächlein*, even if there are some exceptions in words as *Flasche* > *Fläschchen* and *Tasche* > *Täschchen*. Moreover, nouns ending in *-el* take both *-chen* and *-lein*.⁶ However, it seems that there are also some semantic features that trigger either the suffix *-chen* or *-lein*. In fact, there is this tendency by which the suffix *-chen* seems to attach mostly to nouns indicating humans, while *-lein* to nouns indicating animals. Moreover, data from corpora show that the suffix *-chen* is much more used than the suffix *-lein* on a rate of 4:1 and that this last one is mainly used in fairy tales, drama, poetry, and ballads. In fact, in the Grimm's fairy tales there is a higher occurrence of the diminutive morpheme *-chen*, which count as the 52.2%.⁷

After this short introduction to the features of the two main diminutive suffixes of the German language, it is now worth to explain what the main processes involved to build these constructions are. The two main diminutive suffixes are therefore added mainly to nouns, both to its full word (e.g., *Mutter-chen* in which *Mutter* is the German full word for “mother” to which the diminutive attaches without any other readjustment process) and to its root (e.g., *Lämp-chen*, where, to form the diminutive, the final *-e* of the base form of the noun *Lampe* has fallen to take the diminutive suffix) to form the final diminutive. Whenever this process occurs, the new word, i.e., the diminutive, generally change the gender – obtaining the neuter one. The reason is that these suffixes have the head property of gender assignation but not that for the word-class change since the diminutive – as already said – are alterative.⁸ According to Grandi (2015), diminutives and neuter gender interact in many Indo-European languages that have a gender system that assign the gender basing on formal rules – even if there are some genders that are

⁶ Fleischer Wolfgang, B. I. (1995). *Wortbildung der deutschen Gegenwartssprache*. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, pp. 179.

⁷ Fleischer Wolfgang, B. I. (1995). *Wortbildung der deutschen Gegenwartssprache*. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, pp.180.

⁸ Dressler Wolfgang U., M. B. (1994). *Morphopragmatics. Diminutives and Intensifiers in Italian, German, and Other Languages*. Berlin, New York: Moutin de Gruyter pp.103-104.

easily assigned to such nouns because they show strong inherent properties. Therefore, there are no inherent properties that allow some nouns to be assigned to the neuter gender, especially for the animate nouns. However, the interaction between diminutives and neuter might be detected in the assumption that originally the neuter gender was assigned to those “nouns denoting young creatures”, so not small animate nouns, but young⁹. Corbett (1991) adds that:

*“many Indo-European languages assign sex-differentiable nouns to the masculine or feminine gender as appropriate, while the young of sex-differentiables – typically young animals which are treated as not yet sex-differentiable – are neuter”.*¹⁰

This means that the neuter gender is given to all the nouns whose sexual features cannot be perceivable yet.

However, there are exceptions to some nouns which do not change their gender, even after being processed as diminutives. These exceptions can be found in those diminutives that have been formed by adding the “childish” suffix *-i*, e.g., *die Mutter* > *die Mami* or *der Vater* > *der Vati* (the mother > the mummy; the father; the daddy) because of their hypocoristic features¹¹.

As previously mentioned, nouns work as the main basis to which the diminutive suffixes generally attach for the formation of diminutives. It may sometimes occur though that also adjectives (and rarely adverbs) can be the basis for the diminutive formation, normally changing word class in nouns, which are used with their predicative function, and not attributive, e.g., *Dumm-chen/Dumm-i* (*stupid*+*[DIM]*), in *Du* (*bist ein Dummchen* (“you (are a) stupid”). Moreover, a diminutive suffix might also be preceded by an adjective inflectional suffix, hence the strong masculine singular *-er*, regardless of the gender and number of the end result referred to (e.g., *Best-er-chen* (my best*[DIM]*, where *Best* is the adjective, *-er-* the adjective inflectional suffix and *-chen* the diminutive suffix).¹² Less productive and recessive are the inflectional plural suffixes, that have been

⁹ Grandi Nicola, K. L. (2015). *Edinburg Handbook of Evaluative Morphology*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, pp.93.

¹⁰ Corbett, G. (1991). *Gender*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 227-228.

¹¹ Dressler Wolfgang U., M. B. (1994). *Morphopragmatics. Diminutives and Intensifiers in Italian, German, and Other Languages*. Berlin, New York: Moutin de Gruyter, pp.104.

¹² Dressler Wolfgang U., M. B. (1994). *Morphopragmatics. Diminutives and Intensifiers in Italian, German, and Other Languages*. Berlin, New York: Moutin de Gruyter, pp.105-106.

attested in texts from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries instead. It is peculiar for diminutives to take these plural suffixes as base to create plural diminutives. And among these plural suffixes, the *-er* is the one that sometimes might precede the diminutive suffixes *-chen* or *-lein*, creating therefore plural diminutives like e.g., *Kinderchen* (meaning children[DIM]), which is composed by *Kind* (child) *-er-* (inflectional plural suffix) and *-chen-* (diminutive suffix). It may also occur a double pluralization with the plural suffix *-s* which goes at the very end of the new word, e.g., *Kind-er-chen-s*¹³.

Although it is possible to find some cases in which a diminutive suffix follows an inflectional one, it is very rare and unproductive to have a recursive suffixation. The only diminutive suffixes that show in some cases a recursiveness are the suffixes *-chen* and *-(e)l*, like e.g., in *Büch-el-chen* (book[DIM][DIM])¹⁴.

In some ways also German verbs can appear as diminutives selecting though the suffix *-(e)l*, giving to them the iterative, attenuative, and pejorative features, e.g., the verb *husten* (to cough) becomes *hüst-el-n*, varying the meaning in “to cough slightly, clear one’s throat”. Diminutive verbs might also derive from both nouns and adjective, e.g., *gräu-le-n* (to be a bit grey) deriving from the color *grau* (grey); therefore, in this case the suffix *-(e)l* carried the head property of changing the word class¹⁵.

When creating a diminutive, some morpho-phonological readjustments are also carried out. The main one – which occurs in almost all the diminutive nouns – is the addition of the Umlaut before the two suffixes *-chen* and *-lein*. In fact, according to Wiese (1996):

“the term *umlaut* designates fronting of back stem vowels, typically on the final full (non-schwa) vowel”.¹⁶

While forming the German diminutives, it occurs that just some suffixes might trigger the umlaut in the stem, depending on the conditions of the environment, as Wurzel (1970)

¹³ Dressler Wolfgang U., M. B. (1994). *Morphopragmatics. Diminutives and Intensifiers in Italian, German, and Other Languages*. Berlin, New York: Mouton de Gruyter, pp. 109.

¹⁴ Dressler Wolfgang U., M. B. (1994). *Morphopragmatics. Diminutives and Intensifiers in Italian, German, and Other Languages*. Berlin, New York: Mouton de Gruyter, pp. 110.

¹⁵ Dressler Wolfgang U., M. B. (1994). *Morphopragmatics. Diminutives and Intensifiers in Italian, German, and Other Languages*. Berlin, New York: Mouton de Gruyter, pp. 107-108.

¹⁶ Wiese, Richard. 1996a. Phonological versus morphological rules: On German Umlaut and Ablaut. *Journal of Linguistics* 32:113

assumes¹⁷. Therefore, he gives some examples in which the umlaut is triggered and some others where it is not.

Here are the examples where the umlaut is triggered by the diminutive suffix *-chen*:

- a. *Wald Wäld-chen* (/a/ -> /d/) forest forest[*DIM*]
- b. *Schloss -> Schlöss-chen* (/o/ -> /0/) palace palace[*DIM*]
- c. *Turm Tiirm-chen* (/u/ -> /y/) tower tower[*DIM*]
- d. *Maus Mäus-chen* (/au/ -> /oy/) mouse mouse[*DIM*]¹⁸

And here are some others where the umlaut is not triggered– always after adding the diminutive suffix *-chen*:

- a. *Kurtchen* 'Kurt.HYP' (proper name)
- b. *Tantchen* 'aunt.HYP'
- c. *Hundchen* 'dog.HYP',¹⁹

Wiese (1996) assumes hence that it seems that both Standard German diminutive morphemes *-chen* and *-lein* trigger umlaut on the stem, after being added to the noun and that the German speakers always apply the umlaut to create the regular diminutive form.²⁰ However, as noticed in the second list of examples, there are some cases in which the umlauting doesn't occur. One possibility might be hence that the non-umlauting would concern only the hypocoristic nouns followed by the diminutive *-chen*, and the diminutives created to convey the meaning of “endearment”. These forms co-exist though with their variants, which are the umlauting diminutives, e.g., both *Hundchen* and *Hündchen* (“dog”[*DIM*]) are attested, valid, and used. However, Ott (2011) argues that there is a difference between the two forms, and it is a matter of function. To be more precise, he assumes that:

*“the hypocoristic use of -chen is not true diminution, and that non-umlauting -chen is not an exponent of unit, but of a different functional category. The non-umlauting -chen acts as a kind of name-marker, conveying endearment”.*²¹

Everything that has been until this moment presented could be understood to be the main general rules of the diminutives in the German language. From this moment on,

¹⁷ Wurzel, Wolfgang U. 1970. Studien zur deutschen Lautstruktur. *Studia grammatica*, vol VIII. Berlin: Akademie Verl.

¹⁸ Ott, D. (2011). Diminutive-formation in German: Spelling out the classifier analysis. *The Journal of Comparative Germanic Linguistics*, 1-46, pp.38.

¹⁹ Ott, D. (2011). Diminutive-formation in German: Spelling out the classifier analysis. *The Journal of Comparative Germanic Linguistics*, 1-46, pp.39.

²⁰ Wiese, Richard. (1996a). Phonological versus morphological rules: On German Umlaut and Ablaut. *Journal of Linguistics* 32, pp.113.

²¹ Ott, D. (2011). Diminutive-formation in German: Spelling out the classifier analysis. *The Journal of Comparative Germanic Linguistics*, 1-46, pp.39.

the analysis will be deepened moving from a theoretical to a more practical approach, i.e., from the rules to the observation of some contexts in which the diminutives are more prone to be used. The main context of observation will be mainly the baby talk, i.e., a child-centered speech situation. This is what the next section will be discussed.

1.3 Diminutive suffixes in the German Baby Talk

Diminutive suffixes have been attested in different contexts of use, either written or spoken ones, from fairy tales and story for children to speech situations among adults – possibly with ironic purposes – and among adults and children. In the German language too there exist these contexts of use, even if in a small frequency and amount. But they have still been attested both in written and spoken situations, and one big example already mentioned before is one of the most important pieces of work for the German culture and literature, that is the Grimm's fairy tales. Moreover, also in the German spoken language diminutives are used and one of these speech situations of interest involves the Baby Talk, i.e., all of the speech situations in which at least one child and one adult are involved, regardless their exact role. What is interested to observe are all of the features involved in these kinds of speech that trigger the speakers to use diminutives much more than in standard conversations. Therefore, the next paragraph will present an outline of the diminutives in the Baby Talk, child-centered speech situations, the pragmatic features involved and also the pet-centered speech situations, for a matter of completeness because of its similarities to the child-centered ones.

1.3.1 Diminutives in child-centered speech situations

The diminutivization process cannot be entirely defined only as mere morphological process in which a diminutive suffix attaches to a base following the rules explained in the previous section. There are instead other conditions that would lead to the diminutivization of one word, and these are mainly pragmatic. In fact, according to (Kiefer, 1998) pragmatic aspects intervene when the morphological rules fail to modify the denotative meaning or bring a poor semantic contribution. Therefore, in such cases it is the morphopragmatics that comes into play since, according to (Merlini Barbaresi,

2020) this branch of the linguistics covers the pragmatic meanings which are generated by the morphological rules. The two authors state, in fact, that the evaluatives may have a great number of meanings expressing the downgrading (e.g., diminutives) or upgrading (e.g., augmentatives) of the illocutionary force, sympathy and empathy, understatement, euphemism, false modesty, irony and sarcasm, that can be explained only through the pragmatics. For example, the Italian diminutive for the word “house” is *casina* and it would express either the morphosemantic denotation of the size (small vs. big) or the morphosemantic connotation (positive vs. negative intention). The answer is in the context, in the speaker’s intention, perspective, standard of evaluation, world’s perception, namely, in the pragmatics, and not only in the morphology.

The diminutives have therefore specific speech situations in which they typically are triggered, and these are the child-centered, pet-centered and lover-centered speech situations. In this work, the child-centered speech situation is the core of the analysis, but also the animal-centered speech situation will be considered. In fact, the use of diminutive forms has been attested in numerous of speech situations in which children are involved. When occurring in these kinds of speech contexts, the diminutive takes the term of *diminutivum puerile*, coined by Staverman (1953)²², to denote those diminutives that are used in baby talk, motherese, teacherese, and all similar situations. Starting from this assumption, Dressler/M.Barbaresi (1994) have decided to refer to the speech situation in which the *diminutivum puerile* is used as “child-centered speech situation”, which has been hence defined as a speech:

*“in which a child – prototypically a small child – participates as either a) speaker, b) addressee, c) side-participant, or d) as a (non-present) topical referent”.*²³

Therefore, a child-centered speech situation is the condition in which a *diminutivum puerile* is triggered, hence, in any speech situation in which at least one of the members of the conversation – either direct or indirect participants must be a child. Therefore, a child must be a speaker, an addressee, a side-participant, or a (non-present) topical referent; if this does not occur, it is not a child-centered speech situation, nor a

²² Staverman, W. (1953). *Diminutivitis Neerlandica* [Dutch diminutives]. *De Gids*, 407-419.

²³ Dressler Wolfgang U., M. B. (1994). *Morphopragmatics. Diminutives and Intensifiers in Italian, German, and Other Languages*. Berlin, New York: Moutin de Gruyter, pp. 173.

diminutivum puerile can be used.²⁴ Hence, such speech situation is the most suitable one for the use of the *diminutivum puerile*. However, not all the child-centered speech situations are the same, because - as the definition cites - the child might have different roles in one speech: the more the child has a higher centrality in the speech, the more the diminutives would tend to occur. Therefore, the two authors present a scale based on four dimensions that affect the degree of centrality of the child in the speech situation, in a way that it might either increase or decrease the possibility of occurrence of the diminutives. The first dimension follows the hierarchical status of the participant in one speech, where the addressee and speaker occupy the highest place, while the bystanders and the non-present referent the lowest place. If this hierarchy must be transferred to a child-centered speech situation - therefore a situation where children are involved - some modifications are carried out, in terms of register used, which is closer to the baby talk. In such situations, diminutives have more possibility to occur. The second dimension refers to the number of children that take place to one speech: the higher the number of children is, the more the diminutives are expected. As for the third dimension, it is about the acquisition and development of the diminutives in children, where it seems that diminutive formation is one of the first morphological operations they acquire, after having become capable of processing morphology productively. It also happens that some diminutives, e.g., the German "childish" *-i* - might be acquired by children as lexicalized and not by derived forms of nouns.²⁵ The last and fourth dimension refers to the level of child topicality in one speech, depending on also the role that the adult has in one child's life; for example, caretakers tend to use more diminutive forms when addressing to children.²⁶

Along the four dimensions mentioned above, there are some specific conditions that allow the *diminutivum puerile* to increase its possibility of occurrence. Of course, as already said, it has the highest tendency to occur in all the child-centered speech situations. However, the age of the child can affect these speech situations, because there are some diminutives that seem to be used only with children of a younger age and not

²⁴ Dressler Wolfgang U., M. B. (1994). *Morphopragmatics. Diminutives and Intensifiers in Italian, German, and Other Languages*. Berlin, New York: Mouton de Gruyter, pp. 173.

²⁵ Dressler Wolfgang U., M. B. (1994). *Morphopragmatics. Diminutives and Intensifiers in Italian, German, and Other Languages*. Berlin, New York: Mouton de Gruyter, pp. 105.

²⁶ Dressler Wolfgang U., M. B. (1994). *Morphopragmatics. Diminutives and Intensifiers in Italian, German, and Other Languages*. Berlin, New York: Mouton de Gruyter, pp. 173-174.

with older ones – even if they are just one or two years older. An example cited by Dressler/M.Barbaresi is the German word *Fläschen* (feeding bottle[DIM]) that seems to cease being used in a conversation with an older child; of course, the reason of this is also linked to the fact that a non-infant stops using this object. On the other hand, there are some situations in which the *diminutivum puerile* is overused in the baby talk, in a way that such diminutives are used to address towards adolescents and adults, even if with a sarcastic mood. Dressler/Barbaresi (1994) propose *trödi* as for an example, which is the diminutivized form of the verb *trödeln*, (“to dawdle”), that is used generally sarcastically towards adults or adolescents. Another feature to consider when using diminutives with children is the degree of possession of one object to the child: in fact, there are some nouns that are diminutivized in an adult-children conversation only because they refer to objects which belong to the child, e.g., a toy. *Diminutivum puerile* is also used in rhetorical questions addressed to children, which are though not very common in the German language, but still may exist, e.g.:

“Aber wer ist das Schatz-i/Schatz-i-li von seiner Mama?
 (Who’s mummy’s little darling/treasure?)”²⁷

Alongside the child-center speech situation, another condition must be taken into consideration for the creation of a proper context in which diminutives may occur is the degree of psychological distance between adult and child in one conversation. It seems that the lower the distance the more diminutives might occur.²⁸ Here two features take place, i.e., familiarity and empathy between the two actors of the speech. For example, when an adult is scolding a child, it probably happens that diminutives are used in order to make that scolding more acceptable for the child, especially if familiarity and empathy exist between the adult and the child. This is valid also for those scolding moments in which the tone is merely angry, as long as there are these two features. Familiarity and empathy are though not interchangeable, nor dependent one to another; in fact, there are cases in which the degree of familiarity is enough to make the scolding more acceptable for the child – and the diminutive increase their possibility of occurrence – and cases in

²⁷ Dressler Wolfgang U., M. B. (1994). *Morphopragmatics. Diminutives and Intensifiers in Italian, German, and Other Languages*. Berlin, New York: Moutin de Gruyter, pp. 180.

²⁸ Dressler Wolfgang U., M. B. (1994). *Morphopragmatics. Diminutives and Intensifiers in Italian, German, and Other Languages*. Berlin, New York: Moutin de Gruyter, pp. 183.

which the empathy is sufficient without familiarity, e.g., when a stranger addresses nicely to a child.²⁹

In child-centered speech situations, the diminutive can also have the purpose of indicating the denotative aspect of the things. Dressler/M.Barbaresi (1994) disagree³⁰ with Wierzbicka's assumption that *diminutivum puerile* comes from the denotative diminutives because, according to the author, diminutives are the proper way to address to children when indicating them things they see from a world that they conceive as

“a miniature of the things encountered in the adult world”.

In fact, the two authors argue that it is not a matter of how children see the world, because when addressing to them, adults would still use the diminutive, even if what they are indicating is full-sized. It seems to be instead a matter of speech accommodation, because when diminutivizing, the adults attempt to make the children understand the message in the easiest and most natural way. Behind this, there is once again a pragmatic reason, since there is a certain degree of empathy that takes place that the speaker (in this case the adult) has towards the addressee (the child). Moreover, another reason for which Wierzbicka's assumption cannot be possible, is the fact that the diminutivization as the miniature of things, cannot be applied to diminutive forms of verbs, adverbs nor pronouns. The last reason concerns then the semantic distinction between the diminutive and its base: children do not make any differences of meaning; therefore, when they think or name one diminutive or its base, they refer to exactly to the same thing.³¹ However, there are some cases in which the *diminutivum puerile* can be used either to highlight the denotative meaning of one thing – that is the feature [small] – or to highlight the pragmatic feature of that thing, i.e., the feature of [non-serious]. Dressler/M. Barbaresi (1994) suggest that as for the denotative meaning, the feature [small] takes part of the speech because of the pragmatic situation, i.e., at least one child is involved in the conversation. As for the second one, it seems that the feature [non-serious] takes part to highlight the fact that a child cannot be completely taken seriously in one conversation, i.e., the speech situation must be inevitably modified to be suitable to children. It is worth to observe

²⁹ Dressler Wolfgang U., M. B. (1994). *Morphopragmatics. Diminutives and Intensifiers in Italian, German, and Other Languages*. Berlin, New York: Moutin de Gruyter, pp. 184.

³⁰ Dressler Wolfgang U., M. B. (1994). *Morphopragmatics. Diminutives and Intensifiers in Italian, German, and Other Languages*. Berlin, New York: Moutin de Gruyter, pp.188.

³¹ Ibid.

though that even if there are differences between the two features, they both have a connotation of emotion, that can be e.g., happiness, joy, attachment, surprise, interest, sympathy and so on.³² Moreover, one thing to point out related to the pragmatic feature of the non-seriousness is— according to the two authors – that when associated with the other pragmatic feature [fictive], they realize together the ludic character of the diminutives. This one is dominant in all of those situations of playful interactions between adults and children, where the *diminutivum puerile* is again used in e.g., baby talk or motherese speech situations, to fulfill the interaction with a child properly. Of course, it happens mostly when the child is the addressee of one speech and the adult the speaker. On the other hand, when the child plays the other roles of speaker, side participant, or (non-present) referent, the playfulness of the situation is less prone to occur.³³ Moreover, there are also cases in which the diminutives do not occur at all in playful contexts, especially in those situations in which the child plays to imitate adult behaviors and therefore they intentionally avoid the use of diminutives. However, a *diminutivum puerile* do not need necessarily all of these three features to occur; in fact, in a proper situation only the feature [non-serious] is expected to occur, while the other two – [playfulness] and [ludic] are side aspects and not necessary.³⁴

Alongside child-centered speech situation, there exist also a pet-centered speech situation, that would be the same speech situation but instead of children there are animals. Therefore, diminutives play a role also in a speech situation involving an adult addressing to animals – especially pets. As for the German “childish” diminutive morpheme *-i*, it occurs that this is suffixed to every noun indicating an animal, obtaining therefore also all of its features. Examples are: *Maus-i* (mouse[DIM]), *Fleisch-i* (fish[DIM]) and so on. This operation is possible because of the affection felt for their own pets and this degree of familiarity and affection could be compared to the one felt for any other member of one family – or any other people for who it is felt. It seems then

³² Dressler Wolfgang U., M. B. (1994). *Morphopragmatics. Diminutives and Intensifiers in Italian, German, and Other Languages*. Berlin, New York: Moutin de Gruyter, pp.147.

³³ Dressler Wolfgang U., M. B. (1994). *Morphopragmatics. Diminutives and Intensifiers in Italian, German, and Other Languages*. Berlin, New York: Moutin de Gruyter, pp.197.

³⁴ Dressler Wolfgang U., M. B. (1994). *Morphopragmatics. Diminutives and Intensifiers in Italian, German, and Other Languages*. Berlin, New York: Moutin de Gruyter, pp.198.

that pets are treated as children, and therefore, the use of the diminutive in this context can be explained according to Dressler/M. Barebaresi (1994) as a

“metaphorical extension of the diminutivum puerile”.

As for the child-centered speech situation, also here the diminutives are mainly used only when addressing to pets, and not when they are referred to, i.e., when they are the non-present topical referent. Therefore, also in this kind of speech situation the hierarchy “addressee>referent” is confirmed.

This brief introduction to the theory concerning the various processes of diminutivization in the German language was necessary for the conception and creation of the research project that will be shown in the following chapters. In particular, the concepts of the child-centered speech situation, as well as the pet-centered speech situation, and the already attested increase in the frequency of diminutives in such contexts constitute the basis of the hypothesis on which the work is structured. In the following chapters, therefore, all the steps concerning the choice and subsequent implementation of the best methodology for data extraction will be shown and explained in detail (Chapter 2) and how these were subsequently analyzed and discussed.

2. Investigation of the German diminutives in the Baby Talk: a methodology

In the German language, the frequency of use of the diminutives is not so high as compared to the other languages that host these forms in their linguistic systems. Therefore, in a conversation among peers, German speakers generally prefer to convey the message using other periphrastic structures rather than a diminutivized form of the base word. However, it seems that the diminutives enter a sentence only when it becomes necessary to differentiate one object/person to another for one of their semantic features, as e.g., [+small]. But in these kinds of situations too, German speakers could use a periphrastic alternative. This is a short outline of what happens generally among German speakers, but of course a lot of variables have to be taken into consideration. An example could be the fact that the frequency of use of diminutives changes according to the territory: data show that in the South of Germany, in Switzerland and in Austria, diminutives are used with a higher frequency rather than in the rest of Germany. This is due mainly to a culture and social thing, since the areas where the frequency is higher have got the diminutives as part of their regional dialect; however, it might be supposed that for Austria, that has its own variants, this higher frequency could be linked to the richer number of morphological variants at their disposal. Other variables to be considered are surely the age of a speaker, the attitude, the way a speaker interacts generally with the other members of a speech situation, and so on. Therefore, the pragmatics of the diminutives might be considered when observing what triggers a diminutive and what does not, alongside their semantics. In fact, as learned from the theoretical background, pragmatic aspects intervene when the morphological rules fail to modify the denotative meaning or bring a poor semantic contribution (see 1.3.1).

Alongside the theoretical sources, what led me to the investigation of the use of the diminutives in the German language has been my studying experience in Germany, during which I had the possibility to be exposed to the German language in such a way much deeper and more realistic than what just the study of one language and its grammar allows. The *Land* (namely the State) in which I spent my studying period was the Rheinland-Pfalz, that is located in the west of Germany; specifically, I have lived in its

capital city Mainz for six months. As mentioned in the theoretical sources, this is not one of those German regions in which the diminutives are popular, and I have had the proof of it. The same can be said for all the other Northern German States, in which I was able to hear a few diminutives in a conversation with natives. Furthermore, although I have never experienced a direct speech situation in which there was at least one child involved, I just happened to hear some conversations among parents and their sons, as being a kind of “side participant”, e.g., when I was on means of transports during long-distance trips. In such situations I could have heard some baby talk, motherese, and therefore diminutives. Hence, what I started to conceive was that if I wanted to collect the biggest amount of data regarding diminutives, I necessarily had to investigate in similar speech situations, since it seemed to me that diminutives would have mostly been used by adults when finding in a conversation with at least one child, possibly one’s son or daughter. For this reason, I started to think about what would have been the best methodology that I could apply to detect the use of the diminutives in spoken situations. Then I assumed that there were a lot of possibilities that I could have considered, that would had produced interesting and valid data.

One of the first that came to my mind was the idea of entering a kindergarten and observing all the speech situations occurring there, namely those among children and those among children and the teachers, investigating therefore the teacherese. Unfortunately, this scenario was very difficult to reach for some legal issues and authorization that I needed to enter such environments.

A second idea conveyed an interview to adults, targeting all of those who had young children or nephews, or that spend a great amount of their daytime with children, i.e., teachers, caretakers and so on. Also, this methodology had though some issues because it would have generated rather qualitative data, maybe altered by some psychological variables involved in a direct interview. However, before abandoning this method, I wanted to test it informally, addressing to some German native speakers, that were mostly friends. What I did was having a perfectly normal conversation with them and then asking them some questions that would have led them towards a metalinguistic reflection, i.e., make them think about the words they use in some given speech contexts.

Since these have been just informal conversations – and hence something that I needed to have to make myself an idea of the issue – I do not have any records of them, but I will offer just a short description of how they went.

The two main thing I wanted to detect through these “interviews” were: 1) if the diminutives are used to differentiate one object/animal to its similar/identical one, but of difference sizes – in which one was smaller than the other; 2) again, if the diminutives are used to differentiate one object/animal to its similar/identical one, imaging though a speech situation in which a child is involved, especially if the child is the addressee. Hence, when asking to think about one object and the word or words to use in order to describe its smallness compared to its identical but bigger one, the word pronounced was rarely a diminutive, but the same noun preceded by the adverb *klein* (“little”) or a periphrastic construction, i.e., an adjective conveying the feature of smallness or endearment, and the noun in its base form, or *Komposita*, i.e., composed words, namely the noun in question preceded by another word/adjective that specifies it (e.g., *Teetasse* means “tee+mug”, conveying a meaning of “the mug used for drinking tee”). The words I proposed in these metalinguistic reflections were mainly objects that are part of the common and familiar lexicon and everyday life. I observed that such nouns e.g., *Flasche* (“bottle”) or animals, especially pets, e.g., *Hund* (“dog”), were those that triggered the diminutive variant more. These data made me assume that maybe it was the feature of familiarity that triggered diminutives with a higher frequency. This observation has been important for the future decisions taken for the finalization of my methodology. As for the second scenario – namely that in which children are the addressee in one speech situation, there seemed to be more possibilities of use of the diminutives, not only to mark smereely because the addressee is a child. It resulted that in such situation, diminutives seemed to the native speaker correct and not forced, and they also confirmed that they would use them with a higher frequency and in a more natural way. At the end of these short and informal conversations with some native speakers, the data obtained were not sufficient and also very poor to make me decide to choose one of these as main methodologies. Of course, these attempts resulted to be very precious because they made me understand what the next step would have been and led me finally towards the choice of the ultimate methodology for this research.

