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Latvian Diminutives in English Translations of Prose: Overview of Phd Research

Summary

This article aims to demonstrate that the connotations conveyed by morphological diminutives in Latvian source texts can be rendered into English through a range of various linguistic devices, despite the differences between the two languages. In order to achieve this aim, an overview of the PhD research “Semantic and Pragmatic Aspects of Rendering Diminutives in English Translations of Latvian Prose” is offered in this article.

The aim of the PhD research was twofold: firstly, to study and contrast Latvian diminutives and their English counterparts in the context of translation studies and, secondly, to develop guidelines for translators enabling them to apply the results of contrastive analysis in the translation skills acquisition and translation process, and for developing similar support tools to overcome challenges caused by language and cultural differences.

In view of the fact that the rendering of meanings and connotations of diminutives constitutes a complex research problem, as the objects involved are varied and multifaceted, and their resolution emerges through a creative interplay among multiple factors, consequently, the study employs a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods and instruments: descriptive analysis of the theoretical literature, contrastive and comparative qualitative and quantitative analysis of the excerpted language material, translation experiment, Think Aloud Protocols and Dialogue Think Aloud Protocols, questionnaires of translation experiment participants and experts of the translation field.

One of the outputs of the PhD research is the first comprehensive contrastive analysis of Latvian morphologically derived diminutives and the corresponding morphological and analytic means used to convey equivalent connotations in English. This analysis integrates data from multiple levels of practice, comparing source texts with translations produced both by students and practising translators. Interpreting these findings within the framework of translation studies enabled the creation of another output of this PhD research – a support tool for translators grounded in findings from analysing the theoretical literature of linguistics and translation studies and actual

translation practice. The insight into the three PhD research stages, key findings and results described in this article demonstrate that the connotations implied by Latvian morphological diminutives can be rendered into English by combining various translation solutions and a wide range of linguistic devices, mainly analytical means. The chosen translation solutions and linguistic means depend on the specifics of the literary work to be translated and the context of the diminutive use.

Keywords: diminutive, diminutivity, translation, connotation, rendering, counterpart.

LATVIEŠU DEMINUTĪVI PROZAS TULKOJUMOS ANĢĻU VALODĀ: PROMOCIJAS DARBA PĀRSKATS

Kopsavilkums

Raksta mērķis ir parādīt, ka, neskatoties uz atšķirībām valodu starpā, latviešu avottekstos lietoto morfoloģiski darināto deminutīvu konotācijas ir iespējams atveidot tulkojumos anģļu valodā ar daudzveidīgu lingvistisko līdzekļu palīdzību. Šim nolūkam rakstā ir sniegts pārskats par promocijas darba "Deminutīvu atveides semantiskais un pragmatiskais aspekts latviešu prozas tulkojumos anģļu valodā" pētījumu un rezultātiem.

Promocijas darba mērķis bija, pirmkārt, izpētīt un sastatīt latviešu valodas deminutīvus un to anģļu valodas atbilstmes tulkojumzinātnes kontekstā, otrkārt, izstrādāt ieteikumus tulkotājiem iegūto sastatījuma rezultātu praktiskai lietošanai tulkošanas prasmju un tehniku apguvē, tulkošanas praksē un līdzīgu atbalsta materiālu izveidē kultūras un valodas atšķirību radīto izaicinājumu risināšanai.

Deminutīvu nozīmju, konotāciju un funkcionālo aspektu atveide tulkojumos ir komplicēta pētniecības problēma, jo analizējamie objekti ir gan daudzskaitlīgi, gan daudzveidīgi. Šo aspektu risinājumi rodami radošā un dinamiski strukturētā mijiedarbībā starp dažādiem iesaistītajiem elementiem. Tādēļ pētījumā izvēlēta kompleksa pieeja, apvienojot kvalitatīvās un kvantitatīvās metodes un instrumentus: teorētiskās literatūras deskriptīvo analīzi, ekscerpētā valodas materiāla sastatāmo un salīdzināmo kvalitatīvo un kvantitatīvo analīzi, tulkošanas eksperimentu, skaļdomāšanas protokolus un dialogprotokolus, tulkošanas eksperimenta dalībnieku un nozares ekspertu anketēšanu.

