

## Suffixed Diminutive Nouns in Movies by Quentin Tarantino

### Greta Aleknaitė

University of Oslo  
Department of Media and Communication  
Niels Henrik Abels vei 36  
0313 Oslo, Norway  
gretaaleknaite@gmail.com  
<https://ror.org/01xtthb56>

### Bonifacas Stundžia

Vilnius University  
Department of Baltic Studies  
Universiteto 5  
LT-01513 Vilnius, Lithuania  
bonifacas.stundzia@flf.vu.lt  
<https://ror.org/03nadee84>

**Abstract:** Language serves as a tool for expressing feelings and emotions. Diminutives play a key role in conversations by reflecting an attitude of a speaker. Consequently, this article focuses on the use of nouns with diminutive suffixes in nine movies by Quentin Tarantino. This analysis examines the meaning, formation processes and functions of suffixed diminutive nouns, categorizes them and identifies the most frequent ones, exploring their roles and comparing their usage across nine movies. The quantitative method, along with a descriptive approach, was used to study the type and token frequency of diminutive suffixes. Meanwhile, the qualitative method, combined with comparative and analytical approaches, aided in analysing the collected examples of diminutive nouns and their functions. In total, 292 common nouns, 39 different lexemes and eight diminutive suffixes were examined in this article. The most productive diminutive suffix was noted to be *-ie* (*-y*, *-ey*), while the most common function was ameliorative. The most prevalent diminutives were associated with close relationships.

**Keywords:** diminutives, diminutive nouns, melioratives, pejoratives, diminutive semantics, diminutive pragmatics, English, movies by Quentin Tarantino.

## 0. INTRODUCTION

Verbal conversations shift and develop promptly, discussions progress in accordance to information conveyed by the speaker and heard by the listener. One of the ways to express positive or negative emotions is by using diminutives. As Nieuwenhuis (1985) notes, the phenomenon reflects a sense of smallness. Three functions of diminutives are identified on the basis of their contextual usage. The authors of a book edited by Savickienė and Dressler (2007) emphasize the ameliorative function, while Schneider (2003) argues that diminutives can also serve a pejorative role. Hare and Thirwall (2015) also highlight the neutral function. Diminutives must be analysed in relation to the context they are used in, with the purpose of identifying their role in a conversation.

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In recent studies, the use of diminutives in the English language is explored extensively with a focus on children's communication, family interactions and general dialogues. Bystrov et al. (2020) note that speeches incorporating diminutives are usually very emotional (p. 78 f.). The study by Buening et al. (2012) and Walrod (2004) also draws attention to emotiveness with a focus on conversations with children, noting that it is in such dialogues that diminutives occur the most. However, there is a lack of research on the usage of diminutives in movies.

Movies depict authentic conversations and are a vital part of language analysis. Language itself is significant in films, as it helps to shape characters and makes dialogues more vivid and engaging for viewers. Having in mind that diminutives used in movies by Quentin Tarantino may have a negative connotation, it is important to discuss movie's language. Inappropriate language in movies is discussed by Jay (1992), as the author analyses curse words in American movies. In the research, it is found that an average film created in modern times includes around seventy swear words (p. 226). This is important as movies by Quentin Tarantino may follow the same pattern, and diminutives could be used to express someone's negative stance. Such an idea is also discussed in the research by Bolinger (2015). The author addresses three movies by the director – "Django Unchained", "Pulp Fiction" and "Jackie Brown", and finds out that racist's comments are common in these films. The researcher claims that such expressions do not display a historical perspective, but rather form a certain attitude and various emotions. This case can also be approached in the analysis of diminutives, as they can carry negative connotations.

In this article, nine movies by Quentin Tarantino are going to be examined with an emphasis on diminutive nouns and their suffixes, as well as their function. Nine thought-provoking movies by Quentin Tarantino are the following: "Reservoir dogs" (1992), "Pulp Fiction" (1994), "Jackie Brown" (1997), "Kill Bill: Volume 1" (2003) and "Kill Bill: Volume 2" (2004), "Death Proof" (2007), "Inglourious Basterds" (2009), "Django Unchained" (2012), "The Hateful Eight" (2015), "Once Upon a Time in Hollywood" (2019). Here, it is important to note that despite the fact that "Kill Bill" is divided into two parts, it will be examined as a single film. As Chitwood (2019) points out, the script was originally written for a single movie and Quentin Tarantino regards these two parts as one film. Another important thing to point out is the misspelt name of the movie "Inglourious Basterds". As discussed by Tyler (2020), the director stated that he will never explain such spelling. The combined runtime of the nine films is 24 hours and 29 minutes.