2.1 The methodology and its aim

According to the theory, diminutives are particularly used in child-centered speech situations, i.e., all those speech situations in which a child is involved, being either speaker, or addressee, or also side participant or (non-present) referent. This is though not the only speech situation in which diminutives are triggered with a higher frequency by adults, but also in the pet-centered speech situations, which are as the child ones, but involving pets instead of children. Therefore, in such situations, adults use diminutives to address to pets, regardless the participation nor the presence of a child. This made me assume that triggering a diminutive does not depend only on the either direct or indirect presence of one child, but there are for sure other aspects that are involved in the choice of a diminutive or some other periphrastic structures. Observing both two speech situations, it might not be absurd to assume that one of these aspects might be the feature of kinship, since – even if not always, but much often – when an adult addresses to either a child or a pet, in both speech situations there is a certain degree of familiarity in-between.

However, my assumption is that the speech situation is the element that triggers a diminutive suffix the most and that also the degree of familiarity of one word– when present – increases the possibilities of the choice of a diminutive over its standard form. To be more precise, the idea is that the speech situation that would trigger diminutives are those proposed by the theory, hence the child-centered, pet-centered, and love-centered speech situations (see 1.3.1). As for the degree of familiarity, it is meant all the words that belong to this sphere and that hence are those nouns having a strongly marked [+kinship] feature (e.g., family members mother, father, sister, and so on), pet (e.g., dog, cat, and others), and all the other objects, hence words with a [-animate], that can be potentially found in the everyday-life usage (e.g., fork, bottle, and so on). The main hypothesis is hence that such items would be more incline to accept a diminutivization process first because of the semantic-lexical features of their base forms, and then also because of the context in which they are inserted, i.e., the child-centered speech situation. This second condition works in turn as counterproof of the assumption that the pragmatics influences the selection of the morphological alternative (as discussed in the first chapter).

But still some questions remain unanswered, as for example: what happens with the nouns that do not belong to the familiar lexicon or that hardly activate the *diminutivum puerile* in a child-centered speech situation? Is it possible hence that it is only the context triggering the diminutive even in a situation when this feature is absent or opaque? I tried to give an answer to these questions through the setting of an investigation in the German language, particularly addressing to the German mother tongue speakers. Hence, this enquiry is based on the desire to research what triggers the formation of a diminutive in the German language, thus investigating – following my hypothesis – in the child-centered speech context either all those nouns that show an innate feature of kinship and by counterevidence those nouns whose feature [+kinship] is either opaque or absent. Moreover, having eliminated from the list of possible methodologies those explained in the previous part, I had to think of a new one that could produce such data that would be appropriate to answer my questions and consequently confirm or deny the guiding hypothesis. Indeed, for the final methodology I was inspired by an existing psycholinguistic test, namely “The Cologne Picture Naming Test (CoNaT) (Carolin Weiss Lucas, 2021)”. Although this test has been used for clinical purposes, it is structured in a way that it might be used also for other kinds of research. In fact, this test bases on the use of pictures to make the participants name them, without proposing any other any other graphical representations (e.g., synonyms, alternative expressions) that would interfere with the final choice. Moreover, this test considers the frequency of the words before choosing the items to propose; in fact, it is suggested to use words which are common in the everyday language and that are mostly objective to identify. Therefore, basing on this peculiar psycholinguistic test, I have set the final methodology that will be explained in detail further. For now, it is worth to anticipate that it has been opted for an online questionnaire, to submit of course to native speakers of German. The structure of this questionnaire will be explained in detail in later parts of this paper. For the time being, it is essential to anticipate that the questionnaire will essentially investigate items – also listed and explained later – in two different speech situations: the first in isolation, the second in context - i.e., the child-centered speech situation. This differentiation of contexts will be used to find out whether a given item shows differences in being prone to diminutive formation or not and for what pragmatic reasons, i.e., whether it is also one's own innate features that favor diminutivization. This analysis will be provided in

Chapter 3 after having retrieved the results produced by the questionnaire. As premised, we will move on to the detailed analysis of the various parts of the questionnaire.

2.2 The questionnaire

The first intention behind this questionnaire has been to retrieve worth results that would have confirm my hypothesis about the frequency of use of the diminutive forms in the German language. Hence, the main results I wish to retrieve were that 1) diminutives are used with a higher frequency by adults when addressing to very young children, especially when a certain degree of familiarity takes place in one speech situation, rather than in other contexts and, that 2) diminutives are also used in conversations among children, and that 3) diminutive suffixes might be triggered also for those nouns with an opaque or absent feature of familiarity if pronounced in a child-centered speech situation. Having these as main results to reach, I thought that the best target would have been adult people, better adults with own children – but also aunts, uncles, grandparents, caretakers, teachers and whoever who has do to with children in the own everyday life. To have the best results, German native speakers have been selected, but also L2 German speakers have been targeted. The reason behind the choice of this target is quite predictable: adults are those speakers who in a child-centered speech situation are expected to prefer the diminutive of one noun instead of its base noun, because of their addressees, i.e., children. Also having decided to target adults with young children is due to the fact that they are more used and prone to such speech situations, because they probably have them in their everyday life. Same could be assumed for the other part of the target, always because they interact with children more often than other adults. Furthermore, the German native speakers do not only have to be from Germany, but also from Swedish and Austria, where German is the official language, or from any other country, as long as German is one of their mother tongues. Moreover, their age and gender are not of course any discriminants, as far as they satisfy the conditions mentioned above.

After having defined all the characteristics of the target, the next step has been to decide the proper structure for the questionnaire, in all the details. First, what was extremely important was to emphasize the differences between a more standard speech

situation and one child-centered speech situation; therefore, it has been decided to divide the structure into two main parts, each of them reassembling a given situation. Second, it was necessary to find a method to generate reliable data to allow an efficient comparison between the two contexts. This means that the more the two parts were similar the more the results would have depended only on the speech situations in which they were put, that is what one of the leading questions from which this work originates. Therefore, the idea has been to propose the same list of items – not necessarily all in the same order – for the two situations. In this way it would have been possible to observe each item in each of the two situations, in order to detect if they behave similarly or differently, observing then the reasons. By doing this, the intention was to find then if diminutives are triggered more in one context rather than in the other one, or if there are no differences. Third, it was necessary to find a way to observe what is the behavior of those items that do not belong to the familiar lexicon, but that it is instead either opaque or absent. The idea has been to insert in the list of items some *fillers* that do not belong normally to the field of the family and everyday lexicon, but to other fields, particularly those that one would hardly use in a conversation with children. The aim was therefore to observe if such items, regardless their innate features, would have triggered a diminutive, just from the context in which take place.

2.2.1 The questionnaire: the items

In this section of this work, it will be necessarily described in detail the questionnaire for a matter of completeness, showing each of its sections and explaining its structure, what are the items and the *fillers* selected and the reasons behind each choice. More, some examples will be provided in order to make it clear in one's mind how the questionnaire is like and how it works.

As already said, the questionnaire displays two main sections and each of them represents one speech situation: in the first one the items are shown as isolated, hence without a specific context, but just as nouns that appears in the participant's mind when pronounced or read; in the second one the items are put in one context, i.e., a child-centered speech situation. Before going deep into the explanation of these two main

sections, there are a few words to say about the introductory section in which some questions are asked in order to retrieve the personal data of each participant. In fact, gender, age, nationality, native language(s), other language(s) spoken, and if the participants are parents are asked. As previously mentioned, these pieces of information have been asked to track the participants and to observe lately if the wished target have been reached successfully and – if so – in what percentage. This section is the less important one in the discussion of the questionnaire, but nevertheless these pieces of information will be discerning in the observation and discussion of data. This is since the aim of this project is to identify if the frequency of use of the diminutive variants in the German speakers increases in a child-centered speech situation and if some variations take place when differentiating a word from a kind of isolation to a specific speech context. Therefore, it is important to track the personal information of the participants.

It is possible now to move towards the details of this questionnaire, explaining the choices taken, the items inserted and the structure. This analysis will start with the explanation of the choices of the thirty-six items selected in the questionnaire, that has been not casual nor random, but has followed some specific criteria. First, it has been a proper decision to choose all those nouns that are more apt to select a diminutive suffix, i.e., those nouns belonging to the familiar lexicon. In fact, along the German language, a great number of languages adopt the diminutive alternatives or the short names for a lot of nouns, namely, the diminutive alternatives for calling a parent would be e.g., the English *mommy*, *daddy*, the Italian, *mami*, *papi*, the French *maman*, *papa*, and so on. Second, among the items there have been chosen also the *fillers*, i.e., nouns that do not strictly belong to the familiar lexicon, to observe if such items, regardless their innate features, would have triggered a diminutive, just from the context in which they are inserted. The items will be now listed and explained according to four categories – in which they have been divided according to their common inherent features.

2.2.1.1 The items of the first category: family members

After all of these premises, the first category of items consists of German kinship names which have attested forms of diminutives – even more than one variant – and they

are: *die Mutter* (mother), *der Vater* (father), *der Großvater* (grandfather), *die Großmutter* (grandmother), *die Tante* (aunt), *der Bruder* (brother), *die Schwester* (sister), and *der Cousin* (cousin). The peculiarity of these names is in the fact that they all show the feature [+kinship] – as already said – and they all have in common the feature [+human], and therefore the feature [+animate] Presented in this way, these are not the diminutive variants, but the standard forms, namely those found in the dictionaries. Furthermore, some of these items are generally more prone to create a diminutive than others and then show more than one diminutive alternative; therefore, it has not been possible to standardize the number of alternatives proposed in the answers. For this reason, there are some questions which offer then more choices of answers than other, but not more than three (standard form included). For example, the items indicating family members 'mother' and 'father' propose three diminutive alternatives respectively, while 'grandfather' and 'grandmother' only one each. However, this topic will be explained in detail in the following parts of this work.

2.2.1.2 The items of the second category: animals

The second category of the items inserted in the questionnaire is not too different from the first one, since the items here show the feature [+animate] and belong to the familiar lexicon, as for the items of the first category, but in contrary show the feature [-human]. These are hence the names for animals, mainly pet, but also all the animals told and played in the fairy tales for children or cartoons are included. The reason stands in the fact that these specific animals found in such contexts are more incline to create a diminutive form. This category alongside the first one has been subjected to a verification of the existence of their diminutive counterpart and that this was of medium to high frequency. In fact, in order to obtain reliable results, each variant proposed in the questionnaire has been first checked in the two most respectable German dictionaries, hence, the DUDEN dictionary³⁵ and DWDS (Digitales Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache)³⁶ The first one offers the nowadays perspective of the frequency of use one word, while the second one a diachronic diagram. Returning to the description of this

³⁵ <https://www.duden.de> [30.11.2022].

³⁶ <https://www.dwds.de> [30.11.2022].

second category of items, the selected ones are therefore: *der Hund* (dog), *die Katze* (cat), *der Vogel* (bird), *die Maus* (mouse), *der Fisch* (fish), *der Bär* (bear), *der Hase* (rabbit), and *das Pferd* (horse). Such words are frequently used in a child-centered speech situation, hence in one situation among adults and children, but also in a pet-centered speech situation, where adults are addressing to pets with a similar tenderness that they would use with children. Therefore, for this category of items the possibilities of forming a diminutive increase also for this reason.

2.2.1.3 The items of the third category: objects

The third category differ more from the first two, as the items here carry the features [-human] and [-animate] but show in common with the previous ones the fact that it belongs to the familiar lexicon, i.e. that can be found in a home and used by children as well as their parents, and that could therefore be subject to the diminutivization process driven by the same or similar factors as those involved in the items of the two previously mentioned categories. Here, too, the items were tested for their frequency of use and the correlative frequency of use of their diminutive noun. The items chosen are: *das Buch* (book), *der Zahn* (tooth), *das Bett* (bed), *die Flasche* (bottle), *der Teller* (plate), *der Stuhl* (chair), *der Löffel* (spoon), *die Blume* (flower), *der Schuh* (shoe), *der Schrank* (closet), *die Tasse* (cup), *das Glas* (glass), and *der Spiegel* (mirror). The choice of these items in particular is due to the fact that in the collective imagination such objects might be commonly found within a child's bedroom (e.g. the storybook, the wardrobe, the bed, the mirror) or within the home in general, as in the case of tableware (*der Teller*, *das Glas*, *der Löffel* and *die Tasse*) used by children and/or parents, grandparents or others at lunch or dinner time. Commonly used objects of this kind could be subject to the process of diminutivization in a child-centered speech context, in which the diminutive is used not so much to indicate the size or feature [+smallness] of the object but its affective aspect. The kind of diminutive used therefore would be the *diminutivum puerile*, that – as explained in chapter 1 – is used in the baby talk or motherese speech situations to fulfill the interaction with a child properly, mostly when the child is the addressee of one speech and the adult the speaker. Moreover, as mentioned previously, these items share the features of [-human] [-animate] [+kindship], but there is one among them that also has

the features of [+body part] and [+inalienability], i.e., *Zahn* (tooth). Indeed, this item is one among the entire list that has the feature [+inalienability] strongly marked because of its other feature of [+body part]. There are instead other items in the questionnaire that show somehow this feature, but not in the same intensity. To explain it in better words, it is necessary to clarify the definition of “possession”, and hence of alienability/inalienability. In fact, according to Haiman (1983):³⁷

“A number of languages differ in the representation of possessive expressions of the type “X’s Y”, depending on whether the relationship between X and Y is one of the alienable or inalienable possession. Joseph Greenberg (p.c.) has suggested that the following correlation is probably always true:

(27) In no language will the linguistic distance between X and Y be greater in signaling inalienable possession, in expression like “X’s Y”, than it is in signaling alienable possession.”

Haiman (1983) takes as one example to explain this the body part “arm”, saying indeed that here the distance between possessor and possessum is little since it iconically reflects the conceptual closeness of possessor and possessum from the moment that *arms* are not independent from their owners. On the other hand, other words which are not body parts – and therefore not a physical part – would perceive a greater linguistic distance between possessor and possessum. Haiman (1983) also adds a conclusion stating that:

“The linguistic distance between possessor and possessum is greater where possession is alienable.”³⁸

Hence, for a body part the distance is little because inalienable. Consequently, the item chosen for the questionnaire, i.e., *Zahn*, follows this criterion and behaves exactly like the other body parts, taking therefore the feature [+inalienability].

The hypothesis is that also these nouns having these two more features would be prone to the diminutivization and hence triggering a diminutive alternative in a specific child-centered speech context since it would be not absurd to guess that adults would address to children when naming their own body parts using the short names for (1) a practical reason, i.e., that their body parts are naturally smaller than theirs, and (2) in some cases children’s body parts would result to be conceived as “cute” and therefore a *diminutivum*

³⁷ Haiman, J. (1983). Iconic and Economic Motivation. *Language*, 781-819.

³⁸ Haiman, J. (1983). Iconic and Economic Motivation. *Language*, 781-819.

puerile could be activated. The item *Zahn* (having the diminutive *Zähnchen*) is a good candidate for test this hypothesis.

2.2.1.4 The items of the fourth category: *fillers*

At this stage, I assumed that structured in this way the questionnaire would have returned fairly predictable data, as the chosen items have in common both a similar degree of familiarity and the context in which they have been placed, namely the child-speech centered situation. This means that the data would have shown assumably a higher percentage of preference of the diminutive variant over the standard one. The inherent features, however, have a much deeper impact than the context on the activation of one variant rather than another, so that for some items with that very pronounced feature of familiarity, one would expect the diminutive to be activated regardless of the context – and even in *isolation*, e.g., for items relating to the names of family members as *Mutti*, *Vati*, as the data will show in the chapter 3. Nevertheless, my assumption is that it is the pragmatic context that sometimes overrides the choice of a variant and that in this case it is the child-centered speech situation that prevails in activating the diminutive. It is therefore a matter of pragmatic reasons that leads an adult to modulate his tone when interfacing with one or more children, activating the baby talk many times. To verify this assumption, I thought it would be appropriate to include within the questionnaire – almost camouflaging them – other items whose degree of familiarity is opaque or rather completely absent. These nouns are objects, thus having the features [-human] [-animal], which do not belong to a familiar lexicon, but rather to almost or completely different field. These items would be called in the present paper with the term *fillers*, and those inserted in the questionnaire are *die Schraube* (screw), *die Tasche* (bag), *der Knopf* (button), *der Hammer* (hammer), and *der Stoff* (fabric). As one can see, such items do not belong to some kind of familiar field, because it is about objects that generally are not part of a common everyday life, as instead the object of the third category are (“plate”, “glass”, “cup” and so on). These items are therefore part of one specific field, that would be for example the field of mechanics, housebuilding, tailoring, and other similar. And for this reason, there are less possibilities that such items would be used in some baby talk or child-centered speech situations, because there are less reasons for which such

objects would happen to be named by adults to children. However, my assumption is that – as already stated at the beginning of this chapter – even if these items do not or hardly show the element of familiarity and would rarely create a diminutive variation, it would probably occur that if put in an extremely childish-speech situation, they could also trigger their diminutive. If this happens, it means that the speech context influences the choice of one alternative in a great amount, such as to override even the inherent features of one noun and their degree of familiarity. This is one of the main reasons because the second part of the questionnaire has been structured as to show specific child-centered speech situations in which all of the items are inserted. However, this will be explained better in the next part of this chapter, alongside the entire structure of the questionnaire.

2.2.1.5 Restrictions of the analysis

Finally, there are some further clarifications to provide concerning the items chosen for this research before moving to the analysis of the data. A first one is that – as one might easily notice – there have been selected only nouns and their diminutives, while neither verbs nor adverbs nor adjectives have been taken into consideration. Having decided to exclude these other parts of the part of speech is not linked with the possibility that they would have not provided interesting results for this kind of work. This was due to a desire to examine only one category of parts of speech in order to avoid imbalances during data analysis. In fact, it would have been difficult to produce two similar analyses for a noun and an adverb since a noun would play sometimes a more important role in terms of the scope of information in a communicative message than an adverb. The same could not be said for verbs as they play the most important role within a sentence and as verbs – like nouns – are also prone to diminution in a baby talk context or in a child-centered speech situation. However, for this work it was chosen to restrict the analysis to the diminutivization process of Standard German nouns, so as to be able to provide a more specific comparative analysis of these, thus remaining in the same category of parts of speech.

A second clarification concerns the exclusion of the lexicalized nouns, i.e., the diminutivized nouns that have become set in the language and can be found in dictionaries, obtaining their own meaning, which could differ sometimes from the

standard word. Such words are part of the child lexicon and are for example *das Töpfchen* meaning “potty” and coming from the word *der Topf*, meaning:

*aus feuerfestem Material bestehendes, [beidseitig] mit einem Henkel versehenes, zylindrisches Gefäß [mit Deckel], in dem Speisen gekocht werden;*³⁹
cylindrical vessel [with lid] made of refractory material and provided with a handle [on both sides], in which food is cooked.

Hence, the noun *Töpfchen* is not bringing the meaning of a pot but of smaller dimensions, but of the potty children use as a toilet. Therefore, this noun has a brand-new meaning and for this reason has become lexicalized. The reason why nouns as *Töpfchen* have been excluded from the analysis is that they would have made the results false since the aim of the work is to detect if the diminutive form is used with a higher frequency when in a child-centered speech situation, hence if standard nouns take the diminutive suffix in such a context, and an-already-lexicalized diminutive would have not given the same result.

A third clarification regards the diminutive suffixes that each item is expected to trigger; in fact, as already explained in the first chapter the diminutive suffixes might attach to words for some mere morphological factors (e.g., the nouns endings with *-l(e)* take the *-chen* suffix, as in *Vogel > Vögelchen*, while nouns ending in *-ch*, *-g*, and *-ng* take the *-lein* suffix, as in *Bach > Bächlein*) or also for some pragmatic factors (downgrading (e.g., diminutives) or upgrading (e.g., augmentatives) of the illocutionary force, sympathy and empathy, understatement, euphemism, false modesty, irony and sarcasm). Therefore, the expectations will be based on both these two factors and on a third one too, that is the specific context of the analysis, namely the child-centered speech situation. In fact, for this context the theory explains that alongside the two main diminutive suffixes, the childish *-i* one may be triggered, and mainly in those nouns having a [+kinship] features (e.g., *Mami* and *Papi* are expected as well as *Mutti* and *Vati*, hence “mummy” and “daddy”), but also for some others belonging to the familiar lexicon (e.g., *Hundi* (dog[DIM])). On the other hand, this third suffix will not be expected for those items not strictly belonging to the familiar lexicon, hence the *filler*.

Moreover, there are some items, like *Mutter* and *Vater* the possibility to produce such diminutive variants as *Mama* and *Papa* (also *Papi*). These are hence two examples of the morphological phenomenon of suppletion, that according to (Scalise & Bisetto,

³⁹ <https://www.duden.de/rechtschreibung/Topf> [1.12.2022].

2008) is occurs when two words establish a relationship of meaning but not of form between them. The suppletion could either be “strong” (no similarities between the base form and its derived one) and or “weak” (part of the base form is found in the derived one). In this case, for both items *Mutter* and *Vater* the suppletion would be weak since the derived diminutivized forms show similarities respectively to their base forms.

A fourth clarification concerns the exclusion of the regional variants and dialects of the nouns given, in order to limit the analysis to the Standard German and therefore to make it valid for the German language in general, without limiting it to certain areas of Germany, Switzerland and Austria. Inevitably, some dialect forms could be added by the participants when filling in the questionnaire, hypothetically more for family names. What have been discussed since this point of the work is the analysis of the items involved. From this moment on and hence in the next paragraph the structure of the questionnaire will be explained in further detail.

2.2.2 The questionnaire: the structure

As previously said, the questionnaire is made up of two big main sections and one short introductory one, in which either some basic private information is asked – to keep the track of the target, and the main instructions are given, to complete the questionnaire and answer the questions correctly. As for the two main sections, the first thing that can be said is that both of them are furtherly divided into two sub-sections which can be defined as similar in structure one to the other, but not in the content. This division has both practical and meaningful reasons and is somehow coherent to the goals that the questionnaire tries to reach. In fact, the similarities and the differences that the questionnaire shows are created to make the participants follow a kind of pattern that will lead them not to get confused and always understand the point of each question, so that they will always give proper answers. Moreover, the division in two main section is due to an innate necessity of the purposes of this research, i.e., understanding if the behavior of the diminutive forms changes or not based on the speech context given. This means therefore that each section represents its own speech context. The first main section aims to retrieve data that show the generic use that speaker make of the diminutive forms in

the German language; in fact, no particular context of speech is given. Therefore, the items are presented in a sort of “isolation” context, and for this reason the participants are not asked to imagine themselves in a speech conversation with some other kind of speaker, nor are given hints to them that would lead them to the change of their register according to some specific speech situation or speaker. This isolation context where items are put is mainly a neuter space where words, i.e., nouns specifically – are asked to be pronounced. This is of course made it on purpose to understand then in the second section if the use of the diminutive forms changes as the context does. In fact, for the second main section the situation is a little bit different, since there is in this case a speech context and it is very overt, either because it is explained in the instructions and because the questions are prepared to make the participants immerse in that specific speech situation. Of course, as one can foresee, the speech situation given is the child-centered speech context, or namely a speech context that triggers baby talk, motherese, and all the other kinds of speeches that every adult would use in a conversation where a child is involved – either as a direct participant and as a side one. The aim of the questions asked in this second main section is mainly one, i.e., understanding if in this specific speech context, the use of diminutive changes in the German speakers. If so, it would mean that even if the German language presents a very sterile diminutive paradigm and a very little frequency of use of the diminutive forms, in such a speech context involving children, these results will change, and the diminutives would have a wider range of use and become more incline to be used by the German speakers. Furtherly all the phenomena taking part of this alteration in the use of the diminutives will be provided and of course explained, following the data retrieved for this work.

After having given an outline of the main structures of the questionnaire, it is worth now explaining in detail how the two main structures are sub-divided, what are the questions asked, how these questions have been build up according to the chosen items, and what are the expected results that these questions would produce. Hence, as previously mentioned, both two main sections show two sub-sections, which are almost identical in structure one to the other; in fact, in both sections, their own sub-sections have been created for a matter of cohesion in what concerns the questions given, namely that in each sub-section a different leading question is asked. Of course, having decided

not to formulate all the questions in only one way is the result of a thoughtful choice, due mainly to the fact that the items inserted in the questionnaire, that namely constitute the answers, were all different and therefore needed different ways to be asked. In fact, one of the main differences among the features of the items is the degree of alienability/inalienability existing between the possessor and the different family members, animals, and objects proposed, that is, according to Haiman (1983) the degree of possession that exists between the possessor and possessum.⁴⁰ This feature will be a discriminant for the compared observation and final discussion of the results.

Another reason by which the questions are formulated in different ways in the questionnaire is again due to the fact that this research is based on two main contexts, i.e., the first one that sees the items in *isolation*, namely how they are perceived and then named by the speakers without been inserted in a specific context, and the second one that present a specific *context*, which is the child-centered speech situation, in which the participants are asked to name the same items but taking into account this context. For this reason, the questions had to be necessarily formulated in different ways in order to achieve different data. However, even if the questions are formulated in different ways, the items are presented in the answers in the same way, namely that the same variations of one item are offered in both sections. This is of course due to the necessity to get coherent and cohesive results in order to analyze the data in the most precise way possible.

It is worth now going deeper into the sections and explain in detail how they are structured. As the first step, the first two sub-sections of the two main sections will be analyzed. The first thing to say now is that in both main sections the first sub-sections ask questions about the member of the family, involving therefore all the items belonging to the first category. Hence, in the first sub-section of the first main section (*items in isolation*), it is asked to the participant to choose the variant that they use or would use to call, indicate, or name the member of their own family. The example provided in the questionnaire is the following:

z.B.: *Wie nennen Sie Ihren...?*
Enkel

⁴⁰ Haiman, J. (1983). Iconic and Economic Motivation. *Language*, 781-819.

Enkelchen
Weitere...

This means: “*E.g.: How do you call your...? Nephew, nephew[dim], more...*”.

Hence, as we can see, the question is directed to the participants, asking them to choose the noun they use or would use to indicate a member of their own family; then, two options are given – in this case, since previously it has been said that in some other cases more than two options are given – and then the “*weitere...*” option that will appear in all the choices of the answers to allow the participants to add another variant if the one they use is not present.

In the first sub-section of the second main section (*items in context*) it is asked to the participants to imagine themselves to be with a child, i.e., son, nephew, niece, or whosoever, and to call, indicate, or name to them the member of the family of the child. The example provided also in the questionnaire is the following:

z.B.: Nennen Sie dem Kind sein Familienmitglied
Onkel
Onkelchen
Weitere...

That means: “*Name the member of the family to the child. Uncle, uncle[dim], more...*”.

The instruction here asks therefore to the participant to choose which noun they use or would use to indicate to the child in question the member of its family. Also here two options are given, i.e., the noun and its diminutive form, and then there is also the option “*weitere...*”. Obviously, the multiple-choice answers are structured in a way that allows the participants to choose one or more answers, since it is possible of course that not only one of the variants provided is used or would be used in a speech situation. This is valid for all the questions in the questionnaire.

The second step now concerns the analysis of the second sub-sections of the two main sections, in which all the other items are involved, i.e., the items belonging to the second and third category and the *fillers*. Also in this case, the two sub-sections differ one to the other in matter of formulation of the questions. The reasons behind are almost identical to the ones listed above for the first two sub-sections, namely the differences of the two contexts – *items in isolation and items in-context* – and the innate features that characterize the items. The context is though what had influenced more the different formulation of the questions, which are very context-specific especially for the second

sub-section. It is now worth explaining both of them in detail in order to clarify and justify the choices taken during the construction of the questions.

For a matter of clearness, the analysis will start with the second sub-section of the first main section and then will continue with the second sub-section of the second main section. Hence, as previously said, this sub-section contains all the other items belonging to the categories left – the second, the third, and the *fillers*. The main aim of the questions asked in this section is to understand whether there exists a pragmatical difference between a noun and its diminutive form, and if this difference is due specially to highlight the differences in features as youngness/oldness, bigness/smallness of the items given, which are in this case both animals and objects. Nevertheless, there is a question for the items with the feature [+animate] and another for the items having the feature [-animate], but they are identical in structure. Moreover, it is important to remember to the participants that the items are not inserted in a specific context, but are isolated; therefore, the task they are asked to fulfill has purely the aim of stating if they would choose the diminutive alternative form of a noun to indicate the “younger” or “smaller” item given in the questions. In fact, in this section, after a short introduction and a few instructions to the participants about how to answer correctly, the participants will notice that the main question has been formulated differently from the previous one and this is since the aims that this part attempts to reach are different from the previous one too.

