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**THE TRANSLATION OF DIMINUTIVES
IN MIRON BIAŁOSZEWSKI'S
"A MEMOIR OF THE WARSAW UPRISING."
A COGNITIVE ANALYSIS**

Abstract. In this paper we investigate the diminutives in Miron Białoszewski's *Pamiętnik z powstania warszawskiego* and how they are rendered in the English translation by Madeline G. Levine – *A Memoir of the Warsaw Uprising*. We adopt the semantic account of the category of the diminutive proposed by John Taylor (1989), which treats meanings of the diminutive as a radial network of interrelated senses. In *Pamiętnik...*, the diminutive seems to be used most commonly in the descriptions of highly stressful and dangerous events, possibly to make those experiences less frightening (the meaning of low intensity and low quality) and more manageable (the literal meaning of smallness). At times it seems to help re-interpret a bad experience, or rather to mitigate the subjectively experienced impact of a negative event. The proliferation of diminutives is made possible by the productivity of the morphology of the Polish language and by Białoszewski's linguistic creativity. In the English version, the translator employs compensatory strategies to address linguistic nuances, but often omits the diminutive altogether. This work aims to investigate the effect the diminutive has on the construal of the analysed texts and to highlight the problems it poses for translation from Polish to English.

Keywords: diminutive, translation, cognitive semantics, construal, polysemy.

Theoretical introduction

Białoszewski's *A Memoir of the Warsaw Uprising* is a literary account of life in the capital of Poland during the Warsaw Uprising against Nazi occupiers in 1944. The story is written from a first-person perspective. *A Memoir*

focuses on the life of the civilian population, rather than the military exploits of the insurgents, and provides a stark contrast to other narratives about the events found in most postwar Polish literature. Białoszewski wrote the story in a stylized everyday language, although not entirely devoid of striking artistic imagery and surprisingly unconventional metaphors. The conspicuous and programmatic rejection of elaborate and poeticized style, characteristic of much of Polish Second World War literature, is meant to “deromanticize” the vision of the failed insurrection and emphasize the grim reality of civilian life during the war. This shift of thematic focus is evident not only in the style, but also in the content of the book. Many Polish narratives in literature, visual arts, cinematography, etc. focus on the insurgents, and the fate of civilians, if presented at all, is pushed to the background. In *A Memoir* it is the military activities that function as the backdrop for mundane everyday activities, like looking for food and preparing meals, meeting friends and relatives, participating in religious rituals, and attempting to tune in to BBC radio broadcasts.

The first-person perspective adopted by the narrator is evident not only in the choice of first-person verb forms. Even though the book was written more than two decades after the end of the Second World War, Białoszewski does not frame his narrative as a “post-hoc” account of historical events. Instead, he attempts to recreate the sensation of the “on-site” experience. His narration is almost a stream of consciousness meant to capture the subjective experience of events as they unfold in front of the narrator. Thus, the author’s idiosyncratic style not only contrasts with overly romanticized accounts of the Second World War dominant in Polish culture, but is also designed to capture the frenetic train of thought of non-militant civilians caught in the chaotic frenzy of military activities. The attempt at reproducing the “on-site” subjective experience of the narrator motivates many lexical and grammatical choices. As we will show in the following sections of the article, diminutives play an important role in this respect, and their use is frequently motivated by factors other than the mere physical size of respective referents.

The diminutive is a complex and richly varied category. Its multiple morphological realizations can be applied to different grammatical categories. In English, diminutivization is relatively unproductive compared to other languages such as, for instance, Italian or Polish. In Polish, several diminutive affixes can be used quite productively. Again, English seems to be rather limited in that it diminutizes only nouns, but conventionally not verbs, adjectives or other grammatical categories. In Polish, the diminutive is commonly found in nouns (*kot* [cat], *kotek* [cat-

DIM1], *koteczek* [cat-DIM2], *kotunio* [cat-DIM3], *kotuś* [cat-DIM4], *kociak* [cat-DIM5], *kociaczek* [cat-DIM5]), adjectives (*biały* [white], *bielutki* [white-DIM1], *bieluśki* [white-DIM2], *bielusieńki* [white-DIM3], *bieluteńki* [white-DIM4], *bieluni* [white-DIM5], *bielusi* [white-DIM6], *bieluchny* [white-DIM7]), adverbs (*jasno* [brightly], *jaśniutko* [brightly-DIM1], *jaśniusieńko* [brightly-DIM2], *jaśniuteńko* [brightly-DIM3]), pronouns (*sam* [oneself], *samiutki* [oneself-DIM1], *samiuśki* [oneself-DIM2], *samiusieńki* [oneself-DIM3], *samiuteńki* [oneself-DIM4]), and sometimes even verbs (*plakać* [to cry], *plakuniać* [to cry-DIM1], *plakusiać* [to cry-DIM2]). Thus, it becomes very clear that those two languages – English and Polish – vary greatly with respect to the number of diminutive affixes as well as the grammatical categories in which diminutivization is allowed. The existence of such “structural differences” (Hejwowski, 2017) leads to potential untranslatability, or at least it should ring the alarm bell for a translator attempting to render a text from one of these two languages into the other (especially from Polish to English, as there is a potential risk of compromising the artistic effect produced by the text). As Tabakowska (2022) notes, this can be especially problematic in literary translation. In the case of Polish-English and English-Polish translation, those differences are troublesome as “[t]he former group find it difficult to provide proper equivalents, while the latter are believed not to use the equivalents frequently enough” (Tabakowska, 2022, p. 60). Discussing the problem of potential untranslatability, Biały (2016) says that differences between languages may lead to a situation in which a translation may be lacking information present in the original or, conversely, may enrich the text in details absent from the original in an unwarranted and yet unavoidable way. It is the case in the translation of diminutives from Polish to English as

