

Slightly adjectival: Slovenian diminutive adjectives and the adjectivizer *-ast*

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Diminutive suffixes in Slovenian

- Diminutive suffixes can appear in different categories.
- To diminutivize a verb or a noun, you just need to add a diminutive suffix to the structure.

(1) bož-a-ti bož-**k**-a-ti
stroke-TV-INF stroke-K-TV-INF
'to stroke' 'to stroke in a
 loving manner'

(2) zob zob-**ək**
tooth tooth-K
'tooth' 'small/adorable tooth'

(3) stop-a-ti stop-**ic**-a-ti
step-TV-INF step-IC-TV-INF
'to step' 'to make small steps'

(4) hiš-a hiš-**ic**-a
house-NOM.SG hiš-IC-NOM.SG
'house' 'small/adorable
 house'

Making diminutive adjectives in Slovenian

- Diminutive adjectives, on the other hand, seem to be created by adding a diminutive and an adjectivizing suffix:

(5) sam sam-**c-at**
alone alone-C-AT
'alone' 'single'

(6) čevelj čevelj-**c**
shoe shoe-C
'shoe' 'small shoe'

(7) las las-**at**
hair hair-AT
'hair' 'long-haired'

(8) siv siv-**k-ast**
gray gray-K-AST
'gray' 'grayish'

(9) fant fant-**ək**
boy boy-K
'boy' 'small boy'

(10) sluz sluz-**ast**
slime slime-AST
'slime' 'slimy'

Focus of the talk: *-kast* I

- In diminutive adjectives, items like *-k* and *-ast* need to appear together.
 - ▶ Potentially the motivation for the claim in traditional grammars, e.g., Toporišič 2000 that *-kast* is a single suffix – see Sicherl 2016 for an overview.

(8') *siv* *siv-k-ast* **siv-k* **siv-ast*
 gray *gray-K-AST* *gray-K* *gray-AST*
 'gray' 'grayish'

- Are we dealing with *-k* and *-ast* or *-kast*?
 - ▶ On the one hand, we see that *-k* and *-ast* are independent suffixes.
 - ▶ On the other hand, their inseparability in diminutive adjectives suggests a single suffix *-kast*.

The goals & the road-map for this talk

- We will focus on a diminutive adjectives in Slovenian, in particular *-kast* (the most common such suffix).
 - We will argue that *-kast* is in fact the combination of *-k* and *-ast*.
- 1 We will analyze *-k* and *-ast*:
 - ▶ *-ast* is a categorically flexible adjectival suffix expressing some kind of relation to its base.
 - ▶ *-k* is a categorically flexible diminutive suffix.
 - 2 We will show the structure of diminutive adjectives.

Establishing *-ast* as a suffix: Adjectivizing roots

- Sometimes *-ast* attaches to bases that only appear in bound form.
- Thus, we assume *-ast* can adjectivize roots:

(11) *mut mut-ec mut-ast
 mute mute-EC mute-AST
 ‘mute person’ ‘mute (adj.)’

(12) *škil škil-i-ti škil-ast
 squint squint-TV-INF squint-AST
 ‘to squint’ ‘cross-eyed’

- We assume the root has a meaning upon which the adjective’s meaning is built.
 - ▶ ‘Related to the property expressed in the root’.

Establishing *-ast* as a suffix: Adjectivizing nouns I

- Adjectives with *-ast* can express similarity with the base noun in some property, e.g., in terms of color, (13), shape, (14), consistency, (10), behavior, smell or taste, (15).
 - ▶ Ambiguity: *jagodast* can mean ‘strawberry shaped’, ‘strawberry colored’, or ‘tasting of strawberries’

(13) žafran žafran-ast
saffron saffron-AST
‘saffron’ ‘saffron-colored’

(10) sluz sluz-ast
slime slime-AST
‘slime’ ‘slimy’

(14) disk disk-ast
disc disc-AST
‘disc’ ‘disc-shaped’

(15) jagod-a jagod-ast
strawberry strawberry-AST
‘strawberry’ ‘strawberry-like’

- All of these examples have simple nouns as bases.

