

László Fejes

Borrowed or inspired?

Komi diminutive under Russian influence

Abstract: Komi adjectival diminutive -hypocoristic suffixes /-ik/, /-ɲik/ and /-ɲɪk/ resemble the Russian noun suffixes /-ik/ and /-ɲik/ both in form and, for /-ik/, in function as well. Through a comprehensive analysis of these forms, the chapter explores the origin of these suffixes in Komi. Borrowing is excluded, as the amount of nouns originating from Russian ending in /-ik/ and analyzable as diminutives is proven to be negligible. Instead, the emergence of these suffixes is suggested to have been inspired by Russian in several ways. Russian adjectival diminutization may have evoked a communicational need for similar forms in Komi. In the lack of a native suffix, the Russian noun diminutive suffix /-ik/ was applied to Komi adjectival stems, but not to nominal ones. As this suffix was morphophonotactically restricted, a similar noun suffix, /-ɲik/, was also introduced (/ɲɪk/). A third form, /-ɲɪk/, emerged through the reanalysis of /i/-final stems with the suffix /-ɲik/ and became a productive and widely used adjectival diminutive suffix in Komi. Thus, while the source of Komi adjectival diminutive-hypocoristic suffixes is shown to be Russian, the process cannot have been direct or indirect borrowing, but rather forms and function (diminutization) were borrowed in a parallel manner.

Keywords: diminutivization, suffix borrowing, language contact, matter/pattern borrowing, direct/indirect borrowing

1 Introduction

This paper argues that Komi adjectival diminutive -hypocoristic suffixes /-ik/, /-ɲik/ and /-ɲɪk/ emerged under Russian influence in a very specific way. Segments functioning as suffixes in Russian gained morphotactically distinct roles in Komi: this transition of morphemes from language into language is different from the process that we usually call borrowing.

In her influential study, Sakel (2007) differentiates two kinds of morphological borrowing: matter borrowing and pattern borrowing. Matter borrowing is defined as a situation when “morphological material and its phonological shape from one language is replicated in another language”; pattern borrowing happens if “only the patterns of the other language are replicated, i. e. the organization, distribution and mapping of grammatical or semantic meaning, while the form itself is not borrowed” (Sakel 2007: 15). The present paper argues that the emergence of the Komi adjectival diminutive suffix is a combination of matter and pattern borrowing. On the one hand, the emergence of adjective diminutization is a result of a pattern borrowing from Russian. On the other hand, the suffixes used for diminutivization of adjectives in Komi have different functions in Russian: one is used for diminutization of nouns and the other (with a similar form) for various denominal noun formations. As the whole process is much more complex than the simple replication of morphological matter or structure, it is more appropriate to say that Komi was inspired by Russian than that Komi just borrowed morphemes or patterns from Russian.

Most probably, the suffixes were first borrowed with functions as in the donor language, and later their functions have changed. One could also suppose that the Russian suffixes under discussion were borrowed either indirectly, i. e., in whole words, or directly as diminutive noun suffixes, and, in the course of time, applied as diminutive adjective suffixes as well. However, there are no traces of the use of these suffixes as noun diminutive markers in Komi, and there are not many Russian loanwords with a segment resembling these suffixes and having a diminutive meaning.

According to the standard scenario (Paul 1886: 346), suffixes are usually not borrowed directly: at first, whole lexemes with and without the given suffix are borrowed. Then, based on these pairs of lexemes, the suffixes are abstracted and used with native stems (less typically, with stems borrowed from other languages or stems borrowed from the same donor language but with which the suffix is not used in that language); occasionally, extending the use of the suffix to stems belonging to other categories (e.g. from nouns to adjectives). However, Seifart (2015) argues that direct (contrasted to Paul's scenario labeled as indirect) borrowing of morphemes is also possible: in this case, the recipient language begins to use the borrowed morpheme without borrowing whole words (stems) containing it. Seifart presents various suffixes borrowed directly from and into a wide range of languages. However, in all Seifart's examples, the function of the borrowed suffix is the same in the donor and the recipient language, and they are applied with stems belonging to the same morphosyntactic category. This is not the case with the Komi diminutive adjective suffixes: here, Russian noun-forming denominal suffixes were adopted in the function of adjective-forming deadjectival suffixes. Consequently, the process cannot be described as either indirect or direct borrowing.

Contemporary morphological theories tend to treat form and meaning separately, meaning emerging before form (Manova et al. 2020): syntactic trees in Distributed Morphology (Halle and Marantz 1993) consist of terminal nodes associated only with meaning; content paradigms in Paradigm Function Morphology (Stump 2016) also contain only meaning. Thus, the scenario described in Section 6 can be interpreted in a similar fashion: the meanings and forms of Russian morphemes were borrowed into Komi separately and then linked with a semantic mismatch: the meaning (function) of the adjectival diminutive suffix was linked to the forms of two nominal suffixes: a diminutive and a non-diminutive one.

The present paper is structured as follows. In Section 1, Komi, its adjectival diminutive suffixes, the arguments for and against their Russian origin, and a classic scenario of how they could have been borrowed from Russian to Komi are introduced. In Section 2, the use of the adjectival diminutive suffixes, namely their lexical frequency, morpho-phonotactics, morphotactics etc. are demonstrated. In Section 3, Komi words ending in /ik/ are observed from the point of view whether they can be analyzed as derivations, and whether adjectival diminutive suffixes could have other functions in Komi. Section 4 reviews whether Russian loanwords ending in /ik/ in Komi could contribute to the emergence of the Komi adjectival diminutive suffixes. In Section 5, an alternative scenario is considered: whether the Komi adjectival diminutive suffixes can be traced back to the Russian adjectival diminutive suffix. Section 6 proposes an alternative explanation to borrowing. In Section 7, a final conclusion is drawn.

Below, some basic issues making it easier to understand the arguments occurring later in the paper are discussed. Section 1.1 presents the basic facts about the Komi language and its contact with Russian. Section 1.2 briefly describes the adjectival diminutive suffixes of Komi. Section 1.3 discusses the nominal diminutive suffixes of Russian which are suggested to be the sources of the Komi adjectival diminutive suffixes.

1.1 The Komi language and its contact with Russian

Komi is a Permic (Finno-Ugric, Uralic) language spoken in northeastern European Russia. Komi has two standardized variants: Komi-Zyryan (used in the Komi Republic) and Komi-Permyak (used in the former Komi-Permyak Autonomous Okrug, now part of the Perm Krai). In this paper, if not indicated otherwise, Komi refers to Standard Komi-Zyryan, which is based on the dialect spoken around the capital of the Komi Republic, Syktyvkar.

Russian is a Slavic (Indo-European) language, traditionally spoken in the central parts of Eastern Europe, approximately in the zone between the Black and White Seas. As the Russian state colonized Eastern Europe, Siberia and the northern part of Asia as far as to the Bering Sea (and, for a short time, even Alaska), the Russian language contacted many indigenous languages. Russian has three main dialect groups: northern, southern, and transitional middle dialects. Historically, Komi contacted with the northern dialect, the most striking feature of which is the lack of *akanie* (vowel reduction in unstressed syllables: the merge of /o/ and /a/, on the one hand, and /e/ and /i/ on the other hand).¹ However, in this paper, Russian refers to Standard Russian.

Although Komi–Russian bilingualism became general only in the middle of the 20th century, Russian has influenced Komi since the 13th century. Komi people, who were among the first colonized by Russians, were baptized in the 14th century. From that time, Komis had continuous contact with the Russian state and church. The Schism of the Russian Church in the 17th century affected Komi people strongly: many Old Believers fled to Komi territory and many of the Komi also became Old Believers (Lallukka 1997: 54).

Information about the degree of Komi–Russian bilingualism before the 20th century is very difficult to obtain. However, at the beginning of the 20th century, the knowledge of at least some Russian was common among Komis and Komi people used to sing Russian songs, although sometimes translated into Komi (Wichmann 1903: 27–28; Žerebcov & Lašuk 1960: 66). Among the Uralic speaking population in Russia, the degree of literacy was the highest (18%) among the Komi at the turn of the century (Lallukka 1997: 55), and that meant literacy in Russian. Fuchs (1911: 230–232) reports educated people inclined to assimilate to Russians, and also points out the great number of Russian loanwords and structural Russicisms in Komi.