Polish diminutives serve as a good example here as they allow to express various shades of emotional attitudes, which are not given in a precise way, and, consequently, are very difficult to be rendered in English. As a result, they may not be translated properly, and the translation may become impoverished and simplified. Furthermore, the style of the original text may be changed, and the reactions evoked in the readers of translated text may be different from the ones of the original text. (Biały 2016: 271)

To make matters worse, the diminutive is a polysemous category. Its multiple meanings cluster around the prototypical meaning, which, as most scholars seem to agree, is the literal meaning of physical smallness. Other meanings extend from the prototype. For instance, when nouns are diminutized, their meanings encompass not only the small size of a physical entity in

question, but also potentially its reduced scale, strength, or extent. Diminutized nouns may also be used to express the poor quality of the thing or its worthlessness. The meaning of worthlessness extends to the meaning of contemptibility. On the other hand, the diminutive is also associated with positive features. It can convey the meaning of beauty, cuteness, and friendliness. In his analysis of the Italian diminutive, Taylor (1989) enumerates – apart from the literal meanings relating to small size in the physical space – several metaphoric and metonymic extensions. The use of the diminutive form can convey a smaller scale or activity, which is a metaphorical transfer. However, when the diminutive form expresses affection, it represents a metonymic transfer. Furthermore, smallness is also associated with a lack of value, as a larger size is often linked to greater worth. Therefore, the diminutive form can convey both affection and a sense of depreciation. Sokołowska (2023) observes that

while the expressive function is very similar in both languages, even though Polish speakers seem to depend on diminutives to express their feelings to an incomparably higher degree than English speakers, the semantic function is in Polish by far more extensive, as the meanings thereby expressed involve a broad array of various issues beyond smallness. (Sokołowska 2023: 81–82)

Additionally, the diminutive has other meanings based on different experiences. Small things are often considered unimportant. Biały (2013) provides a thorough overview of theories and classifications dealing with the diminutive. She states that the diminutive is a polysemous category with connotative (expressive) meanings taking precedence over denotative (conceptual) ones. Connotative meanings of the diminutive in Polish accommodate both appreciative and depreciative ones, and even extend to expressions of politeness and hospitality. Following Wierzbicka (1984, 1985), Biały concludes that this fact shows a significant influence of culture on the use of the diminutive. Specifically, “[W]hat explains the excessive use of expressive forms such as diminutives is the warmth and emotionality that characterize the Polish culture” (Biały 2013: 7). Finally, the diminutive can also be used as an intensifier as it represents the essence of a thing by stripping away its non-essential aspects (Taylor 1989). Augustyn and Gniecka (2011) suggest that the interplay of the positive and negative affective meanings (i.e. the meanings expressing attachment, endearment, adoration and tenderness on the one hand, and depreciation, worthlessness, triviality and dismissal on the other) may result in the emergence of an ironic meaning. The multiple meanings are entwined in networks of overlapping similarities, and so “in order to properly account for the whole gamut of different

meanings of diminutives, including their ironic use, one has to assume a cognitive view of meaning and thus 'cross the boundaries' between semantics and pragmatics" (Augustyn and Gniecka, 2011, p. 32). Thus, "there is no clear-cut distinction between the emotional load of words, diminutives in particular, and their conceptual (or intellectual) meaning" (Tabakowska, 2022, p. 62). Indeed, cognitive linguistics postulates a semantic-pragmatic continuum, and thus it is an adequate methodological framework for explaining the polysemy of the diminutive. Some theoretical tools originating in cognitive linguistics, for instance the notion of construal (cf. e.g. Langacker 2008, chap. 3), prove very useful for assessing and evaluating equivalence and have already been successfully applied to translation studies.

Thus, for our analysis we will use the theoretical framework developed by Elżbieta Tabakowska, especially in her *Cognitive Linguistics and Poetics of Translation* (1993). Tabakowska turns to the theoretical concept well-known and widely discussed in translation studies, which is the notion of equivalence. She proposes that in the case of literary translation, the key aspect of equivalence is the equivalence in construal of the linguistic expressions in the source and the target texts. The term *construal* is derived from Ronald W. Langacker's Cognitive Grammar (CG), where it "refers to our manifest ability to conceive and portray the same situation in alternate ways" (Langacker 2008, 43). Literary scholars are of course well aware of the fact that language in an artistic text is used in a motivated fashion to portray events in a certain way, and that this portrayal contributes significantly to the overall aesthetic effect of the text. For Langacker, construal is not a matter of literary language alone; in fact, he does not discuss literary language at all. Instead, he argues that the way in which linguistic expressions represent events in the mind of the speaker is crucial for explaining grammatical phenomena by and large. Since the details of Cognitive Grammar are beyond the scope of this article, we will limit our discussion to the aspects most relevant to the present topic. In literary studies, some elements of Cognitive Grammar, as well as other theories forming a group of loosely connected theories under the umbrella term "cognitive linguistics", have been used in Peter Stockwell's cognitive poetics (cf. e.g. Stockwell 2019). Elżbieta Tabakowska's project can be seen as the application of the theoretical toolkits of Langacker's Cognitive Grammar and Stockwell's cognitive poetics to the study of literary translation.