Establishing *-ast* as a suffix: Adjectivizing nouns II

- The base can also be a compound or a complex noun:

(16) *slad-o-led* *slad-o-led-ast*
sweet-O-ice sweet-O-ice-AST
'ice cream' 'ice cream–like'

(17) *dež-n-ik* *dež-n-ik-ast*
rain-N-IK rain-N-IK-AST
'umbrella' 'umbrella-like'

- The structural type of the base (simple/complex/compound) does not seem to correlate to the meaning of the adjective.
- In all cases, the adjective's meaning is related to that of the base.

Establishing *-ast* as a suffix: Adjectivizing nouns III

- Toporišič 2000 also mentions meanings ‘covered with/abundance of’ and ‘illness’.
 - ▶ A lot of overlap.

(18) kock-a kock-ast
cube-NOM.SG cube-AST
‘cube’ ‘checkered/
 cube-like’

(19) pik-a pik-ast
dot-NOM.SG dot-AST
‘dot’ ‘(polka-)dotted’

(20) akn-e akn-ast
acneNOM.PL acne-AST
‘acne’ ‘acne-covered’

(21) rak rak-ast
cancer cancer-AST
‘cancer’ ‘cancerous’

Establishing *-ast* as a suffix: Adjectivizing nouns IV

- When the base noun denotes a type of material, the *ast*-adjective means ‘made of x’.
 - ▶ Depending on the context, also ‘related to the property of the base’.

(22) bron bron-ast
bronze bronze-AST
‘bronze’ ‘(made of) bronze’

(23) gumi gumij-ast
rubber rubber-AST
‘rubber’ ‘(made of) rubber’

- For this meaning, other more common adjectivizers like *-en* and *-ov* are more typical:

(24) les les-en
wood wood-EN
‘wood’ ‘wooden’

(25) brez-a brez-ov
birch-NOM.SG birch-OV
‘birch’ ‘made of birch’

Competition with other adjectivizers

- When the base can take both *-ast* and a more common adjectivizer (*-en* or *-ov*), the *-ast* adjective gets the meaning ‘related to’

(26) jagod-en sok jagod-ast sok
strawberry-EN juice strawberry-AST juice
‘strawberry juice’ ‘juice tasting of strawberries’

(27) bresk-ov sok breskv-ast sok
peach-EN juice peach-AST juice
‘peach juice’ ‘juice tasting of peaches’

(28) jagod-ast bresk-ov sok
strawberry-AST peach-EN juice
‘peach juice tasting of strawberries’

- All denominal adjectives with *-ast* express relation to some property of the base.

Adjectivizing adjectives

- The suffix *-ast* can modify adjectives, but these are either . . .

- ▶ derived:

(29) vod-a vod-en vod-en-ast
water water-EN water-EN-AST
'water' 'watery' 'watery'

- ▶ or loanwords – specifically, a subset of indeclinable adjectives:

(30) roza roz-ast
pink pink-AST
'pink' 'pink'

- But these are relatively rare compared to both denominal *-ast* and deadjectival *-k-ast*.
- In these examples, *-ast* doesn't change the meaning of the base.

Overview of *ast*-adjectives

- Adjectives with *-ast*, extracted from Gigafida 2.0 (more than 5 tokens)
 - ▶ Annotated for the category of the base
 - ▶ Excluding adjectives with the suffix *-k*

<i>category of the base</i>	<i>number</i>	<i>example</i>
bound root	11	<i>pocast</i> 'gooey'
noun	882	<i>mrežast</i> 'netted'
verb	2	<i>spreminjast</i> 'changeable'
adjective	10	
derived	7	<i>vodenast</i> 'watery'
loan-words	3	<i>rozast</i> 'pink'

Summing up *-ast*

- The suffix *-ast* can adjectivize roots, nouns and adjectives.
 - ▶ While the set of adjectivized nouns is non-uniform, adjectival bases only include derived and loaned bases.
- The meaning of denominal (and deradical) *-ast* adjectives is best paraphrased as ‘related to a property of the base’.
- Put differently: *-ast* doesn’t have a lot of semantic content, it simply adjectivizes the base.