But before stepping to show what the question is, there is another thing to explain, i.e., the presence of the images in this sub-section; in fact, every question for every item presents its own image. This choice of adding an image to the question is not a matter of style nor esthetical completeness; it is instead almost a necessity that completes the sense of the question, since without this image, the question would not have been understood from the participants. Moreover, there is another reason for the presence of the images that makes it worth: the image replace somehow some parts of the verbal information that misses in the main question. In fact, in the main question the referring items is not even mentioned, simply because if written, it would influence the participant on the choice of the option. Therefore, the image plays the role of a specifier and in this way the participant can understand what the item in question is, without having to read a verbal reference of

it. In short, the image presents mainly the item and its “younger” or “smaller” counterpart, and the first one is marked with the letter A while the second with the letter B.

At this point of the explanation, it is necessary to show the main questions. As for the question regarding the items having the feature [+animate], it asks: “*Wie nennen Sie Tier B, um es von Tier A zu unterscheiden?*” (How do you call the animal B to differ it from the animal A?). While, as for the question regarding the items with the feature [-inanimate], it is: “*Wie nennen Sie Gegenstand B, um es von Gegenstand A zu unterscheiden?*” (How do you call the object B to differ it from the object A?). Then, each image is presented and the answers in a multiple-choice format are following.

For a matter of completeness of the explanation, here two examples which are found in the questionnaire too. Example (1) is for the items with the feature of [+animate], i.e., animals, while example (2) for the items having the opposite feature, namely [-inanimate], i.e., objects (*fillers* included).

Example (1):

Beispiel

Frage: Wie nennen Sie Tier B, um es von Tier A zu unterscheiden?



Image 1

Antworten:

- *Katze*
- *Kätzchen*
- *kleine Katze*
- *Weitere...*

Example (2):

Wie nennen Sie Gegenstand B, um es von Gegenstand A zu unterscheiden?

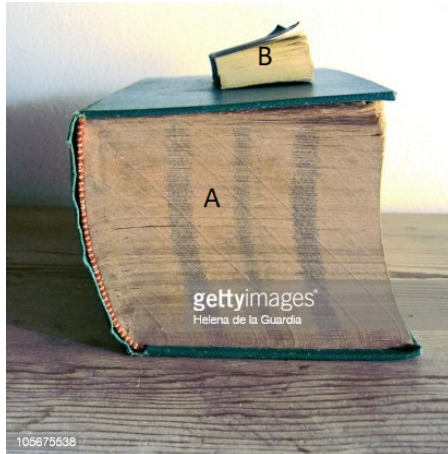


Image 2

Antworten:

Buch

Kleines Buch

Büchlein

Weitere...

Also in this sub-section, the questions have multiple-choice answers, but here, the minimum number of options is three, since also the variant with the German qualificative adjective *klein* is included. And also the possibility of adding an extra answer is given with the option “*weitere...*”.

Now, the reasons why images have been added to the questions should be clearer alongside the choice of the formulation of the questions and their answers. The prevision is that the participants will choose one or more options that they consider valid to differ the “younger” or the “smaller” item from the “standard” one. Throughout the future results, it will be possible then to observe whether the diminutive form is for the participants a valid solution to mark or not this difference, regardless the fact that these items are put in one specific speech situation.

At this point, the explanation can continue to the second sub-section of the second main section in order to explain the choices made and to highlight the differences with the other sub-section. Also in this sub-section, the items are again those belonging to the second and third categories, plus the *fillers*, namely all the items having either the

[+animate] feature, namely animals, or the [-inanimate] feature, which are the objects. These items are proposed again but in a different context, that is the same of the second sub-section of the first main section, namely the child-centered speech situation or whatever kind of speech situation where a child is involved and where therefore adults use the baby talk. The aim that this part of the questionnaire tries to reach is to observe whether the diminutive form is preferred over the “standard” form of a noun in such a specific context for these kinds of items which are normally less inclined to activate their diminutives because their feature of [+/-kindship] is either opaque or completely absent. As already mentioned in this paper, these items either belong to a kind of familiar lexicon, as for example, *die Flasche* (the bottle), *die Katze* (the cat), or *das Bett* (the bed), or are completely external to it, as nouns as *der Knopf* (the button), *der Hammer* (the hammer). This last part of the questionnaire has been maybe the most difficult one to create, because the goal to reach was very intricate since the results to obtain should have been as coherent as possible to the aim of this part. This means that what I needed to retrieve would have been representative data of such a typical and spontaneous communicative situation among adults and children. Therefore, the leading question would have to give the participants the possibility to relate themselves in the best way possible in a child-centered speech situation so that to give the most spontaneous answers possible. Hence, this part of the questionnaire would have proposed some kinds of typical situations in which at least one adult and at least one child were taking part, and where the items would have been pronounced either by the adult or by the child, leaving them the possibility of choosing the option they would agree to be the most naturally spontaneous one, namely the one they would consider to be the most realistic one. Also in this part of the questionnaire the options proposed for each item are the same that will be furtherly found in the second sub-section of the first main section for a matter of completeness and consistency for the final analysis of the results. Moreover, also here the participants are given the possibility of choosing one or more options and also adding theirs, if they do not find it in those given.

It is worth now explaining how this sub-section is structured and what has been the final solution I chose in order to retrieve the data in the most effective way. Hence, it has been said that in this sub-section a child-centered speech situation has been created, and that

the participants are asked here to insert the items themselves, following what the context is asking. In this way, the answers will be given in an even more spontaneous way. Moreover, they are asked to identify themselves either in an adult speaking with or about a child or in a child speaking with an adult. Then the questions will be offered to them in a form of *cloze test*, i.e., short texts with blanks that will be filled by the option that the participants will choose. The options will be of course given underneath and will be proposed in the same format of the previous sections of the questionnaire.

These *cloze tests* are mainly of two kinds: (1) stories, either invented or famous ones – inspired for example from cartoons, i.e., stories for children in general; (2) typical child-centered speech situations in form of the hypothetical dialogues that would exist among children and adults. This second kind is completely invented. To help the participants understand what the item is that they need to insert in the text, the options are offered as follows, alongside the pictures of the animal and the object in question. In this case, the pictures chosen are not highlighting the differences in size between the same or a similar object; they are instead pictures showing only one animal or one object in its normal size. Moreover, as already said, these *cloze tests* are either a single-sentence text (short text) or a longer one (long text), in where more than one items needs to be inserted.

Here two examples taken from the questionnaire to help understanding more. The first one is an example (1) of a short text and the second one (2) of a long text.

Example (1):

Beispiel

Frage: "Schau mal, wie die glückliche Entenfamilie dort schwimmt. _____ ist so süß!"



Image 3

Antworten:

- Die Ente

- Das Entchen

- Die kleine Ente
- Weitere

Example (2):

Jeden Abend vor dem Schlafengehen bittet Matilde ihre Mutter, ihr ein paar Seiten aus _____ vorzulesen: ein Kindermärchen mit dem Titel Noch ein Märchen für das Bärchen. Nach der Geschichte kuschelt Mama mit ihr und legt sie zum Schlafen in ihr warmes _____. Um einzuschlafen, bereitet ihre Mutter warme Milch zu, die Matilde aus _____ trinkt. Für einen ruhigen Schlaf fehlt nur noch eines: ihr _____ Charlie, mit dem sie die ganze Nacht kuscheln wird!



Image 4

Antworten:
 dem Buch
 dem Büchlein
 dem kleinen Buch
 Weitere...



Image 5

Antworten:
 Bett
 Bettchen
 kleines Bett
 Weitere...



Image 6

Antworten:
Ihrer Flasche
Ihrem Fläschchen
Ihrer kleinen Flasche
Weitere...
Antworten:



Image 7

Bär
Bärchen
Kleiner Bär
Weitere...

As for the example (2), each picture with its own options of answer has its own section in the questionnaire, i.e., the entire text is offered again and the options change as the answers do, so that the participants can insert their choices one by one.

In this case too, the options are proposed in three variations, which are the standard noun, the noun[dim], and the *klein* + noun; of course, also the possibility to add an extra variation is given in the field *weitere*. Another thing to say about all the options given in the questionnaire is that there has been paid a lot of attention to the agreement existing between the gender and the case requested by the sentences. For this reason, the options are – where there has been the necessity – offered with the exact agreement. This has

been decided for not letting either the gender or the case already mentioned in the text to influence the participants in the choice of their options.

This sub-section of the questionnaire is probably the most important one in terms of results, since the research here aims to find if the German native speakers would use rather the diminutive alternative of a noun to name one animal or object when finding themselves in a child-centered speech situation. Since the leading question of this work find its root in the assumption that one speech situation – in this case a child-centered one – triggers some specific suffixes for nouns, i.e., the diminutive suffixes, the prevision for the results of this last section is that the participants will choose the diminutive forms in much more percentage than the “standard” noun or the *klein* + noun variations. Of course, with this prevision it does not mean that the participants will choose only the diminutive forms, but that they will be more incline to this choice because they will be led by the context given. Moreover, an important consideration will be given to those nouns that have been marked as *fillers*. The results generated from these items will be a crucial point for the conclusions since they are those nouns that do not closely belong to the familiar lexicon, i.e., whose kinship feature is either opaque or totally absent, and therefore, are less apt to get diminutivized.

Finally, one clarification that needs to be done conveys the fact that all the items and their variants within the questionnaire are assumed to be considered ad valid from all the participants, basing on the fact that for each of them both their presence in the lexicon and their frequency of use (generally medium-high) have been checked in the two most respectable German dictionaries, namely, the DUDEN Dictionary and the DWDS. Moreover, also the instructions proposed at the beginning of each section of the questionnaire and the two conditions in which the items are inserted will be useful for the participant to understand lead the participant to give a valid answer.

2.2.3 The questionnaire: the release

In the previous two parts, the questionnaire has been explained in its structure and content, which are probably the most important things that are to highlight to understand later the results (chapter 3). But before moving to this next section, one last thing deserves

personally to be told, for a matter of completeness in the explanation of this work: the release of the questionnaire to the wished target.

Before releasing the questionnaire officially, I have decided to test it first to verify if everything worked and if not, what to change and in which way. Therefore, I have submitted the questionnaire to a German native speaker, without telling much more information than those I would then have given to the other participants. This test has been very important because thanks to it I have lately noticed that there were some items which were not as suitable as I thought for this research, and therefore I have decided to eliminate or replace some of them. For example, I have eliminated the item *die Suppe* (having the diminutive *Süppchen*) since there were problems for the first context, i.e., the isolation, whose aim is to differentiate the two variations in terms of dimension and the diminutive variant in this case does not contain any information of being smaller than its standard variant and therefore would have generated inconsistent data. Another example in the modification of the items is in the addition of some more *fillers*, as *die Tasche* and *der Knopf* since those I had previously added were not enough for the counterevidence. As already mentioned, the questionnaire is targeted to adult German native people (also having German as L2), preferably those having children, but also adults who have children in their family or that work with them as teachers, caregivers, and so on. Finding such target has been quite difficult because it is a very specific one and because they had to speak German; therefore, I needed to find a way to reach some people living in another country. But thanks to my experience of studying abroad in Mainz looking for this target has been a little bit less difficult thanks to the people I have met there. From that moment on, the only thing to do was to send to them the link of the questionnaire with a short introduction and some instructions to what they were asked to do. The total results from 13 people have arrived finally around three weeks later. After a deep observation of the data, I have started to figure out which would have been the best criteria to analyze the data that I have obtained. In the next chapter, the data retrieved will be shown and analyzed.

3. Retrieving and discussing data

In the present chapter of this work, it will be explained how the data have been retrieved from the questionnaire. Furtherly, they will be discussed to verify if the initial assumptions were correct or not and if some other considerations might be done. Hence, this chapter will explain the methodology used to retrieve and sort the data, then they will be observed and analyzed by categories and by using specific tools, and finally some considerations will be made in order to prove if these data support or not the initial hypothesis at the base of this work.

3.1 Methodology for retrieving and sorting

Before moving towards the core of the analysis, it is necessary to explain the methodology that has been used to retrieve the data from the questionnaire and how these data have been furtherly sorted to be analyzed. Indeed, after having obtained all the answers from the participants, each answer form has been observed to check its validity; hopefully, all were correct. Then, the answer forms have been observed altogether in order to see the overall percentages that each option has gained for each question. After these two quick operations, it has been possible to start sorting the data, beginning with the personal information until the end. At this point, two main tables have been created and can be found in the section called “Appendix”: the first one is furtherly divided into sub-tables and each of these shows the data regarding all the personal data, i.e., age, country of origin, gender, and so on; the second one contains all the options given in the other sections of the questionnaire. Moreover, this second table contains the items in the column and the two conditions (isolation and in-context) in the rows; then, all the data, i.e., the variants chosen and added, have been inserted into the table according to the item and the condition in which they have been produced. Close to the variants there is indicated the percentage obtained and the number of the participants that have chosen them in brackets. In this way, it has been possible to analyze and compare the behavior of each item in the two different conditions, making also comparisons between the two.

Therefore, having decided to sort the data by items, the analysis has been structured similarly. The analysis is divided and then presented in five parts: the first part is a short observation of the target, which can be useful to track the participants and observe if the wished target has been reached or not; then, the other four parts show the items by their four categories, i.e., family members, animals, objects, and fillers. Moreover, each category presents a short introduction about the common features that these items have, the expectations made based on the theoretical part and the assumptions at the beginning of this work, and the differences (if any) between the two conditions. Then the actual analysis is provided and is presented item by item, showing (1) the percentages obtained, which are discussed to see if they were expected or not, trying furtherly to justify their behaviors, and (2) if the expected situation of the features has been confirmed or not in the two conditions, by considering the overall results of each item. Among the other things to take into consideration during the analysis, there is the influence of the child-context in which an item is inserted and the degree of familiarity of each item; this second one will be considered as high when the item contains such inherent features as [+kinship], medium-high when the item belongs to the lexicon of the everyday life (e.g., pets, object that can be found in a house), and low when the item belongs to any other lexicon that is not that of the everyday life (e.g., technical or special languages). At the end of each category, the final considerations will be presented

Therefore, the data will be analyzed at the quantitative level, based on the percentages that discriminate the preference of one variant over another by German speakers, and at the level of the inherent features of the items, which are [+/-kinship] [+/-human] [+/-animate] [+/-inalienable] [+/-body-part] [+/-small] [+/-young] [+/-affective]. These features have been selected because are more or less all inherent features of all the items or because they are expected to be triggered either positively or negatively in the two conditions. Indeed, the feature [+kinship] is expected to be found and triggered for all the items belonging to the category of the family members because in both options there exists a familiar relationship. In the same category, the features [+human] [+animate] [+inalienable] are expected too. As the first two options are strictly inherent to these items, since all indicate human beings, the third one deserves a short specification. During this analysis, the feature [+/-inalienable] will be considered as the relation existing

between the possessor and possessed, as it is explained by Haiman (1983)⁴¹, hence, the relation existing between two or more people, or between a person or an animal, a person or an object, a person and his/her body part, and so on. Therefore, this feature will be considered in the current analysis when an item shows a presence/absence of a certain kind of familiar relationship or the feature [+body part]. Therefore, if an item presents the feature either [+kinship] or [+body part], then this item is expected to show the inherent feature of [+inalienable] too. If this feature results as [-inalienable], it needs to be furtherly observed to see if something unexpected occurred. A suitable example to make in order to clarify the explanation in one's mind is the item *Mutter*, whose feature [+/- kinship] would either be positive or negative, depending on the relationship existing between the item and who pronounce it in a conversation. Hence, in a child-centered speech situation this feature will be expected as positive because a close relationship between the mother and child is assumed. As for the features [+/-small] [+/-young], they are mainly expected to be triggered in the isolation condition – except for the items of the first category. However, also in the in-context they might be possibly triggered because some variants would bring additional information about the size or age of the item. Finally, the item [+/- affective] will be the hardest to denote; this is since the degree of affection is very personal and may change from one participant to another. In fact, each participant has a different attitude toward showing affection which might be reflected in the variants chosen to indicate one item in one given situation. In the current analysis, this feature will be considered positive when the diminutive (or the analytic form) is selected over the standard one because these two variants are supposed to have in turn the inherent [+affective] feature. It is though only a simplification because, of course, it is not to be excluded that a certain degree of affection may also be activated by the participants when choosing the standard form too.

Finally, one last consideration to make about the use of the feature for this analysis is the fact that there are cases in which the item does not show a complete adherence to either pole of one feature, but they are kind of in the middle. In fact, what it is expected is that each item belonging to a specific category would share with the other items the same status and the same features, and that this category would consequently have very

⁴¹ Haiman, J. (1983). Iconic and Economic Motivation. *Language*, 781-819.

sharp boundaries. However, according to this idea, it would be difficult to deal with those items whose features cannot be fully and definitively tagged to either one pole or the other. Therefore, to dull the limitations of this approach, (Taylor , 1989) has proposed the theory of the prototype, defined as the “exemplary element of a category”, and based on a cognitive perspective. According to this theory, the definition of category changes, and it is no longer considered as a collection of items with the same status, but as a collection of items having a core exemplary element – the prototype – and that around it is the other elements that are more or less close to the prototype, according to different degrees of similarity. Moreover, (Cerruti, 2010) exemplifies the relations existing between the theory of the prototype and the sociolinguistic concept of the *continuum*, focusing on the importance of having a graded scale to assign the category to one element basing on the prototype. In this way, the category becomes a continuum of scaling, not only within but also between different categories, that hence are separated by fuzzy boundaries.

3.2 Analysis and discussion of the data

After having explained the methodology for the discussion, it is now possible to move toward the core of the analysis, that, as already said, will be shown by categories. It will start hence with a brief outline of the personal information retrieved from the first part of the questionnaire and then move to the four categories, i.e., family members, animals, objects, and fillers. Moreover, all the further considerations will be found in each part.

3.2.1 Personal information

In this section, a few considerations about the personal information of the participants will be shown in order to observe if the wished target has successfully been achieved or not. First, the wished number of participants to reach – that would have been considered sufficient to produce reliable and consistent research – was ranking about from ten to fifteen people; hopefully the total and actual number of participants has been of thirteen. Second, the wished target was supposed to be adult German native people (also

having German as L2), preferably those having children, but also adults who have children in their family or that work with them as teachers, caregivers, and so on. The results show therefore that the actual target is composed mostly of people that are (1) over 30 years old; (2) women; (3) from Germany and with German as their mother tongue – even if there is an unexpected number of bilingual participants, particularly with Italian and Portuguese as a second language; (4) people not having children. Generally, the results suit the expectations, except for the fourth point since there would have been probably produced much more interesting data if it were a higher number of participants having children. Nevertheless, as the following analysis will show the data obtained are as positive as to support the hypothesis at the base of this work.

However, releasing this questionnaire had its own difficulties and limits that must be considered. In fact, since it was a very specific target, the questionnaire could not be widespread but sent privately to the participants after being sure that they would have been suitable candidates. Moreover, not being from Germany, nor living there, it was difficult to know a lot of people that could be suitable for this specific kind of target. Everything was limited to the few German people I met during my permanence in Mainz.

3.2.2 First category – family members

The first part of the analysis regards the observation of the items belonging to the category of the family members, namely those items that are strictly part of the familiar lexicon and have the inherent features of [+human], [+kinship], and [+inalienable]. The analysis will start with an outline of the percentages that each variant, both those proposed and those added, have produced and will continue then with some considerations about what was expected and what occurred both at the level of the variants and of the features. Moreover, the analysis will highlight the differences that occurred in the two conditions, isolation and in-context, observing whether the results support the initial assumptions or not. In fact, for the isolation, it is supposed to find results that would put emphasis on the degree of kinship existing between the participant and the family member in question and a medium-high degree of affection. A similar situation is expected for the in-context, but these features are supposed to be triggered by the kind of relationship existing between the child and its family member and by the specific context, i.e., the child-centered speech

situation. Therefore, having the condition one a kind of possibility to trigger the degree of familiarity, activating consequently the emotional aspects, the feature [+/-affective] will be taken into consideration. However, this feature will be expected as “unmarked” because this is only a possibility of activating it and not a certainty; therefore, no precise expectations can be predicted. One last consideration to make before starting with the analysis is that some items will be analyzed together for some of their similarities that need to be discussed.

3.2.2.1 *Mutter and Vater*

The first item of the analysis is *Mutter* and it has brought some important results that support the hypothesis since in both conditions – hence the isolation and in-context– the diminutive with *-a*, i.e., *Mama*, has been the favorite variant chosen by the participants (76.9% in the isolation and 92.3% in the in-context situation). Indeed, this item has been the favorite one of most of the participants, as to prevail the other diminutive forms proposed, i.e., *Mutti*, which has gained a little percentage of 7.7% in both conditions, and *Mütterchen* that has got no hints at all. Moreover, these percentages mirror the expectations because according to the DWDS the most frequently used variant among these three is *Mama*, followed then by *Mami* and finally *Mütterchen*. For what concerns the percentage difference it must be said that it is very wide among the variants and therefore it is worth making some considerations. Hence, the variant *Mama* – as already said – has been the most voted and possibly the most popular and widespread variant among German speakers, as it is also attested when comparing the frequency of use of the three variants in the DUDEN dictionary. Moreover, according to the DUDEN dictionary, this word origins from: “französisch *maman*, verwandt mit lateinisch *mamma*, *Mamma*”⁴², meaning “French *maman*, related to the Latin *mamma*, *Mamma*”. On the other hand, the other two variants, i.e., *Mutti* and *Mütterchen*, are the regular diminutive forms that have originated from the suffixation process during which the endings *-chen* and *-i* have been added to the German noun *Mutter*. By the observation of the data retrieved from this investigation, it seems though that nowadays the German speakers prefer the Latinate variant over the other two and this preference has been attested also

⁴² <https://www.duden.de/rechtschreibung/Mama> [17.12.2022].

for the counterpart of this item, which is *Vater*, that has got the highest percentage for its variant *Papa* in both conditions (84.6% for both) – prevailing over *Vati* and *Papi* (7.7% for both). To explain this phenomenon there is a great number of hypotheses that might be considered, but personally the most inherent ones are mainly two: (1) the Latin variant is today the favorite one because of the influences from the neighbor countries – Spain, France, Italy, that all use the Latinate variants i.e., *mamá y papa* (ES), *maman et papa* (FR), *mamma e papa* (IT) – resulting also as a consequence of the loss of the *-chen* and *-i* diminutive variants, and (2) this variant is the product of the *babbling* phase, i.e., the first stage of the language acquisition, where the child is likely to utter these words earlier because it is easier, especially with the diminutive *Mama*, as explained in (Locke, *The Secrets of Baby Talk*, 1995)⁴³. There are of course other explanations for this phenomenon that would be interesting to deepen; however, in this work, this will be limited only to the considerations made above. As for the other variants, the second most selected has been *Mutter* but only in the first condition, gaining a 23.1%, that has been selected by two participants out of three as a second choice along with *Mama*, while as for the second condition, the standard variant has got a 0%. These data are though not exemplary of the expected frequency of use that is found in the DWDS, since among these four variants so far discussed, *Mutter* is the one with the higher frequency. However, considering the fact that this word is used in two specific conditions that request both some degree of kinship, even if of different kinds, it seems that the participants do not tend to opt for the most frequent and common variant, but to the one that is more suitable to the context, confirming the assumption that the pragmatic/contextual counterpart influences the outcome. Moreover, this data supports the initial hypothesis of this work too, from the moment that the standard form was not supposed to appear particularly in the second condition since the assumption at the base is that a child tends not to use such standard form to call its parent but rather a short form or a diminutive one.

Besides the proposed variants, some participants have also added some extra options, which are *Mami*, *Mamabär*, and *Mãe*, and some observations need to be done. First, the three variants do not appear in the same condition, but the first two only in the second and the third one only in the first, and the reasons will be explained in the following

⁴³ Locke, J. L. (1976). *The Secrets of Baby Talk*. *The Wilson Quarterly*, 145-146.

analysis. Second, the two variants do not have specific aspects in common, therefore their analysis will be made separately and will start with *Mami*, but without any specific reasons. Hence, this variant has been chosen only from one participant (7.7%) and according to the DUDEN dictionary it is the “Koseform von Mama”⁴⁴, that means “the tender, affectionately modified form of the word *Mama*”. Therefore, it seems that the Latinate variant *Mama*, that has appeared in the list of answers, might also produce a further diminutive form, which is hence *Mami*, attested and used from the German speakers, as provided by the questionnaire and from the tendency of the frequency of use, shown in the DUDEN dictionary too. Moreover, the data retrieved for the item *Vater* show a counterpart of this variant, which is *Papi*, that again according to the DUDEN dictionary the “Koseform von Papa”⁴⁵, which means “the tender, affectionately modified form of the word *Papa*”. It seems that for both cases it has occurred that the diminutives *Mama* and *Papa* have been subjected for a second time to the same morphological process of diminutivization, producing hence two further diminutives, *Mami* and *Papi*. Thus, it seems that at the morphological level the recursion has been activated. This process is defined by (Scalise B. , 2008) as one of the properties of human language of repetition of the same process - morphological or syntactic.⁴⁶ Assuming this, it could also be observed how the German words for “mother” and “father” would have a higher potential in producing a greater number of diminutives. In fact, this may be observed also in the fact that a great number of variants have been added by the participants.

As for the variant *Mamabär* (EN: mummy bear), it has been produced and then added to the list of the possible variants by a participant that is an adult with children (as it has been possible to retrieve from the personal information provided in the first part of the questionnaire). This word in German grammar is defined as *Kompositum* (namely the German word for “compound”) and is not found nor attested in any German dictionary. In such cases, the word is still considered valid for the German speakers whether it is understood and shared by most of them. As for this word in particular, its meaning does not seem to be difficult to get – also thanks to the support of the English language that

⁴⁴ <https://www.duden.de/rechtschreibung/Mami> [17.12.2022].

⁴⁵ <https://www.duden.de/rechtschreibung/Papi> [17.12.2022].

⁴⁶ Scalise, B. (2008). *La struttura delle parole*. Bologna: Il Mulino.

makes the readers understand that it says something about a “mummy” and a “bear”. Furthermore, a male counterpart of this variant is found in the additional options of the item *Vater*, that is *Papabär* (EN: “daddy bear”), by the same participant. However, the typicity of this data may be justified hence by stating that since it has been produced by an adult with children, it might be possible then that the participant wanted to put emphasis on the degree of affection existing between her (gender learned from the data) and her child, generating this word with a lot of creativity. In fact, from this compound it seems that the participant – that hence is a mother – wanted to echo the couples “mummy bear and baby bear” and “daddy bear and baby bear”, and the tenderness between them that exists in the common imagination. Moreover, since this variant has been attested only in the results of the second condition, it may be added to the analysis that it has also been the child-centered speech situation that has influenced the creation of such compound. In fact, also corpora do not produce any great amount of occurrences of these two variants; only in the German Web 2020 (deTenTen20) can be found some hints of these two, which count 3.238e-7% for *Mamabär* and 0.000001152% for *Papabär* ⁴⁷Hence, it might be finally stated that the in-context condition and a marked [+affection] feature have led to the production of a short form that is extremely appropriate to the Baby Talk, supporting thus the initial hypothesis of this work, even if it is not merely a diminutive, but a compound.

Finally, for the last additional variant *Mãe*, a different kind of analysis needs to be led. Indeed, this noun is neither a *Kompositum* nor a mere diminutive, but it is the Portuguese short name used to call the mother. In this case, the participant that has produced such a variant is bilingual and origins from both Germany and Portugal (as learned from the personal information retrieved from the questionnaire). However, in the additional variants of the item *Vater* in this case there is not a counterpart, and therefore it might be assumed that since the participant has a double origin, it is probable that the *mother* is Portuguese and the *father* (if there is) German. This could be also said because this data is found only in the isolation situation, therefore the participant has indicated the names used to call only her (gender learned from the data) own parents. Moreover, in the second condition, i.e., the in-context one, there are not any traces of any Portuguese words maybe

⁴⁷ https://app.sketchengine.eu/#dashboard?corpname=preloaded%2Fdetenten20_rft3; [17.12.2022].

because the participant has imagined calling the name of one parent for a child who is German, therefore, using one of the German variants. Therefore, this could be considered as a sociolinguistic variant that has occurred only when the participant has been asked to think about her own family because she wanted to express her culture of origin.

For a matter of completeness, since the item *Vater* has partially already been analyzed, it would be worth showing the other tendencies of the variants of this item within the results and then moving to the analysis of the features, firstly for the item *Mutter* and then *Vater*, making hence a comparison between the two, if needed. Therefore, the item *Vater* shows some similar percentages to the item *Mutter* because in both of them – as already said – the Latinate variant (here *Papa*) has been the most voted one (84.6% in both conditions), while the *-chen* and *-i* diminutive forms have received a few hints (0% for the first one in both conditions and 0% and 7.7% for the second one). As for the standard variant, it also has got the 30.8% only in the first condition and none in the second one, as it occurred for the item *Mutter*. The same consideration made for the comparisons of the frequency of use of each variant of the item *Mutter* is valid in this case too, since the prospects are quite the same and the data retrieved from the questionnaire mirror them. Also here, this datum supports the initial hypothesis that assumed that there would have been no hints of a standard form in a child-centered speech situation – especially for the family members – because they would not fit into the Baby Talk. Furthermore, also for this variant some extra options have been provided and these are the counterparts of two of the extra variants added for *Mutter*, that are *Papi* and *Papabär*, which have already been explained previously.