For our purposes, an important element of Langacker's theory is the notion of perspective as one of the dimensions of construal. The dimension subsumes several subparameters, including the vantage point and the degree of objectivity/subjectivity. The terms *objectivity* and *subjective* have special

technical meanings within the CG framework: they pertain to the inherent asymmetry between the object and the subject of conceptualization (the latter being the conceptualizer themselves). When the conceptualizer and the details of their mental life are not objects of conceptualization, the conceptualizer is construed subjectively and the object of conception is construed objectively. The conceptualizer is always present in the conceptualization to some extent, if only because they are the ones who entertain the conceptualization in the first place. When the conceptualizer and some aspects of their mental life (like subjective opinions, axiological evaluations, implied meanings, etc.) become objects of conception, the respective aspects are construed with greater objectivity and the object of conception with greater subjectivity. Langacker illustrates this point by comparing the construal behind *communist* and *commie* (cf. Langacker 2008, 262). In the former word, the referent is construed with high objectivity and the conceptualizer with high subjectivity, but in the latter the referent is construed more subjectively in that the axiological evaluation on the part of the speaker is a part of the word's semantic characterization.

Diminutives are used very generously throughout *A Memoir...*, and the brief analyses presented in the following sections cannot do justice to the abundance. These lexical forms do not appear to be bound to any particular subject matter covered in the narrative: Białoszewski uses them to describe both highly dramatic events like air raids and more mundane everyday activities like the preparation of meals. While most diminutives in the book are nouns (which is hardly surprising given that physical size is a key property of nominal referents), the author willingly takes advantage of the flexibility of Polish morphology and diminutizes adjectives and adverbs as well (even though such diminutives tend to convey intensity or emotional charge rather than physical size). Admittedly, the data for the study have been cherry-picked to illustrate a variety of challenges pertaining to equivalence in construal faced by the translator. For this reason, this concise study should not be considered to be a comprehensive and exhaustive overview of the strategies for translating diminutives in the book.

The description of a provisional hospital

A notable lack of equivalence in construal can be found in the translation of the description of a provisional hospital organized in the basement of a tenement. In the excerpt below, three pairs of words are of special interest for our purposes. The pairs are presented in Table 1.

- (1)(a) A że podziemia to były po prostu schrony, a schrony pod starymi domami to były ordynarne piwnice na węgiel i kartofle, *ciasne klitki i klity*, więc nic dziwnego, że byliśmy po wszystkich doświadczeniach rąbnięci na nowo. Zdziwieniem. Po *korytarzyskach* były napisy nad tymi wejściami do *klitek* na kartofle: sala 5, sala 6. A i w samym *korytarzyku*, tym od wejścia z podwórza – byli ranni. To też była sala ileś. Jedni leżeli na piwnicowej podłodze. Na czym? Na *kocykach*, jak były. I na *papierkach* też. (Białoszewski 2016 [1970]; our emphasis)
- (b) And since the basements were merely shelters, and since shelters beneath old houses were ordinary cellars for coal and potatoes with *narrow cubicles and stalls*, it is not surprising that even after all our experiences we were floored once again. Astounded. Signs were posted along the *narrow corridors* over the entryways to the *potato stalls*: Ward 5, Ward 6. And in the *corridor* itself, the one leading from the courtyard entrance, lay the wounded. That, too, was a ward number something. Some lay on the cellar floor. On what? On *whatever blankets* were available. On *scraps of paper*, too. (Białoszewski 2015; our emphasis)

Table 1

The diminutives from (1)

English translation	Polish source	equivalent English meaning
<i>narrow cubicle</i>	(<i>ciasna</i>) <i>klitka</i>	≈ (tight) cubicle + DIM
<i>stall</i>	<i>klita</i>	≈ cubicle
<i>narrow corridor</i>	<i>korytarzysko</i>	corridor + AUG
<i>corridor</i>	<i>korytarzyk</i>	corridor + DIM
<i>whatever blankets</i>	<i>kocyki</i>	blankets + DIM
<i>scraps of paper</i>	<i>papierki</i>	papers + DIM