Establishing -k as a suffix: The categorizing -k

- Nominalizing -k:

(31) iz-del-a-ti iz-del-ək
out-work-TV-INF out-work-K
'to make' 'product'

(32) rdeč rdeč-k-a
red.A red-K-F.NOM.SG
'red' 'chickenpox/fire ant'

- ▶ A feminine agent suffix:

(33) pev-əc pev-k-a
sing-EC sing-K-F.NOM.SG
'male singer' 'female singer'

- Adjectivizing -k

(34) *šib šib-i-ti šib-ək
weak weak-TV-INF weak-K
'to weaken' 'weak'

(35) tež-a tež-ək
weight-NOM.SG weight-K
'weight' 'heavy'

The modifying *-k* in diminutive adjectives I

- Despite the one exception, modifying suffixes in adjectives appear with other suffixes.
- In most cases *-k* appears with *-ast*, but other adjectivizing suffixes are possible.

(39) prid-ən prid-k-an
 good-N good-K-AN
 ‘well-behaved’ ‘well-behaved (dim.)’

- As already shown, with adjectival bases *-ast* also requires a modifying suffix like *-k*.
 - ▶ Exception: Loanwords and a few complex adjectives.

(8') siv siv-k-ast *siv-k *siv-ast
 gray gray-K-AST gray-K gray-AST
 ‘gray’ ‘grayish’

Interpretation I

- *-k-ast* modifies an existing adjective to express a lower degree of the property in the base (that is, ‘slightly adjectival’, like English *-ish*).
 - ▶ Purely scalar meaning, unlike in Czech diminutive adjectives, which are expressive (Vanden Wyngaerd, Caha & De Clercq 2024).
 - ▶ This reading is typical of deadjectival adjectives, as noted in Fábregas 2014.

(40) *plav-k-ast*
blue-K-AST
‘bluish’

(41) *rdeč-k-ast*
red-K-AST
‘reddish’

(42) *rumen-k-ast*
yellow-K-AST
‘yellowish’

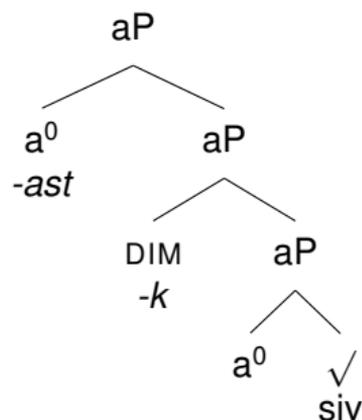
- Note that all base adjectives are scalar, i.e., there are no examples such as **sestr-in-k-ast* ‘sister-POSS-K-AST’

- There are minimal pairs showing that the diminutive reading comes from *-k*.

(43) vod-en-ast vod-en-k-ast
water-EN-AST water-EN-K-AST
'watery' 'slightly watery'

- *-k* is a modifying diminutive suffix.

(44)



- Simplified structure.
 - ▶ The DIM in the tree is a vague representation
 - ▶ Maybe: *-k* realizes [scale] and [low degree], like *-ke* and *-tje* in Dutch (following De Belder 2011).
- The diminutive suffix is a modifier adjoined to the structure.
 - ▶ It always preserves the category of the base (and in nouns the gender).
 - ★ We take it to be a specifier (see e.g. Steriopo 2008, Steriopo, Markopoulos & Spyropoulos 2021).
- The suffix *-ast* re-adjectivizes the structure.
 - ▶ Next time.