While today the typical case is that the Komis speak Russian but the Russians do not speak Komi, this situation cannot simply be projected back to the earlier centuries. Žerebcov and Lašuk (1960: 56, 60) state that in the Upper Vyčegda region, Russians were assimilated to the local Komi population as well. Zsirai (1937: 218) makes similar statements for the whole Komi territory, although it remains unclear to which sources he relies on. Assimilation

¹ To avoid ambiguity, IPA will be used throughout this paper.

of Russians could only happen if they learned to speak Komi as a second language. The proportion of Komi and Russian inhabitants varied in different types of settlements. According to Žilina and Baraksanov (1971: 3), in 1926 in the region around Syktyvkar about 85% of the inhabitants were Komis, and 15% Russians. However, in the industrial settlement Njuvčimskij zavod (Njuvčim factory, today Njuvčim) about 95% of the inhabitants were Russians; in the central town of the region, Ust'-Sysolsk, about two thirds of the population was Komi and one third Russian. In all the volosts made up of just small villages, the proportion of Komis was over 97% with one exception, where it was slightly over 90%. Presumably, Russians living outside the industrial centers had to speak or at least understand some Komi.

The two languages, Komi and Russian, are quite different structurally. Some differences are highlighted here to help in understanding the linguistic facts discussed below. In phonology, both Komi and Russian contrast consonant phonemes based on palatality (hard vs. soft). However, while Komi distinguishes only alveolar and palatal consonants, Russian contrasts unpalatalized and palatalized consonants among alveolars, labials and marginally also among velars. While alveolar and palatal consonants do not typically alternate in Komi, the alternation of unpalatalized and palatalized phonemes is very typical for Russian.

With respect to morphological organization, Komi is usually classified as an agglutinative language, while Russian as a fusional language. Although this is a strong oversimplification, it is generally true that morpheme boundaries in Komi are more clear-cut than in Russian, and there are much more phonologically unmotivated alternations of morphemes in Russian than in Komi. In Komi, stems in inflected forms of nouns and adjectives typically coincide with the unsuffixed singular nominative forms (with the exception of some stems that show stem-final consonant alternations). On the contrary, Russian nouns and adjectives usually appear with an inflectional suffix even in the singular nominative (although there is a large group of nouns, especially masculine ones,² which are unsuffixed in singular nominative). Russian nouns (and many times also adjectives) are usually borrowed into Komi together with their singular nominative inflectional suffixes, which are reanalyzed as belonging to the stem. For example, in the case of Russian /avarija/ 'accident, crash' the final /a/ is an inflectional suffix and the stem is /avarij-/ (other inflectional and derivational suffixes are attached to this form). However, in Komi, /avarija-/ will be the stem and the stem final /a/ is never deleted before suffixation.

Diminutivization is less typical for Uralic languages than for Slavic ones, which are well-known for their intensive use of diminutive suffixes. No diminutive suffix can be reconstructed for the proto-languages preceding Komi. All contemporary diminutive suffixes have emerged relatively recently. Although grammars mention some nominal diminutive suffixes as being of Russian origin, /-ka/ (/nivka/ 'girlie' ← /niv/ 'girl, daughter'), the endearing /-ə/ (/babə/ 'granny' ← /bab/ 'grand-mother'), the derisive /foj/ (/kəmfoj/ 'bad

² Komi has no genders.

shoes' ← /kəm/ 'shoes'; from /foj/ 'dead body'), none of these is really productive³ and frequent.

1.2 Adjectival diminutive suffixes in Komi

Komi has several adjectival diminutive suffixes, illustrated in (1) through (5).

(1) /-ik/

a. /it̪æt/ 'little, small' → /it̪æc-ik/ 'tiny'

b. /pækid/ 'wide' → /pækiɟ-ik/ 'a bit (too) wide'

(2) /-ɲik/

/musɑ/ 'kind, dear' → /musɑ-ɲik/ 'dearie'

(3) /-ɲɪk/

/ɬok/ 'bad' → /ɬok-ɲɪk/ 'baddish'

(4) /-ɲɪd̪zi/

/kos/ 'dry' → /kos-ɲɪd̪zi/ 'a kind of dry'

(5) /-ɲɪd̪zik/

/nebid/ 'soft' → /nebid-ɲɪd̪zik/ 'softish, very soft'

When the adjectival base means something little ('small, short, tight, shallow' etc.), the diminutive suffix intensifies the meaning (similar to the adverb 'very'). Otherwise, the diminutive suffix moderates the meaning, which indicates subjective qualification rather than objective degradation of the property ('a bit (too)...', 'somewhat...', 'a kind of...', '...-ish', cf. Kiefer 2004: 340 on similar cases in Hungarian).⁴ In some cases, both meanings are possible. These diminutive suffixes are hypocoristic, usually reflecting sympathy, pity or some general positive attitude (6). As a consequence, they fulfil an important pragmatic function: the diminutive suffix "subdues or tones down the negative meaning and hence the impoliteness involved" (Kiefer 2004: 340).

(6) /pəriɕ/ 'old' → /pəriɕ-ɲɪk/ 'oldish'

Occasionally, these diminutive suffixes attach to adverbs as well:

(7) Derivation of diminutive adverbs:

a. /nad̪z/ 'slow, tardy, slothful (adj. & adv.)' → /nad̪z-ən/ 'slowly, quietly, silently (adv.)' → /nad̪z-əɲ-ik/ 'silently, gently, secretly, bit by bit, little by little (adv.)'

b. /ɕər/ 'late (adj. & adv.)' → /ɕər-ən/ 'late (adv.)' → /ɕər-əɲ-ik/ 'quite late, fairly late (adv.)'

c. /et̪ʃɑ/ 'some, little, few, not much' → /et̪ʃɑ-ɲɪk/ 'some, a bit'

³ Here and henceforth, productivity simply refers to the fact that the suffix is used for novel derivations. In the lack of other possibilities, the judgement on productivity is just an educated guess based on the attested case.

⁴ There is also another kind of adjectival diminutive in Komi, the moderative one, derived with the suffixes /-ov/, /-ovat/ (borrowed from Russian), /-gov/ (most probably, a variant of /-ov/), /-gəm/, /-pɪriɕ/, /-d̪zik/ etc. (cf. Sazhina 2012). The moderative forms indicate that the property denoted by the adjective is not realized to a full degree.

In most of the dialects, /-ik/, /-nik/ and /-ipik/ (or similar forms) are used, specifically in the Pečora (Saxarova et al. 1976: 31), Middle Sysola (Kolegova & Baraksanov 1980: 40), Upper Sysola (Žilina 1975: 93–94), Upper Vychegda (Sorvačeva et al. 1966: 89) Luza–Letka (Žilina 1985: 59) and also Permyak (Batalova 1975: 169–173) dialects. The forms /-ip̃d̃zi/ and /-ip̃d̃zik/ are used in the western and northern periphery, that is in the Udora (Sorvačeva & Beznosikova 1990: 46), Lower Vychegda (Sorvačeva 1978: 41), Vym (Žilina 1998: 85) and Ižma (Saxarova & Selkov 1976: 60) dialects. Both sets of forms are used in the Syktyvkar dialect (Žilina & Baraksanov 1971: 101). The suffixes /-ip̃d̃zi/ and /-ip̃d̃zik/⁵ are not discussed in the present paper.

1.3 Suggested origin of adjectival diminutive suffixes in Komi

In this paper, it will be argued that Komi adjective diminutive suffixes /-ik/, /-nik/ and /-ipik/ originate from the Russian noun diminutive suffix /-jik/, which is still productive today.⁶ Its productivity can be demonstrated by the fact that it can be used with the relatively recent borrowings, which is illustrated in (8).