The translator chose to render *klitki i klity* from the source text as *narrow cubicles and stalls*. The translation *narrow cubicle* is referentially equivalent to the Polish word *klitka* in that both refer to a small utility room. From the grammatical point of view, in the source text the small size of the room is signalled by the diminutizing feminine morpheme *-ka* and emphasized by the preceding adjective *ciasne* ('tight'), while in English it is signalled via the adjective *narrow* alone. The minute details of the construal, e.g. the fact that *narrow* signifies the limited size in the horizontal dimension and *-ka* does not suggest any specific dimension, are perhaps less relevant for the overall aesthetic effect created in the excerpts. A more prominent effect is visible when we move on to the second word of the phrase. The Polish *klita* is,

in fact, an augmentative of *klitka*, created through the process of so-called back formation, i.e. an extraction of the diminutizing morpheme *-ka* from the original word *klitka*. In simple terms, the room referred to as *klita* can be understood as a larger variant of a cubicle referred to as *klitka*. From the aesthetic point of view, in the source text one can see a rhythmic alliterative sequence of two-syllable words which serves to enhance the aesthetic quality, rhythm, and impact of the writing – an effect completely lost in the English translation.

A more dramatic alteration of the source imagery is apparent in another pair of words: *korytarzyska* and *korytarzyk*, translated as *narrow corridors* and *corridor*, respectively. Morphologically, *korytarzyska* is the plural form of *korytarzysko*, which is the augmentative of *korytarz* ('corridor'); *korytarzyk*, in turn, is the diminutive of *korytarz*. A closer look at the middle section of Table 1 reveals a curious inconsistency: the Polish augmentative was rendered by means of the English diminutive and the Polish diminutive by means of an English neutral word that does not suggest any deviation from the standard size. In the source text, the transition from the augmentative to the diminutive is motivated by the already mentioned desire to reproduce a subjective "on-site" experience of the narrator. In the story, the narrator enters the basement and is astounded (as he himself admits) by the sheer number of corridors and cubicles adapted as provisional sick bays. Arguably, the augmentative variant of the Polish word for corridor signals the subjective impression of surprise and highlights the vastness of the basement. Yet the fact that so many wounded were placed in a limited space of the basement resulted in significant overcrowding. Thus, when the narrator states that even the corridor from the courtyard entrance was packed with the wounded, the subjective impression of "crampedness" is more adequately expressed by the diminutive form of the word for the corridor, which highlights the lack of space. In sum, both the augmentative and the diminutive appear to have more to do with the subjective sensations of the narrator than the objective size of the interiors, especially since nothing in the text suggests that the two corridors in question differed notably in physical size. More technically, the overall construal is subjectivized in that the aspects of the narrator's mental life colour the seemingly objective description of the hospital.

The English translation almost reverses this imagery. When the narrator reminisces about entering the hospital, he uses the expression *narrow corridor*, which implies a lack of space rather than the vastness of the interior, and then while describing the cramped passageway, he resorts to the size-neutral word *corridor*. In effect, the narrator in the English text appears

to undergo a different sequence of impressions: at first, he is astounded by the overcrowding (rather than the vastness of the basement) and then he ignores the size of the corridor altogether, perhaps after becoming accustomed to the crowd. It is, of course, difficult to speculate about the reasons why the translator decided to render the passage in that manner. Perhaps, the augmentative *korytarzysko*, whose inflected forms are very similar to certain inflected forms of the diminutive *korytarzyk* (e.g. genitive *korytarzyska* vs. genitive *korytarzyka*), was misread as a diminutive; an easy mistake to make considering the accumulation of these types of words in Białoszewski's prose.

Finally, the narrator mentions the blankets and the pieces of paper on which the wounded were laid. The source text depicts the objects by means of diminutives *kocyki* and *papierki* derived from *koce* ('blankets') and *papiery* ('papers'), respectively. Arguably, the diminutives are not intended to imply that the blankets and papers were small in size, because if this were the case, they would be of little use for the wounded. Taking into consideration the dire conditions in the provisional hospital, it seems more reasonable to propose that the diminutives are meant to convey the poor quality or the inadequacy of the papers and blankets. Therefore, the lexical items are once again employed to signal the subjective impressions of the narrator rather than to offer an objective description of the scene. The translator correctly recognized the motivation behind the diminutives in the source text. Unlike Polish, English does not offer a convenient way of forming diminutives from the nouns *blanket* and *paper* by means of affixation. However, since the objective physical size is not at stake, the more descriptive nominal phrases *whatever blankets* and *scraps of paper* convey the negative evaluation adequately, even though the details of the Polish and English construals differ markedly. This is, of course, yet another example of difficult trade-offs familiar to translators all over the world: in order to preserve one aspect of meaning in the target text, it is often necessary to sacrifice another aspect in the source text.

The description of a residence

The description of a residence in (2) displays similar subjectivity of construal, but it also features several additional translation problems. Some of them stem from the differences between Polish and English morphology and probably cannot be solved in a way that fully preserves the aesthetic effect from the source text. Others result from a certain ambiguity within the source text and the linguistic creativity of the narrator.