Another look at the data

- Extracted from Gigafida 2.0, adjectives ending with *-ast* (more than 5 tokens)
 - ▶ Including adjectives with *-k*

<i>category of the base</i>	<i>number</i>	<i>example</i>	
bound root	12	<i>pocast</i>	'gooey'
verb	2	<i>spreminjast</i>	'changeable'
noun w/o <i>-k</i>	882	<i>mrežast</i>	'netted'
noun w/ <i>-k</i>	47	<i>žepkast</i>	'pocketed'
adjective w/o <i>-k</i>	10	<i>vodenast</i>	'watery'
adjective w/ <i>-k</i>	22	<i>sivkast</i>	'grayish'

But there is *-kast* in denominal adjectives II

- In fact, both the categorizing and the modifying *-k* can appear as a part of the base.

(49) žar žar-ək žar-k-ast
glow glow-K glow-K-AST
'glow' 'ray' 'ray-like'

- Some items can be interpreted as adjectives made from deadjectival nominals or as diminutive adjectives (the more prominent interpretation).

(50) rdeč rdeč-k-a rdeč-k-ast
red red-K rdeč-K-AST
'red' 'chickenpox/fire ant' 'reddish/covered in chickenpox'

- The take-away:
 - ▶ In deadjectival adjectives: *-k* and *-ast* come in a pair.
 - ▶ In denominal adjectives: the presence of one does not hinge on the other.

Conclusion

- Given that adjectives get the ‘slightly’ reading only when *-k* is in the structure, we conclude that *-k* in *-k-ast* is the diminutive suffix.
- Given that *-ast* is in most cases an adjectivizer that has only a vague meaning of relation to the base, we conclude that *-ast* in *-k-ast* is the adjectivizer.
- The diminutive *-k* contributes the scalar modification meaning of *-kast* adjectives, while *-ast* changes neither the syntax nor the semantics of the base adjective.
- Next question: Why does the diminutive *-k* require an adjectivizer in adjectives?
 - ▶ In short: Diminutive adjectives ending in *-k* are well-formed syntactically and semantically but not *morphologically*. *-ast* makes them declinable.

Thank you!

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Default inflection

Diminutive adjectives ending in *-k* are morphologically ill-formed.

- Inflection class follows *linear adjacency*: a stem's inflectional suffixes are determined by its *rightmost* morpheme (cf. Gouskova & Bobaljik 2022).
- Thus, the inflection of diminutives depends on the inflectional properties of *-k*, not the root/base.
- *-k* is unspecified for inflection class and thus receives *default* inflection given syntactic properties.
- While nouns and verbs have default inflection, adjectives do not – so *-k* is stuck.

Default nominal inflection

Most masculine nouns have the inflection class of *zdravnik* 'doctor'

		'doctor'
SG	NOM	zdravnik
	LOC	zdravnik <u>u</u>
PL	NOM	zdravniki
	LOC	zdravnikih

Default nominal inflection

Most masculine nouns have the inflection class of *zdravnik* ‘doctor’ – this is the *default* masculine noun class.

		‘doctor’	‘taboo’
SG	NOM	zdravnik	tabu
	LOC	zdravniku	tabuju
PL	NOM	zdravniki	tabuji
	LOC	zdravnikih	tabujih

- Indeclinable nouns are very rare – loan words typically get this inflection even when phonologically ill-suited (e.g. end in a high vowel).

Default nominal inflection

Most masculine nouns have the inflection class of *zdravnik* ‘doctor’ – this is the *default* masculine noun class.

		‘doctor’	‘taboo’	‘tooth’	‘tooth (dim.)’	‘Aljoša’	‘Aljoša (dim.)’
SG	NOM	zdravnik	tabu	zob	zobək	Aljoš a	Aljošək
	LOC	zdravnik u	tabuj u	zob u	zobk u	Aljoš i	Aljošk u
PL	NOM	zdravniki	tabuji	zob je	zobki		
	LOC	zdravnik ih	tabuj ih	zob eh	zobkih		

- Indeclinable nouns are very rare – loan words typically get this inflection even when phonologically ill-suited (e.g. end in a high vowel).
- Nouns with irregular inflection revert to this default when diminutivized.