(8) Productivity of the Russian suffix /-jik/

- a. /ananas-jik/ ← /ananas/ ‘pineapple’
- b. /d̃inosavr-jik/ ← /d̃inosavr/ ‘dinosaur’
- c. /ñuans-jik/ ← /ñuans/ ‘nuance, shade, detail, subtle issue’
- d. /projekt-jik/ ← /projekt/ ‘project, design, draft’
- e. /r̃ietsept-jik/ ← /r̃ietsept/ ‘recipe, (medicine) prescription’
- f. /stałagt̃it-jik/ ← /stałagt̃it/ ‘stalactite’
- g. /s̃ejf-jik/ ← /s̃ejf/ ‘safe (box for valuables)’
- h. /t̃eat-jik/ ← /t̃eat/ ‘(Internet) chat’ etc.

Obviously, some diminutive forms can take specific meanings. For example, the diminutive form of /nos/ ‘nose’, /nos̃ik/, in addition to its transparent diminutive meaning, can also mean ‘beak (of birds)’, ‘spout (e.g. of a teapot)’, ‘tip of a shoe or sock’ etc., see also Manova and Sitchinava, this volume. According to Švedova (1980: 205–206, §413), the suffixes /-ok/ and /-t̃eik/ are used in a similar way. Additionally, in diminutive forms of forenames, /-ok/ and /-uk/ are used besides /-jik/ (Švedova 1980: 212, §429).

According to Švedova (1980: 141, 164, 187⁷), /-jik/ derives different meanings (9).

(9) Meanings related to the Russian suffix /-jik/, classified according to derivational base

⁵ In all probability, the form /-ip̃d̃zik/ is a result of the contamination of /-ip̃d̃zi/ on the one hand and /-ik/, and /-nik/ and /-ipik/ on the other hand. Therefore, its origin cannot be completely separated from the history of /-ik/, /-nik/ and /-ipik/.

⁶ From the point of view of Russian morphology, the feminine form /-ik (a)/ and the neuter form /-ik(o)/ could be discussed here as well. However, such derived words are borrowed into Komi in their base (singular nominative) forms, and the Russian inflectional endings /-a/ and /-o/ become parts of the stem in Komi. As such stems do not end in /-ik/, they are ignored here.

⁷ §212, §285, §344

- a. From nouns: A person, object or material which has a typical relationship with the referent of the nominal base. All the examples are of Latin or Greek origin, with deletions and alternation processes atypical for Russian: /ximʲik/ ‘chemist’ from /ximʲija/ ‘chemistry’, /fizʲik/ ‘physicist’ from /fizʲika/ ‘physics’, /epʲik/ ‘epic’ from /epos/ ‘epic poem’, /skeptʲik/ ‘skeptical’ from /skeptʲis/ ‘skepsis’, etc.⁸ As the examples (and some of the English translations) illustrate, these forms were not derived in Russian but borrowed as such, and the Russian patterns are due to the derivational patterns in the source languages. (This is a purely theoretical guess, in the mental lexicon of a native speaker of modern Russian such pairs of nouns should be in a derivational relationship.)
- b. From adjectives: A person or object with the property denoted by the adjectival base, e.g. /star-ʲik/ ‘old man’ from /star-/ ‘old’; based on the data in Švedova (1980), /-nʲik/ is the default form and /-ʲik/ is used sporadically and after certain suffixes ending in /t/. Occasionally, /-jevʲik/ is also used with the same function.⁹
- c. From verbs: A person or object executing or assigned to execute the act denoted by the verb, as in /pie:ʲik/ ‘fife, tin whistle’ from /pie:(a) -/ ‘peep, squeak’. In this function, /-nʲik/ is more typical and /-jenʲik/ also occurs.

Thus, it is important to notice that although /-nʲik/ is not used as a diminutive suffix, it often derives the same meaning as /-ʲik/.

Having reviewed the types of Russian diminutives, let us now turn to the arguments supporting the Russian origin of the Komi adjectival diminutive suffixes in question. These suffixes seem to have no equivalent in the related languages, especially in the closely related Udmurt. On the contrary, Komi /-ik/ and Russian /-ʲik/ are not just similar in form and function, but they also share a morphophonemic property, namely the stem-final consonant palatalizes before both. Typically Russian suffixes which are usually preceded by a (synchronically or diachronically) palatalized **vowel consonant** are borrowed with their usual phonological environment, and cause consonant alternations which are otherwise unknown in the recipient Finno-Ugric language, (10) through (11).

⁸ There are also other structures morphophonologically atypical for Russian, e.g. /proza/ ‘prose’ : /prozaik/ ‘prosewriter’ (Švedova 1980: 419, 428) instead of the expectable */prozʲik/: as /-a/ is the feminine singular nominative suffix, not the part of the stem (cf. /prozu/ ‘prose:SG.ACC’, /prozie/ ‘prose:SG.LOC’, /proz/ ‘prose:PL.GEN’), it should not be present in a form derived from the word.

⁹ One can ask whether the fact that the Russian /-ʲik/ can attach to adjectival stems could have played any role in its adoption as an adjectival suffix in Komi. The answer is rather no. As demonstrated in Section 3, the number of deadjectival nouns ending in /-ik/ that are borrowed from Russian is low (and the adjectives that serve as bases for such nouns are usually derived from other nouns, as in /gazəvik/ < Russian /gaz-ov-ʲik/ ‘worker of gas industry’ ← /gaz-ov-/ ‘gas’ (adj.) ← /gaz/ ‘gas’ (noun) or /zapovednik/ < Russian /zapoved-n-ʲik/ ‘natural reserve’ ← /zapoved-n-/ ‘protected, secret’ ← /zapovedi/ ‘commandment, rule’). Additionally, even derivations based on the same stems have considerably different forms in Russian and Komi, cf. Russian /star-ʲik/ ‘old man’ and Komi /star-inʲik/ ‘oldish’ from /star-/ ‘old’.

(10) Veps (Zajceva 2016: 98–99, 101, 218–220)

/mustiknik/ ~ /mustifnik/ ~ /mustiznik/ 'blueberry field' ← /mustik/'blueberry scrub'

(11) Yazva Komi (Maria Usacheva and Timofey Arkhangelskiy, p. c.), etc.

/kurəʒok/ 'hen (dimin.)' ← /kurəg/ 'hen'

Although non-palatal and palatal consonants do not generally alternate in Komi, such an alternation is typical for the suffix /-ik/ (see (1), further details in Section 2.1). Therefore, in what follows, the Komi suffix is, like in Russian, given as /-ik/. It should also be mentioned that in the suffixes /-jik/ and /-jnik/, the segment /ik/ is preceded by a palatal consonant as well.

However, there are arguments against the Russian origin of these suffixes: in Russian, the diminutive suffix /-ik/ is used with nouns, but not with adjectives and adverbs; the Russian suffix /-nĭk/, a possible source of the Komi /-(i)nik/, is not used with adjectives and adverbs in Russian and cannot derive diminutives either.

It is practically impossible to determine when exactly these suffixes emerged in Komi. However, dictionaries based on dialectal materials collected at the very beginning of the 20th century (Wichmann 1942, Fokos-Fuchs 1959) already contain such forms. Thus, the suffixes should have appeared during the 19th century, or even before.

2 A closer look at the Komi diminutive adjectival suffixes

In this section, the occurrences of the diminutive suffixes /-jik/ (Section 2.1), /-jik/ (Section 2.2) and /-jnik/ (Section 2.3) will be examined from a morpho-phonotactic and a morphotactic point of view. In Section 2.4, the distribution of the three suffixes will be compared.

The data come from the latest comprehensive dictionary of Standard Komi (Beznosikova et al. 2000), a specific list of Komi adjectives ending in /ik/ (Lav 2013), and various modern grammars (above all, Ajbabina et al. 1997 and Ludykova 2000). There are about 30 examples with /-jik/, 10 with /-jik/ and over a hundred with /-jnik/.

2.1 The diminutive suffix /-jik/

As already mentioned, the /-jik/ notation is intended to signal the fact that the suffix palatalizes the preceding consonant.

This suffix occurs after both adjectival and adverbial stems. There is only one case attested in which the base word (an adjective) ends in a palatal consonant (12).