Promocijas darbā pirmo reizi tiek piedāvāts detalizēts latviešu morfoloģiski atvasināto deminutīvu sastatījums ar anģļu valodas morfoloģiskajiem un analītiskajiem līdzekļiem, ar kuru palīdzību iespējams izteikt līdzvērtīgas konotācijas. Pētījuma praktiskajā daļā sastatījuma rezultāti ir pētīti gan studiju praksē, sastatāmi analizējot avottekstus un topošo tulkotāju mērķtekstus, un nozares profesionālajā praksē, analizējot praktizējošu tulkotāju mērķtekstus. Izanalizējot sastatījuma rezultātus no tulkojumzinātnes skatpunkta, tika izstrādāti lingvistisko parādību sastatījumā un tulkošanas praksē balstīti ieteikumi tulkotājiem deminutīvu konotāciju atveidei anģļu valodā.

Rakstā sniegtais pārskats par promocijas darba trim pētījuma posmiem, galvenajiem secinājumiem un rezultātiem parāda, ka latviešu morfoloģiski darināto deminutīvu konotācijas iespējams atveidot angļu valodā, izvēloties konkrētā deminutīvu lietojuma kontekstam un daiļdarba specifikai atbilstošus tulkošanas risinājumus apvienojumā ar plašu lingvistisko, galvenokārt analītisko, līdzekļu klāstu.

Raksturvārdi: deminutīvs, deminutivitāte, tulkošana, konotācija, atveide, atbilde.

Introduction

The morphologically derived diminutive is an integral part of the Latvian language, enabling the conveyance of a broad spectrum of meanings, attitudes, emotive and culturally embedded connotations. As a morphological category, Latvian diminutives, with their numerous suffixes (cf. Rūķe-Draviņa 1959, 167; Vulāne 2013: 222–223), serve to convey culture-specific information and reflect the Latvian worldview (cf. Sīlis 2002; Sīlis, Sīle 2019; Vulāne 2002; Vulāne 2013). Their context-dependent implicit and explicit meanings and connotations pose challenges for literary translation, particularly into languages that employ non-morphological linguistic means to express such meanings and connotations. Translation difficulties in the Latvian-English language pair arise because English conceptualises diminutives on an onomasiological rather than morphological basis (Schneider 2003: 4; Schneider, Strubel-Burgdorf 2012: 15). Since diminutives frequently imply essential nuanced information, a character's (or author's) evaluative stance and other nuances, translators should find means to convey it to the intended target audience, while also preserving genre conventions, the author's style and intent, and other aspects. This task is often regarded as challenging by translators (cf. interviews by Rikše 2014; Kaukule 2018). Many translators, especially novice translators, often translate literally and generally fail to reproduce the connotations implied by source text (ST) diminutives (cf. Sīlis 2002; Veidenberga 2014b; Veidenberga 2020). Klaus P. Schneider proposes the broader concept of “diminutivity”, acknowledging that languages lacking diminutive suffixes express evaluative and emotional meanings and nuances through alternative linguistic resources (Schneider 2003: 4). The above-mentioned reasons highlight the relevance of the PhD research for the translation field.

This article aims to demonstrate that the connotations conveyed by morphological diminutives in Latvian source texts can be rendered into English through a range of various linguistic devices, despite the differences between the two languages. In order to achieve this aim, an overview of the PhD research “Semantic and Pragmatic Aspects of Rendering Diminutives in English Translations of Latvian Prose” (Veidenberga 2026a) is offered in this article.

The aim of the PhD research was, firstly, to study and contrast Latvian diminutives and their English counterparts in the context of translation studies and, secondly, to develop guidelines for translators enabling them to apply the results of contrastive analysis in the translation skills acquisition and translation process, and for developing similar support tools to overcome challenges caused by language and cultural differences. The following research questions were set forward to achieve this aim:

1. What are the similarities and differences between Latvian and English in expressing the meanings, connotations and functions of diminutivity?
2. Which translation solutions can be applied in order to transfer meanings, connotations and functions implied by diminutives in Latvian STs using the means of expressing diminutivity characteristic to the English language?
3. How to use the results of the English – Latvian contrastive analysis and the findings of the analysis of translation approaches and solutions offered by translation studies in order to overcome the challenges posed by the language and cultural differences of the ST and target text (TT) in the translation process and in the translation skills and techniques acquisition process?