- (2)(a) Ze schodów – z zatrzymaniem się na półtora piętrze, na podeście z oknem w *podwóruchno*. *Malutkie*. Widzę. Ono. Tak. Ale widzę jeszcze coś, czego nie spodziewałbym się nigdy (tryb przypuszczająco-elegancki, często warunkowo-uprzejmościowy, typowo warszawski). Nagle więc na tle tyłów drugiego domu **oficynka-pałacyk-pięterko**; na pięterku wiszący **ogródek z alejkami**, w kwiaty. Płyty, **chodniczki**, balustrady. (Białoszewski 2016 [1970]; our emphasis)
- (b) From the stairs—stopping one and a half flights up, on a landing with a window looking into a *tiny courtyard*. *Very small*. I see. It. Yes. But I also see something I never would have expected (the elegant-conditional mood, conditionally courteous, typically Varsovian). Well, suddenly against the background of the rear of a second building there was *a little detached building, a tiny one-and-a-half-story palace*; on the building, a hanging **garden** with **tiny paths**, covered with flowers. Paving stones, **little sidewalks**, balustrades. (Białoszewski 2015; our emphasis)

The first kind of problem is illustrated by the Polish word *podwóruchno* ('tiny backyard'), qualified in the following phrase with the adjective *malutkie* ('very small'). The former word is somewhat unconventional in Polish: it is a diminutive of *podwórko*¹ ('backyard'), but it is formed by means of the emotionally charged affix *-uchno* rather than more standard *-eczko*, (resulting in the hypothetical *podwóreczko*, which does appear in (2a)). The morpheme *-uchno* conveys not only the notion of small size but also (perhaps more importantly) the sense of affection on the part of the speaker. Thus, the use of *podwóruchno* is somewhat non-standard in a narration pretending to be a relatively objective and factual account of events, but it is perfectly compatible with Białoszewski's "subjectivized" manner of storytelling, where the descriptions are coloured by the narrator's personal impressions. The use of the diminutized adjective *malutkie*, derived from the neutral *małe* ('small'), is somewhat ambiguous in this context. On the one hand, intensification is one of the functions of diminutives, so the narrator may want to emphasize that the courtyard was very small. Yet on the other hand, it may also express affection towards the place, which seems plausible in the light of the emotionally charged *podwóruchno* used in the previous sentence. The affection on the part of the narrator is more understandable when the context of the entire scene is taken into account. The narrator is travelling through the war-torn city, in which most buildings were badly damaged in the course of military activities. Suddenly, and to his surprise mentioned explicitly in (2a), the narrator discovers a small garden in a courtyard, which somehow survived relatively intact in the havoc of the uprising. This realization must have had a strong emotional impact.

As far as the translator's choices are concerned, Levine decided to use the emotionally charged adjective *tiny* modifying *courtyard*, which underlines the affection and therefore appears to adequately convey the subjectivized character of the description. However, she also renders *malutkie* by means of *very small*, which does have the intensifying effect of some diminutives, but does not convey affection. As already mentioned, the adjective in the source text is somewhat ambiguous, so *very small* successfully expresses a part of the source meaning, but the emotions suggested by *malutkie* are lost in translation.

Table 2

The diminutives in (2)

English translation	Polish source	equivalent English meaning
<i>tiny courtyard</i>	<i>podwóruchno</i>	courtyard + DIM
<i>very small</i>	<i>malutkie</i>	small + DIM
<i>little detached building, a tiny one-and-a-half-story palace</i>	<i>oficynka-palacyk-pięterko</i>	outhouse + DIM – palace + DIM – story + DIM
<i>garden</i>	<i>ogródek</i>	garden + DIM
<i>tiny paths</i>	<i>alejki</i>	paths + DIM
<i>little sidewalks</i>	<i>chodniczki</i>	sidewalks + DIM

The non-standard compound-like expression *oficynka-palacyk-pięterko* is an exercise in linguistic creativity; a distinctive characteristic of Białoszewski's poetry, which occasionally finds its way into his prose, too. A word-by-word translation into English would require stringing together the diminutives of *outhouse*, *palace*, and *story*. In Polish, the diminutives are derived via affixation, but since this strategy is much less readily available in English, the translator opted for a conservative strategy of a fairly standard description of the building (*a little detached building, a tiny one-and-a-half-story palace*) rather than attempting to provide a more experimental equivalent that would mirror the form of the source expression more faithfully. Nonetheless, the adjectives *little* and *tiny* do evoke, at least partly, the small size and affection, which are probably the most important aspects of the meaning in the source text.

The diminutives used in the description of the garden display an ambiguity similar to the one witnessed in *malutkie/very small*. Białoszewski writes about *ogródek* (diminutive of *ogród* 'garden'), *alejki* ('paths', also diminutive of *aleje* 'alleys'), and *chodniczki* (diminutive of *chodniki* 'sidewalks'). It is far from clear whether the lexemes signal the size or the emo-

tional attitude of the narrator, or both. The words *kwiaty* ('flowers') and *balustrady* ('balustrades') remain in their "standard" size-neutral forms, perhaps for stylistic reasons, to prevent excessive accumulation of diminutives in a short passage. To complicate the matter even further, *alejki*, while technically a diminutive of *aleje* ('alleys'), is also a fully lexicalized word for garden paths. Thus, even though this lexeme bears formal similarities to other diminutives in the passage, its usage is less marked and therefore it is not obvious whether it was used to express subjective impressions of the narrator or the objective small size, or whether Białoszewski used the word in a neutral descriptive fashion to refer to an element of the garden's architecture. It is probably impossible to preserve all the semantic ambiguity and nuances related to the diminutives in the source text and Levine decided to mix several strategies. She eliminated diminutivization altogether in *garden* and opted for the emotionally charged *tiny paths*, and emotionally neutral *little sidewalks*. Perhaps the variety of strategies was meant to prevent awkward repetitions of similar words related to size, but it also removed much of the emotional charge evident in the source text and therefore markedly decreased the subjectivized character of the description.