The next step of the analysis concerns the features of these two items, observing whether the features have been modified or not, by analyzing this possible change on two levels: (1) what was expected and what has occurred and (2) what occurred to the item in the two conditions. Hence, the two items here are *Mutter* and *Vater*, and the analysis of the two will be distinct, even for some common aspects that will be considered altogether.

As for the item *Mutter*, the expected features are shown in the following table:

ITEM	FEATURE	ISOLATION	IN-CONTEXT
Mutter	kinship	+	+
	human	+	+
	animate	+	+
	inalienable	+	+
	body-part	-	-
	young	-	-
	small	-	-
	affective	+/-	+

Table 1

All the data concerning this item have provided such variants that generally confirm the expectations. Indeed, since in the first part of the questionnaire, namely in the isolation condition, the leading question is *Wie nennen Sie ihr*...?* (How do you call your...?) and in the second part, that is the in-context condition, it is asked to *Nennen Sie dem Kind sein Familienmitglied* (Name the member of the family to the child), it is possible to state that for both conditions the [+kinship] feature was expected – and hence confirmed – because for both there exists a familiar relationship, even if of different kinds. In fact, while in the second condition the degree of kinship is marked according to the participants’ idea about the relationship existing between the item (e.g., the family member) and the child (being hence a result produced by a third person), in the first condition, namely in isolation, the participants tend to refer the item back to their own status, projecting their own relationship with that given family member. Therefore, for this first category, it is not completely possible to conceive the isolation in its narrow sense since there will be always some kind of interference from the participants’ emotions. A similar observation is valid for the items of the next two categories (e.g., animals and (for some) objects) because they also have a medium-high degree of familiarity and therefore, the participants’ emotional status could have some influences. A proof is in the data which have objectively produced such variants as *Mae, Nonno, Nonna*, and so on, in the isolation, that show the emotionality of speakers, which consequently prompts them to choose their L1 when asked to pronounce the name of a family member. Moreover, given that the feature [+inalienable] occurs in those cases in which the feature [+kinship] is marked as well, in this case, it is expected and hence confirmed in both conditions. Another feature that deserves attention is [+/-affective] which is very difficult to delimit in either the positive or the negative pole of the scale. In fact, this feature is less inherent if compared to the other selected for this analysis and it seems to be much more incline to be influenced

by the context, reflecting hence a functional behavior. This is therefore why this feature is expected to be pragmatically related to evaluative suffixes, thus being more prone to form a diminutive. In fact, being the degree of affection very personal, its perception changes from one person to another; hence, among the participants, there are possibly different degrees of affection between them and the item in question, depending on how each of them considers the relationship. In this analysis this observation is born from the fact that from the moment that each variant proposed – and those added – has its own degree of affection (in terms of innate feature) and that each participant assigns to this his or her own perception of affection, then this feature can inevitably never have the same value for everyone. One last consideration to make is that, as expected, the features [+/-small] and [+/-young] have maintained their negative bias, since in neither two conditions it is asked to the participants to indicate a differentiation nor in size neither in age, as will be instead the case for some other items in the later categories. As for the item *Vater*, the situation is very similar to this one; in fact, as shown in the table, the expected polarization of the feature is the same as what has occurred too:

ITEM	FEATURE	ISOLATION	IN-CONTEXT
Vater	kinship	+	+
	human	+	+
	animate	+	+
	inalienable	+	+
	body-part	-	-
	young	-	-
	small	-	-
	affective	+/-	+

Table 2

Therefore, the consideration made for the item *Mutter* will be considered valid for the item *Vater* too, considering also the fact that they have generated very similar percentages and produced similar additional variants.

3.2.2.2 *Großmutter* and *Großvater*

The analysis may now continue with the next item which is *Großmutter* and it could also be led along with its male counterpart, that is *Großvater*. From the observation of the percentages, it is evident again that for both items, their short forms prevail over

the standard forms, in both conditions, having thus obtained 76.9% for *Opa* over 7.7% for *Großvater*, and 84.6% for *Oma* over 7.7% for *Großmutter*. However, if considering the prospects offered by the DWDS, this percentages do not mirror the expectations because the two variants of the two items show the same level of frequency, while the data here show a prevalence of the diminutive forms. This confirms hence the idea that the context influences the outcome. Also, for both items there have been added extra variants, that is only one in both conditions, that has its counterpart for the other item. Hence, the additional variant for *Großmutter* is *Nonna* (EN: grandma) and the counterpart for *Großvater* is *Nonno* (EN: grandpa). These two variants are the Italian short forms used to indicate the grandparents and might be considered as sociolinguistic variants that belong to the culture of the country of origin of the participant (that according to the data is the same that has produced both variants in both conditions). The typicality that occurred, in this case, is like that for the variant *Mãe*; the only difference is that the latter has been produced only in the isolation condition and not in the in-context one. The reason might be found in the fact that the two participants have considered the question of the second condition in two different ways, namely that the participant that produced *Mãe*, has imagined that the child in question was not part of her family, while the participant that has produced both *Nonno* and *Nonna* has wondered that the child in question was, creating, therefore, a closer level of kinship, such as to decide to transmit his origins to his descendants. In this way, it may be possible to assume that in this category, especially with the family members that are closer in the speakers' family lineage (e.g., parents, grandparent, siblings), the high degree of familiarity triggers consequently a higher degree of affection, that is carried out in the activation of the L1 or of the L1 of family member in question.

As for the analysis of the features, for both items, the expectations are the same, as shown in the following tables:

ITEM	FEATURE	ISOLATION	IN-CONTEXT
Großmutter	kinship	+	+
	human	+	+
	animate	+	+
	inalienable	+	+
	body-part	-	-
	young	-	-

	small	-	-
	affective	+/-	+

Table 3

ITEM	FEATURE	ISOLATION	IN-CONTEXT
Großvater	kinship	+	+
	human	+	+
	animate	+	+
	inalienable	+	+
	body-part	-	-
	young	-	-
	small	-	-
	affective	+/-	+

Table 4

After having analyzed the data, it is possible to state that the resulting features match the expected ones, since there have not been any changes for those that are more innate, i.e., [+kinship], [+human], [+animate], that consequently confirm the existence of [+inalienable] in both conditions. The only feature that cannot be totally marked as fully positive is the [+/-affective], since also here it is very hard to rate such a feature because each participant would perceive it differently according to the relation that one has with another person or whatsoever. However, since the data have retrieved a high percentage of diminutives, that express more the degree of affection, there might be said that the feature confirms its positivity in both conditions.

3.2.2.3 Tante

Unlike the previous data, for the item *Tante*, there appears in both contexts a preference for the standard form over the diminutive variant *-chen*, showing a large disparity in percentage; in fact, in isolation, the standard form shows 76.9 % vs. 0 % and in-context 84.6 % vs. 15.4 %, confirming the expectations attested in the frequency of use in the DWDS. However, as data show, in the second condition two are the participants who opted for the *-chen* diminutive, thus suggesting that the context nevertheless pushed toward such a preference, emphasizing even more here the feature [+affective] or otherwise any attempt to address a child in a more tender tone. Even so, this percentage does not turn out to be so significant as to change the intrinsic features of the item in the transition from one condition to the other. Furthermore, also for this item, some extra variants have been added, which are *zia* and *Brigitte (Vorname)*. The first one is a

sociolinguistic variant resulting from the participant's bilingualism because it is the Italian word for “aunt”, i.e., *zia*, and it is found only in the first condition. For this variant the same analysis made for the other two sociolinguistic variants found in the answers of the previous items also applies here, namely that the participant has been led by his culture of the country of origin and the possibility that his Italian family has taught him to address to his family members using the Italian words. The second one, i.e., *Brigitte (Vorname)* (EN: Brigitte (name)) has been produced only in the first condition too, which would imply that the participant used to call his (gender assumed from the data) aunt by her first name. This variant could be justified as typicality, i.e., as a habit of the speaker, perhaps unusual, on which the speaker's hypothetically less close relationship with his (gender assumed from the data) aunt probably also influences, thus contributing to bias the [+/- affective] feature toward its negative pole. Of course, this is only a hypothesis, since it could also be that the speaker adopts this choice for no reason related to the type of relationship that he has with his aunt but has just been accustomed to calling her by her first name or prefers it.

As for the analysis of the features, there were no significant changes between expectations and results, as the bias did not change drastically for any of the features. Here is the table of the expectations for this item:

ITEM	FEATURE	ISOLATION	IN-CONTEXT
Tante	kinship	+	+
	human	+	+
	animate	+	+
	inalienable	+	+
	body-part	-	-
	young	-	-
	small	-	-
	affective	+/-	+

Table 5

Indeed, the first three feature of the table – which are the more intrinsic ones – have maintained their polarization to the positive pole in both conditions, and the same for the other. Here again, only the feature [+/-affective] is the most difficult to polarize, since the degree of affection changes every time. Hence, as previously said, results have produced

some percentages that have compromised the positive polarization of this feature, leaving it in the continuum.

3.2.2.4 *Bruder (1) and Bruder (2), Schwester (1) and Schwester (2)*

The analysis continues with the observation of two pairs of items that need to be discussed together because they are two words with their own declinations; these are *Bruder (1)* and *Bruder (2)* and *Schwester (1)* and *Schwester (2)*., where (1) denotes the items in their declension of "younger brother" and "younger sister," and the (2) of "older brother" and "older sister." Starting with the first pair, both items *Bruder (1)* and *Bruder (2)* show homogeneous results favorable to support the initial thesis. In addition, both items obtained in parallel the highest percentages for the same variants in both conditions. In fact, both *Bruder (1)* and *Bruder (2)* show a preference for the standard variant in isolation and a preference for the diminutive/incremental variant in the in-context condition. According to the attested frequency of use of the variants *Bruder* and *Brüderchen*, the first one was supposed to prevail; nevertheless, having the *-chen* diminutive forms prevailed in the second condition, it is possible to claim that the context has influenced the choice, in this case too. However, it is now necessary to show the data for both items, one at a time, observing their most relevant data. Starting with *Bruder (1)* – as previously mentioned – if in isolation its standard form got the highest percentage (53.8 %), in the in-context the situation is reversed, as it got the lowest (30.8 %). Contrarily, while in the first condition its two short forms achieved low percentages, such as 15.4 % for *Brüderchen* and 7.7 % for *kleiner Bruder*, in the second condition these gained 46.2 % and 53.9 % respectively (the latter being the highest percentage here). Even when comparing the two short forms such as *Brüderchen* and *kleiner Bruder*, differences emerge in the two conditions: in the former, in fact, the *Brüderchen* variant prevails over *kleiner Bruder* (15.4% over 7.7%), while in the latter there is the opposite situation (53.9% over 46.2%) – although this is still a very small percentage difference. In light of all this, the first consideration that arises is that it would seem that *Brüderchen* and *kleiner Bruder* have been more frequently triggered in the second condition i.e., the child-centered speech situation, than in isolation, further supporting the hypothesis that the specific context affects the choice of a particular variant, in this case, the diminutive form – regardless of whether it is expressed with a suffixation or with the extended form *klein*

+ noun, which would seem to be-albeit slightly – the preferred one in the in-context situation. In the isolation condition, on the other hand, it happens exactly the opposite: although the speaker was asked to indicate the form used to name the younger brother, still the majority opted for the standard form. Given this, the hypothesis could be made that at the level of inherent features, something has changed when switching from one condition to the other: indeed, the feature bias [+/-affective] has a tendency to be negative for the first situation and positive in the second, due in the latter by the triggering of diminutivization. However, if it were to consider the other variants that emerged from the research as well, the [+affective] feature was also activated for the isolation. This is precisely because of the three variants added by the participants, namely: *Bruderherz* and *Bro*, all reporting a percentage of 7.7 %, only in the isolation, In fact, as a result of consulting various monolingual dictionaries of the German language, both variants express the meanings of affection and intimacy. Indeed, according to the DUDEN dictionary, the word *Bruderherz* means “Bruder, Freund”⁴⁸, that is “brother, friend”, denoting therefore this double meaning and that might be used not only to indicate the “blood brother”, but also a friend that is considered as a real brother. More specific is the DWDS that explains this word by stating “lieber Bruder”⁴⁹, which means “beloved brother”, putting emphasis on the high degree of affection and love that the participant feels for his (gender assumed from the data) brother. As for the word *Bro*, no hits have been found in either the DUDEN or the DWDS German dictionaries, but only in the Mundmische, which is the dictionary of spoken German. Here, the definition of *Bro* is “Ein Bro ist die Kurzform des englischen Wortes *brother*”⁵⁰, which means that it is the short form of the English word *brother*, and it states that “im Alltagsgebrauch bezeichnet man man seine engsten Kumpels als Bros”⁵¹, hence that “in everyday usage, you refer to your closest buddies as bros”. Therefore, it is the case of a loanword, that contrarily to *Bruderherz*, is used even more to indicate close friends rather than brothers. However, since the question in the survey was very precise in asking the participant to select the word used to name their own brother, it is possible that here the blood relation is meant. Otherwise, it could just have the meaning of “friend”.

⁴⁸ <https://www.duden.de/rechtschreibung/Bruderherz> [17.12.2022].

⁴⁹ <https://www.dwds.de/wb/Bruderherz> [17.12.2022].

⁵⁰ <https://www.mundmische.de/bedeutung/26358-Bro> [17.12.2022].

⁵¹ Ibidem.

Moreover, it is to say that such a word is probably widespread among young people; in fact, the participant that has added this variant is a 20-year-old young adult.

Having hence analyzed these two variants, it is possible to make some considerations about the feature [+/-affective]. In fact, as for the isolation, only by considering the percentages of the variants proposed (excluding the additional ones) it seems that the positive bias of this feature vacillates, because the standard form has prevailed, which - compared to the others - is the one that expresses less the emotivity of a speaker. However, if considering the additional variants too, namely *Bro* and *Bruderherz*, the degree of affection certainly increases since, according to their definitions, these two nouns bring with them an inherent feature of [+affection]. Therefore, it is not completely possible to claim that the expectations for this feature in this first condition have been fulfilled. On the other hand, this did occur for the second condition because of the highest percentages in the short forms. Here is the table of the expected features:

ITEM	FEATURE	ISOLATION	IN-CONTEXT
Bruder (1)	kinship	+	+
	human	+	+
	animate	+	+
	inalienable	+	+
	body-part	-	-
	young	+	-
	small	-	-
	affective	+/-	+

Table 6

Of course, another consideration to make about the features of this item concerns the [+/-young] that confirms its positive bias, since what was expected and asked was to make the participants opt for a variant that would emphasize the difference in age between them and the brother. The last observation to make for this item is that another extra variant has been found in the isolation condition's results, and it is a sociolinguistic variant, i.e., *Fratello*, namely the Italian word for brother. In this case the same considerations made for the previously mentioned sociolinguistic variants are valid.

Moving now towards the analysis of the second element of the pair, namely the item *Bruder (2)*, the first observation to make – that has been though already pointed out previously – is the fact that, likewise the item *Bruder (1)* also here there is a prevalence

in percentage for the standard variant *Bruder* in the isolation, having registered a total of 61.5%, against a 38.5% of the augmentative variant *großer Bruder*. On the other hand, in the in-context condition the results show the exact opposite, that is that it has been the augmentative variant that has taken the greatest amount of percentage (76.9%) prevailing its standard variant that has obtained a 30.8%. Moreover, also for this item, the extra variant *Bro* (same datum produced for *Bruder (1)*, namely 7.7%), has been added for the item *Bruder (1)*, again in the first condition and from the same participant. As previously said, according to the *Mundmische* dictionary, this word mainly indicates those people with whom there exist a very close relationship, such as to be considered as intimate as one that would exist among siblings. Therefore, it seems that for this participant this word would have the same value either for indicating a young or an older brother and that the participant wanted to emphasize the closeness of the relationship rather than the difference in age. However, the other variants and percentages do confirm the difference in age existing between the participants and the item in question in both conditions.

However, at the level of features there are though some considerations to do especially regarding the feature [+/-affective]. Before discussing it, here the table of the expectations:

ITEM	FEATURE	ISOLATION	IN-CONTEXT
Bruder (2)	kinship	+	+
	human	+	+
	animate	+	+
	inalienable	+	+
	body-part	-	-
	young	-	-
	small	-	-
	affective	+/-	+

Table 7

As it is possible to observe, the feature [+/-affective] is supposed to polarize positively in both conditions, since the participants are asked in the first one to name a member of their own family and in the second one to name the member of the family of one child, still considering the familiar relationship among them. However, the percentages do not show such a degree of closeness, especially in the isolation condition, where the standard form gained a very high percentage compared to the augmentative form. One hypothesis could be found in the fact that in this case it is the augmentative form that have been proposed

and not the short form, that would bring a much higher degree of affection instead. If this was true, it would support in such way the initial hypothesis, even if these are indirect data, namely that they are the opposite of a short form.

The second pair now analyzed is composed by the items *Schwester (1)* and *Schwester (2)*, where the first item denotes the “younger sister” and the second one “the older sister”. While for the first pair – *Bruder (1)* and *Bruder (2)* – the results gave a very similar outline in terms of preferences of the standard variant or the diminutive/augmentative variant – here the results are not that homogeneous. In fact, the data show a preference of the standard variant over the diminutive variant for both conditions – as concerns the item *Schwester (1)* – although there is a very slight differences between the total percentages of the standard and diminutive variants for the second condition, that are 38.5% for the standard variant and 30.8% for the diminutive one, i.e., *Schwesterchen*. However, this result mirrors the expectations provided by the prospects of the frequency of use of the two variants, that indicates the standard variant as the most frequent one; in this case, it seems that the context did not have that strong influence. The same might be said for the items *Schwester (2)*, but only for what concerns the isolation, having obtained therefore a higher percentage for the standard variant (46.2%) over the augmentative one (38.5%), i.e., *große Schwester* – also here with a little difference. However, the same cannot be said for the second condition, in which it has finally been the augmentative variant that has prevailed over the standard one, with also a relevant difference in percentages, namely the 38.5% for the standard and 76.9% for the augmentative.

Moreover, as for the item *Schwester (1)* only one participant has chosen the analytic variant *kleine Schwester* (7.7%) for the first situation, while for the second it has obtained a 0%. The remaining data are found in the other extra variants indicated by the participants, only in the isolation, for both items. As for the item *Schwester (1)* there has been added only one other answer that is *keine Schwester* (7.7%) that means that one participant has no sisters and therefore has preferred not to choose any other of the options, abstaining therefore from answering. Also, for the item *Schwester (2)*, there has been the same answer indicated though from two participants and in two different ways, counting a total percentage of 15.4%. Finally, remaining in the analysis of the other variants added for the isolation about the item *Schwester (2)*, another one has been

sorellona (7.7%), that is the Italian augmentative form for “older sister”. It seems therefore that for this item too, a sociolinguistic variant has been chosen to indicate a family member. It is though not immediately possible to indicate this Italian augmentative to be the direct equivalent of the German *große Schwester*. In fact, according to Dressler/Barbaredi (1994) the Italian augmentative *-one* is the counterpart of the diminutive *-ino*, but when attached to nouns having the feature [+human], the augmentation is not referred to the age but to the size, especially if from a child perspective.⁵² However, the two authors state that further studies could be useful to understand which are generally the properties of lexical item that would change. Hence, the issue is not completely resolved; therefore, at this point a hypothesis may be done. Having the data produced such Italian augmentative in isolation, and better, when it has been asked to the participants to name the family member only considering the age (i.e., naming the older sister), it would be possible to assume that besides the feature of size – as stated by the authors – also other features would change for the items having a [+human] feature. And in addition, that among these other features there are also the ones referring to the age. Furthermore, as a native speaker I would also assume here the augmentative suffix *-one* would also emphasize the trait [+affective].

For what concerns the analysis of the features, as for the item *Schwester (1)*, the most inherent ones, namely [+/-kinship], [+/-human] and [+/-animate] did not change, and consequently, the feature [+kinship] also gives rise to a polarization of inalienability, since the existence of a family relationship implies the existence of an inalienable relationship between the participant and the item. Some doubts are urged, however, by the feature [+/- affective], which while in previous cases only it faltered without ever completely changing its bias to negative, here the data do report a different situation. In fact, here the short forms have obtained very low percentages and considering that both the *klein* and diminutive suffixes carry with them the feature [+affective], it is as if this was little activated given the very low adherence of participants to such forms. Therefore, in this case, the feature [+/- affective] even more cannot be fixed definitely in one of the

⁵² Dressler Wolfgang U., M. B. (1994). *Morphopragmatics. Diminutives and Intensifiers in Italian, German, and Other Languages*. Berlin, New York: Mouton de Gruyter, pag. 437.

two poles but finds in a continuum that is difficult that relatively tends towards the negative pole. Of course, this conclusion cannot be too strict, because there is always the consideration that each participant expresses affection in different ways, and it is not necessarily the case that they do so only by using a short form. Here the table of the expectations for the item *Schwester (1)*:

ITEM	FEATURE	ISOLATION	IN-CONTEXT
Schwester (1)	kinship	+	+
	human	+	+
	animate	+	+
	inalienable	+	+
	body-part	-	-
	young	+	-
	small	-	-
	affective	+/-	+

Table 8

As for the item *Schwester (2)*, the analysis of the features is quite like the one of *Schwester (2)*, but also of *Bruder (2)* for what concerns the considerations made for the augmentation. Before going through the observation, here the table with the expectations:

ITEM	FEATURE	ISOLATION	IN-CONTEXT
Schwester (2)	kinship	+	+
	human	+	+
	animate	+	+
	inalienable	+	+
	body-part	-	-
	young	-	-
	small	-	-
	affective	+/-	+

Table 9

In this case, too, the most inherent features, namely [+/-kinship], [+/-human], and [+/-animate] did not change and kept the positive polarization; moreover, the feature [+kinship] also gives rise to a positive polarization of the feature [+/-inalienable], for the same reasons explained above. As for the feature [+/-affective], also here it cannot be fully marked as positive, especially because the alternative to the standard variant proposed for this item are not diminutives, but augmentatives, that basically do not bring with them strongly inherent features of affection and tenderness. However, the percentages are not too different between the standard and the augmentative forms in both

conditions; therefore, it might be said that augmentation brings a further information to the item compared to the standard one. But it is not possible to claim that this additional information concerns the positive degree of affection, as for the diminutives. Nevertheless, in the isolation condition there has appeared a sociolinguistic variant, *sorellona*, that is an augmentative Italian form for the Italian *sorella*, namely “sister[AUG]”. Hence, having assumed above that such an Italian augmentative suffix would bring a more marked feature [+affective] to the base noun, it may be possible to state that this item did not bring any signs of affection at all, but that a variant did, even if it is not a German one.

3.2.2.5 *Cousin/e*

The last item of this first category is *Cousin/e*, whose variants taken into consideration are the standard one and the *-chen* diminutive form, namely *Cousinchen* (and its graphic variant *Kousinchen*). For this item, the data reveal mostly similar results for both conditions, namely that in both it is the standard variant that prevails over the diminutive one, and with a great difference in percentage. In fact, the numbers show a preference of 69.2% for the standard variant over 30.8% for the diminutive one for what concerns the first situation, and 84.6% over 23.1% for the second condition, projecting what is attested in the DWDS according to the frequency of use of the two variants, namely that the standard is more used than the diminutive one. In this case, the child-centered speech situation did not sufficiently work to trigger the diminutive. Nevertheless, it is to consider that – especially for the isolation – the number of answers given is higher than the number of participants (15 versus 13) therefore, for two participants both variants are allowed and equally valid. Moreover, within the results of the isolation, it has been added another extra variant, which appears as *Vorname* (EN: first name), meaning so that the participant addresses the cousin using his/her first name. This data has appeared previously also for the item *Tante*, and it would be coherent to make also here the same assumption made for the previous one to try to justify this extra option. Therefore, this typicality would be perhaps a speaker’s habit to address some of their own family members by using their first names, maybe due also to the relationship they have, hypothetically not so close, leading thus to assume a more negative polarization of the feature [+/-affective]. As already said also for the previous analysis,

this is only a hypothesis since using the first name would assume a kind of distance between the two speakers, while using the noun denoting the family member, or better its diminutive variant, there would be more emphasis on the closeness and affection existing between them. For this reason, it may be possible to consider that at the level of features, the expected polarization of [+/-affective] cannot be fully confirmed – also due to the prevalence of the standard form in both conditions. Hence, compared to the expected situation, shown here in the table, all traits would remain as such except the feature [+/-affective]:

ITEM	FEATURE	ISOLATION	IN-CONTEXT
Cousin/e	kinship	+	+
	human	+	+
	animate	+	+
	inalienable	+	+
	body-part	-	-
	young	-	-
	small	-	-
	affective	+/-	+

Table 10

3.2.2.6 Final considerations about the first category

Before moving toward the second part of the analysis, it is worth making some final considerations about the overall data retrieved. First, it is possible to state that these items have produced a very high number of additional diminutive variants, especially for the items *Mutter* and *Vater*, and this result led to confirm that (1) the high productivity of the German language, (2) the high productivity of diminutive forms for the items belonging to this category, i.e., those that have a strong degree of familiarity, and (3) the degree of affection is marked also in the isolation condition. Second, these items have produced a great number of sociolinguistic variants that led to the hypothesis that when it is asked to name the family members some psycholinguistic mechanisms are triggered, and these led the speakers to choose the variant that emphasizes the intimate relationship existing between the two, showing, therefore, a high level of affection either towards the family member and the country of origin. Third, the items with a high degree of familiarity produce more variants with an inherent feature of [+affective] in a child-centered speech situation, and this is also proved by the additional variants *Mambär* and

Papabär. Fourth, the items *Mutter*, *Vater*, *Großmutter*, *Großvater*, *Bruder* and *Schwester* have obtained a higher percentage of diminutives compared to *Tante* and *Cousin/e*, probably because the first ones indicate the closest members of the family and therefore higher degree of affection is present. To conclude, these results have provided generally a high number of diminutives such as to support the initial hypothesis.

3.2.3 Second category: animals

The second part of the analysis concerns the observation of the items belonging to the category of the animals, namely those items that are strictly part of the familiar lexicon and have the inherent features of [-human], [+animate]. For this part, the analysis will present an outline of the percentages of each variant, both those proposed and those added, and offer then some considerations about what was expected and what occurred both in terms of the variants and of the features. Moreover, the analysis will highlight the differences that occurred in the two conditions, isolation and in-context, observing whether the results support the initial assumptions or not. In fact, in the isolation, the age difference will be marked, while in the in-context it will be asked to indicate the variant that according to the participants is the most suitable to the child-centered speech situation, namely in all those conversations having a child as a direct or side participant. Therefore, there will be expected to have a higher percentage of the analytic forms in the isolation, since it is the variant that indicates the differences either in size or in age, and a higher percentage of the diminutive forms in the in-context, as they are hypothetically those that are more suitable for the baby talk since the diminutive suffixes are supposed to bring inherent [+affective] feature. The last thing to say is that in the current analysis, the answers will be proposed in their primitive form and not as they appear in the questionnaire, namely showing their agreement when needed.

3.2.3.1 Hund

The first item of this second part of the analysis is *Hund* (EN: dog) and some very interesting and worthwhile data came out from the questionnaire. The first consideration to highlight is that the standard form has been chosen only once and only in the in-context condition – while none in the first one – obtaining therefore a small percentage over the

total, that is 7.7%. This is, of course, a worthwhile result, because this means that the participants have in both conditions preferred a short form – whether it is the diminutive or the analytical form, over the standard one, thus contributing to the validation of the hypothesis at the basis of this work. Moreover, considering the percentages of the frequency of use, this is even more a significative result, since the expectations predicted a prevalence of the 29% for the standard form over the diminutive one. The second consideration concerns the short forms initially proposed to the participants, i.e., the *-chen* or *-lein* diminutive and the analytic form with *klein*. Here, it can be observed that whether in isolation the *-chen* diminutive prevails over the analytic form, in the in-context it has occurred the exact opposite. The percentages are, therefore, 15.4% for *kleiner Hund* versus 53.8% for *Hündchen* in the first condition, and 61.5% for *kleiner Hund* versus 38.5% for *Hündchen*.