The rendering of meanings and connotations of diminutives constitutes a complex research problem (Mārtinsone et al. 2016: 51–52), as the phenomena involved are varied and multifaceted, and their resolution emerges through a creative interplay among multiple factors. Consequently, the study employs a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods and instruments: descriptive analysis of the theoretical literature, contrastive and comparative qualitative and quantitative analysis of the excerpted language material, translation experiment, Think Aloud Protocols (TAP), Dialogue Think Aloud Protocols (DTAP), questionnaires of translation experiment participants and experts of the translation field.

This article is structured in line with the three key stages of the PhD research:

- stage 1 – analysis of Latvian and English linguistic theory sources to compare and contrast the linguistic means of expressing diminutivity in both languages;
- stage 2 – analysis of the results of stage 1 from the perspective of translation studies;
- stage 3 – practical application of the findings and conclusions of the theoretical literature analysis by developing a support tool for translators to overcome challenges caused by Latvian ST diminutives.

Research stage 1 – contrastive analysis

In Research stage 1, the similarities and differences between Latvian and English diminutives, particularly their meanings and connotations, were examined. Firstly, the descriptions of the diminutive in Latvian linguistic literature, including grammar and lexicography sources, were explored to argue the significant role of diminutives in Latvian and to emphasise the need to render their connotations in translation. Secondly, English linguistic literature sources were analysed by summarising the linguistic means used to express diminutivity and connotations in English. Thirdly, a contrastive analysis of the expression of diminutivity in Latvian and English was carried out.

The interdependence of language and human emotional experience has already been suggested by Wilhelm Humboldt in the 19th century, who maintained that language arises through speaking and that speaking conveys thought and feeling (Humboldt 1999: 10). Later psychological research similarly concluded that people encode in language what they consider personally significant (e.g., Malim, Birch 1998), including not only rational but also emotional aspects of experience. The relationship between language and thought, though rejected by some scholars (e.g., Chomsky 2006), has encouraged the author of this PhD research to seek English linguistic means for connotations conveyed in Latvian via derivative lexeme structures. Translators act as cultural mediators and should therefore be able to recognise that attitudes, emotions and feelings may be encoded in language- and culture-specific ways. Anna Wierzbicka (1992a: 3) maintains that all meanings are translatable, though cultural differences have their impact. Her work on universal human concepts and semantic primes (Wierzbicka 1992a; Wierzbicka 1992b; Wierzbicka 1997; Wierzbicka 1999; Wierzbicka 2011; Harkins, Wierzbicka 2001), known as the natural semantic

metalanguage (Wierzbicka 1997; Wierzbicka 1999; Wierzbicka 2011), provides tools for representing meanings in cross-culturally accessible terms.

This PhD research, examining the meanings and connotations of Latvian diminutives, primarily draws on the classification proposed by Velta Rūķe-Draviņa (Rūķe-Draviņa 1959) and Anna Vulāne (Vulāne 2002; Vulāne 2007; Vulāne 2013). Research in Latvian linguistics has predominantly addressed diminutives from the perspective of morphology and word formation (cf. Saule-Sleine 1955; MLLVG 1959; Kalme, Smiltnece 2001; Vulāne 2013; Kalnača 2015; Kalnača, Lokmane 2021), while Rūķe-Draviņa (Rūķe-Draviņa 1953; Rūķe-Draviņa 1959) has offered the most substantial analysis of their semantic and pragmatic dimensions. In “Diminutive im Lettischen” (1959), she identifies more than 60 diminutive formants in the standard language and dialects and delineates 17 meanings and functions, noting that their nuanced interpretation emerges only in contextual use (ibid.: 121). Diminutives may denote smallness, youth, endearment, or combined meanings such as small and dear, and they may convey emotions such as joy, affection, respect, regret, compassion, pity, contempt, irony, or intensification, as well as spatiotemporal precision (ibid.: 127–158). Neutral diminutives used merely to state facts (ibid.: 159) or maintain rhythm (ibid.: 165) are not relevant for analysing connotations. Building on this framework, Vulāne (Vulāne 2002; Vulāne 2007; Vulāne 2011) expands and refines these categories through her studies of folk songs and children's emotional development. In folk songs, diminutives frequently encode objects deemed worthy of emotional engagement (Vulāne 2002: 12). Beyond Rūķe-Draviņa's categories, Vulāne argues that diminutives may express humour (ibid.), praise or special favour (ibid.; Vulāne 2007: 85), and can soften discourse or convey modesty (Vulāne 2002: 12; Vulāne 2007: 81; Vulāne 2013: 228). They may also be used to name entities objectively superior to the speaker to establish a sense of equality (Vulāne 2002: 12) or harmony (Vulāne 2007: 85, 87).