(12) /oməʎ/ 'bad, weak' → /oməʎ-ik/ 'badish, weakish'

In all other cases, the palatalization of the stem is caused by the suffix.

In the data, all adjective stems end in an apical stop. Just one of these ends in /t/, which is palatalized to /c/ (1a). In all other, almost 30 cases, the adjective bases end in /d/ which is palatalized to /j/ (1b): the adjectives always end in /id/ or /əd/, typical endings for adjectival stems, although they can hardly be identified as suffixes (except as a “nativizer suffix” of borrowed stems, (13)).

(13) The nativizer /id/

/krepid/ ‘strong, durable, solid’ < Russian /krep-/ ‘id.’

Among adverbs, there are three cases in which the base ends in an /n/ palatalized to /ɲ/ before the suffix. In all these cases, the base-final /n/ is part of the derivational suffix /-ən/, (7) and (14).¹⁰ Note that corresponding forms in (7a) and in (14a) are synonymous.

(14) /n/ to /ɲ/ before /-jik/

- a. /ɲəʒ/ ‘slow, tardy, slothful (adj. & adv.)’ – /ɲəʒj-ən/ ‘slowly, quietly, silently (adv.)’ – /ɲəʒj-əɲ-ik/ ‘silently, gently, secretly, bit by bit, little by little (adv.)’
- b. /guc/ ‘thief’ – /guc-ən/ ‘stealthily, furtively, secretly; to oneself; in a whisper, inconspicuously’ (adv.) – /guc-əɲ-ik/ ‘softly, in a whisper, inconspicuously; (talk) to oneself; secretly’

In addition, there is an adverb ending in /d/ palatalized into /j/ before the suffix, (15).

(15) /regid/ ‘soon, shortly before’ → /regijik/ ‘for a short time’

To sum up, the diminutive suffix /-jik/ occurs in just about 30 lexemes, and in most of these the base ends in /d/: all but one are adjectives. Additionally, it occurs in two other adjectives, one ending in /t/ and one ending in /ʎ/, and in three adverbs derived with the suffix /-ən/.

2.2 The diminutive suffix /-ɲik/

The diminutive suffix /-ɲik/ occurs in fewer than ten lexemes, all ending in vowels (/a/ or /i/). Among these, there is only one adverb, which also serves as a quantifier (7c). All of the others are adjectives, (2) and (16).

(16) Diminutive adjectives with /-ɲik/

- a. /gʌʒa/ ‘happy’ → /gʌʒa-ɲik/ ‘happyish’
- b. /vəsɲi/ ‘thin, slim’ → /vəsɲi-ɲik/ ‘thin, slim (dim.)’

2.3 The diminutive suffix /-ipik/

¹⁰ The suffix has the same form as the instrumental case suffix.

The diminutive suffix */-ɨnik/* is attested in more than a hundred lexemes, however, all adjectives. The bases are always consonant-final, but palatalization never happens. The base-final consonants vary, they can be palatal (17a), non-palatal but theoretically palatalizable (17b), or non-palatalizable (17c–d).

(17) diminutive adjectives with */-ɨnik/*, Komi stems

- a. */kuz/* ‘long’ → */kuz-ɨnik/* ‘longish’
- b. */kiz/* ‘thick, fat’ → */kiz-ɨnik/* ‘kind of thick, fatish’
- c. */vaʒ/* ‘old’ → */vaʒ-ɨnik/* ‘kind of old, oldish’
- d. */tom/* ‘young’ → */tom-ɨnik/* ‘youngish’

This suffix can also be attached to stems borrowed from Russian. In (18), the short form of Russian adjectives serve as the base (see Section 5).

(18) diminutive adjectives with */-ɨnik/*, from Russian short forms of adjectives

- a. (Russian */blɨd-n-/* ‘pale’ >) */bɫed/* ‘pale’ → */bɫed-ɨnik/* ‘palish’
- b. (Russian */sləb-/* ‘weak’ >) */sləb/* ‘weak’ → */sləb-ɨnik/* ‘weakish’

There are also cases in which the loanword is borrowed together with the Russian inflectional suffix */-ɨj/* (usually [ɨj]) or */-oj/* in a nativized form */-əj/*, the so-called long-form adjectives, which are the citation forms of the Russian adjectives, see the examples in (19).¹¹

(19) diminutive adjectives with */-ɨnik/*, from Russian long forms of adjectives

- a. (Russian */grub-/* ‘coarse, rough, rude’ + */-oj/* SG. NOM.M inflectional ending >) */grubəj/* ‘coarse, rough, rude’ → */grubəj-ɨnik/* ‘a kind of coarse, rough, rude’
- b. (Russian */prost-/* ‘simple, ordinary, basic’ + */-oj/* SG. NOM.M inflectional ending >) */prəstəj/* ‘simple, ordinary, basic’ → */prəstəj-ɨnik/* ‘relatively simple’.

2.4 Comparison of diminutive suffixes */-ɨk/*, */-ɨnik/* and */-ɨnik/*

All the three suffixes have the same diminutive function, they can be considered as the allomorphs of the same morpheme. As */-ɨk/* and */-(i)ɨnik/* are attached to consonant-final stems and */-ɨnik/* is attached to vowel-final stems, both */-ɨk/* and */-ɨnik/* are in complementary distribution with */-ɨnik/*: they are positional variants. By contrast, */-ɨk/* and */-ɨnik/* can be attached even to the same stem (20), without semantic differences reported.

(20) */-ɨk/* and */-ɨnik/* diminutives with the same meaning

- a. */vekɲɨd/* ‘tight, narrow’ → */vekɲɨɲɨk/* ‘tight, narrow (dim.)’
- b. */vekɲɨd/* ‘tight, narrow’ → */vekɲɨdɨnik/* ‘tight, narrow (dim.)’

Nonetheless, the two suffixes are not free variants in all positions: while */-ɨnik/* seems to be productive and attachable to any adjective stems, */-ɨk/* can be attached only to stems

¹¹ Of course, it is not the dictionary form (i.e. nominative masculine singular) that is borrowed, cf. Section 5.

ending in a palatalizable (or, occasionally, palatal) consonant. Moreover, /-jik/ is attested only with a restricted set of the stems potentially suffixable with it, therefore, it does not seem to be productive. In adverbs, only /-jik/ and /-jik/ are attested, but only in few cases, that they cannot be considered productive.

3 Komi native words ending in /ik/

If we suppose that /-jik/ and /-(i)nik/ were borrowed from Russian, first in whole words, later abstracted and also used with native stems, we should find diminutive nouns with native stems to which these suffixes are attached. In addition, since the original Russian /-nik/ has no diminutive function, we should also find non-diminutive nouns with this suffix, which could have served as basis for the development of /-nik/ into a diminutive suffix.

First, we will exclude words ending in /ik/ which is not (part of) a suffix (21). There are only few such words.

(21) Komi non-derived words terminating in /ik/ (mostly adverbs)

- a. /əcik/ (~ /əci/) ‘one’ (numeral)
- b. /d̥zik/ ‘totally, completely, perfectly, surely, certainly, doubtlessly, definitely’ (adverb)
- c. /suɬik/ ‘throughout, completely, abundantly, fully’ (adverb)
- d. /kid̥zik/ (~ /kid̥zi/ ~ /kid̥z/) ‘how, what way’ (interrogative adverb)
- e. /tad̥zik/ (~ /tad̥zi/ ~ /tad̥z/) ‘so, this/that way’ (demonstrative adverb)

In some cases, it is quite difficult to decide whether a word was suffixed in Komi or was borrowed as a Russian suffixed form. For example, Anikin (1990) argues that Komi /kuʃnik/ ‘loghut, winter shelter (or its guard, user)’ is borrowed from Russian /kuʃnik/, a noun with a similar meaning derived from /kuʃniɑ/ ‘lodging for lumberjacks’. Ignatov (1993), however, argues that /kuʃnik/ was derived in Komi from /kuʃ/ ‘empty’, and it became lexicalized as a noun from the attributive construction /kuʃnik kerka/ ‘log hut, winter shelter’ (<‘empty house’). It is not easy to decide which etymology is correct. A possible argument against a Russian origin is that /kuʃniɑ/ is attested in the Arkhangelsk Oblast (Ščepanskaja 2003: 338), an area where Russians had contacts with the Komi, but /-jik/ attaches to Komi adjectives only when they are vowel-final, i. e. one would expect not /kuʃnik/ but */kuʃjik/ here. In addition, as it is demonstrated below, /-jik/ does not seem to be a productive suffix in Komi. Although these facts do not exclude it, they make it less probable that the form /kuʃnik/ was derived in Komi.