Besides the proposed variants, some participants have added some extra answers in both conditions – especially in the isolation. Indeed, in the first condition these are *Welp* (38.5%), *das Junge* (7.7%), and *mit dem Namen von dem Hund, ansonsten Feini* (7.7%). As for the first variant, *Welp* (EN: puppy), there needs to be said that this variant has got a higher percentage than the analytic form with *klein*, and in general a very significant preference, although it was not one of the initially proposed variants. This means, therefore, that it might be a very common variant spread among German speakers. The differences with *Hündchen* can be observed both at the level of denotation and at the level of the current frequency of use. In fact, at the level of denotation, the difference is mainly in the fact that while *Hündchen* is the expected diminutive form of *Hund* and thus denotes only "little or young dogs,"⁵³ *Welp* is used to denote puppies of dogs, as well as wolves and foxes, as can be read under the entries of the definitions of both nouns in both DWDS⁵⁴ and DUDEN⁵⁵ dictionary. As for the difference in the frequency of use, although this - according to the DWDS - is the same for both *Welp* and *Hündchen*, if one looks at the progression line (which can also be consulted in the DWDS, comparing *Welp* and *Hündchen*) one can see that in recent years as the use of the variant *Hündchen* has

⁵³ <https://www.duden.de/rechtschreibung/Huendchen> [19.12.2022].

⁵⁴ <https://www.dwds.de/wb/Welp> [19.12.2022].

⁵⁵ <https://www.duden.de/rechtschreibung/Welp> [19.12.2022].

decreased, the use of *Welp*e has increased. This would justify this high adherence of participants to the variant *Welp*e.

The second additional variant of the analysis is *das Junge* (7.7%) and the first consideration that can be made is that this word does not bring any information about animals, but rather of humans. In fact, according to the DWDS, it is “*es ist die schwache form des adj. jung in substantivem gebrauch*”, which means that “it is the weak form of the adjective *jung* (young) in substantive usage” and more that it refers to “*adolescens, puer*”, that are the Latin words that indicate a “young person”. Therefore, as already said, it seems that this variant brings a [+human] rather than a [-human], which is instead what would be expected since this variant is supposed to indicate an animal, i.e., a dog. However, there also exists a *Kompositum* in the German language, that is *Jungtier*, which according to the DUDEN dictionary means “junges Tier vor der Geschlechtsreife”⁵⁶, namely “young animal before sexual maturity”. Therefore, it is attested that such deadjectival substantive might be used to indicate animals. Hence, the idea is now that the participant that has proposed the variant *das Junge* imagined that he would have to indicate the “young” of a pair proposed in the image within the questionnaire, having assumed that the other dog was *das Alte* (“the old”).

Then, *mit dem Namen von dem Hund, ansonsten Feini*, is the last additional variant found in the results of the isolation condition. However, this must though be considered as containing two options added from the same participant, which are (1) “the name of the dog” and (2) *Feini*. As for the first option, it could be said that the participant suggests that he calls his dog by his name – which is however a very common habit. As for the second, there are some interesting observations to point out since it has been very difficult to find this word in German dictionaries but also on websites. In fact, the *Mundmische* does not provide any meaning for this word as a noun, but only as an adjective, namely that: “Ein Ausdruck der Freude, der sich eigentlich überall einsetzen lässt. Für alle, denen "gut" zu langweilig ist”⁵⁷ that means “an expression of joy that can be used everywhere. For those who "good" is too boring”; briefly it is a synonym of “good”.

⁵⁶ <https://www.duden.de/rechtschreibung/Jungtier> [19.12.2022].

⁵⁷ <https://www.mundmische.de/bedeutung/1185-feini> [19.12.2022].

Moreover, in some websites⁵⁸ there have been found hints of this adjective that is used in collocation with “dog”, mostly to compliment the dog after it has carried out a command. Finally, I have accomplished – going through the web – that in various YouTube videos, it seems that a change in word class has occurred, such that the adjective *fein* has been given a substantive function, producing hence *Feini*, which is used to indicate dogs. This noun seems to be a neologism of recent years that is widespread among young people; in fact, this variant has been added by a 21-year-old participant. However, this neologism seems not to carry specific information about the size or age of the dog but would be used to indicate general dogs.

As for the in-context condition, the only variant that has been added is *Hundebaby*. This noun is attested in German dictionaries and has a medium-low frequency of use. It would literally mean “baby dog”, therefore it has a similar meaning to *Welp* and *Hündchen*. Moreover, having such meaning makes us assume that this variant has a very marked feature of [+young], putting therefore emphasis on the age more than the size. This justifies the reason why the participant that has proposed it has put it only in the second condition.

All the percentages and variations produced for this item can certainly lead to reflection on what were the various and eventual changes at the feature level. As there are many variants added, it is difficult to standardize the analysis, but still, there are interesting considerations to be made. Considering that the two conditions produced results in accordance with the starting questions, the expectations about their features are also related to these. Regarding the item *Hund* these are the expected features for both conditions:

ITEM	FEATURE	ISOLATION	IN-CONTEXT
Hund	kinship	-	-
	human	-	-
	animate	+	+
	inalienable	-	-
	body-part	-	-
	young	+	+
	small	+	+

⁵⁸ <https://uelzener.de/magazin/hund/haeufige-fragen/mit-hund-sprechen/> [19.12.2022].

	affective	-	+
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Table 11

For this item, a [-kinship] is expected in both conditions because in neither question is one asked to think about one's dog; it follows that in both the inalienable feature remains negative. Since it is an animal, moreover, the expected features are [-human] [+animate], and [-body part]. What happened when looking at the results is that overall, these last three inalienable features were kept as such, because all variants report them that way. It should be noted, however, that as much as the trait [-kinship] was generally retained, the datum *mit dem Namen von dem Hund, ansonsten Feini* creates a small imbalance from the point that "calling the dog by its name" is as already mentioned a typicality of dog owners; so, some sort of relationship is marked, possibly producing a [+kinship] and [+inalienable]. However, since it is only a very small percentage it does not affect the final result. As for the specification of size and age, in general, the features appear to be such in the results as well; again, the second part of this answer *mit dem Namen von dem Hund, ansonsten Feini*, i.e., the neologism *Feini*, would seem not to emphasize either feature, from the moment that it would indicate any dog in general regardless of its age or size. Again, being only a small percentage, it does not affect the total. As for the feature [+/-affective], it is expected a negative polarization for the isolation as it is no context that would trigger it, nor an existing relationship between the participants and the item, and a positive polarization for the in-context condition which is of course triggered by the child-centered speech situation. However, the variants produced in the results do not fairly bring with them such information that would make the feature [+affective] that prominent in the in-context condition more than in the isolation, and more, being this feature very personal, this difficulty increases. Moreover, another consideration to make is that this feature is also inherently brought by the diminutive suffixes – as it is assumed at the basis of this research. In fact, if the diminutive suffix has a much more marked feature [+affective] than the analytic form with *klein*, then the diminutive would be expected to prevail in the in-context condition. From the results, however, it turned out that in the in-context condition, the diminutive form acquired a smaller percentage and thus would imply that this feature was activated less than in isolation. However, this is obviously a slight nuance of difference at the trait level, and not a total absence of affectivity expressed with the other variants in the child-centered situation.

3.2.3.2 *Katze*

The second item from this category is *Katze* (EN: “cat”) and the data retrieved are very similar to the ones of the item *Hund*. In fact, as done for the previous item, the first consideration to make here concerns the fact that the standard form has been never chosen in any of the two situations, letting, therefore, prevail the two short forms. It is the *-chen* diminutive that has obtained the greater results – 76.9% in both conditions– overriding the analytic forms that have obtained a 7.7% in the first situation and a 30.8% in the second one. The second consideration is found in the similarities existing between the additional options chosen by the participants for this item and for the previous one, namely *Hund*. This means that those participants who have proposed one extra variant for the item *Hund*, have then proposed the same one or a counterpart for the item *Katze*. This means hence that there have been added *Kitty* and *Babykatze* would be the counterpart of *Welp* and *Hundebaby*, and *das Junge* and *mit dem Namen*. Going through the answers, it has been possible to check for both items whether the extra similar options have been added from the same participant, and in fact, it is so. This systematicity might be considered a typicality of the participants that show a preference for the use of similar linguistic structures or patterns to address a specific category of the lexicon – in this case animals. In fact, throughout the current analysis, it will be shown how these patterns will repeat and hence reappear in the different outlines of the data. However, there are of course some considerations to make for the two new variants that have appeared here, namely, *Kitty* and *Babykatze*, which I have marked as the counterparts of the variant *Welp* and *Hundebaby* (“puppy”). Starting with *Kitty*, as there have been found no correspondences in any German dictionary, it is possible that this word is a loanword taken from the English language since it exists in the English dictionaries. In fact, according to the Collins dictionary, a *kitty* is “*Kitty* is sometimes used as an affectionate way of referring to a cat or kitten”⁵⁹. Indeed, even if in English use, this word indicates the way of calling a cat either if the speakers want to put emphasis on the [+affective] feature or on the [+small] and [+young] features. The reason why an English word is found in the results would possibly be justified by the fact that the participant that has added this variant is the youngest of the target and it is typical for young adults to use

⁵⁹ <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/kitty> [22.12.2022].

English words. Also, the other additional variant *Babykatze* has found any correspondences in any of the dictionaries, but through a search by images, it seems that it might confirm to be the word used to indicate the cat’s puppy. Moreover, in the in-context condition, the only extra variant added is *Katzejunge*. This variant has been very hard to find in dictionaries, which have generated no results. However, it seems that this word is a German *Kompositum*, therefore, must be analyzed by splitting it into the two main words it contains, that are *Katze* (“cat”) and *jung* (“young”), producing hence the final meaning of “young cat”, whose translation suggests a marked feature of [+young].

As for the general analysis of the features, the expectations in the following table might be considered as fully confirmed:

ITEM	FEATURE	ISOLATION	IN-CONTEXT
Katze	kinship	-	-
	human	-	-
	animate	+	+
	inalienable	-	-
	body-part	-	-
	young	+	+
	small	+	+
	affective	-	+

Table 12

Indeed, in both conditions, no feature has changed its inherent bias and fully confirmed the positiveness of the features [+young] for the isolation – especially thanks to the additional variants, and [+affective] for the in-contexts because of the greatest percentage that the diminutive form has obtained. The only thing to consider that is not merely expected is the fact that in the isolation the markedness of the feature [+young] is not due to the high percentage of the analytic form – as it was expected – but to the other short form, hence the diminutive. Therefore, the diminutivization of this item may be considered valid also when the German speakers want to put emphasis on the age of the animal.

3.2.3.3 *Vogel*

As for the item *Vogel*, no hints have been reported for the standard variant – as it occurred for the previous items of this second category. The most favorite item selected

by the participants has been in both conditions the *-chen* diminutive variant, i.e., *Vögelchen*, with a 76.9% recorded in the isolation and a 69.2% for the in-context. As for the analytic form, there have been no choices in the isolation (0%) and five in the in-context (38.5%). It seems then that the diminutive forms have acquired a great adherence and a so high percentage in the in-context condition supports of course the initial hypothesis. Moreover, this percentage confirms also the assumption concerning the features [+affective] that seems to be confirmed in the second condition, leading therefore to suppose that both the context and the diminutive suffix – that are supposed to trigger such feature – have successfully influenced the item to behave in such a way. This supports the initial hypothesis by far.

As for the additional variants, also in this case some have been produced, and some of them follow some of the typicality explained for the previous items. The additional variants are *Kücken/Küken*, *das Junge*, and *Vogelbaby*. Starting with the first one, is shown with both two graphic variants, hence *Kücken/Küken*, which express a diatopic variation, namely that the first one is the Austrian variant while the second is the German one. Furthermore, as for the meaning, according to the DUDEN dictionary, this word means: “Junges von Geflügel (besonders des Huhns)”⁶⁰, which means: "Young of poultry (especially of chicken)", which would be the equivalent of the English “chick”. Moreover, according to the DWDS, this word has still a medium frequency of use, similar to the one of *Vögelchen*⁶¹. Despite being an attested and used variant, the only difference existing between *Küken* and *Vögelchen* is the specificity of the first one – use therefore especially for chicken babies – while the second one is used more generically for all kinds of birds. The other additional variant is *das Junge* (7.7%) and here again it has been observed that this variant has been added from the same participant that has chosen it for the previous analyzed items. This result supports the hypothesis of the typicality explained above. Moreover, for this item also another variant has appeared that is *Vogelbaby* (7.7%); even if this one has not been selected by the same participant that has opted for *Babykatze*, it is though the same one that will opt for similar counterparts for the following items that will be analyzed shortly.

⁶⁰ https://www.duden.de/rechtschreibung/Kueken_Kind_Jungtier [22.12.2022].

⁶¹ <https://www.dwds.de/wb/Küken> [22.12.2022].

At the level of feature, the expected result is confirmed here too, and a similar analysis made for the previous items can be made here. In fact, the expectations are the following:

ITEM	FEATURE	ISOLATION	IN-CONTEXT
Vogel	kinship	-	-
	human	-	-
	animate	+	+
	inalienable	-	-
	body-part	-	-
	young	+	+
	small	+	+
	affective	-	+

Table 13

Indeed, the positiveness of the features [+young] has been confirmed in the isolation and the feature [+affective] in the in-contexts because of the greatest percentage that the diminutive form has obtained in both conditions. For this item, too in the isolation, the markedness of the feature [+young] is not due to the high adherence of the participants to the analytic form – as it was expected – but to the diminutive. Therefore, the diminutivization for this item may be considered valid also to put emphasis on the age of the animal.

3.2.3.4 *Maus*

As for the item *Maus*, it appears for the first time in this second part of the analysis that almost the total of the participants has preferred the *-chen* diminutive variant to all the other options, with a percentage of 92.3% against the 0% of the analytic and the standard form. This has happened though only in the isolation, while in the in-context, the situation appears to be quite the opposite. In fact, the *-chen* diminutive has got the lowest percentage (15.4%) against a 46.2% for both the analytic and standard forms. The overall situation appears to be unique because the *-chen* diminutive variant presents a huge difference in percentage in the two conditions: whether in the first one, it classifies as the most voted, or in the second one it is completely the opposite. It is very complicated to explain this very marked difference; however, this may mean that probably the *-chen* diminutive for this item is rather used for highlighting the differences in size more than those in affection and tenderness, that are triggered by the context. Therefore, in a child-

centered speech situation using a standard form or an analytic one would perhaps have the same results in terms of baby talk when referring to a mouse.

Moreover, as for the additional variants, only two have been added and only in the isolation condition and these are *Mäusekind* and *Mausebaby*. The first one has not produced any hints in any of the German dictionaries, therefore it seems that it must be considered as a *Kompositum*, extracting thus the meaning from the analysis of the two main words that compose this word, which are *Maus* (“mouse”) and *Kind* (“kid”). Of course, the proper translation cannot be simply created by putting together the two translations, since “mouse kid” would have no sense, also because the word *kid* is used for human beings and not for animals. Therefore, it should be adapted and thought of as something like a “baby mouse” or a “puppy mouse”. By using this variant, the participant has decided to put emphasis on the “youngness” of the animal and not only on the “smallness” existing in comparison with its “older” and “bigger” counterpart shown in the picture. Some similar analysis might be done for this other extra variant added to the list of the options for the first situation, that is *Mausebaby* (7.7%). This has again been chosen by the same participant that has opted for *Vogelbaby* in the previous set of options given for the item *Vogel*, supporting this hypothesis again. Moreover, also this option might be considered as a *Kompositum* and therefore been analyzed so, resulting then as having the meaning of “baby mouse” or “puppy mouse”. Also, here the participant has probably the intention to highlight the features of [+young], quite more than [+small].

At the level of features, besides what has been already discussed, the expected situation has been mainly maintained, except for the feature [+/-affective] that was supposed to be much more marked in the in-context condition:

ITEM	FEATURE	ISOLATION	IN-CONTEXT
Maus	kinship	-	-
	human	-	-
	animate	+	+
	inalienable	-	-
	body-part	-	-
	young	+	+
	small	+	+
	affective	-	+

Table 14

In fact, if the diminutive suffix would trigger the [+affection], since this variant has received the lowest percentage, it seems that this feature has not totally been positively polarized. However, knowing that it is a very personal one, this must be taken only as a hypothesis.

3.2.3.5 *Fisch*

Also, for the item *Fisch*, its standard form has acquired the 15.4% of the votes, but only in the in-context, against 0% in the isolation. Here the percentage is not so high as that found for the item *Maus*, but still, two participants have considered it to be a valid variant for the context. However, the short forms have got the highest percentages in both conditions— confirming thus the trend. In fact, in the in-context the analytic form has obtained a 53.8% while the *-lein* diminutive a 30.8%, while in the isolation both the *-lein* diminutive have got a 38.5%. Therefore, both conditions offer a very similar situation in this case, and this would hypothetically mean that both the diminutive and the analytic forms are accepted by the German speakers as being valid variants used to differentiate two animals in terms of size and age and to be used in a child-centered speech situation, conveying, therefore, a sense of tenderness and affection.

As for the extra options added by the participants, there appear again some with a similar structure to the others found in the previous items for the first speech situation, namely, *Babyfisch* and *Fischjunges*. In fact, the first one has been chosen from the same participant that has proposed *Mausebaby* and *Vogelbaby*, while the second one has been proposed by the participant that has previously selected *das Junge*, supporting again the hypothesis of the typicality. Furthermore, both of them might be considered *Komposita* in this case too, resulting in two translations that would mean “baby fish” or “young fish”, marking therefore in both cases the feature [+young] rather than [+small]. Another extra variant appears in either the first and in the second conditions, and it is *Fischchen*. This is an ambiguous variant since according to the DUDEN dictionary the definition says: “kleines, flügelloses Insekt, das einen blass gefärbten, mit silbrigen Schuppen bedeckten Körper hat (z. B. Silberfischchen)”⁶², that means “small, wingless insect that has a pale colored body covered with silvery scales (e.g., silverfish)”. Therefore, it indicates a

⁶² <https://www.duden.de/rechtschreibung/Fischchen> [22.12.2022].

different animal, i.e., an insect, in particular a silverfish. But if it has been chosen by a native, it is probably an attested and valid way to create also the diminutive form of the noun *Fisch*.

At the level of feature, this is the expected situation:

ITEM	FEATURE	ISOLATION	IN-CONTEXT
Fisch	kinship	-	-
	human	-	-
	animate	+	+
	inalienable	-	-
	body-part	-	-
	young	+	+
	small	+	+
	affective	-	+

Table 15

Hence, considering the previous discussion, it seems that generally there have been not consistent variations from what it was supposed to have.

3.2.3.6 *Bär*

For the item *Bär*, again there have been no occurrences for its standard variant - neither for the first nor for the second condition – that has been then overridden by the short forms. This is of course a worthy result for supporting the hypothesis at the basis of the work. However, even if the short forms have prevailed over the standard one, between the analytic and diminutive forms there are two opposite situations in the two conditions. In fact, whether in isolation the *-chen* diminutive variant has been the favorite one (46.2% versus 30.8%), in the second one it is the opposite, namely that the analytical variant has obtained a higher percentage (61.5% versus 30.8%). Of course, it is a slight difference, but this makes us assume that also for this item, the diminutive is mainly used to highlight the differences in terms of size and age while the analytic is used in baby talk. However, since there are hints in both conditions for both variants it means that German speakers accept both forms for both conditions.

Moreover, three extra variants have been added for the first situation and two others for the second one. For the isolation, these are *Bärenjung*, *Eisbärbaby*, and *Bärenkind*, which

remind on the extra options added for the previous items, namely the *Komposita* ending with *-jung*, *-baby*, and *-kind*. In this case too, the same analysis concerning the *Komposita* made for the previous items is valid and as for the translations they might be respectively “young bear”, “baby polar bear”, and “baby bear”. For the second one, it needs to be said that the adjective “polar” might have been added only because the picture proposed in the questionnaire shows a polar family bear, and perhaps the participant wanted to be specific and precise about the kind of bear. Furthermore, as previously mentioned in the analysis of the other items, also in this case these extra options emphasize the feature of [+young], which is of course brought from their endings *-jung*, *-baby*, and *-kind*. As for the in-context condition, two variants have been added and these are *Plütschtier* and *Kuschelbär*. According to the DUDEN dictionary, these two words convey a very similar meaning and have something in common regarding inherent features. Indeed, for *Plütschtier* it is meant a “soft toy” and for *Kuschelbär* a “cuddle bear” (since it is a *Kompositum* made up of the verb *kuscheln*⁶³ “to cuddle” and *Bär* “bear”). Through these two added options, it is possible to mark the switching of one of the main innate features of the noun *Bär*, from its positive to its negative pole. This is the feature [+/-animate] that is definitely marked positively for the first situation and negatively for the second one. In fact, at the level of feature, this radical change for the feature [+/-animate] was not fully expected. The overall situation in the expectation was:

ITEM	FEATURE	ISOLATION	IN-CONTEXT
Bär	kinship	-	-
	human	-	-
	animate	+	+
	inalienable	-	-
	body-part	-	-
	young	+	+
	small	+	+
	affective	-	+

Table 16

However, this change of the feature [+/-animate] is confirmed only in the last two additional variants, while for the proposed one there is no evidence that would tell the same. Therefore, it is not possible to extend this result to all the results. Moreover, these two extra variants have provided some interesting considerations for the feature [+/-

⁶³ <https://www.duden.de/rechtschreibung/kuscheln> [22.12.2022].

affective]; in fact, since these two convey the meaning of a “soft bear” and “cuddle bear”, it seems that this feature confirms its positive bias in the in-context because these variants express a sense of tenderness. On the other side, if these two variants have been chosen by the participants it means that the context had correctly triggered in the participant’s mind the idea of producing such variants having such features that would fit and be coherent with the baby talk.

3.2.3.7 *Hase*

The next item is *Hase* which rates only one hint for its standard form (7.7%) in the in-context, while 0% for the isolation. As for its short forms, it can be said that they have prevailed over the other variants; in particular, in both conditions, it is the *-chen* diminutive variant that is ranked as the most voted, with an 84.6% in the isolation and a 61.5% in the in-context. On the other side, the analytic form with *klein* shows 15.4% in the first one and 38.5% in the second one. For this item thus it seems that the most favorite one is the *-chen* diminutive for both situations, and this is therefore a great result for the assumption at the basis of this work. It might probably be assumed that the diminutive variant is widespread and commonly accepted to be a valid variant used to the differentiation in both size and age and to the baby talk. Moreover, also for this item – but only in the isolation – there have been added two more options, which are *Babyhase* and *Hasenjung*. Therefore, it is not even needed to explain that the typicality of the *Komposita* with *Baby* and *jung* as part of the compound occurs also here once again. The new words that these *Komposita* has created may be translated with “baby rabbit” and “young rabbit”, emphasizing again the feature [+young].

Finally, at the level of features, there is not so much to observe, and the expectations shown in the following table may be confirmed:

ITEM	FEATURE	ISOLATION	IN-CONTEXT
Hase	kinship	-	-
	human	-	-
	animate	+	+
	inalienable	-	-
	body-part	-	-
	young	+	+
	small	+	+

	affective	-	+
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Table 17

Indeed, the feature [+young] has been triggered in the isolation from the diminutive – even if an analytic form was expected, and the feature [+affective] in the in-context, also triggered from the diminutive variant.

3.2.3.8 Pferd

For the item *Pferd*, it occurs again that the *-chen* diminutive form has been the most voted one, having got a 46.2% in isolation and a 61.5% in the in-context condition. In the second position, there is the analytic form with *klein*, with 15.4% in the first condition and 38.5% in the second condition. Finally, the standard variant has obtained only one occurrence in the second situation (7,7%). In this case too, it is possible to assume that the *-chen* diminutive is valid for both conditions to express either a differentiation and a baby talk speech, and not for the standard form that seems not to have the same role for what concerns this item.

Then, as for the other extra options added, there have been only two in the isolation, and they are *Fohlen* and *Pony*. In particular, the variant *Fohlen* (EN: foal) has recorded a worth number of preferences, counting a total of 46.2%, which is the same percentage that the *-chen* diminutive has gained. This means thus that the native German speaker use this variant with a very high frequency – which is also attested in the DWDS – and would use it as a valid alternative to the other in question, especially to *Pferdchen*. This is proved also by its definition, which is very specific since it states that this word indicates: “neugeborenes bzw. junges Pferd”⁶⁴, namely, “newborn or young horse”. Also this word, as some others met in the previous analysis, gives emphasis on the feature [+young] and also [+animate], since this word would be used rarely to indicate an object representing it, e.g., a cuddle horse, rocking horse, and so on. On the contrary, the variant *Pony* (EN: “pony”) – that has recorded a 15.4% - is not bringing the feature [+young], but is giving instead more emphasis on the dimension, since this word has a different meaning, namely: “Pferd einer kleinen Rasse”⁶⁵, meaning “horse of a small breed”. Therefore, a pony is nothing like a “baby horse” nor “foal”, but a kind of horse of a small size; hence, here the

⁶⁴ <https://www.duden.de/rechtschreibung/Pferdchen> [22.12.2022].

⁶⁵ https://www.duden.de/rechtschreibung/Pony_Pferd [22.12.2022].

feature [+small] is eventually more marked. However, at the level of features, no specific changes have occurred:

ITEM	FEATURE	ISOLATION	IN-CONTEXT
Pferd	kinship	-	-
	human	-	-
	animate	+	+
	inalienable	-	-
	body-part	-	-
	young	+	+
	small	+	+
	affective	-	+

Table 18

The same situation occurred for most of the items belonging to this category has occurred here, hence that (1) the feature [+young] is confirmed in the isolation and it has been triggered from the diminutive, even if the analytic was expected, and (2) the feature [+affective] in the in-context, also triggered from the diminutive.

3.2.3.9 Final considerations about the second category

The items have generally produced some homogeneous results that do not show any particularly adverse data. In fact, the diminutive variant has prevailed in most of the items over the other proposed or added forms, also in the isolation, where it was more expected to have the analytic form be the most voted. Moreover, this result confirms the idea that the pragmatic/contextual aspect influences the choice of variant and hence the preference of opting for the diminutive form, because generally the diminutive variant is not the most used one, but it is instead the standard form. In fact, according to the DWDS for this category of items their standard forms prevail with a range of 29-20% over their diminutives.

Furthermore, this result would probably mean that for such nouns having the [+animate] and [-human] features, the diminutive form is according to the German speakers the most suitable one to be used to highlight the differentiations in age too. Therefore, if it is assumed that the diminutive suffix brings inherent information about the positive degree of affection, it would mean that when the diminutive suffix is added to these nouns, they

automatically get this positive degree of affection, even when isolated and there is not any specific context that would influence them. Finally, it can be said that these results support the initial hypothesis according to which items belonging to the sphere of familiarity are more prone to undergo the diminutivization process in a baby talk context. Even more so, it was seen that having a very pronounced trait of [+affective]-evidenced by the data in isolation-then they result to be even more suitable for use in a child-centered speech situation.

3.2.4 Third category – objects

The third part of the analysis concerns the observation of the items belonging to the category of the objects, namely those items that are somehow part of the familiar lexicon and have the inherent features of [-human] and [-animate]. In this part the analysis will be the same that has been made for the previous two categories, hence first an outline of the percentages, some observations about what has changed in features compared to what was expected to occur, and the differences that occurred in the two conditions, isolation and in-context, observing whether the results support the initial assumptions or not. Here in isolation, the highest percentage is expected to be obtained from the analytic form, which is supposedly the one that gives information about the [+small] feature, marking therefore a difference in the size of the objects proposed. On the other hand, in the in-context it will be asked to indicate the variant that according to the participants is the most suitable to the child-centered speech situation, namely in all those conversations having a child as a direct or side participant. Therefore, there will be expected to have a higher percentage of the diminutive form because it is supposed to bring inherent [+affective] features. These expectations rely however on the assumption that it will be the pragmatic/contextual aspect to influence the outcome and lead the participants opt for the analytic for the first condition and the diminutive for the second. There, these expectations must contrast the general frequency of use of these forms, that according to the DWDS has the standard form dominating by 20-29% over the diminutive form. Finally, in this third part of the analysis too, the answers will be proposed in their primitive form.

3.2.4.1 *Buch*

The first item from the third category is *Buch* and the first consideration that might be done by observing the data is that in the two situations, they are not homogeneous at all. In fact, whether in the first one, the standard form has received no results at all, and it is the *-lein* diminutive form that prevails with a 61.5% also over the analytic form (53.9%), in the second one the situation is almost the opposite, while the standard form is the most voted one with a 46.2% over a 38.5% of the *-lein* diminutive and a 30.8% of the analytic form. Moreover, no extra options have been added for this item. What is worth highlighting here is the very different percentages that the standard variants have received in the two conditions. In fact, it seems that the standard variant is probably considered a valid option to be used in a child-centered speech situation besides the short forms, making, therefore, vacillating the positive bias of the feature [+affective], but not that strongly. Instead for the isolation, the fact that the standard variant has got no hints confirms the fact that for German speakers the short forms convey the feature [+small] in a more appropriate way. Indeed, the expectation shown in the following tables have mostly been confirmed:

ITEM	FEATURE	ISOLATION	IN-CONTEXT
Buch	kinship	-	-
	human	-	-
	animate	-	-
	inalienable	-	-
	body-part	-	-
	young	-	-
	small	+	+
	affective	-	+

Table 19

3.2.4.2 *Zahn*

As for the second item, *Zahn*, the data are instead much more homogeneous in the two conditions. In fact, in both of them it is the *-chen* diminutive form that has taken the greatest percentages, which are 61,5% for the isolation and 53,8% for the in-context. The only anomalous datum here concerns the analytic form, which has got no hints in the first condition and a 30.8% in the second one. As for the standard form, the percentages are the lowest for both condition – 15.4% in the first and 23.1% in the second. In the light of

these data some considerations need to be done: (1) the choice of the standard variant in the isolation raise doubts about the assumption that German native speakers would not use a standard form to highlight the differences in size, (2) there is no concrete explanation that justifies the 0% for the analytic form in the isolation and a high adherence in the in-context, and (3) the *-chen* diminutive has at least retrieved worthwhile result that support the initial hypothesis.