It is frequently asserted that English possesses either no diminutives or only a very limited set, and that diminutive suffixes are generally unproductive (cf. Grandi 2011: 7). The examination of the English means for expressing diminutivity primarily draws on Schneider's research. Schneider argues that the term “diminutive” originates in traditional grammar and is characteristic of languages whose morphology resembles that of Classical Latin (Schneider

2003: 5; Schneider 2013: 137). Consequently, comparing diminutives as a morphological category in synthetic languages with English is misleading; instead, all relevant expressive devices within English as an analytical language must be considered (Schneider 2003: 55–56). Thus, Schneider proposes the concept of “diminutivity”, encompassing quantification, qualification, modification, gradation, intensification and evaluation, including nuances of size, attitude, appreciation and depreciation (ibid.: 4).

Contemporary English has 14 diminutive suffixes (ibid.: 79), most infrequent and some restricted to dialects, with nouns forming the dominant base and personal names constituting the largest derivational group (ibid.: 120). Semantic distinctions between the base word and derivative are reliant on contextual interpretation (ibid.: 122). Beyond prototypical suffixation (e.g., *-let* in *droplet*, *booklet*), Schneider identifies further morphological strategies, including reduplication (e.g., *John-John*, *goody-goody*), rhyming reduplication (e.g., *Annie-Pannie*), and truncation, especially for personal names (e.g., *Elizabeth* – *Lizzie*, *Andrew* – *Andy*) or for close objects (e.g., *bottom* – *bottie*, *football* – *footie*), often combined with *-ie/-y* (ibid.: 9; 84–85).

Cross-linguistic studies on the transfer of diminutive meanings into English, for instance from Spanish (Ruiz de Mendoza 1996), Czech (Chamonikolasová, Rambousek 2007), Slovenian (Sicherl 2013), or Polish (Biały 2017), demonstrate a predominance of analytical means, particularly expressive adjectives. Schneider likewise maintains that these means represent the principal alternative to prototypical diminutives, consistent with English as an analytical language (Schneider 2003: 122–123; also Naciscione 2010: 135–136). Size-related meanings may be conveyed with adjectives such as *small*, *little*, *tiny*, *wee*, etc. (Schneider 2003: 124–126; 135–136). Qualifying adjectives offer extensive possibilities for signalling connotations (Schneider 2003: 134–135): positive evaluations may be expressed with *dear*, *sweet*, while negative attitudes use adjectives such as *selfish*, *lousy*, *cheeky*; empathy or pity through *poor*, *pitiful*, *old*. They can also be combined for intensified effect, e.g., *you cheeky devil* (ibid.: 134), *you smug, self-righteous little scientist* (ibid.: 135).

The results of the above analysis have been compared and contrasted using Daniel Jurafsky's (Jurafsky 1993; Jurafsky 1996) model of Universal Tendencies in the Semantics of the Diminutive viewing them from the perspective of onomasiology (Schneider

2003: 56). Jurafsky's model (Jurafsky 1993; Jurafsky 1996) outlines tendencies of diminutives across more than 60 languages. This PhD research distinguishes the semantic meanings identified by Jurafsky, such as *child/offspring*, *small*, *small type-of*, and *related to* (Jurafsky 1996: 535–537), and the pragmatic meanings, including *affection*, *pets*, *intimacy*, and *contempt* (ibid.), which largely correspond to the Latvian diminutive meanings described by Rūķe-Draviņa (Rūķe-Draviņa 1959) and Vulāne (Vulāne 2002; Vulāne 2013). However, several nuances emphasised in Latvian linguistic literature, such as *flattery*, *irony*, *respect*, *reverence*, *praise*, and *special favour*, fall outside Jurafsky's model. Jurafsky further stresses that semantic meanings are frequently accompanied by one or more pragmatic connotations (Jurafsky 1996: 535), a view expressed in Latvian analyses that highlights the importance of contextual interpretation (e.g., Rūķe-Draviņa 1959: 121; Urbanoviča 2014: 147; Kalnača 2015: 253). Contrastive analysis based on Jurafsky's model (Veidenberga 2026a: 39–41; 42–44) supports the idea that equivalent meanings and connotations of the diminutive may be realised across languages by different linguistic means shaped by their respective cultural and structural characteristics.