The subject of this article is suffixed diminutive nouns in movies by Quentin Tarantino. The article aims to explore diminutive suffixes and their function in Quentin's Tarantino's movies. The movies will be compared and analysed together.

To explore this phenomenon, this article is guided by three research questions:

1. What are the most frequent diminutive suffixes used in movies by Quentin Tarantino?
2. What is the most frequent function of diminutives in movies by Quentin Tarantino?
3. What are the similarities and differences between the nine movies by Quentin Tarantino?

In total, 39 different lexemes with diminutive suffixes are analysed. The number corresponds to the type frequency of diminutive suffixes, as there are no lexemes found that were used with multiple diminutive suffixes. Eight diminutive suffixes are examined. 292 tokens of nouns with diminutive suffixes are taken into account.

The first chapter of the article uses quantitative research method along with descriptive and analytical. It deals with the analysis of diminutive nouns in regard to their semantics, pragmatics and formation processes. The second part of the article employs qualitative method and the analytical and comparative approaches to investigate functions of suffixed diminutives in the movies by Quentin Tarantino specifically.

## 1. SEMANTICS, PRAGMATICS, AND FORMATION OF DIMINUTIVES

To be able to effectively analyse suffixed diminutives and their functions in the given context of movies, it is crucial to first focus on several key aspects. This involves investigating both the semantic and pragmatic dimensions of diminutives. In addition, it is important to draw attention to formation methods and identify specific processes of suffixation. This chapter will further aid in the comprehension of the role and function of diminutive nouns within the cinematic narrative.

### 1.1. SEMANTICS AND PRAGMATICS OF DIMINUTIVES

Diminutive is a linguistic phenomenon described in various ways, but the prevailing theory suggests that it signifies smallness. Such an idea is discussed in the research by Nieuwenhuis (1985) as well as in the analysis by Schneider (2003), as authors agree that with the usage of diminutives a speaker attributes a quality of an object being small. However, it is interesting and important to point out that, according to Nieuwenhuis, the diminutive form can convey not only physical smallness but also nuanced emotional meanings, such as affection or disdain, depending on the context (p. 2). To be able to understand such nuances, comprehension of the context is a must. Without the context, it would be impossible to clarify whether the diminutive is used in relation to the physical qualities of an object or if the usage of it is based solely on emotive language.

The idea of the context's importance is also discussed by Schneider (2003), who significantly suggests that diminutives can express smallness, however, only with regards to the context their meaning can be clearly understood (p. 1).

The terms *diminutive* and *smallness* are often used interchangeably, according to Mintsy and Mintsy (2015). Yet, the authors point out that the significant difference between the terms is word-formation processes on which account diminutive's function. As previously discussed, diminutives may not only express an object's physical attributes but can also be related to an attitude of a speaker. Mintsy and Mintsy (2015) draw attention to other qualities that could possibly be expressed by the usage of diminutives, that being compassion, kindness, tenderness or indignity (p. 30).

The new and greatly significant aspect of diminutive studies is pragmatics. In the analysis by Mintsy and Mintsy (2015), it is pointed out that the phenomenon was viewed from different perspectives, as firstly semantics considered and only later diminutives were started to be examined with regards to pragmatics (p. 29), making it a progressive and modern study. As this article is highly dependent on the setting of dialogues in specific movies and pragmatics of diminutives, it is worth to note that Barrett et al. (2007) suggests that the context is highly important as it concerns not only outer circumstances but thinking processes as well (p. 1).

Conversations are inherently dynamic and develop on the spot. Such perspective is also supported by Bara and Douthwaite (2010), as the research examines cognitive pragmatics, implying the idea that language can be impulsive and spontaneous (p. 85). As conversations progress and the themes change, attitudes may shift, and different emotions may arise. According to Bara and Douthwaite (2010), the intonation, tone or selected verbal expressions of the speaker can signify corresponding actions of the hearer (p. 91). Therefore, the hearer may respond in the same manner as the speaker signified, whether it has a positive or a negative connotation. It is also a significant medium for emotions to circulate.