Moreover, there is one extra option that has been added in the first situation by two participants, receiving thus the 15,4%, which is *Milchzahn* (EN: milk tooth) a very specific word used to indicate children's teeth. Indeed, the DUDEN dictionary reports for this word: "Zahn aus dem ersten Gebiss des Kindes, das nach einer bestimmten Zeit nach und nach ausfällt"⁶⁶, which means "Tooth from the child's first set of teeth, which gradually falls out after a certain period of time". This word thus is very for the field in question, even if it is not clear why the same two participants did not opt for the same answers in the second situation, which is much more child-specific.

At the level of features, even if the percentages show quite uncoherent results, they do not change radically the expectations.

ITEM	FEATURE	ISOLATION	IN-CONTEXT
Zahn	kinship	-	-
	human	-	-
	animate	-	-
	inalienable	-	-
	body-part	+	+
	young	-	-
	small	+	+
	affective	-	+

Table 20

In fact, the results keep the feature [+body part] and consequently the feature [+inalienable], since it is assumed that whatever has a positive bias for the kinship or body part feature would trigger it. Moreover, the only feature that would vacillate would be [+/-small] in the isolation because the two participants that have opted for the standard variant, basically do not bring such information about the smallness, that is instead what is asked to express by the leading question. However, being a very small percentage, it will not compromise the entire results.

⁶⁶ <https://www.duden.de/rechtschreibung/Milchzahn> [2.1.2023].

3.2.4.3 Bett

As for the item *Bett* the *-chen* diminutive form has prevailed over the other two in both two situations, rating a 46.2% in the isolation and a 61.5% in the in-context condition. As for the analytic form, it has gained a similar percentage in both two conditions having got a 38.5% in the first and a 30,8% in the second one, while the standard form has got no hints in the first and a 30.8% in the second. Here the overall framework is quite more coherent and the absence of occurrences of the standard in the isolation confirms once again the idea that the German speakers would not prefer to use such a variant – when having the possibility to choose a short form – to define the size difference of one object. Moreover, also in the in-context condition data support the initial hypothesis since the *-chen* diminutive confirms to be the favorite one to use in a child-centered speech situation, even if also the standard one is a valid alternative.

Furthermore, three more extra options have been produced for this item in the first situation and these are *Babybett*, *Kinderbett*, and *Gitterbett*; in particular, one of them – *Kinderbett* – has been chosen by three participants. What is very interesting to observe of this data is the fact that in the first two, the nouns *Baby* and *Kinder* have appeared once again, as it has occurred for the items of the second category – the animals. Therefore, also for this kind of noun, German speakers tend to create *Komposita* by using one of the two parts of the compound that has been used for another category of nouns. The only difference is in the fact that while for the second category, these specifiers emphasized the feature [+young] of the final *Kompositum*, for this third category there is another kind of semantic change. In fact, either *Baby* or *Kinder* – in this case – gave the final compound information about the use that this bed has, namely, that is a bed for babies, as their definitions explain. Indeed, the DUDEN dictionary defines *Babybett* as “kleines Bett für Babys”⁶⁷ which means “small bed for babies” and it also defines *Kinderbett* as “kleines Bett für Kinder, besonders für Kleinkinder”⁶⁸ which means “small bed for children, especially for toddlers”. Hence, the two variants bring information about the scope of the bed, that is a bed for children. As for the third option *Gitterbett*, it cannot be considered merely as a *Kompositum*, even if it does contain two words that, if considered one by one, have their own meanings. However, according to the DUDEN definition, *Gitterbett*

⁶⁷ <https://www.duden.de/rechtschreibung/Babybett> [2.1.2023].

⁶⁸ <https://www.duden.de/rechtschreibung/Kinderbett> [2.1.2023].

means “Bett mit gitterartigem Gestell, besonders Kinderbett mit [hochklappbarem] Gitter”⁶⁹ that is “bed with lattice-like frame, especially crib with [fold up] lattice”. Therefore, also the word *Gitter* in the compound changes the semantics of the final word, but in another new way, that is thus by giving information about the structure and material this bed is made, but it is still a bed for babies. Hence, while the first two are the generic words to indicate a bed for babies (hypernym), *Gitterbett* is a more specific one of the categories (hyponym).

At the level of features, also here there have not occurred any specific phenomena that changed the expectations, which are the following:

ITEM	FEATURE	ISOLATION	IN-CONTEXT
Bett	kinship	-	-
	human	-	-
	animate	-	-
	inalienable	-	-
	body-part	-	-
	young	-	-
	small	+	+
	affective	-	+

Table 21

Indeed, the most inherent features have been confirmed, i.e., [-kinship], [-human], [-animate], [-inalienable], [-body part], and [-young]. As for the feature [+/-small], it also might be considered confirmed for both conditions, also thanks to the additional variants that bring inherent information about not only the scope but also the dimension of the bed, from the moment that, is defined as a bed for children, they are consequently smaller than beds for adults. What concerns the feature [+/-affective], it is supposed to have a much higher degree of positiveness in the in-context than in the isolation, even though it is still to be considered that this third part of the analysis concerns objects and of course, the degree of affection cannot be so high as for the items of the first two categories, i.e., family members and animals. However, if the *-chen* diminutive form brings such an inherent feature of [+affective] and having this form gained a very high percentage, the expectations for the in-context condition may be considered as confirmed.

⁶⁹ <https://www.duden.de/rechtschreibung/Gitterbett> [2.1.2023].

3.2.4.4 *Flasche* and *Teller*

The next two items of this category will be analyzed together since they both have produced similar data and these items are *Flasche* and *Teller*. Both of them have produced such results which seem to be very supportive of the initial hypothesis, which assumes that for the items belonging to the category of objects belonging to the familiar sphere, they would tend to produce an analytic form when highlighting their differences in dimension (first situation) and a diminutive when addressing to children (second situation). And this is what has occurred for these two items. Indeed, in the first situation, *Flasche* received a 92.3% (almost the total of the participants) for its analytic variant against a 7.7% for the diminutive and a 0% for the standard form, and *Teller* got a 69.2% for the analytic over a 38.5% for the diminutive and a 7.7% for the standard. As for the second situation, *Flasche* has rated a 53.8% for its *-chen* diminutive against a 30.8% for the analytic variant and a 15.4% for the standard, and *Teller* a 46.2% for the *-chen* diminutive against a 30.8% for the analytic and a 30.8% for the standard. Moreover, for both items, no more options have been added by the participants.

At the level of features, the expectations follow those of the previous items and are for both:

ITEM	FEATURE	ISOLATION	IN-CONTEXT
Flasche	kinship	-	-
	human	-	-
	animate	-	-
	inalienable	-	-
	body-part	-	-
	young	-	-
	small	+	+
	affective	-	+

Table 22

ITEM	FEATURE	ISOLATION	IN-CONTEXT
Teller	kinship	-	-
	human	-	-
	animate	-	-
	inalienable	-	-
	body-part	-	-
	young	-	-
	small	+	+
	affective	-	+

Table 23

In fact, as already said, most votes to the analytic form for both *Teller* and *Flasche* in isolation confirm the idea that for such items the difference in size is commonly marked by using this form rather than a diminutive, that is instead proffered in the child-centered speech situation to convey a sense of affection, that is also confirmed from the data. As for the other features, there is nothing to say but that they all have confirmed the expectations.

3.2.4.5 *Stuhl*

As for the item *Stuhl* the data are not that different from the previous two, but for the in-context condition, it has been the standard difference that prevailed over the short forms with a 46.2%. However, the *-chen* diminutive has gained a 38.5%, which is not so distant from the standard form. On the other hand, in the isolation, the results are those expected, because the analytic form has prevailed with a 69.2% over a 46.2% of the *-chen* diminutive and 0% of the standard one. Therefore, at the level of features, it would be said that generally the expectations have been confirmed, but with some considerations:

ITEM	FEATURE	ISOLATION	IN-CONTEXT
Teller	kinship	-	-
	human	-	-
	animate	-	-
	inalienable	-	-
	body-part	-	-
	young	-	-
	small	+	+
	affective	-	+

Table 24

Hence, as previously said, the feature [+small] is fully confirmed in the isolation due to the high preference for the analytic form over the other two. As for the feature [+/-affective], the expectation cannot be easily confirmed, because of the highest percentage gained by the standard form and not by the short forms. However, having observed that the difference in percentage is a small one, it may be generally assumed as valid.

3.2.4.6 Löffel

A similar situation of *Stuhl* has occurred to the item *Löffel*, which has confirmed the hypothesis in the isolation since the analytic form has gained the highest percentage (46.2%), but not so much for the in-context, in which the most voted variant is the standard one with a 53.8% over a 30.8% for the analytic variant, and only a 23.1% for the diminutive form. It seems therefore that for this item the short forms are not strongly used to convey a child-centered speech situation and that the standard form is preferred.

Moreover, data show an extra variant – chosen by two participants (15.4%)– in the isolation, that is *Teelöffel*. This is again a *Kompositum*, composed of the words *Tee* (EN: tea) and *Löffel* (EN: spoon), producing thus the final word with the translation of “teaspoon”. Also in this case, the compound differs from the standard word for a specification, that in this case brings information about the scope of the object, i.e., a spoon used to stir the tea, or as the DUDEN dictionary states: “(in der Größe zur Tee- oder Kaffeetasse passender) kleinerer Löffel”⁷⁰ that means “(in size to fit the tea or coffee cup) smaller spoon”.

Finally, at the level of features, it is not possible to fully confirm all the features, especially for the in-context condition. What was expected is the same of the previous items, that is:

ITEM	FEATURE	ISOLATION	IN-CONTEXT
Löffel	kinship	-	-
	human	-	-
	animate	-	-
	inalienable	-	-
	body-part	-	-
	young	-	-
	small	+	+
	affective	-	+

Table 25

In fact, as previously said, while for the isolation the analytic form confirms that it is the most used to express differences in terms of size – also provided by the additional variant *Teelöffel*, for the in-context the diminutive form has not gained a high adherence.

⁷⁰ <https://www.duden.de/rechtschreibung/Teeloeffel> [5.1.2023].

Therefore, since this form brings inherent features of [+affective] and this has gained a very low percentage, it is not possible to confirm the expectation of a fully positive bias in this condition. It is possible though that for this item its short forms are not that common and that also the standard one would denote a sense of affection and tenderness when in child-centered speech situation. However, the standard form does not bring evident information that would prove it, therefore it is not possible to state that the participant would express these feelings when using this item in a conversation with a child.

3.2.4.7 *Blume*

The next item is *Blume* and here it can be said that the retrieved data mostly support the hypothesis, because the *-chen* diminutive variant has been the favorite one in the in-context with a 61.5% over a 15.4% of the analytic form and a 30.8% of the standard one. As for the isolation, although there is a tie between the analytic form and the diminutive variant, namely a 53,8% for both over 0% for the standard, it is possible to assume that also in this condition the results support the initial hypothesis. Therefore, at the level of feature, having such data it is possible to confirm the expectations:

ITEM	FEATURE	ISOLATION	IN-CONTEXT
Blume	kinship	-	-
	human	-	-
	animate	-	-
	inalienable	-	-
	body-part	-	-
	young	-	-
	small	+	+
	affective	-	+

Table 26

In fact, having the analytic form as the favorite in the isolation, the feature [+small] might be confirmed because this form emphasizes the differences in size. As for the in-context, the feature [+/-affective] is fully marked as positive in the expectations and so as in the results for the same considerations made for the previous items.

3.2.4.8 Schuhe

An unexpected situation can be observed in the data retrieved from the item *Schuhe*, which has produced the highest percentage for the *-chen* diminutive variant (53.8%) in the isolation and for the standard form (53.8%) in the in-context. However, in the isolation the analytic form is ranked in the second position and with a very slight difference from its rival, having received indeed a 46.2%. The same might be said for the *-chen* diminutive that has gained however a 38.5% in the in-context.

Furthermore, two extra variants have been added: *Hallenschuhe* (7.7%) in the first isolation and *Kinderschuhe* (15.4%) in the in-context. As for the first variant, it is a *Kompositum* since there are no hints of this word as it is in any German dictionary. Therefore, it must be analyzed by splitting the word into *Halle* (EN: “gym”) and “Schuhe” (EN: “shoes”), having the final meaning of “sport shoes”. This *Kompositum* emphasizes mainly the scope of the shoes, underlining that they are used for training in a gym, and not on the dimension of them nor it reminds of something linked to the infant field. The idea is that the participant has decided to highlight the differences between the two shoes in the picture not for their dimensions, but for their scope – even if the pictures show two pairs of shoes and both are sneakers. Since only one participant has opted for this answer, it will not affect the final analysis of the data. On the contrary, the second extra variant – *Kinderschuhe* – is qualitative data for supporting the hypothesis. It has indeed been added in the options of the second condition, where it is asked to indicate the child’s shoes, and this noun contains properly this information. Thus, according to the DUDEN dictionary, *Kinderschuh* is “Schuh für ein Kind”⁷¹ which means “shoe for a child”. Also in this case, the compound has *Kinder* as one of the two words – as occurred for other previously analyzed items (see e.g., *Kinderbett*) – and in this case, this emphasizes the kind of shoe and the person that uses them, i.e., a child, and also on the dimension, i.e., the feature [+small] since children’s shoes are generally smaller than adults’ ones.

At the level of features, the expected situation is the following:

ITEM	FEATURE	ISOLATION	IN-CONTEXT
Schuhe	kinship	-	-
	human	-	-

⁷¹ <https://www.duden.de/rechtschreibung/Kinderschuh> [6.1.2023].

	animate	-	-
	inalienable	-	-
	body-part	-	-
	young	-	-
	small	+	+
	affective	-	+

Table 27

After having shown all the results, it is possible to make some considerations about the features. First, the inherent features such as [-kinship], [-human], [-animate], [-inalienable], [-body part], and [-young] can be confirmed because no datum has generated information that would change them. Therefore, also here the two interesting features to observe are [+/-small] and [+/-affective]. Starting with the feature [+/-small], the expected polarization would have been positive for both conditions, and this might be confirmed especially in the in-context also thanks to the additional variant that – as previously said – emphasizes the feature [+small] because it is assumed that children’s shoes are generally smaller than adults’ shoes. As for the feature [+/-affective], it is not possible to completely confirm the positivity bias in the in-context condition since the *-chen* diminutive has received a low percentage. Overall, expectations are found to be not excessively varied.

3.2.4.9 *Schrank*

As for the item *Schrank*, data are once again not homogeneous and not expected, since for the isolation the most voted variant is not one of the three proposed, but an extra one chosen by the different participants. This variant is *Kommode* (with its graphical variant *Komode*) that has gained a 38.5%. According to the DUDEN dictionary, *die Kommode* is: “kastenförmiges Möbelstück mit Schubladen”⁷² that is “box-shaped piece of furniture with drawers”, hence a dresser, which is a specific piece of furniture with a different structure from a general cabinet. Therefore, the choice made by the participants here has probably been led by the image proposed in the questionnaire, which indeed shows a furniture item that reassembles more a dresser rather than a smaller cabinet. As for the other percentages, the diminutive variant prevails in the isolation (30.8%) while has got the lowest percentage in the in-context condition (15.4%), letting thus wondering that the diminutive perhaps is not strongly triggered for this noun, even when inserted in

⁷²<https://www.duden.de/suchen/dudenonline/Kommode> [6.1.2023].

a child-centered speech situation. On the other side, the standard variant here has been the most favorite one. As for the analytic variant, it has gained the same percentage for both conditions (23.1%), which also here is not as high as expected. However, in the isolation the diminutive variant has prevailed, therefore it might be probable that for such a noun a diminutive form is accepted to indicate the differences in sizes. Furthermore, another variant has been picked for this item, but now in the second situation, it is *Kinderschränk*. Here again a *Kompositum* with *Kinder* as one of the parts appears, and it is again worth data that supports the hypothesis because once again this kind of compound brings specific information about (1) the person that uses the bed in question, namely a kid, and (2) the size, which is, of course, smaller than a bed for adults.

As already said the data that have emerged from this item are very anomalous and very difficult to justify since there is not a clear mechanism behind the choices made by the participants. However, it might be stated that such an item is not particularly inclined to adopt a diminutive suffix in either condition or in a child-centered speech situation. In fact, as in the isolation, it is possible to justify the fact that *Kommode* has got the highest percentage because probably the participants have been led by the image, in the in-context it has not been the image that has wrongly guided the choice, as the picture shows a cabinet whose colors and size let assume that is inevitably a cabinet that would be found in a child's room. therefore, it is probable that such an item does not consider a diminutive suffix as a morpheme that brings the feature of [+affective] or that would create a more baby-talk-fitting word. On the other hand, it seems though that the diminutive would be appropriate to indicate the differences in size, bringing therefore a more marked feature of [+small]. At the level of feature, therefore, something has changed from what was expected:

ITEM	FEATURE	ISOLATION	IN-CONTEXT
Schränk	kinship	-	-
	human	-	-
	animate	-	-
	inalienable	-	-
	body-part	-	-
	young	-	-
	small	+	+
	affective	-	+

Table 28

Indeed, while the first features in the table have remained untouched, there are at least two considerations to do for the last two. Firstly, the feature [+small] remains with a positive bias - even if only in the isolation, but not for the expected reasons. In fact, it was supposed to have a higher percentage for the analytic form that would have proven the positive bias of this feature, but this positivity has been confirmed instead by the additional option *Kommode* (that is still a smaller piece of furniture compared to a standard cabinet) and the *-chen* diminutive variant. As for the in-context, it is though not possible to confirm totally the positivity since the standard variant has reached more than half of the choices from the participants. Hence, the differentiation in size by using an alternative has not been accomplished. Secondly, the feature [+affective] in the in-context might be assumed as positive, but only thanks to the additional variant *Kinderschrack* and not to the *-chen* diminutive. To conclude, this item is not fully inclined to adopt a diminutive form as it was expected; therefore, it seems that it might stand on the borderline of its category in the sense that its degree of familiarity is not so high as that of the other items.

3.2.4.10 *Tasse and Glas*

The items *Tasse* and *Glas* will be analyzed together because of their similarities in dimension and scope of use in the everyday life and because of some similarities in percentages that are worth discussing. Indeed, for both items in the isolation, the analytic variant has received the highest percentages (69.2% for both items) and then the second most voted variant is the *-chen* diminutive, having gained a 53.9% for the item *Tasse* and a 38.5% for the item *Glas*. The only variant that differs in its percentages in the two conditions for both items is the standard one: 0% for the item *Tasse* and a 7.7% for the item *Glas* in the isolation and a 30.8% for *Tasse* and 38.5% for *Glas*. in the in-context. Moreover, both items have produced some additional variants which are *Espresso Tasse* for the item *Tasse* and *Shotglas*, *Schnappsglas*, and *Miniglas* for the item *Glas*. Starting with *Espresso Tasse* (EN: espresso cup) what is firstly important to say is that it has appeared only in the isolation. Secondly, this noun cannot be merely defined as a *Kompositum*, since it is composed of two different and distinct words. Therefore, it would be better defined as a compound term, where the word *Espresso* is the modifier of the head, that is *Tasse*. Also in this case, hence, this additional variant expresses the scope of

the object, namely, to use this cup to drink specifically a certain kind of coffee, but also emphasizes the dimension, since an espresso cup is generally smaller than a teacup or other cups. As for the additional variants of the items *Glas*, there have been appeared three more in the isolation and these are *Shotglas*, *Schnappsglas*, and *Miniglas*. These three variants are all *Komposita*, and the first two have two similar meanings and both of them bring information about the scope, while the third one is about the dimension. Of course, all three indicate smaller glasses compared to the regular ones. The first among the three variants is *Shotglas* and is composed by the English word *shot* and the German word *Glas*. In order to explain the meaning of this word, it is necessary to refer directly to the English definition from the Collins Dictionary that states that a *shot glass* is: “a small glass that holds a single measure of spirits”⁷³. It is hence a kind of small glass that is used to serve and then drink spirits in small quantities. A similar meaning is found in the second variant, *Schnappsglas*, whose first word of the compound is the word *Schnaps* that according to the DUDEN dictionary means: “hochprozentiges alkoholisches Getränk, besonders Branntwein”⁷⁴, that is a “high-proof alcoholic beverage, especially brandy”. Therefore, the *Kompositum* would have the final meaning of a glass used to serve and drink spirits, especially brandy. The only information that this second variant shows more is the particularity that this kind of glass is preferred to use for the brandy. As for the third variant *Miniglas* there is to observe that this *Kompositum* has as the first element of the compound the adjective *mini*, that means “sehr klein”⁷⁵, that is “very small”. Therefore, this *Kompositum* highlights only the feature of the size of the glass, that is clearly [+small], and brings no information about the scope nor the kind of drink that is generally served in such glass.

At the level of features, the expected situations are the following:

ITEM	FEATURE	ISOLATION	IN-CONTEXT
Tasse	kinship	-	-
	human	-	-
	animate	-	-
	inalienable	-	-
	body-part	-	-
	young	-	-

⁷³ <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/shot-glass> [7.1.2023].

⁷⁴ <https://www.duden.de/rechtschreibung/Schnaps> [7.1.2023].

⁷⁵ <https://www.duden.de/rechtschreibung/mini> [7.1.2023].

	small	+	+
	affective	-	+

Table 29

ITEM	FEATURE	ISOLATION	IN-CONTEXT
Glas	kinship	-	-
	human	-	-
	animate	-	-
	inalienable	-	-
	body-part	-	-
	young	-	-
	small	+	+
	affective	-	+

Table 30

After having analyzed either the percentages reached or the kinds of additional variants, it is possible to affirm that generally the expectations about the features have been confirmed. Besides the first ones of the list that firmly stayed the same, also the features [+/-small] and [+/-affective] have resulted to be as predicted. In fact, as for the isolation, the smallness of both items is marked not only thanks to the fact that the analytic form has got the highest percentage – confirming also the assumption that German speakers opt for this variant when wanting to emphasize the differences in the size of objects – and thanks to the additional variants that denote their smallness. As for the feature [+/-affective], it is also possible to confirm the expectations since (1) even if the *-chen* diminutive has reached a high percentage in the isolation, this does not mean that this form in the isolation brings the information of affection, but of size instead – as it has occurred for some previous items too and (2) in the in-context then it might also be confirmed as positive because of the prevalence of the short forms over the standard one.

3.2.4.11 *Spiegel*

As for the item *Spiegel*, the initial hypothesis might be considered valid only in the isolation, because the analytic variant prevails over the other two with a great percentage, namely the 61.5% over the 15.4% for the *-lein* diminutive and the 7.7% for the standard variant. On the contrary, in the in-context, the results are not the wished ones, as it has been the standard variant that has got the greatest percentage, namely the 61.5% against a 30.8% gained by both short forms. However, even if the *-lein* diminutive has not been the favorite in the second condition, it has still gained a higher percentage here

than in the isolation; therefore, it may be possible to assume that German speakers would rather use this form in a child-centered speech situation, marking hence the degree of affection than to use it to make a differentiation in size – where the analytic has actually and successfully prevailed.

Furthermore, in the isolation condition four more options have been added, namely *Kosmetikspiegel*, *Standspiegel*, *Standspiegel*, and *Schminkspiegel*, and most of them emphasize the smallness of the item. The variant *Kosmetikspiegel* has not been found in neither the DUDEN nor the DWDS dictionaries, but in another online German dictionary that is Wort Bedeutung, that provides this definition “ein vergrößernder Spiegel, der für gesichtskosmetische Handlungen wie Schminken und Rasieren genutzt wird”⁷⁶, that means “an enlarging mirror used for facial cosmetic acts such as make-up and shaving”. Moreover, this noun is defined by the same dictionary as *Kompositum*, or more specifically as a “Determinativkomposita aus den Substantiven *Kosmetik* und *Spiegel*”⁷⁷, namely a “determinative compound of the nouns *Kosmetik* (cosmetic) and *Spiegel* (mirror)”. Therefore, the compound brings either information of the scope of the item (facial cosmetic) or somehow of the size, as the definition makes deduce. The second variant, i.e., *Standspiegel* is defined in the DUDEN dictionary as a “Spiegel, der (z. B. auf einem Fuß o. Ä.) frei steht (etwa im Gegensatz zu einem Wandspiegel)”⁷⁸, that means “mirror that stands freely (e.g., on a foot or similar) (as opposed to a wall mirror, for example)”. This definition does not essentially bring some explicit information about the size of the item nor the scope, but merely about the structure. However, mirrors that can stand freely are usually set on a table, therefore, it might be assumed that these are generally smaller than a standard mirror. As for the variant *Schminkspiegel*, its definition has not been found in any German dictionary, therefore it must be analyzed as a *Kompositum*, made up of the words *Schminke* and *Spiegel*. According to the DUDEN dictionary the word *Schminke* means a “kosmetisches Mittel in Form von farbigen Cremes, Pudern, Fettstiften o. Ä., das besonders für die Gesichtshaut, Lippen, Augenbrauen zur Verschönerung oder (besonders in der Schauspielkunst) Veränderung des Aussehens benutzt wird”⁷⁹, that is a “cosmetic product in the form of colored creams,

⁷⁶ <https://www.wortbedeutung.info/Kosmetikspiegel/> [6.1.2023].

⁷⁷ Ibidem

⁷⁸ <https://www.duden.de/rechtschreibung/Standspiegel> [7.1.2023].

⁷⁹ <https://www.duden.de/rechtschreibung/Schminke> [7.1.2023].

powders, lipsticks, etc., used especially for the skin of the face, lips, eyebrows to beautify or (especially in acting) change the appearance”. The equivalent of this word would be “cosmetic” again; therefore, the final meaning of this compound would be the same of *Kosmetikspiegel*, and hence its synonym. Hence, the same analysis made previously is valid here. The final additional variant is *Tisch Spiegel*, that is not a *Kompositum*, but a compounded term – as seen previously with *Expresso Tasse*. Indeed, this term is also composed by two different and distinct nouns, where *Tisch* (table) would be considered as the modifier of the head, that is *Spiegel*. The final meaning of this term would be “table mirror”, hence a small mirror that stands on a table. This variant seems to be then a synonym of the second additional option analyzed, i.e., *Standspiegel*, therefore the same analysis is valid for this last term too.

As for the features, the expectations are the following:

ITEM	FEATURE	ISOLATION	IN-CONTEXT
Spiegel	kinship	-	-
	human	-	-
	animate	-	-
	inalienable	-	-
	body-part	-	-
	young	-	-
	small	+	+
	affective	-	+

Table 31

A few consideration can be done for the feature [+/-small] that might be confirmed in its positive polarization for the isolation thanks to the great number of additional variants that directly express the difference of size, i.e., the smallness. As for the feature [+/-affective], it cannot be considered as positively polarized for neither conditions because the number of diminutives form is very law. This means that not only the diminutive form does not denote the smallness of this item for the isolation, but also that for the in-context condition the pragmatical aspect was not influent enough to trigger the diminutivization process. Therefore, such item does not have such a high degree of familiarity as the other items of this category.

3.2.4.12 Final considerations about the third category

What was expected from these items was the preference of the analytic form for the isolation condition, since it is supposedly the most valid one to use to name the smaller object of the two, and a majority of votes for the diminutive form in the in-context, since these items still belong to the familiar lexicon and hence have an [+affective] inherent feature. The results have shown though not very homogeneous data since some items have behaved as expected while others have not so much. Therefore, it might be guessed that there are some kinds of sub-categories of the lexicon in which a small group of items behaves furtherly following a specific pattern. In fact, there have been cases in which the diminutive has been chosen for the isolation too, hence, to mark the difference in size (e.g., *Buch, Zahn, Bett*), and others in which it did not, but had produced the expected percentages (e.g., *con Flasche, Löffel, Glas, Tasse, Teller* – and for the last two the analytic form has prevailed in both contexts). This second sub-category – that has generally confirmed the predictions – is composed of such items that not only are those used in the everyday life but more specifically are those that are present on a dinner table. It may be said hence that for this specific sub-category of items, the diminutive hardly attaches because the analytic form has instead a strong influence and more frequently and easily succeed to prevail when it is asked to make a size distinction.