Research stage 2 – contrastive analysis from the perspective of translation studies

In Research stage 2, firstly, the linguistic means and translation solutions used by translators to transfer diminutive connotations in published Latvian prose translations into English were extracted and analysed. Secondly, translation approaches and solutions were reviewed to identify the most suitable for transferring the connotations of diminutives from Latvian into English.

The language material for contrastive and quantitative analyses was excerpted from three anthologies of English translations of Latvian prose – *Bear's Ears* (2003), *New Latvian Fiction* (1998), and *Trafika Europe: Latvian Sojourn* (2015). Diminutives identified in the STs and their corresponding TT segments were compiled in an Excel database, where their contextual values were established, assessing whether each diminutive's meaning and connotations were fully conveyed, partially rendered through morphological or lexical means, paraphrased or compensated, or lost in translation. Despite frequent loss of diminutive connotations across all three anthologies, the results demonstrate that English analytical means provide considerable potential for conveying diminutivity. While

denotative smallness is commonly reproduced through adjectives such as *small*, *little*, or *tiny*, evaluative adjectives (e.g., *dear*) appear far less frequently, and morphological diminutives occur only when clear English equivalents exist (e.g., *memmiņa* – *mummy*, *vecmāmiņa* – *granny*). Nevertheless, the material also includes effective solutions, such as rendering *brālīti* and *bērniņ* as *little guy* and *sweetie*, or translating the ironic *putniņš* as *what kind of bird*. The overall results indicate a need for a practical aid summarising strategies for conveying implicit diminutive connotations in English, which would benefit translators. (Veidenberga 2014b)

To develop a translator-oriented aid, the contrastive analysis of Latvian diminutives and English expressive means was reinterpreted through the lens of translation studies (Veidenberga 2026a: 65–68). Wierzbicka's claim that meaning is, in principle, transferable across languages raises the question of how far such transfer is achievable when cultural differences intervene (Wierzbicka 1992a: 3). Theo Hermans emphasises that translation inevitably represents a discourse created in one sign system within a different one, meaning that the cultural "otherness" of the source cannot be fully eliminated (Hermans 1996: 12). Latvian diminutives constitute such a culture-specific feature, reflecting attitudes rooted in folklore (Vulāne 2002: 12), and may be difficult to reproduce even in closely related languages such as Lithuanian (Kvašite 2012: 251). Zoltan Kövecses likewise notes that connotative and especially emotional meanings differ widely across cultures (Kövecses 2003: 10). For this reason, it is essential for translators to understand the target audience's background knowledge and linguistic intuitions. Christiane Nord argues that analysing the ST and TT within their respective cultures enables translators to identify which elements require preservation or adaptation (Nord 1991). The choice between domestication and foreignization (Venuti 2000 [1989]; Venuti 2008) depends on the intended function of the translation, its readership and its skopos (Vermeer 2000 [1989]: 227; 229). Perception of meaning is context-dependent, shaped by linguistic and extralinguistic factors, background knowledge and the recipient's experience (Morris 1938; Horn 2006; Munday 2010; Nītiņa u. c. 2008). As Mona Baker and Jeremy Munday observe, the interpretation of texts is guided by the reader's expectations, which differ between source and target cultures (Baker 1992; Munday 2010). A pragmatic analysis of diminutives, therefore, assists translators in recognising crosscultural differences in language use and emotional expression.

Anthony Pym's typology of translation solutions (Pym 2016: 219–242), one of the most extensive classifications of translation approaches and techniques, synthesises earlier typologies (cf. Vinay, Darbelnet 2000 [1958]; Chesterman 1997) into a form accessible to both practitioners and novice translators. Pym's typology has been examined in this PhD research in relation to the linguistic means of expressing diminutive connotations in English as outlined by Schneider (Schneider 2003), and it has been found applicable for rendering diminutive meanings and connotations. Empirical evidence from the student translation experiment (cf. Veidenberga 2020) and previous analyses of published translations (cf. Veidenberga 2014a; Veidenberga 2014b) demonstrates that translators employ Pym's solutions when transferring diminutive connotations. In particular, Copying solutions enable the reproduction of diminutive morphology where contextually appropriate (Pym 2016: 221–213). The Expression Change category (Pym 2016: 223–231) facilitates the transfer of implicit connotations through strategies such as Perspective Change, Changing Semantic Focus, and Density Change. These approaches are attested in practice, for instance, using Explication to capture nuanced meanings (*spilventiņi* – *soft pillows*; *sievīņa* – *my dear wife*), Cultural Correspondence to convey attitudes such as contempt (*Profesorīte atradusies* – *Aren't we Little Miss Professor*), or Compensation to reintroduce lost nuances elsewhere in the text (cf. Veidenberga 2014b; Veidenberga 2020). Overall, Pym's classification provides a broad repertoire of options, with the optimal choice in each instance depending on text genre, translation skopos, target audience, author's style, context, and the translator's linguistic intuition and experience.