The research by Dressler and Merlini Barbaresi (2020) is focused on diminutive pragmatics in relation to emotions. A natural connection between diminutives and pragmatics is argued by the researchers (p. 408). As the conversation unfolds, discourse, having to do with conversations, draws attention to the change in one's demeanor, making pragmatics the key aspect of dialogue's investigation and their adjustments. It leads to stating that not only language-specific points of view are significant in the analysis of diminutives, since, as stated in the research by Dressler and Merlini Barbaresi (2020), the phenomenon of diminutive pragmatics is also examined around philosophy and psychology. Finally, Dressler et al.

(2024) emphasize the priority of pragmatics over semantics in diminutives of several researched languages including English.

## 1.2. FORMATION OF DIMINUTIVES

When it comes to the formation processes of diminutives, studies show that there are two main types – derivation and clipping (cf. Bauer et al. 2013; Booij 2007; Plag 2003; Schneider 2003; Schneider & Strubel-Burgdorf 2013). In this chapter, the two processes are analysed in more detail.

Derivation is an essential aspect of the process of word-formation, and, according to Nieuwenhuis (1985), the most popular approach in diminutive formation. It is possible to derive diminutives not only from nouns or adjectives but also from prepositions or word phrases. It is justified in the study by Bauer et al. (2013), as the authors illustrate the statement with such examples as *all righty* derived from *all right* or *thanky* derived from *thank you* (p. 391).

Clipping is another significant formation process. As Schneider (2003) points out, diminutives can be formed through subtractive processes. The author gives examples of *condo* clipped from *condominium* and *disco* clipped from *discotheque* (p. 9).

## 1.3. SUFFIXED DIMINUTIVES IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Throughout the 20th century, researchers (e.g., Rotzoll 1910; Charleston 1960; Leisi 1969) identified and debated the number of diminutive suffixes in English, with estimates ranging from one to fifty. The study by Schneider (2003) played an essential role in identifying productive diminutive suffixes used in the present English language. In his milestone study, the author highlights fourteen productive diminutive suffixes. Schneider suggests that in the present English language there are eleven native and three foreign diminutive suffixes.

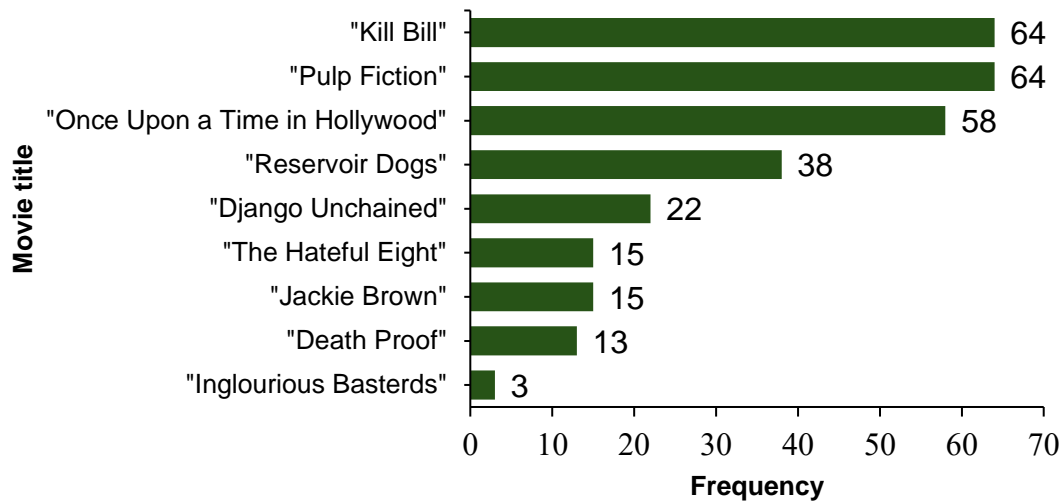
Eleven native English diminutive suffixes suggested by Schneider (2003) include: *-ie* (*-y*, *-ey*), *-let*, *-ling*, *-s*, *-er*, *-o*, *-a*, *-le*, *-poo*, *-pop*, *-peg*. It is claimed by the author that the most productive diminutive suffix in the present English language is *-ie* (p. 86), as well as *-let* (p. 96). Another interesting fact found by the author is that the suffix *-er* is suggested to be the most productive in British English. The author points out one suffix, i.e. *-o*, that implies to have a negative connotation (p. 112).