The case of Komi /gibɒnik/ ‘wedding bread’ is similar: /gibɒn/ is a ‘(duck-formed) salt-cellar’, as offering bread with a salt-cellar in the middle of it is typical in the Russian culture (Figure 1).¹² The semantic connection between the salt-cellar and the bread is clear in

¹² ‘Russian’ here is meant as ‘related to the Russian state’, not as ‘related to the Russian ethnic-ity’. As for Komi culture, we can mention that as a ceremonial phrase at the beginning of a meal (similar to enjoy your meal! or bon appetit!), the phrase нянь да сов! /ɲɒɲ da sov/ ‘bread and salt’ is used. The phrase has Russian origin (хлеб да соль, cf. Voronina 2004: 105, 112, 128, 130). Plesovskij (1968: 55–97) makes evident the important role of bread in the description of the Komi wedding ceremony, but he does not mention the word term /gibɒnik/

the light of ethnographic data: the bread could get the name from the salt-cellar in the middle of it, and later the word could have been used also for ceremonial bread without a salt-cellar.

Nonetheless, /gɪbɐnik/ could also have been derived within Russian from the verb от-/со-/на-/etc. -гибать (/ot-/ , /so-/ , /na-/ , etc. /-gibatʲ/ – formerly with an /i/ instead of /i/) ‘bend, fold’ and then borrowed to Komi. Voronina (2004: 115) mentions pies called *загибень* /zagibenʲ/ and *загибенька* /zagibenʲka/, derived from *загибать* /zagibatʲ/ ‘bend, turn up/down’. Šabuldaeva (2009: 266) mentions the Eastern Slavic terms for bread *гибаник* – *гибаница* – *гибанец* (/gibanʲik/ – /gibanʲitsa/ – /gibanʲets/), but without details or references. The Bosnian-Croatian-Montenegrin-Serbian-Slovenian term *gibanica* /gibanitsa/ with a similar etymology refers to different kinds of layered pastries. Voronina (2004: 115) also mentions a kind of bun made of leftover dough: when rolled out, salt was poured into the middle of the leaf, and the edges were bent – although she mentions it under the name *солоник* /solonʲik/. In any case, the Slavic etymology of /gɪbɐnik/ seems to be so convincing that it can also be suggested that /giban/ ‘salt-cellar’, otherwise without a straightforward etymology, was a result of back-formation from /gɪbɐnik/ ‘some kind of bread (offered with a salt-cellar or with a hole in it serving as a salt-cellar, at least occasionally)’.



Figure 1: Traditional Russian bread with a salt-cellar in the middle.

Source: Wikimedia Commons, Olli Niemitalo, CC0

The connection between /gatɕ/ ‘trousers’ (<Russian /gatɕa/ ‘trouser leg’) and /gatɕɐnik/ ‘string, cord (for tying, e.g. sacks)’ is not quite clear either. In any case, Russian /gaʃɐnik/ ‘cord for tying the upper edge of the trousers’ is used also in Komi (/gaʃɐnik/). Despite the formal similarity between /gatɕ/ ‘trousers’ and /gatɕɐnik/ ‘cord (for sacks)’, /gatɕ/ ‘trousers’ and /gaʃɐnik/ ‘cord for trousers’ are closer semantically.

In other cases, the lexeme has no probable Russian source, and a derivation within Komi is not fully convincing. e.g. Komi /sajɐnik/ ‘woodshed, eaves, jutting roof’ might be a derivation from Komi /saj/ ‘back, place behind sthg’, if we suppose that originally it denoted a woodshed behind the house. Similarly, Komi /ʃevɐnik/ ‘scarf made of white tails’ might have come from Russian /ʃeja/ ‘neck’ or /ʃi-, ʃj-, ʃej-/ ‘sew’, however, no similar word has been found in Russian.

there or in the section devoted to the significance of bread and porridge (Plesovskij 1968: 141–146).

There are only two lexemes in which we can suppose the presence of the derivative suffix /-ik/, however, its function is not clear (22).

(22) Komi nouns derived with the suffix /-ik/

- a. /sutʃ-ik/ ‘hiccup’ ← /sutʃ/ ‘second’
- b. /teir-ik/ ‘ash, spark flown out of fire’ ← /teir/ ‘bit, chunk, scrap, shred’ (/bi teir/ ‘spark’, /bi/ ‘fire’)

Similarly, there are three lexemes in which we can quite univocally segment the derivative suffix /-nik/, although in various functions (23).

(23) Komi nouns with the suffix /-nik/

- a. /dub-nik/ ‘female button-up shirt decorated with barks’ ← /dub/ ‘bark’
- b. /fojdan-nik/ ‘working zipun, torn clothes, person dressed in rags’ ← /fojdan/ ‘zipun (peasant upper garment)’
- c. /juər-nik/ ‘courier’ ← /juər/ ‘news’

There are three additional lexemes, in which we can recognize (three different) suffixes ending in /ik/ (24).

(24) Komi nouns with suffixes ending in /ik/

- a. /az-əvik/ ‘sauerkraut pie’ ← /az/ ‘leaven’
- b. /nir-eik/ ‘leader, initiator, instigator’ ← /nir/ ‘nose’¹³
- c. /kim-ut-ʔik/ ‘ball game: hitting the ball by the palm and the back of the hand alternately’ ← /kim-/ (cf. /kimiʃ/ ‘palm’ or /kimalas/ ‘touch’) and /ut/ ‘sole’

There are also words which could have been derived in Komi and which do not seem to be of Russian origin, but the derivational base cannot be identified (25).

(25) Komi nouns in /ik/, seemingly derived but with unidentifiable bases

- a. /vetʔik/ ‘wing, shoulder’
- b. /kuteik/ ‘skin, leather, membrane, pellicle’
- c. /petʔik/ ‘slap, smack’
- d. /teeʔik/ ‘snow-storm, snowdrift, snowbank’
- e. /teizik/ ‘(a kind of) folk dance’

(25c) exists in Russian, and it means ‘tip-cat (a kind of children’s game)’ and also ‘siskin’, but the resemblance seems to be only by chance.

¹³ Interestingly, the spelling of the word also shows that the regulatory bodies of Komi orthography suspected a Russian suffix in the word. As a native Komi word, it should be spelled as *нырсик*, but it is spelled *ныричик*, suggesting that the Russian derivational suffix *-чик* (cf. *барабан* /baraban/ ‘drum’ → *барабаничик* /barabaneik/ ‘drummer’, *камень* /kamenʲ/ ‘stone’ → *каменщик* /kamenʲʃik/ ‘bricklayer, mason’ etc.) can be identified in the word.

To sum up: there is no single non- diminutive adjective ending in /ik/ in Komi. Among the nouns, fewer than a dozen lexemes could have been derived with the suffix /-ik/ or a suffix ending in /ik/, but the semantic functions of these suspected suffixes (if they are clear at all) are different in all the attested cases. Out of the four non-diminutive adverbs ending in /ik/, none seems to be morphologically derived.

4 Russian loanwords in Komi ending in /ik/

As has been demonstrated, it is not always clear what is a loanword and what is not. There are about two dozen cases in which we have a suspected Russian base with a Russian suffix, and even their semantic connection seems to be clear, but the derived word is unattested in Modern Russian. In some cases there are historical data about the former existence of such words, or such a form can even survive in a modified meaning. For example, Komi /kapuɕnik/ ‘cabbage garden’ is obviously connected to Russian /kapusta/ ‘cabbage’. In contemporary Russian, the similar word, /kapustnʲik/ is used with various meanings: ‘cabbage pie’, ‘cabbage worm’, ‘humorous amateur performance’, the meaning ‘cabbage garden’ is also documented, although outdated. According to dictionaries, /tɕisʲɐnʲik/ is ‘calendar’ in Komi, and it is clearly related to Russian /tɕislʲo/ ‘date’. In Russian, /tɕislʲe-nʲik/ is ‘tear-off calendar’ – it is not clear whether there is a semantic change (a shift of meaning from a type of calendar to the general notion of calendar).

