

# Unlocking Evaluative Morphology II

*Semantic values and pragmatic motivations*



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# PLENARY SPEAKER

## Words that wound: Pejorative morphology in insulting, condemning, and dehumanizing discourse

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**Keywords:** *Pejorative morphology, Morphopragmatics, Dehumanizing discourse, Combining form, Splinter, Affixoid*

Pejorative morphology investigates how word-formation encodes negative evaluation, allowing speakers to insult, ridicule, condemn, or dehumanize social actors and events. While pejoration is traditionally defined as the speaker's evaluation of something as 'bad' (Finkbeiner, Meibauer & Wiese 2016), recent work has emphasized the need to account for its complex semantic and pragmatic effects in discourse (Merlini Barbaresi & Dressler 2020; Sánchez Fajardo 2022). This talk adopts a morphopragmatic perspective to examine a set of highly productive transitional morphemes in contemporary English – combining forms, splinters, and affixoids – that operate at the interface of derivation and compounding (Mattiello 2022). Importantly, the analysis considers not only speaker intention but also audience reception, highlighting how pejorative forms can be interpreted as humorous, offensive, or dehumanizing depending on context and social positioning.

The study focuses on six pejorative elements that are particularly salient in public and media discourse: *Franken-*, *-zilla*, *-pocalypse*, *-mageddon*, *-brain*, and *-face*. Drawing on large corpora, including the *Corpus of Contemporary American English* (COCA, Davies 2008), *News on the Web Corpus* (NOW, Davies 2008), and *English Web 2021* (enTenTen21, Sketch Engine, Kilgarriff et al. 2004), as well as lexicographic data (*Urban Dictionary*, UD), the analysis combines quantitative frequency data with qualitative contextual examination to show how these morphemes contribute evaluative, ridiculing, dehumanizing, and alarmist meanings. Examples (1)-(6) illustrate how these morphemes are used in context:

- (1) Will **Frankenstorm** be used to ensure **Frankenbama**'s re-election? (COCA, 2012)
- (2) Stay focused on the real monster, the real enemy, the real threat to America: **Obamazilla!** (enTenTen21, 2021)
- (3) We're all now immersed in an evolving **Trumpocalypse**. In a sense, we were there even before The Donald entered the Oval Office. (enTenTen21, 2021)
- (4) After reading these "tells," I believe you'll agree we are entering "**Obamageddon**" – Obama's Great Depression. (NOW, 2011)
- (5) For the first time I considered the possibility ... we might lose to that **fuckbrain** Nixon. I mean, before that, I was absolutely convinced we would win. (COCA, 1998)

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- (6) President George W. **Fuckface** ... signing an executive order creating what he called a “financial crimes SWAT team” at the Justice Department in the wake of the corporate scandal domino disasters ... (enTenTen21, 2021)

Metaphor-based combining forms such as *Franken-* and *-zilla* invoke culturally entrenched monsters (*Frankenstein*, *Godzilla*) to portray their targets as grotesque, threatening, or unnaturally powerful. Catastrophic splinters *-pocalypse* (← *apocalypse*) and *-mageddon* (← *Armageddon*) construct hyperbolic scenarios of collapse, dramatizing events as uncontrollable crises. Metonymy-based affixoids such as *-brain* and *-face* reduce individuals to a single body part, signalling cognitive, moral, or social deficiency. Pejorative meanings across these elements emerge from the interaction of morphological structure with discourse context, humour, hyperbole, ideological positioning, and the varying perceptions of different audiences.

Across these morphemes, a consistent set of pragmatic functions emerges: (i) evaluative – marking strong disapproval or negative stance; (ii) ridiculing or humorous – exaggerating traits to provoke mockery; (iii) dehumanizing or reductive – reducing the target to a trait or likening them to a monstrous figure; and (iv) alarmist – especially in catastrophic morphemes, dramatizing danger, loss of control, or systemic failure. Denotationally, these morphemes shift the literal meaning of base nouns into socially negative, hyperbolic, or morally charged senses, illustrating the interaction of morphology, semantics, speaker intention, and audience reception.

Brief contrastive remarks on Italian, confirmed by *WordReference* and the English-Italian parallel corpus OPUS2 (Sketch Engine, Kilgarriff et al. 2004), show that similar effects are typically achieved through compounds (e.g., It. *sposa assassina* ‘bride-killer’ as an equivalent of *bridezilla*) and ‘of’-phrases (e.g., It. *faccia di merda* ‘lit. face-of-shit’ for *fuckface*) rather than metaphorical blends or culturally specific combining forms.

By foregrounding English pejorative morphology, this talk demonstrates how speakers exploit morphological creativity to ‘wound’ through words, highlighting the central role of evaluative morphology in social interaction, ideological discourse, and the negotiation of meaning between speakers and audiences, where humour, offense, and cultural context intersect.

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# **ABSTRACTS**

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## The Evaluative Values of Italian Name Blends

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Research on lexical blending offers significant insights into formal and semantic properties of lexical blends – e.g. overlap, length, stress position, reduction patterns, as well as grammatical relationship between the source words or semantic headedness (see, e.g. Algeo 1977; Gries 2004; Beliaeva 2014; Mattiello 2013, 2017; Renner 2023). Recent studies also demonstrate the expressive function of English determinative blended names such as *Messidona* (*Messi* + *Maradona*), and coordinative blends like *Clintasha* (*Clint* + *Natasha*) (Arndt-Lappe, Beliaeva & Martin 2025). Another exploration into the expressive nature of blending is Beliaeva and Knoblock (2020), which concentrates on blended insulting nicknames for politicians in Russian and Ukrainian news posts, blog posts and forums. Regarding Italian blends, Cacchiani (2015) and Cacchiani and Le Donne (2025) briefly look at blends that are used as pejoratives (Dressler & Merlini Barbaresi 1994; Merlini Barbaresi & Dressler 2020) to convey out-group exclusion. In this context, we investigate the evaluative potential of personal name (van Langendonck 2008) blends in Italian, which are composed with at least one personal name and may serve as names (including nicknames) or nouns (van Langendonck 2008), as in examples (1) to (4).