Apart from eleven native diminutive suffixes, it is important to analyse foreign diminutive suffixes used in the English language, as they are productive in the present English. Schneider (2003) establishes three foreign diminutive suffixes: *-ette*, borrowed from French, *-kin*, originating in Dutch, *-een*, borrowed from Irish language.

Distinguished diminutive suffixes are beneficial for this article and will be analysed further with regards to movies by Quentin Tarantino.

## 1.4. SUFFIXED DIMINUTIVE NOUNS IN THE MOVIES BY QUENTIN TARANTINO

Suffixed diminutives are frequently used in all Tarantino's movies. In total, there are 292 tokens of suffixed common diminutive nouns noted. As presented in the figure below, mostly, diminutives are used in "Kill Bill", "Pulp Fiction" and "Once Upon a Time in Hollywood". The frequency of diminutives is significantly lower in the remaining movies. Nearly half as many are noted in "Reservoir Dogs", three times lower number is observed in "Django Unchained, while in "The Hateful Eight", "Jackie Brown" and "Death Proof" the number of diminutives is a quarter as frequent. The lowest number of tokens of suffixed diminutives appeared in "Inglourious Basterds" with only three cases (for more see Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** Token Frequency of Diminutive Nouns in Movies by Quentin Tarantino (292 in all)

The usage of diminutives varies due to the length of dialogues in the English language, the historical period, relationships between the characters. “Inglourious Basterds” features dialogues not only in English but also in French and German languages, which may account for the relatively low frequency of diminutives, as the multilingual context could limit their typical use and impact. The length of the dialogues also influences the use of diminutives in “Death Proof”. The film includes numerous instances of non-verbal communication, suggesting that this may contribute to the limited occurrence of diminutives. The historical period also has an impact on the usage of diminutives, as “Django Unchained” is set in 1858, during the times of slavery. In the movie, dialogues often present racist attitudes, creating a historical perspective with the usage of diminutives *blackie*, *pickaninny*. Yet, the most significant factor for the usage of diminutives is the relationships between the characters. In both “Kill Bill” and “Pulp Fiction” different relationships are displayed. Most of the diminutives in “Kill Bill” occur in conversations between family members calling each other *daddy*, *mommy*, *baby*. In “Pulp Fiction”, on the other hand, many diminutives appear in two romantic relationships. In “Reservoir Dogs”, the most prominent use of diminutives occurs when a son refers to his father as *daddy*. This aligns with the previously mentioned observation that diminutives often appear within close personal relationships. “Jackie Brown” and “The Hateful Eight” do not centre on close relationships, which may explain the relatively low number of diminutives in these films. Notably, even though “The Hateful Eight” is Tarantino’s longest film, its focus on tension rather than intimacy likely contributes to this reduced use of diminutives. “Once Upon a Time in Hollywood” weaves together multiple storylines, showcasing diverse relationships among characters. As a result, a wide range of diminutives can be observed, spanning from those that reflect close relationships to those that convey hostility.

In the examined movies, among eight diminutive suffixes only one is noted to be productive, i.e. the suffix *-ie* (*-y*, *-ey*), attached to 29 different lexemes with 235 instances of tokens. Other suffixes, viz. *-let*, *-ette*, *-kin*, *-ling*, *-pop*, *-o*, *-le*, are not productive, attached to one or two different lexemes, and except for *-let* and *-ette*, show very low token frequency (for more see Table 1).

**Table 1.** The Type and Token Frequencies of Diminutive Suffixes in Movies by Quentin Tarantino

No.	Suffix	Type Frequency	Token Frequency
1.	<i>-ie (-y, -ey)</i>	29	235
2.	<i>-let</i>	2	25
3.	<i>-ette</i>	2	15
4.	<i>-kin</i>	1	5
5.	<i>-ling</i>	1	4
6.	<i>-pop</i>	1	3
7.	<i>-o</i>	2	3
8.	<i>-le</i>	1	2
	<b>Total</b>	39	292

According to Schneider (2003), three diminutive suffixes, i.e. *-ie (-y, -ey)*, *-ette* and *-let* are the most productive in the English language (p. 86), while the films by Quentin Tarantino confirm the productivity of the first suffix only. This could be an argument for a prototypical character of it.