Research stage 3 – development, piloting and revision of guidelines for translators

The final phase of the PhD research comprised a systematic development, piloting, and revision of a practical support tool – “Guidelines for transferring connotations of Latvian diminutives into English”. These Guidelines were constructed on the basis of theoretical insights from linguistic and translation studies gathered in the earlier research stages, together with findings from the contrastive analysis of published Latvian prose translations. Given the complexity of the research problem (Mārtinsone et al. 2016: 51–52), a mixed-methods research design was adopted (ibid.: 194;

Tracy 2020: 5), primarily using qualitative methods and combining them with quantitative methods to identify general trends. A quasi-experiment (Mārtinsone et al. 2016: 127–128; Williams, Chesterman 2014: 63–64) was employed to assess the effectiveness of the Guidelines by observing the impact of controlled variable changes across comparable control and experimental groups.

The structure of the translation experiments was inspired by Schneider's experiment (Schneider 2015), in which pairs of translators produced translations while recording discussions to reveal how diminutive-related challenges were addressed. In this PhD research, Experiment 1 (control group) involved individual translation with TAP recordings, without informing participants of the specific research focus (Veidenberga 2020). Experiment 2 introduced pair work and DTAP recordings to examine both the chosen translation solutions and the practical value of the Guidelines in stimulating creative broader searches for ways to render diminutive meanings and connotations (Veidenberga 2023). Prior studies (Kusssmaul, Tirkkonen-Condit 1995; Bouziane 2015; Schneider 2015) indicate that TAP monologues are often unnatural, as translators rarely verbalise their thoughts spontaneously, whereas dialogic DTAPs promote interactive problem-solving and tend to enhance the quality of the final translation product.

Participants of both experiments translated the same fragments from the fairy tale “Hangman's Daughter” (*Bendes meitiņa*) (Skalbe 1979 [1913]) and a chapter from the novel “In the Shadow of the Rooster Hill” (*Gaiļu kalna ēnā*) (Zebriš 2014), recorded their TAPs and DTAPs respectively, and completed post-translation questionnaires. Each experiment involved fifteen students from English–Latvian–English translation programmes (Veidenberga 2020; 2023).

After collecting all data – TTs, TAPs/DTAPs, and post-translation feedback – each translation fragment and participant (or pair/group) received an identification code. Experiment 1 (15 participants working individually) produced 283 TT counterparts of ST diminutives, Experiment 2 (15 participants working in pairs/ small groups) produced 133. ST diminutives and their renderings were marked with colour codes, noting the use of lexical or morphological means to convey connotations and the loss of nuance. Translation solutions were identified according to Pym's typology (Pym 2016: 220), including cases where stylistically tinged lexical items elsewhere in the fragment compensated for diminished connotations.

Given the variables involved, the quantitative comparison of both experiments cannot be generalised, but it demonstrates that (a) diverse linguistic means combined with different translation solutions offer translators various ways to render Latvian diminutive connotations in English, and (b) translators often require encouragement, such as targeted advice, to stimulate their creativity. Although not all solutions proposed by participants were successful, and some misconceptions occurred, the discussions in Experiment 2 and the post-translation feedback confirmed that the Guidelines functioned as a productive source of inspiration (Veidenberga 2023). TTs from Experiment 2 show that participants applied the Guidelines and used a wide range of English linguistic means summarised by Schneider (cf. 2003: 7–15), such as rhyme and repetition, e.g., *gravy-grave*, collocations, e. g., *Baby Pauls*, truncation, e. g., *Paully*, and expressive adjectives, e. g., *fluffy pillows*, *the dainty daughter* (Veidenberga 2023).

