

How to form diminutives

Diminutives are formed in various ways:

(1) C-Reduplication

chumux chichmux ‘pitch, chewing gum’

(2) CV-Reduplication

sil sisul’ ‘canvas, cloth’
 sens sesun’s ‘penny’
 sqewth sqequw’t ‘potato’

(3) Cute little vowel /i/

sqwumey’ sqwiqwmi’ ‘dog’
 yunus yiy’nus ‘tooth’
 spaal’ spi’paal’ ‘raven’

(4) Glottalize the resonants (m, n, l, w, y)

machus mam’chus ‘match’
 lushan lil’shaan’ ‘shawl’
 wekun wew’kun’ ‘wagon’

(5) Insert glottal stop

slhap’ slha’lhp ‘soup’

Plural versus diminutive for the word ‘hand’

– many nouns have four forms, plain/singular, plain/plural, diminutive/singular, diminutive/plural

	Singular	Plural
Plain	tselush	tsultselush
Diminutive	tsetslush	tsul’etslush

Assignment (Diminutives)

I. Name the difference(s) between the plain and diminutive:

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|-----|--------------|----------------------|
| (1) | tselush | ‘hand’ |
| | tsetslush | ‘little hand’ |
| (2) | shelh | ‘road’ |
| | she’shlh | ‘little road, trail’ |
| (3) | slhewut’ | ‘herring’ |
| | slhelhwut’ | ‘herring, DIM’ |
| (4) | lelum’ | ‘house’ |
| | li’lum’ | ‘little house’ |
| (5) | situn | ‘basket’ |
| | si’stun’ | ‘little basket’ |
| (6) | kwumluhw | ‘root’ |
| | kwikwum’luhw | ‘little root’ |
| (7) | snuhwulh | ‘canoe’ |
| | snin’hwulh | ‘little canoe’ |
| (8) | spa’ | ‘roe, salmon eggs’ |
| | spi’pa’ | ‘roe, DIM’ |

Using Diminutives

USES OF DIMINUTIVES

I. Diminutive forms express smallness.

- Diminutives are used to refer to something small. (plain form given for comparison)

(1) 'o-o-o, wulh kwintul kw'i sun'iw' 'u tthu kw'ikw'le's.
 'Oh, the fight started in his little stomach.' (kwul'u)

(2) na'ut wulh tsulel 'i' qutl'qutl'um thunu sxuxun'u.
 'My little feet are almost off.' (sxun'u)

- Diminutives are used on verbs, adjectives, etc. when speaking about something that is small.

(3) na'uth wulh xuli'xuxun'uq't thu pulou'ps.
 'The little kittens are opening their eyes.' (xunuq't, pou)

(4) yuy'iw'en' tse' tthun' mim'ne' kws qw'ims.
 'Your little child will get off first.' (yuw'en')

- They are frequently used in 'baby talk', speaking to and about babies.

(5) quqi'lum' 'eyes' qul'iqlum' 'little eyes' (qulum')

II. Diminutive forms convey endearment.

(6) ts'ehwle' 'i' xwi'xwi'a'mustus tthu 'i'i'muths.
 'Sometimes he would tell stories to his little grandson.' ('imuth)

(7) yelh sus hwwi'lus lhu sisum'shathut.
 'The dear sun finally came out.' (sum'shathut)

DIMINUTIVES ARE FORMED ON ALL KINDS OF WORDS

(8) pronouns

'een'thu	'me'	'i'een'thu	'me, DIM'
lhnimulh	'us'	lhnin'mulh	'us, DIM'

(9) adjectives

hwutus	'heavy'	hwi'hwtus	'heavy, DIM'
tu'iitsh	'narrow'	tetu'iitsh	'narrow, DIM'
tsitsulh	'high; noble'	tsutsi'tsulh	'a little bit high, noble'
'uhwiin'	'little'	'e'uhwiin'	'little bitty'

(10) verbs

'a'mut	'sitting'	'i'a'mut	'(something little) is sitting'
huy'qw	'burning'	hi'huy'qw	'burning a little'
seq't	'splitting/ tearing it'	si'seq't	'splitting/tearing it into little pieces'

ALL SORTS OF NOUNS FORM DIMINUTIVES

We have recorded diminutives for 800 nouns of all semantic types

(11) native, but also borrowed words like:

pout	'boat'	pou'pt	'little boat'
kupou	'coat'	ki'kupou	'little coat'
lumutou	'sheep'	lil'mutou	'little sheep'

(12) common nouns, but also proper nouns, like:

kwa'mutsun 'Quamichan' kwikwmutsiin' 'Quamichan, DIM'

(13) nilh nu swiw'q'us tthey' smeent.

'That mountain is my dearest Mt. Provost.' (swuq'us)

(14) A mass noun like *qa* 'water', which lacks a plural, forms the diminutive *qika* 'a small amount of water,' which can be pluralized as *qul'ika* 'small amounts of water.'