## 2. FUNCTIONS OF SUFFIXED DIMINUTIVE NOUNS IN MOVIES BY QUENTIN TARANTINO

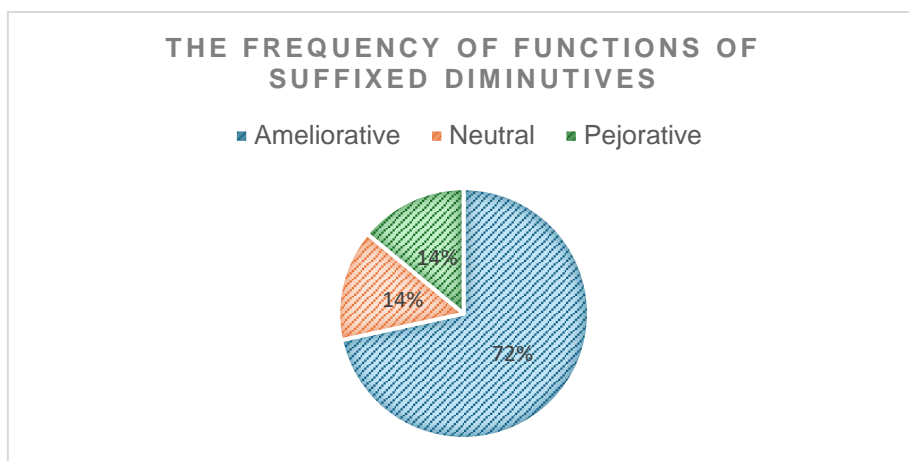
Tokens with diminutive suffixes were considered when collecting different cases of functions of diminutive nouns in movies by Quentin Tarantino. Collected data shows that ameliorative function characteristic of 72 percent of tokens prevails in all analysed movies by Quentin Tarantino (see exs. 1-3 and Figure 2).

- 1) *I'm proud of you, **honey bunny**.* ("Pulp Fiction")
- 2) ***Mommy** is gorgeous.* ("Kill Bill")
- 3) *C'mon shy girl, you know what you said, tell **mommy**, it'll make her feel good.* ("Kill Bill")

Such a finding corresponds to the research by Nieuwenhuis (1985), focused on positive implications of diminutives, as discussed prior.

Neutral and pejorative functions of diminutives appear ca. five times less frequently in comparison to ameliorative function; however, they are still common in every film by Tarantino (see exs. 4-7 and Figure 2 for generalized data).

- 4) *Sorry about putting a **bullet** in your beast.* ("Django Unchained")
- 5) *Would you roll me a **cigarette**?* ("The Hateful Eight")
- 6) *They were **hippie** assholes.* ("Once Upon a Time in Hollywood")
- 7) *We ain't paying a penny for that **pickaninny**.* ("Django Unchained")



**Figure 2.** The Frequency of Functions of Nouns with Diminutive Suffixes in Movies by Quentin Tarantino

Such linguistic nuances shape the tone and atmosphere of a scene and are shaped by the relationships of the characters and their interactions. The use of diminutives, whether they help to express hatred, love, friendship, is always deeply intertwined with the way the plot is developing and evolving together with the characters throughout the film. The specific functions of diminutives can differ depending on the context of the narrative, underlying emotions between the characters and even cultural and historical norms within the film.

### 2.1. AMELIORATIVE FUNCTION

The most common and possibly prototypical function of diminutive nouns is an ameliorative one. The research by Nieuwenhuis (1985) suggests that diminutives are used in such function when the context concerns politeness, kindness and even one's miserable demeanour, as "if someone is pitiable it is usually because he or she is helpless, in need of protection" (p. 82). It is also essential to note that, according to the author, this function can be employed in the context of manipulation.

In the list of top ten most common diminutive nouns in the movies by Quentin Tarantino, the three most frequently used suffixed diminutives, i.e. *babby*, *daddy*, *mommy*, refer to family matters or close relationships (see Table 2).