Whereas the results of Experiment 1 largely resembled those of Schneider (cf. Schneider 2015: 483–484) and Sīlis (cf. Sīlis 2002: 112–113) – around 60 % of the ST diminutive connotations were lost, Experiment 2 produced markedly different outcomes: only about 16.5 % of the ST diminutive connotations were lost. Overall, participants in Experiment 2 avoided literal translation and adopted creative strategies, including paraphrasing, reformulation, and compensation (cf. Veidenberga 2026a: 115–116; Veidenberga 2026b: 38–40). In the post-translation questionnaire, participants acknowledged the challenges of diminutives and appreciated the conciseness and practicality of the Guidelines. They recommended further improvements, e. g., expanding guidance on complex cases without direct morphological equivalents, listing existing English diminutives, and providing more examples of context-dependent cases.

Students' feedback on the Guidelines informed the development of a questionnaire for translation experts. Five translator trainers at three Latvian higher education institutions responded to the invitation to give their expert opinion on the draft Guidelines. Their responses were collected and coded. Following an expert's proposal to include practising translators as a control group, the student translation task and post-translation questionnaire were adapted for practitioners. Practising translators were contacted through a publisher's representative and former translation students, with three consenting to participate. All three practitioners evaluated the Guidelines as highly useful.

Based on the experimental data and expert feedback, the draft Guidelines were revised to balance practical usability with informativeness. The final adjustments emphasised the contextual dependence of diminutive connotations and clarified that reproducing diminutives in the TT is not always obligatory. The Guidelines were also enriched with additional examples and restructured into a two-stage table, consisting of the core recommendations followed by an expandable section with genre- or context-specific illustrations and explanations (Veidenberga 2026a: 124–125).

Conclusions

The present PhD research contrasts Latvian and English to address research question 1, namely, to determine the similarities and differences in how both languages express the meanings, connotations, and functions of diminutivity. The discussion on the relationship between language and thinking demonstrates that positive or negative connotations, as well as subjective or objective evaluations, may be expressed through different linguistic means across languages. Although Latvian and English both belong to the Indo-European language family, they rely on distinct dominant linguistic means for expressing diminutivity: Latvian primarily uses morphologically derived diminutives, whereas English predominantly employs analytical means.

In both Latvian and English, a clear-cut distinction between semantic and pragmatic meanings is difficult to establish, as their interpretation is inherently context-dependent. The combined analysis of translation studies literature and the contrastive comparison of both languages provided the answer to research question 2, namely, the identification of translation solutions suitable for transferring the meanings, connotations and functions of Latvian diminutives into English by means of linguistic resources characteristic of English diminutivity. Pym's typology of translation solutions – such as Expression Change (e.g., Changing Perspective, Changing Semantic Focus), Density Change (e.g., Explicitation), Cultural Correspondence and Compensation – offers translators a broad set of options for reproducing in English the nuanced meanings, connotations, emotions and attitudes encoded in Latvian ST diminutives.

By comparing and analysing the linguistic means available in English with the translation solutions for conveying the connotations of Latvian ST diminutives, Guidelines for transferring the

connotations of Latvian diminutives into English were created. Their development and final form answer research question 3 by demonstrating how the results of Latvian–English contrastive analysis can be applied in practice: the Guidelines may function both as a practical support tool for translators and as a didactic aid in translator training, while also exemplifying a methodology for designing similar tools. The step-by-step development of the Guidelines demonstrates that, beyond linguistic and translation knowledge, iterative feedback from experiment participants and field experts was essential for refining the recommendations and enriching them with clearer formulations and more varied examples. It is intended to convert the Guidelines into an interactive online platform where translator trainers and practising translators can add examples of specific text types, genres, or contexts, as well as their advice and comments.

The practical value of the PhD research derives from its innovative contribution: it offers the first comprehensive contrastive analysis of Latvian morphologically derived diminutives and the corresponding morphological and analytic means used to convey equivalent connotations in English. This analysis integrates data from multiple levels of practice, comparing source texts with translations produced both by students and practising translators. Interpreting these findings within the framework of translation studies enabled the creation of a support tool for translators, grounded in analyses of the theoretical literature of linguistics and translation studies and in actual translation practice. The step-by-step development of these Guidelines illustrates (Veidenberga 2026a, Appendix 10, 272) a methodology that can be applied to designing translator training aids and practical tools for translating other language- and culture-specific phenomena.¹

¹ Artificial intelligence was used for language editing of this article using ChatGPT (2025). The author reviewed and verified all content generated by this tool.

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