Default nominal inflection

Likewise in the feminine:

		‘linden’	‘wing’	‘wing (dim.)’
SG	NOM	lipa	perut	perutka
	LOC	lipi	peruti	perutki
PL	NOM	lip ^e	peruti ⁱ	perutke
	LOC	lipah	perutih	perutkah

- Nouns with irregular inflection revert to this default when diminutivized.

Default verbal inflection

Many imperfective verbs have the theme vowel *a* throughout their inflection

	'lift'
INF	dvigati
PTCP.M.SG	dvigal
PRES.1SG	dvigam

Default verbal inflection

Many imperfective verbs have the theme vowel *a* throughout their inflection – this is the *default* verbal theme vowel, at least in the imperfective.

	‘lift’	‘Google’
INF	dvigati	guglati
PTCP.M.SG	dvigal	guglal
PRES.1SG	dvigam	guglam

- Loan verbs typically get the theme vowel *a*.

Default verbal inflection

Many imperfective verbs have the theme vowel *a* throughout their inflection – this is the *default* verbal theme vowel, at least in the imperfective.

	‘lift’	‘Google’	‘laugh’	‘laugh (dim.)’
INF	dvigati	guglati	smejati se	smejčkati se
PTCP.M.SG	dvigal	gugal	smej ^a l se	smejčk ^a l se
PRES.1SG	dvigam	guglam	smej ^e m se	smejčk ^a m se

- Loan verbs typically get the theme vowel *a*.
- Diminutive verbs take *a* throughout their paradigm, even when their bases don’t (though this is very rare).

No default adjectival inflection

Native simplex and derived adjectives almost all have the same inflection:

'young'		
	M	mlad
NOM.SG	F	mlada
	N	mlado

No default adjectival inflection

Native simplex and derived adjectives almost all have the same inflection:

		'young'	'pink'
	M	mlad	roza
NOM.SG	F	mlada	roza
	N	mlado	roza

- However, loan adjectives are often indeclinable

No default adjectival inflection

Native simplex and derived adjectives almost all have the same inflection:

		'young'	'pink'	'matte'
	M	mlad	roza	mat
NOM.SG	F	mlada	roza	mat
	N	mlado	roza	mat

- However, loan adjectives are often indeclinable . . . even when phonologically well-suited (end in a consonant) – there is no default adjectival inflection.

No default adjectival inflection

Native simplex and derived adjectives almost all have the same inflection:

		'young'	'pink'	'matte'	'pink'	'matte'
	M	mlad	roza	mat	rozast	matast
NOM.SG	F	mlada	roza	mat	rozasta	matasta
	N	mlado	roza	mat	rozasto	matasto

- However, loan adjectives are often indeclinable . . . even when phonologically well-suited (end in a consonant) – there is no default adjectival inflection.
- These can be made declinable with *-ast* (as seen previously).

No default adjectival inflection

Native simplex and derived adjectives almost all have the same inflection:

		'young'	'pink'	'matte'	'pink'	'matte'	'grayish'
	M	mlad	roza	mat	rozast	matast	sivkast
NOM.SG	F	mlada	roza	mat	rozasta	matasta	sivkasta
	N	mlado	roza	mat	rozasto	matasto	sivkasto

- However, loan adjectives are often indeclinable . . . even when phonologically well-suited (end in a consonant) – there is no default adjectival inflection.
- These can be made declinable with *-ast* (as seen previously).
- The same is true of diminutive adjectives.

Non-default inflection

-ast makes diminutive adjectives declinable.

- *-k* (and other diminutive suffixes) trigger default inflection.
- Adjectives (unlike nouns and verbs) have no default inflection, so adjectival diminutive *-k* cannot be inflected.
- *-ast* is the typical adjectivizer used to make indeclinable adjectives declinable.
- That is its role in diminutive adjectives.