**Table 2.** Top Ten Diminutive Nouns and Their Frequency in the Movies by Quentin Tarantino

No.	Diminutive	Frequency
1.	Baby	49
2.	Daddy	33
3.	Mommy	31
4.	Honey	25
5.	Bullet	24
6.	Hippie	21
7.	Buddy	16
8.	Belly	15
9.	Cigarette	14
10.	Bunny	6

Diminutive nouns *mommy* and *daddy* are used in children directed speech or in conversations in which characters refer to their parents. In the movie "Kill Bill" an interesting aspect regarding such diminutives can be seen. When talking in front of the child, parents address themselves as *mommy* and *daddy*, showing affectionate attitude and creating a medium that is children friendly (see ex. 8).

8) *You know, sweetie, **mommy's** kinda mad at **daddy**.* ("Kill Bill")

This idea can be viewed as an example of a statement addressed by Bodor and Barcza (2007), who suggest that children's surroundings are represented as small through, thus creating a specific children friendly atmosphere (p. 257). Parents addressing themselves in this manner influence the speech of their daughter as well, as she uses the same diminutives to refer to them (see ex. 9).

9) *I waited a long time for you to wake up, **mommy**.* ("Kill Bill")

Similar case of influence can be noted in the movie "Death Proof", as the adult character Shanna is talking about her father to her friends (see ex. 10).

10) ***Daddy** just has a tendency to just pop out and make sure we don't need anything.* ("Death Proof")

It is important to point out that father himself is not present in these conversations, and he is only being referred to. Once Shanna's friend Pete hears the way she addresses her father, he uses the same diminutive to talk about him (see ex. 11).

11) *They're going to Shanna's **daddy's** house on lake L.B.J.* ("Death Proof")

Even though Pete is talking about his friend's father rather than his own, he uses the diminutive *daddy*, since that is how Shanna talks and influences him to do the same.

Comparing nine movies, an interesting case can be noted with the diminutive *baby*, which appears to be the most ambiguous of all diminutives collected. This diminutive is always used in an ameliorative function and in various contexts. One of the examples of the different situations the diminutive is used in dwells back to its original meaning and is used referring to a child (see exs. 12-14), as occurs in "Kill Bill" and "Inglourious Basterds".

12) *Hey, **baby**, how was school?* ("Kill Bill")

13) *Bill, I'm pregnant. It's your **baby**.* ("Kill Bill")

14) *My **baby** was born today in Frankfurt!* ("Inglourious Basterds")

All these examples refer to a little child, whether it is to talk about or to them directly.

The diminutive *baby* is often used in adult relationships in the movies as well. Such instance can be seen in "Pulp Fiction", "Jackie Brown", "Kill Bill" and "Once Upon a Time in Hollywood" (see exs. 15-16).

15) *Hang in there, **baby**, I'm proud of you.* ("Pulp Fiction")

16) *I'm going to the bar, **baby**.* ("Jackie Brown")

The use of the diminutive *baby* serves as a marker of affection and familiarity between characters. The diminutive carries a sense of tenderness and warmth, signalling that the bond between the characters is not formal or casual, but close, informal and intimate.

Another way the diminutive *baby* is used throughout the movies by Tarantino, is in reference to inanimate objects. This occurs in the movie "Death Proof", when a character named Stuntman Mike addresses his car (see ex. 17).

17) *I could drive this **baby** into a brick wall at a hundred and twenty-five miles an hour, just for the experience.* ("Death Proof")



Such personification of the diminutive *baby* reflects emotional attachment given by the context of the film. In this way, the character expresses sentimental and personal bond with an object, as he views his car not merely as a functional tool, but as something valued and personal. This personification is not rare in the English language, as Brédart (2021) points out, a car is the most frequent object personified (p. 35).

Emotions using diminutive *baby* can be expressed not only in situations addressing someone directly, but to show general positivity or amazement in the given circumstances. As seen in the movie “Reservoir Dogs”, the character uses the diminutive to express his astonishment (see exs. 18-19).