Furthermore, another consideration can be done for this category. Indeed, it can be said that generally the standard form has been less chosen in the isolation condition than in the in-context, because not intuitively valid to indicate a smaller object when compared to its bigger one. However, the standard form seems to be more competitive with the diminutive variant to be selected in the baby talk.

To conclude, the overall outline of the results shows a clear preference for the variants that mark the differentiation in size in isolation and a preference for the variants that bring or produce a certain degree of affection in the in-context.

3.2.5 Fourth category – fillers

The fourth part of the analysis concerns the observation of the items belonging to the category of the “fillers”, namely items that indicate mainly objects, thus having the features [-human] [-animal], which do not belong to a familiar lexicon, but rather to

almost or completely different field. In this part the analysis will be the same of the other categories, hence it will show the percentages, the changes in features comparing them with the expectations, and the differences that occurred in the two conditions, isolation and in-context, observing whether the results support the initial assumptions or not. Here the percentages expected are not the same as the previous categories – especially the first and the second ones – since these final five items do not belong to the familiar lexicon and are merely objects, therefore have the inherent feature of [-animate]. However, what is expected here is a differentiation in size with a marked feature of [+small] for the isolation and some hits for the short form – especially the diminutive one in the in-context situation, to prove that there is a certain trigger of this form when inserted in a child-centered speech situation. In the second condition though it is expected rather a [-affective] because those items are not supposed to trigger a positive bias of this feature, since they are too far from the familiar lexicon and not common for a baby talk speech situation. However, if some items will trigger even partially this feature, it will be a successful result for this work, because it will mean that the child context has triggered the participants to choose a more fitting variant for such context.

3.2.5.1 *Stoff*

The first item of this fourth and last part of the analysis, i.e., *Stoff* is indeed the one that has got the lowest percentages for the short forms, as predicted. However, the results are not completely unsatisfying to support the hypothesis, but there are some worth considerations that may be done. In fact, while for the in-context the diminutive variant has produced a 0% of hits and acquired on the other hand the full percentage (100%) for its standard variant, in isolation it has got a good 23.1% - which is the same percentage that both the analytic and the standard form have got. Therefore, the diminutive is not to be considered as a form that German speakers fully avoid for such items that do not merely belong to the familiarity lexicon, but that would use it, especially to provide information about the smallness. Nevertheless, having not produced any hit for the second condition, it might not be said that it would trigger a diminutive when in a child-centered speech situation. Therefore, in this case, the feature [+/-affective] has fully and certainly a negative bias for both conditions.

Moreover, within the isolation's results, it has produced the greatest number of additional variants by the participants, proving once again how the German language is prone to create compound words. These variants have almost all the same meanings – there is just a difference in some nuances. The additional variants are therefore *kleines Stück Stoff*, *Stück Stoff*, *Stoffstück*, *Stoffrest*, and *Stoffmuster*. All of these are the equivalents of the English term “piece of fabric”, except the last one that appears instead as the equivalent of “fabric sample”. Of course, this is only a slight difference in meaning, since for “fabric sample” there is much more emphasis on the fact that this piece of fabric is a specimen. However, as previously mentioned, the interesting results here are in the breadth of the extra proposed variants, which confirm how the German language tends to create compound words and prefer consequently the syntactic structure over the analytic one. The first thing to consider here is the difference existing between *Stück Stoff* and *Stoffstück*. The two variants convey the same meaning, hence “piece of fabric” even if they show two opposite morpho-syntactic structures. In fact, *Stückstoff* shows the expected order, which reflects the canonical SOV syntactic structure, that at the level of morphology follows the order modifier-head (hence, *Stück* is the modifier and *Stoff* the head); on the other hand, *Stoff Stück* shows the opposite morphosyntactic structure, hence head-modifier. It seems that this second morphological structure probably omits a third morpheme that would be placed in the middle of the two and would have the function of specifier of the relationship existing between the other two elements. This could be e.g., the German preposition *von* which is the English equivalent of “of”, that expresses the degree of relation; in this case, the preposition will inform that the second element (*Stück*) is a part of the first one (*Stoff*). This third element justifies therefore the unexpected head-modifier morphosyntactic structure. However, although it exists a difference in their structure, the final meaning – as said at the beginning of this short analysis – is the same. Therefore, being two perfectly equal variants, this could be seen as a case of *overabundance*, that is “the situation in which two (or more) inflectional forms are available to realize the same cell in the inflectional paradigm of a lexeme (i.e., to express the meaning arising from the combination of the lexical meaning of the lexeme and the morphosyntactic and morphosemantic feature values that define the cell)” (Thornton, 2019).

As for the other additional variants, *klein Stück Stoff*, is the short analytic form of the *Stück Stoff*, and compared to its standard form this one brings a further feature of [+small], putting emphasis on the difference of size. As for *Stoffrest* it is a synonym of *Stoffstück*, and it is a *Kompositum* composed of the word *Stoff* and *Rest* (“remnant”), meaning “fabric remnant”, that is still a piece of fabric. As for *Stoffmuster* it is again a *Kompositum* made up of the words *Stoff* and *Muster* (“sample”) which is a synonym of *Stoffstück*, because according to the DUDEN dictionary, the word *Muster* means “kleines Stück, kleine Menge einer Ware, an der man die Beschaffenheit des Ganzen erkennen kann”⁸⁰, namely, “small piece, a small quantity of a good, by which one can see the nature of the whole”. From the definition it seems therefore that this word brings the additional feature of [+small], supporting partially – as occurred for *klein Stück Stoff* – the initial hypothesis because in the isolation a differentiation in size has been marked.

At the level of feature, this is the expected situation:

ITEM	FEATURE	ISOLATION	IN-CONTEXT
Stoff	kinship	-	-
	human	-	-
	animate	-	-
	inalienable	-	-
	body-part	-	-
	young	-	-
	small	+	+
	affective	-	-

Table 32

The first consideration to make here concerns the degree of [-affective] that has been confirmed without any hesitations in both two conditions, excluding the possibility that the specific context would have barely triggered it, and hence confirming that some items that do not belong to the familiar lexicon hardly succeed into get diminutivized. The second consideration regards the feature [+small] that has been confirmed partially but only in the isolation and not in the in-context because no hints have been produced for any short form. The third consideration is the great number of additional variants that confirm the productivity of this language.

⁸⁰ <https://www.duden.de/rechtschreibung/Muster> [9.1.2023].

3.2.5.2 *Hammer, Schraube, and Knopf*

In the isolation condition, the short forms have obtained the highest percentages – the analytic one with a 76.9% and the *-chen* diminutive with a 30.8% - against the 0% of the standard form. The results coincide with predictions because the analytical form, which is the prevailing one for size differentiation, was the one that obtained the greater adherence. And it is what was asked in this section of the questionnaire. On the other hand, in the in-context the situation is completely the opposite; in fact, the standard form has gained the highest percentage (53.9%) while the short forms are the lowest, namely 38.5% for the analytic and 30.8% for the diminutive. This result is not negative at all from the moment that there would have also been the possibility of a scenario where no hints would have been produced. This means hence that the child-centered speech situation has succeeded in triggering such short forms and since there is no suggestion in asking the participants any differentiation in size, it means that these forms are considered applicable to the baby talk. The same situation occurred for the item *Schraube*, which has obtained the greater result for the analytic form in the isolation (76.9%) followed only by the diminutive form (23.1%) – while the standard form has got no hints at all. Also, for the in-context the situation is the same as the item *Hammer*; in fact, the standard form has gained the highest percentage (61.8%) followed by the analytic form (30.8%) and finally the diminutive form (23.1%). Therefore, for this item, the considerations previously are valid also here. As for the item *Knopf*, the resulting percentages show a similar situation to the previous two items. In fact, while in the isolation the analytic form prevailed with a 69.2%, followed by a 46.2% of the diminutive form (and none for the standard), in the in-context condition, it has been again the standard form that has gained the highest percentage (69.2%) and then the diminutive with a 38.5%. This last percentage thus suggests that German speakers accept the possibility of diminutivizing this item in a baby talk condition, although it is not necessarily the preferred variant.

At the level of feature, it is possible therefore to provide a similar analysis for all three items, since they have generated similar results. In fact, the three prospects of the expectations are the following:

ITEM	FEATURE	ISOLATION	IN-CONTEXT
Hammer	kinship	-	-
	human	-	-
	animate	-	-
	inalienable	-	-
	body-part	-	-
	young	-	-
	small	+	-
	affective	-	-

Table 33

ITEM	FEATURE	ISOLATION	IN-CONTEXT
Schraube	kinship	-	-
	human	-	-
	animate	-	-
	inalienable	-	-
	body-part	-	-
	young	-	-
	small	+	-
	affective	-	-

Table 34

ITEM	FEATURE	ISOLATION	IN-CONTEXT
Knopf	kinship	-	-
	human	-	-
	animate	-	-
	inalienable	-	-
	body-part	-	-
	young	-	-
	small	+	-
	affective	-	-

Table 35

Thanks to the analysis it is possible to confirm these expectations, since no inherent feature has radically changed. As for the feature [+/- affective] it may not be said that it has totally changed in its positive bias in the in-context, but that it is not a full negative, thanks to a good number of adhesions to the diminutive form.

3.2.5.3 *Tasche*

The last item of the analysis is *Tasche* and will be analyzed separately from the previous ones because it has provided different results, that are also very supportive to the initial hypothesis at the base of this work. In fact, whether in the isolation the results are like the other items, in the in-context there is a surprising and positive situation.

Indeed, in the isolation the analytic form has got the highest percentage, namely 69.2%, followed by the diminutive with a 38.5% and no hints for the standard form. therefore, the considerations to make here are the same of the previous ones. As for the in-context condition, it has been the diminutive form that has gained the highest percentage, i.e., the 61.5%, against a 15.4% of both the analytic and standard forms. This is a promising result and makes us assume that such an item is very prone to be chosen in its diminutivized variant in a child-centered speech situation. Hence, among the items of this category it would have perhaps a more marked feature of [+affection] that would make this word more prone to diminutivization in such a specific context. Therefore, at the level of feature, it may be possible to state that no radical change has been verified, but for the feature [+/- affective] that was not supposed to polarize positively in either condition, it did. Here is the table of the expected feature for this item:

ITEM	FEATURE	ISOLATION	IN-CONTEXT
Tasche	kinship	-	-
	human	-	-
	animate	-	-
	inalienable	-	-
	body-part	-	-
	young	-	-
	small	+	-
	affective	-	-

Table 36

3.2.5.4 Final considerations about the fourth category

The expectation for this fourth category were a prevalence of the analytic form to highlight the differentiation in size in the isolation and a small percentage of the diminutive variants in the in-context, that would have been triggered by the child context, since hypothetically the direct or indirect presence of a child in one conversation would influence on the choice of a diminutive form – that would furtherly increase and emphasize the degree of affection. Hence, by observing the results it seems that only the item *Stoff* has completely avoided the diminutive variant. As for the other items, there have been good percentages for it, proving therefore that even if these words do not belong to the familiar lexicon, they can somehow produce diminutives. Moreover, this

would prove consequently that although they do not have inherent features suitable for taking a diminutive suffix, when inserted into a child context the latter acts in such a way as to almost change their inherent features and subsequently generate diminutivization. To conclude, it seems however that also these “fillers” could be potentially diminutivized if a specific child context strongly prevails.

Conclusion

This work pursued the aim of investigating the morphological phenomenon of the diminutivization in the German languages, specifically in all the speech situations in which the Baby Talk is activated. More specifically, the goal was to detect if the German speakers are more inclined to produce the diminutive forms when they find themselves in a child-centered speech situation, hence, whatever speech situation in which at least one child is involved, either as direct or indirect participant. In the light of the morpho-pragmatics perspective proposed by Dressler (1994), this investigation bases on the hypothesis that it is this specific speech situation alongside the degree of familiarity of one word that would lead the speaker to choose the diminutive over the standard form in the Baby talk. In order to verify this hypothesis, this work found fertile ground in steady and respectable theoretical assumptions, which have been formulated by honorable experts. In addition, an investigation was conducted with the aim of producing useful data that would help observing firsthand what is claimed from the theory. Such research has been carried out through a questionnaire targeted to German native speakers (also with German as L2), hopefully having children or that are close to them in their everyday life (e.g., aunts, uncles, grandparents, and more, teachers, caretakers, and so on). After having received all the answers from the participants, the data have been retrieved from the questionnaire and sorted by item and by the two conditions, in a table – showing the percentages obtained too – to allow a smooth comparison of the behaviors that each item had in the two conditions. Further, the data have been discussed item by item, by observing the percentages and their inherent features, comparing then the behavior of each item in the two conditions.

As claimed at the beginning of this work, the investigation aimed to detect some main behaviors of the diminutives in the German languages, namely that 1) diminutives are used with a higher frequency by adults when they find themselves in a child-centered speech situation, 2) the higher the degree of familiarity the higher the possibility that the German speakers opt for a diminutive variant is, and 3) the diminutive suffixes might be triggered also for those nouns with an opaque or absent feature of familiarity if pronounced in a child-centered speech situation. It was hence predicted that the

diminutive forms would have been triggered more in a child-centered speech situation, and with a higher possibility if the items have a higher degree of familiarity. Taken this assumption, the family members' category is supposed to be the most suitable to the diminutivization, decreasing then progressively towards the categories of animals, object, and finally *fillers*. Moreover, for this last category in fact the prevision is that they would barely trigger diminutive forms; hence, only a few data must be considered a worth result because it will mean that it has been the specific context that has influenced the choice of the diminutive.

Hence, after the deep analysis of all results, it is possible to claim that, as for the first point, the family members' category has confirmed the expectations since it has been the one that has produced the highest number of diminutive forms, especially for the items *Mutter* and *Vater*, confirming hence the expectations. Moreover, having produced the highest number of additional variants (mostly diminutives), it could be possible to confirm also the fact that the German language shows instead a high productivity of diminutives, when the words in question have a higher degree of familiarity. As for the second category, namely animals, the diminutive forms have prevailed too, and in both conditions. However, for the isolation it was expected the prevalence of the analytic form or of the standard form, because there is no explicit reason that would make the isolation trigger the feature [+affective]. The only request was indeed to highlight the difference in age – or perhaps in size – of the animals. Therefore, according to the results, it may be assumed that such a form might be accepted by the German speakers both for differentiating in age and for use such words in a child-centered speech situation. Finally, the third category, objects, is also supposed to trigger a high number of diminutives since the items selected for this category still belong to the familiar lexicon because they are objects of the everyday life and are commonly found in a household. However, the selection of the diminutive form was expected for the child-centered speech situation, while for the isolation a prevalence of the analytic form since the *klein* + noun variant is statistically more used to name the smaller object of a pair. The expected outline was though confirmed not for all the items; however, it has been observed that the item that have behaved in the same way have got some additional common features that sub-categorized them furtherly. In fact, there have been cases in which the diminutive has

been chosen for the isolation too, hence, to mark the difference in size (e.g., *Buch, Zahn, Bett*), and others in which it did not, but had produced the expected percentages (e.g., *Flasche, Löffel, Glas, Tasse, Teller* – and for the last two the analytic form has prevailed in both contexts). This second sub-category – that has generally confirmed the predictions – is composed of such items that not only are those used in the everyday life but more specifically are those that are present on a dinner table. This prove how unsteady are the borders of the lexical categories and the inherent features of one word. This denotes precisely that as much as a word is arbitrarily confined to a certain category, the boundaries of the lexical domain could be easily weakened when this word is inserted into a specific context, which prevails, altering the expected behavior.

As for the second point, hence for what concerns the degree of familiarity and its potentiality of triggering the diminutives, it may be considered that, besides the high percentages obtained, the first category has produced some sociolinguistic variants when it has been asked the participants to name their own family members. This datum shows that the emotionality of the speakers has participated into the selection of the diminutive, proving the assumption that this process is not completely and merely led only by morphology but also by the pragmatic/contextual aspects. In fact, even if these have been produced in isolation, some participants have been affected by the pragmatic trigger of relating the generic naming of the family members to their own personal perspective. This might be hence the proof that the very strictly inherent high degree of familiarity of such items has led the participants to produce such variants that recall their habits in naming their own family members (e.g., the variants *nonno, zia*, but also *Mamabär* and *Papabär* that seems to be a typicality of only one participant). For the second category too, namely animals, there have been produced some similar data that recall the idea that the participants have tended to relate the animals in question to their own household, like e.g., the datum “calling the dog by its name”. Moreover, the overall results for both conditions have produced a great percentage for diminutives and some additional diminutives variants, confirming the assumption that the higher the degree of familiarity the higher the diminutive is selected. As for the third category, objects, it can be observed that when decreasing the scale of the degree of familiarity the words are less incline to select the diminutivization. In fact, here the diminutives have been generally chosen less than the

previous two categories if considering the data of both conditions. Nevertheless, the fact that the diminutive form has been chosen in the *in-context* where the analytic form has been concurrently chosen in the *isolation* let assume that the child-centered speech situation has impacted as expected.

The third point concerns the assumption that the diminutive suffixes might be triggered also for those nouns with an opaque or absent feature of familiarity if pronounced in a child-centered speech situation. It is hence the case of the fourth category, the one containing the *fillers* that have produced the smallest number of percentages in the research – as expected. However, the only presence of some votes for the diminutive variant may partially prove this assumption because even if they are at the end of the scale of familiarity and do not show the inherent feature [+affective], they would still get diminutivized because pragmatical-contextually affected by the child-centered speech situation.

Along with the concluding considerations related to the leading questions of this work, there are additional observations to be drawn for what emerged from the analysis carried out by means of the inherent features. In fact, the decision of analyzing the data by help of the observation of the behavior of the inherent feature finds its root in the idea that the evaluative suffixes select their bases according to their own inherent features. Therefore, the hypothesis is that some evaluative suffixes are more sensitive to those features that are more incline to be modified by the context rather than to those that are steady in the lexical root. Based on this hypothesis, the data produced by the research would allow us to verify the possibility that inherent features may be influenced by context. It is therefore possible to observe that some features are more inherent than others, e.g., the feature [+human] is much steadier in the lexical root and for this reason it is almost impossible that the context can alter it. In fact, no item has been modified for this feature, in neither of the two conditions. This cannot be said for the feature [+/-affective] that is much more vulnerable, and its outcome mostly depends either on the context or – more case-specific – to the relationship existing between the speaker and the item of reference. Such a consideration is found firstly in the theory of the proto-type (discussed in Chapter 3) and confirmed for the data of this research too. A second consideration concerns the fact that

not all but only some features are subject to different interpretation that changes with respect to the context; in fact, the data present some cases in which even if the same form has been selected in both conditions, not all their inherent features have generated the same outcomes, confirming hence the idea that the context influences and modifies the features' behavior. An example can be concerning the fact that the diminutive variant has been selected in both conditions but whether in isolation it had the role of emphaser of the youngness or smallness of the item, in the second it wanted to mark the degree of affection. Therefore, it is possible to claim that there are differences in the interpretation of the features in the two conditions, such as *isolation* and *in-context*. However, despite having produced some very interesting considerations, the methodology of analysis by features carries some restrictions and limitations. Considering that it is very difficult to restrain some features within their arbitrary categories and to polarize these features in a definitive way, it has been as well difficult to tag all the items once and for all, and consequently to control and predict their behavior. This confirms though Dressler's assumptions concerning the idea that the evaluative suffixes are influenced by the pragmatic/contextual counterpart alongside the morphological one, causing the impossibility to stigmatize them under definitive features – that may be in turn influenced from the context too.

Another limit that this research had found concerns the impossibility to access such corpora that could have retrieved some worthwhile results regarding the specific frequency of use of the items selected for this research in a Baby Talk condition, like the CHILDES corpus of the German language. This tool would have probably been a valid standard to elaborate data comparing them to an-already-detected frequency of use and occurrence of the same items in a child-centered speech situation. Therefore, this research had to rely only on the frequency data provided by DUDEN and DWDS, and thus on an indicated frequency that is out of any specific context. Another restriction that is typical of this kind of investigations and that resulted here too concerns the target. In fact, it would have been even more interesting if it was reached a more homogeneous and larger target audience. In this way, the outcome of the analysis would have resulted even more precise.

In conclusion, the present work has provided supportive data to the initial hypothesis and deserving of observation and discussion. Indeed, these data show that the German evaluative morphology is much more productive than what was expected. Hence, such productivity occurs mostly in those specific contexts and in the spoken language that seems to create a fertile ground for this morpho-pragmatic operation to be triggered. The wish is that this work may have aroused such curiosity in the readers that they will choose to use this research for further and future investigation.

Appendix

This section of this work provides all the data retrieved from the research in two tables of contents. Tables 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5, and 1.6 contain all the personal information given by the participants, i.e., gender, age, origin, and so on; table 2 provides all the answers given to the questions in the questionnaire, listing all the variations that were chosen and/or added. Some of them may have been condensed under the same denomination since are actually the same. In this table, each item is shown one by one in each of the two communicative situations, with all its variants, showing both the percentage and the number of responses received.

Table 1.1

Year of birth	Percentage (number of answers)
1952	7.7% (1)
1961	23.1% (3)
1963	7.7% (1)
1978	7.7% (1)
1981	7.7% (1)
1995	15.4% (2)
1997	7.7% (1)
2002	15.4% (2)

Table 1.2

Gender	Percentage
male	38.5%
female	61.5%
not specified	0%

Table 1.3

Country of origin	Percentage (number of answers)
Germany	46.2% (2)
Germany, Brasil	7.7% (1)
Italy	30.8% (4)
Irak	7.7% (1)
Switzerland	7.7% (1)

Table 1.4

Mother tongue	Percentage (number of answers)
German	69.2% (9)
German, Italian	7.7% (1)
Italian	7.7% (1)
Kurdish	7.7% (1)
German, Portuguese	7.7% (1)

Table 1.5

Other language(s) spoken	Percentage (number of answers)
English	76.9% (10)
French	30.8% (4)
Italian	53.8% (7)
Spanish	15.4% (2)
Portuguese	15.4% (2)
German (DE)	7.7% (1)
German (CH)	7.7% (1)

Table 1.6

Having children	Percentage
Yes	38.5%
No	53.8%
Stepchildren	7.7%

Table 2

ITEM	ISOLATION		IN-CONTEXT	
	VARIANT	% (number of answers)	VARIANT	% (number of answers)
Mutter	Mutter	23.1% (3)	Mutter	0% (0)
	Mutti	7.7% (1)	Mutti	7.7% (1)
	Mama	76.9% (10)	Mama	92.3% (12)
	Mütterchen	0% (0)	Mütterchen	0% (0)
	Mãe	7.7% (1)	-	-
	-	-	Mami	7.7% (1)
	-	-	Mamabär	7.7% (1)
Vater	Vater	30.8% (4)	Vater	0% (0)
	Vati	0% (0)	Vati	7.7% (1)
	Papa	84.6% (11)	Papa	84.6% (11)
	Väterchen	0% (0)	Väterchen	0% (0)

	-	-	Papi	7.7% (1)
	-	-	Papabär	7.7% (1)
Großvater	Großvater	7.7% (1)	Großvater	7.7% (1)
	Opa	76.9% (10)	Opa	84.6% (11)
	Nonno	15.4% (2)	Nonno	15.4% (2)
Großmutter	Großmutter	7.7% (1)	Großmutter	7.7% (1)
	Oma	76.9% (10)	Oma	84.6% (11)
	Nonna	15.4% (2)	Nonna	7.7% (1)
Tante	Tante	76.9% (10)	Tante	84.6% (11)
	Tantchen	0% (0)	Tantchen	15.4% (2)
	Zia	15.4% (2)	-	-
	Brigitte (Vorname)	7.7% (1)	-	-
Bruder (1)	Bruder	53.8% (7)	Bruder	30.8% (4)
	Brüderchen	15.4% (2)	Brüderchen	46.2% (6)
	Bruderherz	7.7% (1)	-	-
	Fratello	7.7% (1)	-	-
	kleiner Bruder	7.7% (1)	kleiner Bruder	53.9% (7)
	Bro	7.7% (1)	-	-
Bruder (2)	Bruder	61.5% (8)	Bruder	30.8% (4)
	großer Bruder	38.5% (5)	großer Bruder	76.9% (10)
	Bro	7.7% (1)	-	-
Schwester (1)	Schwester	53.8% (7)	Schwester	38.5% (5)
	Schwesterchen	7.7% (1)	Schwesterchen	30.8% (4)
	Sorella	15.4% (2)	-	-
	keine Schwester	15.4% (2)	-	-
	kleine Schwester	7.7% (1)	kleine Schwester	53.8% (7)
Schwester (2)	Schwester	46.2% (6)	Schwester	38.5% (5)
	große Schwester	38.5%	große Schwester	76.9% (10)
	ziehe oben ⁸¹	7.7% (1)	-	-
	sorellona	7.7% (1)	-	-
	habe keine Schwester	7.7% (1)	-	-
Cousin/e	Cousin/e	69.2% (9)	Cousin/e	84.6% (11)
	Cousinchen/Kousinchen	30.8% (4)	Cousinchen/Kousinchen	23.1% (3)
	Vornamen	7.7% (1)	-	-
Hund	klein Hund	15.4% (2)	der kleinen Hündin	61.5% (8)
	Hündchen	53,8% (7)	des Hündchens	38.5% (5)

⁸¹ I have identified the meaning of this answer by going through the details of the whole answers that the participants gave to the questionnaire and understood that the participant that had given this answer means to *see above* to the answer he gave to the previous answer, that is *keine Schwester*. Therefore, I will take this as valid and having the meaning of “not having sisters”.