In some other cases, such links are completely missing, i. e. the Russian stem is recognizable and the semantic relation is undoubtful, but the derived forms cannot be considered borrowed without any doubt (26).

(26) Doubtful borrowings

- a. /mələt-nik/ ‘blacksmith’ (Russian /molot/ ‘hammer’)
- b. /pacer-ɛik/ ‘tenant, renter’ (Russian /fatʲera/ ‘flat, apartment’)
- c. /ivan-tɕeik/ ‘Jersey cow mushroom, bovine bolete’ (Russian /ivan/ ‘Ivan’)
- d. /gəʃk-əvik/ ‘pot holder, oven cloth’ (Russian /gorʃok/ ‘pot’)
- e. /ganc-ik/ ‘edge, cant, brim’ (Russian /kant/ ‘edge, cant, brim’)

In the case of (26e), the connection between the Komi and Russian words is clear – however, although the form suggests diminutization, the Komi word is not diminutive.

There is also an adjective showing similar semantic irregularities, namely Komi /tupik/ ‘dull, blunt’ (in a literal sense, as in /tupik purt/ ‘blunt knife’, and without any tinge of diminutiveness), which is clearly related to Russian /tup-/ ‘dull, blunt (literally and also abstractly, as stupid)’. Nonetheless, /tupʲik/ means ‘blind alley, dead end street, side-track, deadlock, standstill’ in Russian (and it was borrowed into Komi with the same meaning). The origin of Komi /tupik/ ‘dull, blunt’ cannot be explained from these data in a straightforward way.

Of course, there are several Russian loanwords which are not problematic at all. The largest semantically solid group of such words denote professions and similar terms based on the typical activity of the denoted person. Some of the words belonging to this group are not derived and end in /ik/ just by chance: they are loanwords in Russian (27). (This does not

collide with the fact that Russian has a pattern of profession names ending in /ik/, derived ones among them.)

(27) Clear cases of borrowed words

- a. /kricik/ < Russian /kri:tʲik/ ‘critic’ (cf. /kri:tʲika/ ‘criticism, critique’)
- b. /fizik/ < Russian /fizʲik/ ‘physicist’ (cf. fizʲika/ ‘physics’)
- c. /ximik/ < Russian /ximʲik/ ‘chemist’ (/ximʲija/ ‘chemistry’)
- d. /ceorecik/ < Russian /teorʲetʲik/ ‘theorist’ (cf. /teorʲija/ ‘theory’)
- e. /jeretnik/ ‘wizard, magician, warlock’ < Russian /jerʲetʲik/ ‘heretic’ (cf. /jeresi/ ‘heresy’)

(27e) is a special case, since the Russian form is not a result of derivation, but the Komi form reflects a reanalysis process which substituted /-ik/ with /-nik/. (This process, together with the semantic shift, could have taken place already in local Russian dialects as well.)

The majority of the loanwords borrowed from Russian into Komi were derived in Russian by various suffixes ending in /ik/, (28). There are about fifty such loanwords.

(28) Russian derivatives with suffixes ending in /ik/ borrowed into Komi as whole words

- a. /gazəvik/ < Russian /gaz-ov-ik/ ‘worker of gas industry’ ← /gaz-ov-/ ‘gas’ (adj.) ← /gaz/ ‘gas’ (noun)
- b. /gruzteik/ < Russian /gruz-tʲeik/ ‘loader, stevedore, docker, porter’ ← /gruz/ ‘weight, load, cargo’
- c. /barabanʲeik/ < Russian /baraban-ʲeik/ ‘drummer’ ← /baraban/ ‘drum’
- d. /zələtʲnik/ < Russian /zəlot-nʲik/ ‘(gold) prospector’ < /zəlot/ ‘gold’

There is also another large group, also denoting persons but with various roles (the borderline between the two groups is not clear-cut). In this group there are also words which are not derived by a suffix ending in /ik/ (29).

(29) Monomorphemic Russian borrowings denoting persons

- a. /tadʒik/ < Russian /tadʒik/ ‘Tajik’
- b. /ʒənik/ < Russian /ʒenʲix/ ‘bridegroom, fiancé’

However, most of the words denoting persons are derived in Russian (30). There are about fifty loanwords in this group as well.

(30) Russian derivatives for persons borrowed as whole words

- a. /boʃʲevik/ < Russian /bolʲʃe-vʲik/ ‘bolshevik < belonging to the majority’ ← /bolʲʃe/ ‘more’
- b. /prəciɲnik/ < Russian /protʲiv-nʲik/ ‘enemy’ ← /protʲiv/ preposition ‘against’
- c. /spuʦnik/ < Russian /s-put-nʲik/ ‘fellow traveller’ ← /s/ preposition ‘with’, /putʲi/ ‘road, way’
- d. /izmeɲnik/ < Russian /izmenʲi-nʲik/ ‘betray’ ← /izmenʲi-/ verb ‘betray’

Another large group of words denotes objects (31). Again, there are about fifty loanwords in this group.

(31) Russian derivatives for objects borrowed as whole words

- a. /vorotnik/ < Russian /vorot-n'ik/ 'collar' ← /vorot/ 'collar' (not diminutive)
- b. /zbornik/ < Russian /s-bor-n'ik/ 'collection; a kind of headdress'¹⁴ ← /s-bor/ 'collection, gathering, assembly, meeting'
- c. /vatnik/ < Russian /vat-n'ik/ 'quilted jacket' ← /vata/ 'cotton wool'
- d. /tɕajnik/ < Russian /tɕaj-n'ik/ 'tea pot, tea kettle' ← /tɕaj/ 'tea'
- e. /dnevnik/ < Russian /dn'ev-n'ik/ 'diary, daybook' ← /dn'evn-/ adj. 'daily' ← /dn'i/ 'day'
- f. /nagrudnik/ < Russian /na-grud-n'ik/ 'apron' ← /na/ preposition 'on', /grudi/ 'chest, breast, bosom'
- g. /turnik/ < Russian /turn-n'ik/ 'horizontal bar for gymnastics' ← French /turn-/ (*tourner* verb 'turn') + -/ik/

Some of these words are diminutives or resemble diminutives in a way (32). In (32d), the stem-final sequence /ik/ was reanalyzed as a diminutive suffix and a "non- diminutive" lexeme was back-formed in Russian.

(32) Russian diminutives borrowed as whole words

- a. /kələkəʔtɕik/ < Russian /koʔokoʔ-tɕik/ 'bell, handbell' ← /koʔokoʔ/ 'bell'
- b. /trueik/ < Russian /trus-ik-i/ (plural) 'panties, knickers' ← /trus-i/ (plural) 'underwear, underpants, shorts'¹⁵
- c. /kopik/ < /kon'i-ik/ 'bench < horsy' ← /kon'i/ 'horse'
- d. /zoncik/ < Russian /zont'ik/ 'umbrella' (< Dutch *zonnedek* /zɔnədək/) → /zont/ 'umbrella'

The remaining words are difficult to arrange into groups based on their meaning (33). A smaller group of about ten words denote various kinds of places.

(33) Russian derivatives of various meanings borrowed as whole words

- a. /betɕevnik/ < Russian /betɕev-n'ik/ 'towpath' ← /betɕev-(a)/ 'rope'
- b. /zapovednik/ < Russian /zapov'ied-n'ik/ 'natural reserve' ← /zapov'ied-n-/ 'protected, secret' ← /zapov'iedi/ 'commandment, rule'

¹⁴ Interestingly, Komi orthography makes a distinction between the two meanings. The form *сборник* 'collection (book, as a book of stories, poems, articles, etc.)' is etymologizing (the first letter refers to the phoneme /s/, although it is pronounced as voiced /z/) and reflects the connection to *сбор* 'collection (in general)'. However, the form *зборник* 'a kind of headdress' is based on pronunciation. In this case, the connection to 'collection' is not clear-cut (the word seems to be rather connected to *сборка* 'pleat' than *сбор* 'collection' – the former was not borrowed by Komi, but the latter was), and it is reflected in Komi (but not in Russian) orthography.