- 18) *Then one day she meets a John Holmes motherfucker, and it's like whoa **baby**.* (“Reservoir Dogs”)  
19) *If he's not lyin' to me, and it really is Thai stick, then whoa **baby**.* (“Reservoir Dogs”)

Schneider (2003) draws attention to another realm of the usage of diminutives in an ameliorative function—requests. The author states that this interaction may not only be applied during children-directed conversations but between adults as well (p. 167). In this case, diminutive *baby* is used too. It can be clearly seen in the movie “Jackie Brown”, as Ordell talks with women (see exs. 20-21).

- 20) ***Baby**, I really could use some more ice.* (“Jackie Brown”)  
21) *Grab that for me, would ya, **baby**?* (“Jackie Brown”)

In both instances, the character gets what he was asking for, which corresponds to the statement by Brown and Levinson (1987, as cited in Schneider, 2003), who suggest the action is more likely to be performed if the speaker uses diminutive while requesting an action.

As addressed before, ameliorative function may be common when addressing someone's misery. This idea can be justified by the examples from the Tarantino's movies. As seen in the “Pulp Fiction”, girlfriend addresses her boyfriend's statement using a diminutive (see ex. 22).

- 22) – *Hard day at the office?*  
– *Pretty hard. I got into a fight.*  
– *Poor **baby**.*  
 (“Pulp Fiction”)

Similar instance can also be noted in “Reservoir dogs”, as a colleague tries to console and help his co-worker who was shot (see ex. 23).

- 23) *Just hold on **buddy** boy.* (“Reservoir Dogs”)

There is no familiar relationship between the colleague's prior in the film, however, when one of them gets shot, the other one tries to show support and empathy, the speaker is attentive to his colleague's feelings.

In both instances addressing someone's miserable demeanour, speakers are trying to subtly lighten the emotional weight of the situation with the help of diminutives.

Discussed examples of ameliorative function of diminutive nouns show that such cases usually appear in family, intimate relationships, discourse directed to children. Diminutives were also used in requests and to address someone's misery.

## 2.2. PEJORATIVE FUNCTION

Negative connotation of diminutives is also common, especially in conversations referring to a person and their traits, as discussed by Schneider (2003). The author claims that by employing diminutives, outrage towards the addressee is created (p. 210). Diminutives can also create a narrative of hierarchy or power, or, as suggested by Schneider and Strubel-Burgdorf (2012), they can be used to gain superiority (p. 30).

Several diminutive nouns used in the movies by Quentin Tarantino carry a negative connotation by showing disrespect, i.e. *weirdo*, *dummy*, or expressing racism. The most common diminutive carrying a pejorative function in Tarantino's movies is *hippie*. As suggested by Oxford English Dictionary (n.d.), its meaning is context dependant. In the case of Tarantino's movies, pejorative function of the diminutive *hippie* is clear, since it is often used with other humiliating words, as in "Death Proof" and "Once Upon a Time in Hollywood" (see exs. 24-25).

24) *Who, the dirty **hippie**?* ("Death Proof")

25) *Hey, you come around here again, I will call the fucking cops! Dirty fucking **hippies**!* ("Once Upon a Time in Hollywood")

In "Once Upon a Time in Hollywood", people walking barefoot and having long hair are considered *hippies* and presumed to belong to a group only from their looks. These instances seen in the examples 24 and 25 exclude a group of people with regards to the way appearance rather than personalities. Such instance does not correspond to Schneider's (2003) suggestion that negative diminutives usually refer to one's personality rather than looks.

In several Tarantino's movies references to animals appear by using diminutive nouns to dehumanize characters and show hierarchy. In the movie "Reservoir Dogs" a character uses a diminutive *doggie* to disrespect another person and show superiority towards him (see ex. 26).

26) *Are you gonna bark all day, little **doggie**, or are you gonna bite?* ("Reservoir Dogs")

As the characters argue, one of them suggests fighting, using characteristics of a dog – barking, biting.

Such instance of a diminutive *doggie* is also seen in "Inglourious Basterds" (see ex. 27).

27) *The **doggie** doc's gonna dig that slug outta your gam.* ("Inglourious Basterds")

Schmauks (2014) claims that with such reference it is desired to characterise someone as stupid (p. 106).