The description of wheat grinding

The description of wheat grinding features several diminutives with varying functions. On the one hand, some diminutives serve to emphasize the narrator's dissatisfaction with the slow and inefficient process of grinding. On the other, there is an element of affection in his reminiscing about the flour and the meals made from it.

- (3)(a) Drugą rozrywką było mielenie zboża. Z dnia na dzień mielenie narastało. (...) Ale to nam się wydało **powolnietkie**. **Malutkie**. A pszenicy mieliśmy dużo. (Już ją jedliśmy. W kółko. Po **pełnietkich** talerzach. Z sokiem. I z plewami. Bardzo dobra!). Częstowało się nią, kto jej nie miał. Daliśmy część państwu Wi., bo nie bardzo mieli co jeść. Więc od młynka do kawy przeszło się do młynka nie wiem na co, większego. Pożyczyło się. Wydaje mi się, że ten większy wymagał więcej wysiłku, jako że miał większą korbę i większe obroty. Toteż Zocha poszła i wystarała się u niby to znajomych o młynek duży. Taki duży, że nie był do pożyczania. Czyli do ruszenia. I trzeba było z pszenicą lecieć tam. Na mielenie. Polecieliśmy prawie wszyscy. Młynek był podobny do magła. Miał olbrzymią korbę, chodzącą w pionowe koło. Sypnęliśmy pszenicy. I dalej mleć. Na zmianę. Raz Zocha. Raz ja. Raz Halina. Raz Ojciec. Zaglądamy do szuflady. A tam ledwie-ledwie w kacie. Tej **mączki**. Owszem: może i drobniej zmielona. Ale co z tego,

jak tak wolno? Znów mielemy. Na zmianę. Namachało się każde z nas. Aż do potów. Zagłębiamy. A tam znów **niedużuchno**. Zrezygnowaliśmy z dalszego przemiału. Podziękowaliśmy. Przeprosiliśmy. Tych państwa. Że niby już wieczór. I rano wzięliśmy się za pogardzone – te małe – młynki. Od kawy. Te były niezastąpione. (Białoszewski 2016 [1970]; our emphasis)

- (b) Another diversion was grinding grain. Every day the grinding increased. (...) But it was **too slow** for us. **Too small**. We had a lot of wheat. (We were already eating it. At every meal. **Small platefuls** each. With the juices. And the chaff. Very good!) We treated people who didn't have any. We gave some to the Wi. couple, because they didn't have very much to eat. So we changed from a coffee grinder to a mill for something or other, a bigger one. We borrowed it. It seems to me that the bigger one demanded more effort, since it had a larger crank and larger grinding wheels. Then Zocha went and tried to borrow a large mill from some sort-of acquaintances. But it was such a large one that it couldn't be loaned. Or moved. We had to run over there with the wheat. To grind it. Practically all of us ran over. The mill was like a mangle. It had a huge crank which moved in a vertical circle. We poured in the wheat. And kept grinding. By turns. Zocha once. Then me. Halina once. Father. We looked into the drawer. And it was just barely there in a corner. The **flour**. Of course, perhaps it was ground more finely. But so what if it was so slow? Again we grind. By turns. Each of us had our fill of cranking. Till we were sweaty. We looked inside. And again only **the tiniest amount**. We gave up on any more milling. We said thank you. We took our leave of that family. Pretending we had to, since it was almost evening. And in the morning we turned to those despised—those little—mills. For coffee. They were irreplaceable. (Białoszewski 2015; our emphasis)

Subjectivized construal is visible in the description of the grinding process, which the narrator deems unsatisfactorily slow. In the source text it is expressed by means of the diminutized adjective *powolnietkie* (diminutive of *powolne* 'slow') rendered in the target text as *too slow*. Similarly, the coffee grinders or mills originally used for grinding grain are deemed by the narrator as disappointingly small (*malutkie* – diminutive of *małe* 'small'). The use of the diminutive here expresses a disdainful attitude and also hints at the low quality of the mills used for the grinding. In the target text they are *too small*. Some level of subjective evaluation of the effectiveness of the grinders and the grinding process is present in both the source and the target texts. This subjective evaluation is achieved via different strategies. Whereas in the source text the diminutives serve to accentuate the narrator's depreciating attitude, in the target text the grinders and the grinding process are evaluated in reference to some unexpressed but implied norm. They do not come up to these normative expectations and thus are considered *too slow* and *too small*, respectively.