¹⁵ These are pluralia tantum, /-i/ is the plural marker in both cases.

- c. /macerik/ < Russian /matʲerʲi-ik/ ‘continent, mainland’ ← /matʲerʲi/ ‘mother’
- d. /tropik/ < Russian /tropʲik/ ‘tropic’ (also /tropʲik-i/ ‘tropics’)
- e. /tupik/ < Russian /tup-ʲik/ ‘blind alley, dead end street’ ← /tup-/ ‘dull, blunt’, etc.

Another group of similar size contains words meaning plants, mushrooms or animals (34).

(34) Russian words for plants, mushrooms or animals borrowed as whole words

- a. /kələkəʃtɕik/ < R. /kołokoʃ-ʲtɕik/ ‘bluebell, bellflower’ ← /kołokoʃ/ ‘bell’
- b. /masʁepik/ < Russian /masʁenʲik/ ‘slippery jack, sticky bun’ ← /maslo/ ‘fat, oil, butter’
- c. /perɕik/ < /persʲik/ ‘peach’ ← Middle High German /persik/
- d. /kroʁik/ < R. /kroʁʲik/ ‘rabbit’ < Polish *królik* /krulik/¹⁶ (dim.) ← *król*/krul/ ‘king’

Among the borrowings, there are also three abstract concepts, all denoting some kinds of days (35).

(35) Russian words denoting days of various kinds borrowed as whole words

- a. /pɔneʁɕɐʁʲnik/ < Russian /po-nʲedelʲi-nʲik/ ‘Monday’ ← /po-/preposition ‘after’, /nʲedelʲa/ ‘†Sunday, week’
- b. /vɔtorʲnik/ < Russian /vtor-nʲik/ ‘Tuesday’ ← /vtor-/ ‘second’
- c. /prazdnʲik/ < Russian /prazdnʲi-ik/ ‘holiday, festival’ ← /prazdn-/ ‘empty’

The remaining lexemes (about fifteen) are semantically even more diverse (36).

(36) Semantically diverse Russian words borrowed as whole words

- a. /karʁik/ < Russian /karʁʲik/ ‘dwarf, midget, gnome’ < Czech *karlík* or Polish *karlik*
- b. /pʁascik/ < Russian /pʁastʲik/ ‘plastic’ < German *Plastik*
- c. /kʲifetɕɐʁʲnik/ < Russian /kʲifetɕe-nʲik/ ‘bowels, intestines’ ← /kʲʲɪka/ ‘gut, intestine, bowel’
- d. /preʁʲik/ < Russian /prʲianʲik/ ‘gingerbread, spice cake’ < /prʲian-/ ‘spicy’
- e. /əbʁʲik/ < Russian /ob-lʲik/ ‘face, look’ ← /ob-/ preposition ‘around’ + /lʲik/ (arch.) ‘face, image’
- f. /poiskovik/ < Russian /poisk-ov-ʲik/ ‘search engine’ ← /poisk-ov-/ adjective ‘searching’ ← verb /poisk-/ ‘search, quest’
- g. /poʁuprovodʲnik/ < Russian /poʁu-pro-vod-nʲik/ ‘semiconductor’ ← /poʁu-/ ‘half, semi-’
- h. /provodʲnik/ < Russian /pro-vod-nʲik/ ‘conductor’ ← /pro-vod-/ ‘wirelead, conductor’ ← /pro-vodʲi-/ verb ‘lead, conduct’ ← /pro-/ preposition ‘through, past’, /vodʲi-/ verb ‘lead, conduct, guide, drive, move’

¹⁶ In all probability, borrowed before the original [o] had completely changed into [u] in Polish.

- i. /subətnik/ < /subbot-nik/ ‘voluntary unpaid community work’ ← /subbota/ ‘Saturday’

To sum up: there are about 200 Russian loanwords ending in /ik/ in Komi. Just a handful of them can be considered diminutives, and just one of them (/tupik/ ‘dull, blunt’) is used as an adjective (although it is not an adjective in Russian). In other words, there were no Russian diminutive loanwords in Komi from which to abstract a diminutive suffix, either /-jik/ or /-nik/, and to extend their use to adjectives.¹⁷

5 An alternative scenario

As has been demonstrated, Komi borrowed Russian words with the diminutive suffix /-jik/ but their number remained quite low. Although the number of loan nouns with the same suffix in other functions was considerably high, those could not have contributed to the development of a Komi adjectival diminutive suffix /-jik/, because the latter is not attested with nouns at all. The situation is the same with /-nik/ which is not attested as a diminutive suffix. Based on these facts, it seems that we have to look for another solution.

Actually, there is an alternative scenario, which we have to exclude to return to our original hypothesis. In Russian, there is an adjectival diminutive suffix /-enʲk-/ (37), the form of which resembles the form of the Komi suffixes with a similar function.

(37) The Russian adjectival diminutive suffix /-enʲk-/

- a. /tołstʲ-enʲk-/ ← /tołst-/ ‘thick, fat’
- b. /bʲednʲ-enʲk-/ ← /bʲedn-/ ‘poor, pitiable’
- c. /korotʲ-enʲk-/ ← /korot-k-/ ‘short, brief’

Due to its morphosyntactic function (diminutivization of adjectives) Russian /-enʲk-/, at least on the surface, seems to be a much better candidate for explanation of the origin of the Komi adjectival diminutive suffixes /-jik/, /-nik/ and /-jnʲk/ than the Russian nominal suffixes /-jik/ and /-nʲik/. However, there are strong arguments against this scenario.

First, Russian adjectival stems are suffixed with an inflectional morpheme that is overt in most cases (therefore long-form adjectives): in the most frequent cases, the suffix has the structure -Vj (nominative – and also non-animate accusative – singular /-ij/ or /-oj/) or -VjV (feminine nominative singular /-aja/, feminine accusative singular /-uju/, neuter nominative and accusative singular /-oje/, nominative – and also non-animate accusative – plural /-ije/), and this suffix is also borrowed by Komi in the form /-əj/, which becomes part of the stem of a Komi adjective, cf. (19). Russian short-form adjectives constitute an exception. In Russian,

¹⁷ Nonetheless, it is interesting to see that the three lexemes which are undoubtedly Komi derivations could belong to two of the three largest semantic groups of loanwords ending in /ik/: /juəɾɲik/ ‘courier’ denotes a profession, while /dubɲik/ ‘female button-up shirt decorated with bark’ and /fojdanɲik/ ‘working zipun, torn clothes’ denote objects (however, in its secondary meaning ‘person dressed in rags’ /fojdanɲik/ belongs to the third group, among lexemes denoting persons).

short-form adjectives are used as predicates and their endings resemble the typical endings of nouns of the given gender and number. Short-form adjectives were borrowed in their short masculine forms, which are zero-suffixed: /dəvəlʲen/ (< Russian /dovolʲen/) ‘satisfied’, /skup/ ‘avaricious, stingy’, /sləb/ ‘weak’, /strəg/ (< Russian /strog/) ‘sever, strict’, /rad/ ‘glad’, /udəl/ ‘bold, prow’, /zdorov/ ‘healthy’, etc. (cf. Ludykova 2000: 102–103).

However, Russian adjectives derived with the diminutive suffix /-enʲk-/ do not have short forms, thus as loanwords in Komi, they should end in /-ɛnkəj/, in their expected modified form, /-(i)ɲikəj/ (and we could suppose that /əj/ was later deleted for some reason, giving /-ɲik/ – if such deletion can be explained at all). However, such loanwords were not identified. On the contrary, we have forms like /grubəj-ɲik/ ‘a bit coarse, rough, rude’ or /prəstəj-ɲik/ ‘relatively simple’, which suggests that the diminutive suffix is added to the stem-final /əj/, i.e. to a long-form adjective originating from a Russian word, which could hardly be the case if analogous forms were available with an opposite order of the morphemes.