	Hund	0% (0)	der Hündin	7.7% (1)
	Welpen	38.5% (5)	-	-
	das Junge	7.7% (1)	-	-
	mit dem Namen von dem Hund, ansonsten Feini	7.7% (1)	-	-
	-	-	des Hundebabys	7.7% (1)
Katze	kleine Katze	7.7% (1)	kleine Katzen	30.8% (4)
	Kätzchen	76.9% (10)	Kätzchen	76.9% (10)
	Katze	0% (0)	Katzen (pl.)	0% (0)
	Babykatze	7.7% (1)	-	-
	das Junge	7.7% (1)	-	-
	mit dem Namen	7.7% (1)	-	-
	kitty	7.7% (1)	-	-
-	-	Katzenjungen	7.7% (1)	
Vogel	klein Vogel	0% (0)	ein kleiner Vogel	38.5% (5)
	Vögelchen	76.9% (10)	ein Vögelchen	69.2% (0)
	Vogel	0% (0)	ein Vogel	0% (0)
	Küken/Kücken	15.4% (2)	Kücken	7.7% (1)
	das Junge	7.7% (1)	-	-
	Vogelbaby	7.7% (1)	-	-
Maus	kleine Maus	0% (0)	die kleine Maus	46.2% (6)
	Mäuschen	92.3% (12)	das Mäuschen	15.4% (2)
	Maus	0% (0)	die Maus	46.2% (6)
	Mäusekind	7.7% (1)	-	-
	Mausebaby	7.7% (1)	-	-
Fisch	klein Fisch	38.5% (5)	der kleine Fisch	53.8% (7)
	Fischlein	38.5% (5)	das Fischlein	30.8% (4)
	Fisch	0% (0)	der Fisch	15.4% (2)
	Babyfisch	15.4% (2)	-	-
	Fischjunges	7.7% (1)	-	-
	Fischchen	7.7% (1)	Fischchen	7.7% (1)
Bär	klein Bär	30.8% (4)	klein Bär	61.5% (8)
	Bärchen	46.2% (6)	Bärchen	30.8% (4)
	Bär	0% (0)	Bär	0% (0)
	Bärenjunges	15.4% (2)	-	-
	Eisbärbaby	7.7% (1)	-	-
	Bärenkinder	7.7% (1)	-	-
	-	-	Plüschtier	7.7% (1)
-	-	Kuschelbär	7.7% (1)	
Hase	kleiner Hase	15.4% (2)	der kleine Hase	38.5% (5)
	Häschen	84.6% (11)	das Häschen	61.5% (8)
	Hase	0% (0)	der Hase	7.7% (1)
	Babyhase	7.7% (1)	-	-
	Hasenjunges	7.7% (1)	-	-
Pferd	klein Pferd	15.4% (2)	klein Pferd	38.5% (5)

	Pferdchen	46.2% (6)	Pferdchen	61.5% (8)
	Pferd	0% (0)	Pferd	7.7% (1)
	Fohlen	46.2% (6)	-	-
	Pony	15.4% (2)	-	-
Buch	klein Buch	53.9% (7)	dem kleinen Buch	30.8% (4)
	Büchlein	61.5% (8)	dem Büchlein	38.5% (5)
	Buch	0% (0)	dem Buch	46.2% (6)
Zahn	klein Zahn	0% (0)	seinen kleinen Zahn	30.8% (4)
	Zähnen	69.2% (9)	sein Zähnen	53.8% (7)
	Zahn	15.4% (2)	seinen Zahn	23.1% (3)
	Milchzahn	15.4% (2)	-	-
Knopf	klein Knopf	69.2% (9)	-	-
	Knöpfchen	46.2% (6)	Knöpfchen	38.5% (5)
	Knopf	0% (0)	Knöpfen	69.2% (9)
Stoff	klein Stoff	23.1% (3)	-	-
	Stöffchen	23.1% (3)	Stöffchen	0% (0)
	Stoff	23.1% (3)	Stoff	100% (13)
	kleines Stück Stoff	15.4% (2)	-	-
	Stück Stoff	23.1% (3)	-	-
	Stoffstück	7.7% (1)	-	-
	Stoffrest	7.7% (1)	-	-
	Stoffmuster	7.7% (1)	-	-
Hammer	klein Hammer	76.9% (10)	einen kleinen Hammer	38.5% (5)
	Hämmerchen	30.8% (4)	ein Hämmerchen	30.8% (4)
	Hammer	0% (0)	einen Hammer	53.9% (7)
Bett	klein Bett	38.5% (5)	klein Bett	30.8% (4)
	Bettchen	46.2% (6)	Bettchen	61.5% (8)
	Bett	0% (0)	Bett	30.8% (4)
	Babybett	7.7% (1)	-	-
	Kinderbett	23.1% (3)	-	-
	Gitterbett	7.7% (1)	-	-
Flasche	kleine Flasche	92.3% (12)	ihrer kleinen Flasche	30.8% (4)
	Fläschchen	7.7% (1)	ihrer Fläschchen	53.8% (7)
	Flasche	0% (0)	ihrer Flasche	15.4% (2)
Teller	klein Teller	69.2% (9)	klein Teller	30.8% (4)
	Tellerchen	38.5% (5)	Tellerchen	46.2% (6)
	Teller	7.7% (1)	Teller	30.8% (4)
Stuhl	klein Stuhl	69.2 (9)	deinen kleinen Stuhl	23.1% (3)
	Stühlchen	46.2% (6)	dein Stühlchen	38.5% (5)
	Stuhl	0% (0)	deinen Stuhl	46.2% (6)
Löffel	klein Löffel	69.2% (9)	kleinen Löffel	30.8% (4)
	Löffelchen	30.8% (4)	Löffelchen	23.1% (3)
	Löffel	0% (0)	Löffel	53.8% (7)
	Teelöffel	15.4% (2)	-	-
Blume	kleine Blume	53.8% (7)	kleine Blume	15.4% (2)

	Blümchen	53.8% (7)	Blümchen	61.5% (8)
	Blume	0% (0)	Blumen	30.8% (4)
Schuhe	kleine Schuhe	46.2% (6)	kleine Schuhe	
	Schühchen	53.8% (7)	Schühchen	38.5% (5)
	Schuhe	0% (0)	Schuhe	53.8% (7)
	Hallenschuh	7.7% (1)	-	-
	-	-	Kinderschuhe	15.4% (2)
Schrank	klein Schrank	23.1% (3)	deinen kleinen Schrank	23.1% (3)
	Schränkchen	30.8% (4)	dein Schränkchen	15.4% (2)
	Schrank	23.1% (3)	deinen Schrank	53.8% (7)
	Kommode/Komode	38.5% (5)	-	-
	-	-	Kinderschrank	7.7% (1)
Tasse	kleine Tasse	69.2% (9)	deine kleine Tasse	46.2% (6)
	Tässchen	53.9% (7)	dein Tässchen	38.5% (5)
	Tasse	0% (0)	deine Tasse	30.8% (4)
	Expresso Tasse	7.7% (1)	-	-
Glas	klein Glas	69.2% (9)	klein Glas	30.8% (4)
	Gläschen	30.8% (4)	Gläschen	38.5% (5)
	Glas	7.7% (1)	Glas	38.5% (5)
	shotglas	7.7% (1)	-	-
	Schnappsglas	7.7% (1)	-	-
	Miniglas	7.7% (1)	-	-
Tasche	kleine Tasche	69.2% (9)	eine kleine Tasche	15.4% (2)
	Täschchen	38.5% (5)	ein Täschchen	61.5% (8)
	Tasche	0% (0)	eine Tasche	15.4% (2)
Spiegel	klein Spiegel	61.5% (8)	klein Spiegel	30.8% (4)
	Spieglein	15.4% (2)	Spieglein	30.8% (4)
	Spiegel	7.7% (1)	Spiegel	61.5% (8)
	Kosmetikspiegel	7.7% (1)	-	-
	Standspiegel	7.7% (1)	-	-
	Schminkspiegel	15.4% (2)	-	-
	Tisch Spiegel	7.7% (1)	-	-
Schraube	kleine Schraube	76.9% (10)	kleinen Schrauben	30.8% (4)
	Schraubchen	23.1% (3)	Schraubchen	23.1% (3)
	Schraube	0% (0)	Schrauben (pl.)	61.5% (8)

Complete questionnaire online:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1oJqb3m8UiVqSrDq53Bx27kLpT6kn58RRCUqU5fQS9dE/edit>

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Riassunto

Il presente lavoro si incentra su uno studio approfondito sull'utilizzo dei diminutivi nella lingua tedesca, precisamente tramite l'osservazione di questo processo morfologico nel Baby Talk. Questo processo morfologico è discusso in letteratura, che decreta la lingua tedesca come una lingua che permette la formazione delle forme diminutive attraverso il processo morfologico della suffissazione, che consiste nell'aggiunta del suffisso diminutivo alla forma base di una parola, a cui susseguono, talvolta, processi di riaggiustamento – morfologico e/o fonologico. Tuttavia, la frequenza d'uso delle forme diminutive non è poi così alta nella lingua tedesca, se relazionata alle altre lingue, come ad esempio l'italiano. Un motivo potrebbe essere la ristretta disponibilità di morfemi diminutivi, che in tedesco sono essenzialmente due, ossia *-chen* e *-lein*, a cui si aggiungono poi le varianti regionali (in particolare quelle austriache) o infantili (il suffisso *-i*). Secondo Lameli (2018), l'origine di questi due suffissi è longeva e risale al primo periodo del neo-alto-tedesco (1350 al 1650 circa), dove tra i due, il suffisso *-lein* era quello predominante. La situazione poi si è ribaltata nel diciottesimo secolo con una prevalenza del suffisso *-chen*, che si è mantenuta fino ad oggi. Il suffisso *-lein* resta comunque presente e maggiormente utilizzato nel genere delle favole. Inoltre, oggi la situazione diatopica vede la prevalenza d'uso delle forme diminutive nelle zone meridionali della Germania e in Svizzera e Austria. Nonostante l'attestata bassa frequenza delle forme diminutive – soprattutto nel tedesco scritto che nel tedesco parlato – ci sono delle situazioni comunicative in cui i diminutivi trovano terreno fertile di applicazione, secondo alcuni studiosi a causa di fattori pragmatici. Infatti, secondo Kiefer (1998), il processo di diminutivizzazione non può essere delimitato solo al ramo della morfologia, ma è in realtà condizionato anche dagli aspetti pragmatici del contesto. Più nello specifico, secondo il modello di Dressler (1994) la diminutivizzazione non è solo un processo morfologico, ma da un lato esso dipende dal contesto pragmatico/discorsivo, e dall'altro a sua volta questo contesto può alterare i tratti inerenti della forma base creando così una condizione tale da permettere al suffisso diminutivo di attaccarsi alla base. Inoltre, Dressler indica una serie di contesti specifici che sembrerebbero accogliere maggiormente la diminutivizzazione e sono il *child-centered*, *pet-centered* e *lover-centered speech situations* (ossia, le situazioni comunicative con in centro un bambino,

un animale domestico o l'amante). Il presente lavoro si occuperà di indagare l'applicazione dei diminutivi specialmente nella *child-centered speech situation*, ma in parte anche nella *pet-centered speech situation*. Per meglio definire la *child-centered speech situation* è necessario citare ulteriormente Dressler, che la spiega come una qualunque situazione comunicativa in cui un bambino – proto-tipicamente un bambino piccolo – è presente sia come parlante, che come destinatario, che come partecipante marginale che come referente topico (non presente).

L'obiettivo di questo lavoro è di ricercare e osservare se i parlanti tedeschi producano un numero maggiore di forme diminutive in una *child-centered speech situation* rispetto a altre situazioni comunicative più generiche, partendo dal presupposto che questo specifico contesto comunicativo, insieme all'alto grado di familiarità di una parola, attivi la suffissazione diminutiva. L'elemento di familiarità è considerato come quel gradato che si trova generalmente in tutte le parole appartenenti a un lessico familiare o che lo ricordino, comprendendo quindi tutte le parole con un marcato tratto di [+/-parentela], proprio quindi di tutti i nomi che indicano i membri di un nucleo familiare come ad esempio madre, padre, fratello, sorella, ecc., oppure animali domestici come cane, gatto, ecc., o tutti quegli oggetti di uso comune che si possono trovare tipicamente in una casa come forchetta, bottiglia ecc. L'ipotesi principale alla base di questo lavoro è quindi che questi *items* (ossia, queste parole) siano più inclini ad accettare il diminutivo sia per via dei tratti semantico-lessicali della loro forma base sia per via del contesto in cui vengono inseriti, ossia il *child-centered speech situation*. Una controprova sarà offerta da dei *fillers*, ossia delle parole che hanno un grado di familiarità opaco o completamente assente (es., parole appartenenti a un linguaggio tecnico o speciale). Questi *fillers* saranno quindi implementati nell'analisi per osservare se il contesto specifico, *child-centered speech situation*, abbia un'influenza anche su queste altre parole, per osservare se agisca anche senza il riecheggio dell'elemento di familiarità intrinseco di determinate parole.

Per dimostrare questa ipotesi è stata progettata una ricerca, che aveva l'obiettivo di osservare se 1) i diminutivi fossero usati con maggiore frequenza dagli adulti quando questi si rivolgono a bambini molto piccoli, specialmente quando un certo grado di familiarità viene attivato in una situazione comunicativa specifica, ossia il *child-centered*

speech situation, 2) i suffissi diminutivi possano essere attivati anche per quelle parole con un tratto di familiarità opaco o completamente assente, se pronunciate in un contesto di baby talk e 3) se con l'aumentare del grado di familiarità aumenti anche la possibilità che la variante diminutiva venga attivata dai parlanti tedeschi. Quindi, dopo aver considerato più metodologie, ho optato per un questionario rivolto a un target di parlanti tedeschi madrelingua (o con tedesco come L2), meglio se con figli o che sono a stretto contatto con i bambini nel loro quotidiano, come ad esempio zii, nonni, insegnanti. Il questionario trova le sue radici in un test psicolinguistico chiamato "The Cologne Picture Naming Test (CoNaT)", che consiste nell'utilizzo di immagini come innesco che permettano di far nominare al parlante ciò che vedono, senza l'ausilio di rappresentazioni grafiche come sinonimi o espressioni alternative che potrebbero interferire con la risposta finale. Inoltre, questo test funziona meglio se le immagini proposte rappresentano parole comuni della vita quotidiana, che possono essere indicate in modo oggettivo senza incorrere nell'ambiguità. Quindi, il questionario parte dai principi base proposti dal test per la creazione della struttura e per la scelta degli items, per poi svilupparsi secondo gli obiettivi propri della ricerca. Infatti, il questionario contiene items che provengono, nella maggior parte, dal lessico quotidiano, come consigliato dal test e utilizza le immagini come innesco per far nominare ai partecipanti ciò che vedono. Per quanto riguarda gli items, essi sono suddivisi in quattro macrocategorie, che convergono sotto le seguenti denominazioni: *family members* (membri della famiglia), *animals* (animali), *objects* (oggetti) e *fillers* (ossia le parole con un grado di familiarità opaco o assente). Nel questionario gli items sono proposti due volte, ogni volta in una condizione diversa, chiamate *isolation* (isolamento) e *in-context* (in-contesto). Più nello specifico, il questionario è suddiviso in due macro-sezioni che a loro volta sono suddivise in due sottosezioni speculari, sia per via degli items che nella loro struttura interna. Infatti, ogni sottosezione presenta la propria domanda guida all'inizio, che è da considerare per tutti i task proposti di seguito (e ovviamente appartenenti a quella sottosezione). Nella prima macro-sezione ai partecipanti viene chiesto di nominare gli items considerandoli nella loro condizione di isolamento, ossia senza collocarli mentalmente in un contesto specifico, ma soltanto per via dell'immagine che vedono; nella seconda sottosezione viene chiesto invece di nominare gli stessi items ma considerandoli in un contesto specifico, che è il *child-centered speech situation*. Così facendo sarebbe possibile

osservare i diversi comportamenti nelle due condizioni, verificando quindi se le forme diminutive appaiano effettivamente con maggiore frequenza sia nella condizione in contesto che in quella in isolamento. Se così fosse, si potrebbe provare che nonostante la lingua tedesca presenti un paradigma di forme diminutive abbastanza sterile e una bassa frequenza d'uso di tali forme, quando un parlante si ritrova in una conversazione che attiva il baby talk per via della presenza di un bambino potrebbe essere più incline a selezionare tali forme.

Una volta ultimato il questionario è stato inviato a tredici partecipanti selezionati secondo i criteri richiesti dal target. In seguito, le risposte sono state verificate nella loro validità e successivamente i dati sono stati estratti e smistati in una tabella che ne riporta tutte le varianti proposte e aggiunte, affiancate dalle percentuali ottenute. In questo modo sarebbe stato più semplice osservare il comportamento che ogni item ha avuto nelle due condizioni, osservarne la frequenza con cui ogni variante di ogni item sia stata scelta e analizzare il quadro ottenuto nella sua completezza. I dati sono stati quindi osservati da un punto di vista quantitativo, attraverso l'andamento delle percentuali prodotte, comparato con quello atteso proposto dai dizionari più autorevoli della lingua tedesca quali il DUDEN e il DWDS, così da poter verificare per ogni condizione se le opzioni scelte siano quelle attese o meno e quali sono stati i fattori che hanno determinato le differenze di comportamento nelle due condizioni. In seguito, i dati sono stati osservati nelle due condizioni con il fine di osservare e quindi verificare se nel concreto la condizione in-contesto abbia prodotto un numero maggiore di diminutivi o meno rispetto alla condizione di isolamento. Infine, i dati sono stati osservati rispetto ai loro tratti inerenti per verificare se questi siano stati soggetti a modifiche nel passaggio da una condizione all'altra. I tratti inerenti presi in considerazione per l'analisi sono [+/-parentela], [+/-umano], [+/-animato], [+/-inalienabile], [+/-parte del corpo], [+/-piccolo], [+/-giovane] e [+/-affettivo]. Questi tratti sono stati selezionati perché sono generalmente individuabili in tutti gli items presenti nel questionario o perché sono quelli attesi dalle due condizioni. Ci sono alcune considerazioni da fare però su alcuni di questi tratti, che sono quelli che potremmo definire come meno intrinseci alla radice lessicale, ossia [+/-inalienabile], [+/-parentela] e [+/-affettivo]. Per quanto riguarda il tratto [+/-inalienabile] sarà considerato in merito alla relazione esistente tra il possessore e posseduto, seguendo

la teoria di Haiman (1983), che considera quindi la relazione esistente tra due o più persone, o tra una persona e un animale, tra una persona e un oggetto, o una persona e la sua parte del corpo e così via. Per questo, questo tratto sarà considerato nella presente analisi quando un item mostra la presenza o l'assenza del tratto di parentela o di parte del corpo. Quindi se un item presenta il tratto [+parentela] o [+parte del corpo], allora questo item avrà un tratto inerente di [+inalienabile]. Qualora quest'ultimo venga polarizzato negativamente, allora ci sarà bisogno di osservazioni e discussioni specifiche. Un esempio per chiarire la spiegazione è l'item *Mutter*, il cui tratto [+/-parentela] potrebbe essere attivato sia in positivo che in negativo. L'esito dipenderebbe dalla relazione esistente tra l'item e chi lo enuncia in una conversazione. Infatti, in una condizione comunicativa di *child-centered speech* situation, questo tratto è atteso come positivo perché marcherebbe lo stretto rapporto esistente tra la madre e il bambino. Per quanto riguarda invece il tratto [+/-affettivo] vi è da considerare che è il più difficile da polarizzare in modo definitivo perché è uno di quei tratti labili e non fissi nella radice lessicale della forma base. Inoltre, vi è da considerare anche che il grado di affettività è molto personale e può variare a seconda del partecipante. Infatti, ogni partecipante ha possiede un'attitudine diversa nel mostrare affetto che potrebbe riflettersi nella scelta delle varianti per nominare l'item rappresentato in una data condizione. Nella presente analisi, questo tratto verrà quindi atteso tendente alla sua polarizzazione positiva nella condizione in-contesto o quando un diminutivo o una forma analitica saranno preferite alla forma standard. Questo perché a loro volta tali forme sono considerate come portatrici di un tratto inerente positivo di affettività. Si tratta comunque di una scelta economica e semplificativa perché tale tratto resta comunque quasi impossibile da fissare e perché, come già detto, il grado di affettività è molto personale. Un'ultima considerazione va fatta per i tratti [+/-piccolo] e [+/-giovane] che sono tendenzialmente attesi nella loro polarizzazione positiva nella condizione di isolamento quando verrà chiesto al partecipante di selezionare la forma che utilizzerebbero per indicare l'elemento più piccolo della coppia di animali o oggetti. Tuttavia, anche nella condizione in-contesto potrebbero essere talvolta attivati perché alcune varianti potrebbero portare un'informazione aggiuntiva riguardo la loro dimensione e/o età.

Dopo aver effettuato questo tipo di analisi, è stato quindi possibile rispondere alle domande poste all'inizio del lavoro. Ci si è chiesto quindi se 1) i diminutivi fossero usati con maggiore frequenza dagli adulti quando questi si rivolgono a bambini molto piccoli, specialmente quando un certo grado di familiarità viene attivato in una situazione comunicativa specifica, ossia il *child-centered speech situation*, 2) i suffissi diminutivi possano essere attivati anche per quelle parole con un tratto di familiarità opaco o completamente assente, se pronunciate in un contesto di baby talk e 3) se con l'aumentare del grado di familiarità aumenti anche la possibilità che la variante diminutiva venga attivata dai parlanti tedeschi.

Per quanto riguarda il primo punto, le ipotesi paiono confermate, soprattutto per via dei dati emersi dalla prima categoria di items, ossia i membri della famiglia. Qui, infatti, è stato prodotto il numero più elevato di diminutivi in entrambe le forme, specialmente per gli items *Mutter* e *Vater*. Questo dato risulta importantissimo anche per confermare che la lingua tedesca aumenti la sua produttività di forme diminutive quando trova sia un contesto favorevole che un alto grado di familiarità intrinseca della forma base. Anche i dati della seconda categoria, ossia quella degli animali, confermano ciò che è ipotizzato nella prima domanda, per via della prevalenza delle forme diminutive in entrambe le condizioni. L'unico elemento inatteso riguarda il fatto che la forma analitica *klein* + sostantivo non sia prevalsa nella condizione di isolamento, perché questa è generalmente quella utilizzata per indicare l'elemento più piccolo di una data coppia. Stando ai risultati si potrebbe ipotizzare che la forma diminutiva sia accettata dai parlanti tedeschi sia per enfatizzare la differenza nella dimensione e/o età, sia per nominare un oggetto a un bambino, attivandone l'elemento dell'affettività. Ancora, per supportare l'ipotesi di questa prima domanda entrano in campo anche i dati della terza categoria, ossia quella degli oggetti appartenenti anch'essi al lessico familiare, perché sono tutti oggetti che si possono normalmente trovare in una casa. La situazione attesa prevedeva una prevalenza della forma diminutiva nella condizione in contesto, per enfatizzarne il tratto [+affettivo], e una prevalenza della forma analitica nella condizione di isolamento, che avrebbe indicato la differenza di dimensione, enfatizzandone la piccolezza rispetto all'altro oggetto affiancato in foto. Ciò che è successo in realtà è stato che queste predizioni si sono avverate, ma non per tutti gli items. Sembra però che gli items che mostrano comportamenti analoghi abbiano degli elementi in comune, tali da sotto-categorizzarli

ulteriormente. Infatti, ci sono stati casi in cui il diminutivo è stato scelto sia per l'isolamento che per l'in-contesto (e.s., *Buch, Zahn, Bett*) e casi in cui solo per la condizione in-contesto, lasciando prevalere la forma analitica per l'isolamento (e.g., con *Flasche, Löffel, Glas*). In particolare, la possibilità di osservare questa ipotetica sottocategoria la si trova in questa seconda serie di items, ossia coloro che hanno prodotto una forma diminutiva solo per la condizione in-contesto e che quindi hanno coerentemente confermato le aspettative. Si tratterebbe quindi di una sottocategoria composta da tutti quegli elementi della vita quotidiana che in particolare si troverebbero su un tavolo da pranzo. Questo proverebbe inoltre quanto sia labile il concetto di categoria lessicale e di quanto lo siano i suoi confini e quindi anche la possibilità di fissare una volta per tutte i tratti di una parola, confermando così la teoria del prototipo di Rosch. Inoltre, questo denoterebbe che per quanto una parola sia arbitrariamente confinata a una data categoria, i confini del dominio lessicale possono essere facilmente indeboliti quando questa medesima parola viene inserita in un contesto preciso che prevale alterandone il comportamento atteso.

Per quanto riguarda il secondo punto di domanda, ossia ciò che riguarda il grado di familiarità e la sua possibilità di attivazione di un diminutivo, si potrebbe osservare che, oltre l'alto numero di percentuali ottenute, la prima categoria ha prodotto un numero non indifferente di varianti sociolinguistiche nella condizione di isolamento, ossia quando è stato chiesto al parlante di indicare un membro della famiglia. Questo dato dimostra che la componente emozionale di un parlante partecipi nella selezione della variante diminutiva, confermando l'idea che tale processo non sia unicamente mosso e guidato dalla morfologia, ma che debbano essere considerati anche tutti gli altri aspetti pragmatico/contextuali. Anche se prodotti in una condizione di isolamento, si potrebbe osservare come alcuni partecipanti siano stati condizionati da una motivazione pragmatica che li ha portati ad associare il membro generico della famiglia al loro proprio, rispetto alla percezione personale. Di conseguenza, si potrebbe affermare che l'elevato grado di familiarità di tali items abbia influenzato la scelta nei parlanti di selezionare la variante che abitualmente sceglierebbero per nominare il proprio familiare. Questo validerebbe la presenza di dati come *nonno, zia*, ma anche *Mamabär e Papabär*. Un caso simile è stato verificato anche per la seconda categoria, ossia quella degli animali, in cui

si osserverebbe un'analogia tendenza nei parlanti a produrre le varianti che sono soliti utilizzare per nominare il proprio animale domestico, come ad esempio il dato che esemplifica il chiamare il cane per nome. In generale, si può affermare che i risultati abbiano prodotto per entrambe le condizioni dei dati che hanno generato un alto numero di diminutivi e tante altre varianti diminutive aggiuntive, confermando l'idea che maggiore sia il grado di familiarità, maggiore diventa la possibilità che avvenga il processo di diminutivizzazione della forma base di una parola. Riguardo invece la terza categoria, ossia quella degli oggetti, queste considerazioni sembrano indebolirsi. Tuttavia, l'indebolimento è conforme all'ipotesi, perché in questa categoria il grado di familiarità risulta già più basso rispetto alle prime due, per poi scemare completamente per la quarta. Infatti, questi items sono quelli che sono meno inclini a adottare un diminutivo e i dati lo confermano. Tuttavia, la maggioranza di diminutivi la si ritrova comunque nella condizione in-contesto che in quella in isolamento, confermando quindi l'idea che il contesto specifico eserciti un'influenza sul risultato finale.

Infine, il terzo punto in questione riguarda l'idea che i suffissi diminutivi possano essere attivati anche per quelle parole che hanno un grado di familiarità opaco o del tutto assente se enunciate in una *child-centered speech situation*. È questo quindi il caso della quarta categoria, ossia quella relativa alle parole *fillers*. Come previsto dalle aspettative, questa è la categoria che ha prodotto il numero minore di diminutivi; tuttavia, la sola presenza di alcune preferenze per queste forme da parte dei partecipanti è un risultato notevole perché significherebbe che il contesto specifico ha avuto un'influenza non indifferente nella scelta della variante. Inoltre, nonostante questa categoria sia posizionata nel punto più basso della scala di familiarità e mostri un tratto intrinseco di affettività molto basso, ha comunque prodotto diminutivi per via dell'aspetto pragmatico/contestuale.

Oltre alle considerazioni effettuate sui dati rispetto al loro comportamento in relazione alle domande poste inizialmente, ci sono ulteriori osservazioni da fare riguardo l'analisi effettuata tramite i tratti inerenti. Tale analisi è stata portata avanti perché questo lavoro si basa sull'idea che i suffissi valutativi selezionino le loro basi secondo i loro tratti inerenti. Ciò ne consegue la postulazione dell'ipotesi per cui alcuni suffissi valutativi siano più sensibili a quei tratti che sono più inclini a essere modificati dal contesto che da

quelli che sono fissi nella loro radice lessicale. Per questo, i risultati mostrano comunque dei dati che permettono di poter verificare la possibilità che i tratti inerenti possano essere influenzati dal contesto e di constatare che alcuni tratti siano più inerenti di altri. Ad esempio, il tratto [+/-human] è uno di quelli più stabili nella radice lessicale e per questo diventa difficile che il contesto possa alterarlo. Infatti, nessun item è stato modificato in questo tratto. Invece, un tratto come [+/-affettivo] è molto più vulnerabile e quindi più alterabile dal contesto in cui viene immesso; il risultato dipenderebbe quindi sia dal contesto o in questo caso dalla relazione esistente tra il parlante e l'item in questione.

Un'altra considerazione riguarda il fatto che non tutti i tratti ma solo alcuni sono soggetti a diverse interpretazioni che cambiano rispetto al contesto. Infatti, tra i dati ci sono casi in cui sebbene una stessa forma sia stata selezionata in entrambe le condizioni, i tratti inerenti non risultano uguali. Questo confermerebbe quindi l'ipotesi che il contesto modifichi il comportamento e quindi l'esito dei tratti di una data parola. Per essere più chiari, è osservabile nei dati un caso in cui una variante diminutiva sia stata selezionata in entrambe le condizioni, ma in quella di isolamento sia stato scelto per indicare la differenza di dimensione, polarizzando in positivo quindi il tratto [+piccolo], mentre in quella di in-contesto demarchi il grado di affettività, positivizzando il tratto [+affettivo]. Nonostante ciò, questo tipo di analisi comporta dei limiti, che meritano di essere esplicitati. Infatti, vi è da considerare la difficoltà di delimitare i tratti in categorie arbitrarie e di polarizzarle in modo definito e una volta per tutte. Questo ne consegue un'ulteriore difficoltà di etichettare tutti gli items in modo definitivo e quindi di predirne e controllarne il loro comportamento. Ciò confermerebbe la teoria di Dressler per cui i suffissi valutativi siano influenzati dall'aspetto pragmatico/contextuale tanto quanto dalla morfologia, provocando l'impossibilità di stigmatizzare le parole attraverso tratti definitivi.

Un altro limite di questa ricerca riguarda l'impossibilità di accesso a corpora che avrebbero fornito dati di supporto per controllare la frequenza d'uso di ogni item in una condizione tipica di baby talk. Uno di questi è il CHILDES corpus of the German Language, che sarebbe stato un valido strumento per mettere a paragone la frequenza d'uso già attestata con quella prodotta dai dati del questionario, osservandoli nella stessa

situazione comunicativa, ossia quella del *child-centered speech situation*. Tuttavia, l'analisi si è limitata a considerare come standard di riferimento i dati forniti dai due dizionari più referenziati della lingua tedesca ossia il DUDEN e il DWDS, e quindi basandosi su dati di frequenza fuori da ogni tipo di contesto specifico.

Un'altra restrizione ancora che risulta comunque tipica di una simile indagine riguarda il raggiungimento di un target omogeneo. Infatti, idealmente sarebbe stato più proficuo aumentare il numero dei partecipanti e normalizzarli maggiormente, in modo da validare ulteriormente il risultato complessivo dell'analisi, rendendolo ancora più preciso e accurato.

In conclusione, è possibile constatare che il presente lavoro abbia fornito dei dati tali da supportare l'ipotesi iniziale e che meritano attenzione e discussione. In particolare, è importante sottolineare come la morfologia valutativa tedesca sia molto più produttiva di quello che consigliano le aspettative e che tale produttività avvenga soprattutto se il contesto comunicativo e il linguaggio parlato siano tali da offrirne il giusto terreno fertile di operabilità per tale processo morfo-pragmatico. L'augurio è che questo lavoro abbia fatto sorgere nel lettore una curiosità tale da portarlo a utilizzare questa ricerca come base per indagini future.

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