The narrator then admits that there was a lot of wheat and that they were eating a lot of it *w pełniutkich* (*pełniutki* diminutive of *pełny* ‘full’) *talerzach* (‘plates’). This expression is unexplainably rendered in the target text as *small platefuls*, which significantly alters its meaning. The diminutive used in the source text serves to intensify the meaning, i.e. emphasize the fact that the plates were full to the brim. Plates are not diminutized and thus can be assumed to be standard size. The scene that the narrator in the source text refers to is the one in which he eats a lot of wheat in (standard size) plates full to the brim. The narrator in the target text does admit that wheat was eaten at every meal; they were eating it, however, *small platefuls each*. This latter construal does not involve any intensification of meaning. In fact, quite the opposite is the case – the diminutive here seems to serve its more prototypical role, i.e. it expresses the small quantity of the food described in this scene. As a consequence, not only is the original meaning not conveyed in the translation, but also the target text produces a sense of incongruity (if there was so much wheat and they were eating it at every meal, why did they only eat in *small platefuls*?).

In the second part of the excerpted passage there is the diminutized noun *mączka* (a diminutive of *mąka* ‘flour’), which may refer either to the fact that the wheat was very finely-ground (thus resulting in the diminutized *mączka*, rather than the standard *mąka*) or there may also be a hint of positive emotion experienced by the narrator. He must have been happy that they had something to eat – and enough of it to share with their friends and neighbours – after all. The diminutive is completely absent in the target text.

Having changed the mills for bigger ones, with the hope of making the grinding process faster and more efficient, the narrator verifies the result of one particularly heavy bout of grinding. It turns out to be very unsatisfactory, as there is only very little flour. In the source text the word *niedużuchno* is used, which is a diminutive of *niedużo* (literally ‘not much’, ‘not a lot’). The suffix *-uchno*, as mentioned above, is a fairly unconventional diminutizing suffix, which expresses not only the meaning of smallness or small quantity in the physical domain, but also carries some affective values. This diminutive may serve to mitigate the disappointment at the result of heavy labour, thus ameliorating the narrator’s negative feelings, but at the same time it may imply a somewhat disdainful attitude towards the meagre results of the grinding. The target text lacks these added values as *niedużuchno* is translated into only the slightly affectively-loaded *the tiniest amount*. *The tiniest amount* switches focus from the narrator’s subjective judgment that the amount of flour is unsatisfyingly small to the more objective description of the amount as such. The use of *tiny* (rather than

small), as already noted above, hints at the attitude of positive emotion or endearment, which slightly distorts the meaning present in the source text. All in all, in this passage, like in the passages above, the source text provides a more subjectivized construal compared to the target text, and the diminutives are the main vehicles for expressing this meaning. The use of the diminutives and their respective translations are provided in the table below.

Table 3

The diminutives in (3)

English translation	Polish source	equivalent English meaning
<i>too slow</i>	<i>powolnιutkie</i>	slow + DIM
<i>too small</i>	<i>malutkie</i>	small + DIM
<i>small platefuls</i>	<i>pełnιutkie</i>	full + DIM
<i>flour</i>	<i>mączka</i>	flour + DIM
<i>the tiniest amount</i>	<i>niedużuchno</i>	little + DIM

The description of the cellar

Bombardments are a daily occurrence in wartime Warsaw, and even more so during the Uprising itself. Confronted with this lethal danger, people rush to shelter. They often find it in the cellars of the still-standing buildings. The narrator describes a moment of shelling and his leap into an already crowded cellar in the following way:

- (4)(a) – Ru-ru-ru – wpadłem w zbitą kupę ludzką, w **ciasnotkę**, chłop przy chłopie. Bo to ci – my, od barykady. Z czymś, z łopatami (właśnie, pamiętam łopaty)... Ale jak tu było ciasno. A żadnego nic innego, wyjścia, dziury, zapasiku zakamarkowego. Tylko kocie **okienko** w górze i to **miejskonko**. **Ciepełko**. Tyle bycia, co **smrodku** i strachu. I zbijania się w kocią zaradność. Prawie miejsca na pięć worków kartofli. Ktoś co i raz jeszcze doszłusowywał, z **okienka**. (Białoszewski 2016 [1970]; our emphasis)
- (b) I landed in a huddled mass of people, a **tight crowd**, men lined up one beside the other. They were us—the men from the barricade. With something, shovels (that's it, I remember shovels)... But it was so crowded here. And there was absolutely no other exit, hole, hidden recess. Only that cat's **window** above and that **tiny space**. **Warmth**. As much being alive as **stench** and fear! And pressing together with feline resourcefulness. Barely room for five sacks of potatoes. Every now and then someone else slid in through the **window**. (Białoszewski 2015; our emphasis)

Table 4

The diminutives from (4)

English translation	Polish source	equivalent English meaning
<i>tight crowd</i>	<i>ciasnotka</i>	tight + DIM
<i>window</i>	<i>okienko</i>	window + DIM
<i>tiny space</i>	<i>miejsconko</i>	space + DIM
<i>warmth</i>	<i>ciepelko</i>	warmth + DIM
<i>stench</i>	<i>smrodek</i>	smell + DIM

The first diminutive in this excerpt, *ciasnotka*, is a diminutive of *ciasnota*. *Ciasnota* itself may be a challenge for a translator as it refers either to a confined space or a rather unspecified cramped state or a set of conditions. It derives from the adverb *ciasno* ('tightly') and the adjective *ciasny* ('tight'). It carries a negative connotation, and thus affixing a diminutizing morpheme to it creates a discrepancy and results in an uncommon and unconventional word². The function of this diminutive is to ameliorate the negative emotional impact experienced by the narrator in this intense and stressful situation. It serves as a means of alleviating the emotional pressure. By using a diminutive form, the narrator attempts to lessen the perceived seriousness of the situation. In the target text the focus is on the *tight crowd*. The diminutive is lost, together with all its pragmatic value.