Another pejorative function of diminutive nouns in reference to animals is seen in "Once Upon a Time in Hollywood", as a diminutive *piggie* is used several times. People are being referred to as pigs, making it a humiliating scene. Schmauks (2014), suggests that with this kind of insult it is intended to portray someone as filthy or selfish (p. 106). By the usage of such diminutives, filmmaker signals to the audience that the person who is being addressed is seen as less human and creates power dynamics.

In one out of nine movies by Quentin Tarantino a topic of racism is fundamental. "Django Unchained" is set in 1858, during the times of slavery. Having this historical context in mind, many of the instances of diminutive nouns carrying a pejorative function can be explained with regards to racism and exclusion. Three different diminutives carrying negative, race related connotation appear: *blackie*, *pickaninny*, *pony*. The speaker tries to degrade the addressee by negatively focusing on features rather than using his name (see ex. 28).

28) *You be damned, **blackie**, we're not bandits.* ("Django Unchained")

As stated by the OED (n.d.), *pickaninny* is considered as an offensive word, addressing someone in terms of one's race. That can be seen in another instance of "Django Unchained", as a person is being referred to (see ex. 29).

29) *We ain't paying a penny for that **pickaninny**.* ("Django Unchained")

Another reference to slaves can be seen when the diminutive *pony* is used (see ex. 30)

30) *Bill Crash is out there dealing with some shady slaver trying to sell a passel of **ponies**.* ("Django Unchained")

According to Lin (2013), *pony* in “Django Unchained” refers to a slave woman. Thus, the pejorative function is clear, as women are treated as objects.

### 2.3. NEUTRAL FUNCTION

The third function of diminutives is distinguished in the study by Nieuwenhuis (1985). The author draws attention to the fact that nouns can be formed with diminutive suffixes and have a neutral function while carrying no diminutive notion.

In the movies by Quentin Tarantino there are two diminutive nouns in neutral function that stand out and are used in various instances throughout the films – *cigarette* and *bullet*. Only formally, due to their suffixes, can they be classified as diminutives, although semantically they lack any diminutiveness or connection to “smallness”. Tarantino’s cinematic universe often depicts violence, crime, intense confrontations. Therefore, the word *bullet* is used in most Tarantino’s films. Regardless of its diminutive suffix, the word remains neutral, without any emotional implications.

Correspondingly, suffixed noun *cigarette* is often used and is noted in 5 out of 9 movies by Tarantino, and it is one of the most common diminutives analysed.

The cases of diminutives carrying a neutral function illustrate the way linguistic elements can be employed to create the original movie’s narrative or even a pattern throughout most of the director’s work.

### 3. CONCLUSIONS

In this article, nine movies by Quentin Tarantino were analysed with the numbers of diminutives varying with regards to the themes of conversations in movies, relationships between characters and historical period. While films centred on close personal relationships, like “Pulp Fiction” and “Kill Bill”, feature a higher frequency of diminutives, those focused on tension or multilingual settings, such as “The Hateful Eight” and “Inglourious Basterds”, display fewer due to their contextual constraints. Nouns formed with eight diminutive suffixes were examined in terms of their formation processes and functions.

In total, 292 tokens of nouns with diminutive suffixes and 39 different lexemes were analysed. The most productive suffix was found to be *-ie* (*-y*, *-ey*), with 29 cases of type frequency. This finding corresponds to research by Schneider (2003), who considered this suffix to be the most common in the English language. Other suffixes noted in the movies by Tarantino were *-let*, *-ette*, *-kin*, *-ling*, *-pop*, *-o*, *-le*. All of them were not productive, attached to one or two different lexemes, and except for *-let* and *-ette*, showed very low token frequency. Several suffixes classified as productive by Schneider (2003) were not used in the movies: *-s*, *-er*, *-a*, *-poo*, *-peg*, *-een*.

As far as functions of diminutives are concerned, ameliorative function appeared the most, followed by pejorative and neutral functions. The latter function is characteristic of lexicalized diminutives, i.e. nouns that have diminutive suffixes but lack diminutive semantics and pragmatics. Diminutive nouns were usually used in ameliorative function in close relationships, communication directed to children, requests. Diminutives carrying negative connotations, on the other hand, were used to humiliate and express superiority.

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**Greta Aleknaitė:** Master's student in Screen Cultures, University of Oslo

**Bonifacas Stundžia:** Prof. Habil. dr., Department of Baltic Studies, Vilnius University