It seems that the closest forms are adverbial, e.g. Russian /sləbenʲko/ and Komi /sləbɲika/ ‘in a weakish way, a kind of weakly’. One could argue that /sləbenʲko/ was borrowed in a form /sləbenko/ or /sləbenkə/¹⁸ and then reanalyzed as adjectival /sləbenk-/ plus adverbializer /-a/ (a very productive and frequent adverbializer in Komi). Analogically, */sləbenk/ could be an adjective. Although stem-final /ɲk/ is not completely prohibited, it occurs just in onomatopoeic words (/brɲk/ ‘clatter, clang, clank’, /trɲk/ ‘bong’), so it is likely to insert a vowel between the two consonants. Although the typical epenthetic vowel in Komi is /i/, it would be understandable if /i/ were inserted instead of /i/ after a palatal consonant. However, even in this case, the expected form would be */sləbenik/, not /sləbɲik/. The process /e/ > /i/ is not typical for Komi, neither Russian /e/ is typically substituted with /i/ not even in an unstressed position.

Even if we suggested that the process described above was real and /-ɲik/ was abstracted from such words as /sləbɲik/, and /-ɲik/ was then introduced as an allomorph attached to stems ending in /i/ (or other vowels), the emergence of /-ɲik/ would be difficult to explain. We should suppose that forms like /vekɲɲik/ ‘tight, narrow (dim.)’ were developed from */vekɲidɲik/ ‘id.’ by haplology. However, haplology would result in */vekɲidik/ or */vekɲɲik/, but hardly in /vekɲɲik/. Additionally, we should expect similar haplological processes in other forms, such as /pəriɛɲik/ > */pəriɛik/ ‘oldish’ or /dontəmɲik/ > */dontəmik/ ‘cheapish’, which are, however, not attested.

In sum, there are too many problems with this alternative scenario; therefore, it has to be rejected. Nonetheless, it is possible that the formal resemblance of /-enʲk-/ and /-nʲik/ could have played some role in the integration of /-nʲik/ into Komi morphology as an adjectival diminutive suffix.

6 Explanation proposed

¹⁸ As the examples above show, usually Komi /o/ or /ə/ correspond to Russian /o/ in the respective Russian loanwords. The adaptation of the Russian /o/, even in an unstressed position, is unlikely because Northern Russian dialects spoken in and around the Komi territory have no *akanie* (cf. Section 1.1).

Data show that /-jik/ was never borrowed into Komi as a diminutive noun suffix and /-nʲik/ > /-ɲik/ never acquired a similar function. Therefore, /-jik/ and /-ɲik/ could not become adjectival diminutive suffixes by extension of their morphotactics. However, the obvious resemblance of these suffixes in form, the well-known strong effect of Russian on Komi, and the lack of any other explanation make us propose an alternative development path of these suffixes from Russian into Komi.

First, we must realize that although Komi–Russian bilingualism was not widespread at the beginning of the 20th century, it has existed for hundreds of years. We must also be aware of the communicative function of Russian diminutive adjectives: it can soften the judgement expressed by the adjective. Saying /slabenʲkij/ ‘weakish’ instead of /slabij/ ‘weak’ is more tactful; the use of the non-diminutive adjective can be considered rude. Bilingual speakers, accustomed to such manners of courtesy in Russian, could feel a need to make a similar distinction in Komi as well, but no equivalent suffix was available. Since the Russian adjectival diminutive suffix always occurred between the stem and a non-zero inflection, it was not easily adopted into Komi morphology. However, the noun diminutive suffix /-jik/, which is frequently word-final, was. In Russian, this suffix always occurred after a palatalized consonant and the same environment was expected in Komi. Therefore, the applicability of /-jik/ was restricted. The suffix /-jik/ could not be attached to vowel-final stems. For this purpose, another suffix, similar in form, /-nʲik/ was adopted. Moreover, as typical of forms with /-jik/, in the sequence /nʲik/ /ik/ was preceded by a palatalized (in Komi: palatal) consonant. Although /-nʲik/ was not used as a diminutive suffix in Russian, its form strongly resembled the form of the adjectival diminutive suffix, /-enʲk-/, which could help its acceptance as an adjectival diminutive suffix in Komi.

In fact there was nothing to prevent /-ɲik/ from attaching to consonant-final stems. Therefore, seemingly, there was no need for a suffix with a form /-ɲnik/, most probably abstracted from forms like /vəsɲi-ɲik/ ‘thin, slim (dim.)’. It might be that such a form was preferred because the diminutive suffix /-jik/ was typically attached to stems ending in a single consonant, not in a consonant cluster, so such a form resembled the sample patterns more. Thus, the form /-ɲnik/ was not phonologically conditioned. Therefore, it could be attached to any consonant-final stem and nothing prevented it from becoming a productive morpheme.

This scenario assumes that the whole process happened among bilingual speakers, and the emergence of the new Komi morphemes was a result of continuous and multilevel interaction between the two languages. Presumably, at least at the beginning, the derivation of the Komi adjectival diminutives had a playful character, some kind of nudging-winking between the bilingual speakers using one language while expecting the knowledge of the other language as well.

Unfortunately, this kind of change, the invention of new forms based on the resources of another language, does not leave salient traces like pairs of borrowed lexemes with and without the given morpheme. Nonetheless, until we find new data which could serve as an argument for explaining the origin of the Komi adjectival diminutive suffixes, the scenario sketched in this section seems to be the most consistent with the data, and, as a consequence, the most probable one.

7 Summary

As was demonstrated, the Komi adjectival suffixes /-jik/, /-jik/ and /-ijnik/ are functionally similar to the Russian noun suffix /-jik/: they all derive diminutive forms. As the Komi suffixes have no other etymologies, it is straightforward to suppose that /-jik/ was borrowed into Komi from Russian (by all probability, together with the non-diminutive Russian suffix /-nʲik/, which also gained a diminutive meaning), and its usage was extended to adjectives. However, since suffixes are usually borrowed in lexemes, one would expect to find traces of this process: several Russian diminutive forms which functioned as diminutives in Komi as well, or diminutive nouns derived from Komi stems with these suffixes (which could be the base for the extension to adjectives). As such forms cannot be identified, a suffix borrowing scenario looks unlikely. The possibility of the borrowing of the Russian adjectival diminutive suffix /-enʲk-/ was also examined and rejected due to several reasons concerning phonotactic and morphotactic issues and the possible way of development of the supposedly borrowed form.

Instead, another scenario was proposed, according to which Komi did not borrow one or more Russian suffixes but rather was inspired by Russian in several different ways. First, Russian generated a communicative need in a group of Komi speakers (also speaking Russian). To satisfy this need, Komi adopted a Russian diminutive noun suffix form together with its morpho-phonotactic environment for the diminutization of adjectives: /-jik/. However, the use of the new morpheme was highly restricted by morpho-phonotactic requirements. Therefore, Komi adopted another frequent Russian nominal suffix, with a form resembling both the already adopted /-jik/ and the Russian adjectival diminutive suffix /-enʲk-/: /-nʲik/ > /-jik/.

This form was used with vowel-final stems, and theoretically could have been used with consonant-final ones as well (at least Komi phonotactics would have allowed it). Nonetheless, it seems that in this case Russian once again influenced the Komi adjectival diminutive forms: since Russian diminutive nouns always end in /-VCʲik/, Komi forms ending in /-C(j)Cʲik/ were dispreferred, and a new suffix form, /-ijnik/ was introduced to derive diminutives from consonant-final stems. The use of this form was not restricted in any way, so it became a relatively widespread and productive morpheme.

According to this solution, two parallel processes of borrowing took place in Komi. On the one hand, pattern borrowing occurred; the diminutivization of the adjectives became possible following the Russian pattern; and on the other hand, matter borrowing: a diminutive suffix of nouns (/-jik/) and a formally similar noun suffix (/-nʲik/) were borrowed but applied for the diminutization of adjectives, not nouns.

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