A very similar situation is the case with the diminutives used in the central part of the passage quoted. *Miejsconko* (a diminutive of *miejsce* 'space') is retained in the translation but it should be noted that *miejsconko* is a rather unconventional lexeme in Polish, so translating it into a more neutral *tiny space*, though probably the best choice, leads to a familiarizing and objectifying effect. The effect of defamiliarization which draws the reader's attention to this word (makes it more prominent) in the source text is lost in translation. Like in the case of *ciasnotka*, the diminutive *miejsconko* may serve to lessen the seriousness of the situation and diminish the perceived discomfort and distress experienced by the narrator entering (or rather leaping into) this space full of other shelter-seekers. The translation does not fully convey this meaning. *Ciepelko* (diminutive of *ciepło* 'warmth') is translated as *warmth*. The diminutive is lost, and so is the positive connotation present in the source text. *Smrodek* (diminutive of *smród* 'unpleasant smell') does not necessarily carry any positive connotations, but nonetheless is used instead of the neutral *smród* in order to dismiss the unpleasantness of the narrator's experience and thus make it somewhat more tolerable.

The target text, however, does not convey this meaning. *Stench* (chosen instead of, e.g. *stink*, *smell* or maybe even *funny little smell*) is strong, direct and does not 'mitigate' the experience of the narrator in the same way as the diminutive in the Polish version does. Using diminutives for describing, and hence thinking about, the experience in the source text may be interpreted as a *sui generis* coping mechanism which – via a little bit of humour – helps the narrator survive and remain sane amidst the chaos and destruction of the war-torn city. The narrator in the source text playfully reverses the expected description of the unbearable hotness and the stench of a tight cellar crowded with scared people, and instead talks about it as if it were a cozy, warm and nice place. The narrator in the target text, however, experiences all the expected discomforts in a literal, non-diminutized and thus non-ameliorated way. The readers of the target text lose most of the stylistic value of Białoszewski's peculiar writing.

Finally, the characters enter the cellar through *kocie okienko* (*okienko* is a diminutive of *okno* 'window'). This diminutive is also absent in the translation. However, in this case the noun actually refers to the small size of the window, so rendering it descriptively into *cat's window* seems to suffice. What is lacking, however, is the stylistic effect achieved in the source text through the repetition of the whole series of diminutives throughout the paragraph. Within two short sentences in the source text there are four very salient diminutives, while in the target text only one of them is retained.

Conclusion

Objectivity, understood narrowly as an aspect of construal within the CG framework, can help us understand Białoszewski's narration technique. Despite the fact that *A Memoir...* is not excessively introspective and appears to present a fairly "objective" account of events, a closer look reveals a curious stream-of-consciousness-like quality. Even though the narrator does not explicitly describe his feelings about the events presented in the book (probably because he is too busy struggling for survival in war-torn Warsaw), *A Memoir...* is only thinly veiled as a relatively impartial factual account of events. Since the construal behind many passages of the book displays notable subjectivity, the reader learns much about the narrator's attitude towards the events by carefully inspecting lexical and grammatical choices in the text. This is quite evident in the use of diminutives throughout the book. This also poses a serious challenge for translators, since recreating subtle nuances of the construal is oftentimes essential for recreating the

aesthetic effect of the source text. Structural differences between Polish and English make it difficult to achieve equivalence in construal in this respect. In Polish, diminutives are abundant and using them is natural. There are multiple morphological means of creating diminutive forms which vary in terms of the effect that they have on the reader. Some are rather unconventional and thus very marked and salient; others blend easily into the text. In English, diminutivization strategies are rather scarce and the use of the diminutive in general is not as common and natural as it is in Polish. Thus, maintaining the whole gamut of meanings and effects present in the Polish text in order to achieve equivalence when translating a text into English requires resorting to different strategies. Arguably, due to fewer cases of subjective construal, the English text is more objective and thus feels more detached, like a factual journal, rather than a subjective, emotion-filled, and personal diary of *Pamiętnik*...

NOTES

¹ Etymologically, *podwórko* is itself a diminutive from *podwórze* ('yard'), but the diminutive has become a lexicalized basic level term and attracted additional semantic properties to such an extent that for the purpose of our analysis it can be treated as a proper base for the process of diminutivization rather than an intermediate stage between *podwórze* and *podwórnuchno* used in (2a).

² *Ciasnotka* in Polish also refers to a type of women's clothing, an underslip worn typically under a traditional folk skirt. This meaning is not relevant here, though.

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