- (1) *berluscong/Berluscong*.N/N<sub>PR</sub> /ber.lus'kɔŋ/ (2006) < (*Silvio*) *Berluscon(i)*.N<sub>PR</sub> /ber.lu'sko.ni/ x *vietkon(g)*.N/N<sub>PR</sub> /vjɛt'kɔŋ/, i.e. Lucio Malan; a guerrilla-politician and a staunch supporter of Berlusconi's views and policies; a staunch supporter of Berlusconi's Forza Italia party
- (2) *Berluscotti*.N<sub>PR</sub> /ber.lu'skɔt.ti/ (1998) < (*Silvio*) *Berlusco(n)i*.N<sub>PR</sub> /ber.lu'sko.ni/ + (*Fausto*) *Ber(tin)otti*.N<sub>PR</sub> /ber.ti'nɔt.ti/, i.e. Bertinotti's (unwitting) support of Berlusconi's opposition coalition parties in successfully overthrowing the then ruling government (of which Bertinotti's Communist party is the smallest party) and forming a new ruling coalition that excludes Bertinotti
- (3) *gretino*.N/A /gre'ti.no/ (2019) < *Gret(a)*.N<sub>PR</sub> (*Thunberg*) /'grɛ.ta/ x *cretino*.N/A /kre'ti.no/ 'idiot, imbecile', i.e. derogatory term to label all those activists or anyone who speaks out on the issue of the global climate crisis, usually to minimize its severity
- (4) *Bertolessso*.N<sub>PR</sub> /berto'les.so/ (2019) < (*Guido*) *Bertol(as)o*.N<sub>PR</sub> /ber.to.'la.zo/ x *lessso*.A 'boiled, poached' /'les.so/, i.e. useless Guido Bertolaso, Italian Commissioner for Civil Protection in Italy and later Councilor for Health for the Lombardy region during the COVID-19 pandemic

Our goal is to assess the evaluative value of blends in context (GOOD or BAD; cf. Grandi & Körtvélyessy 2015; Dressler and Merlini Barbaresi 1994; Merlini Barbaresi & Dressler 2000). Whereas the choice of constituent names and nouns depends on description, complex names and nouns are created with careful attention to the semantics and formal make-up of the constituents. Our research

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question, therefore, is one about the relation between underlying semantic motivation (Benczes 2006; Panther and Radden 2011), phonological motivation and creative technique (Ronneberger-Sibold 2010), speech act modification (Merlini Barbaresi 1997-1998) and socio-pragmatic effects (Colston 2015, 2017). One related question is about the ability of the blends under scrutiny to instantiate any pattern or constructional schema (Kemmer 2003; Booij 2010).

At this stage of research, the analysis is mainly qualitative and only raw frequencies are provided. Our wordlist is comprised of around 200 appellative nouns and proper names – mostly nonce formations – that we selected from the Italian Trends (Herman et al. 2025) corpus, other online pages with .it domain extensions, online databases of Italian new words and neologisms (e.g. Treccani’s blog, Neologismi della Settimana n.d.), encyclopedias, and the relevant literature. They have been mediated through the press, and more generally, online news outlets with informative goals. Where present, usage examples and the accompanying text are also included, along with additional semantico-encyclopaedic details based on online lexicographic and encyclopaedic resources and interviews with two experts in Sociology of Cultural and Communicative Processes and two experts in Contemporary Italian History.

All blends were categorized accordingly, in terms of sw category, creative technique and phonological features, semantic motivation, evaluative value and recorded socio-pragmatic effect. As will be seen, the preliminary results suggest that pejoration is a distinctive feature of blends in politics as against sports and the showbusiness.

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# Unlocking evaluative verb morphology in a Central Andean Oral Story

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**Keywords:** *evaluative morphology, affective morphology, morphopragmatics, Quechua, Andean storytelling, Central Bolivian Andes*

The intersection of language and emotion is frequently studied through prosody and the lexicon, yet the grammaticalization of affect, especially in understudied, morphologically complex languages, remains comparatively underexplored (Besnier 1990; Wierzbicka 1999; Wilce 2009; Beatty 2010; van Berkum 2022). This paper shows that Central Bolivian Quechua has a dedicated affective verbal suffix *-ri* that adds an expressive layer of meaning (a joyful/pleased stance) without changing truth conditions i.e., (1).

- (1) An added expressive meaning (Camacho-Rios 2022: 97)

*sach'itá qhalla qallitalla t'ikaririn maravillata.*

sach'-itá	qhalla	qall-ita-lla	t'ika-ri-ri-n	maravilla-ta
crop-DIM.ACC	bright	bright-DIM-DISTR	bloom-INCH-AFF-3SG	beautiful-ACC

Descriptive: 'Herbs that reach brightness start to bloom beautifully.'

Expressive: **The speaker is happy about** the herbs' blooming (around her town).

Quechua languages are spoken across the Andes of South America, and current work treats Quechua as a family comprising roughly a dozen distinct languages (Camacho-Rios et al. 2024). The analysis thus contributes an empirically grounded case study from a less-studied Quechuan variety, directly addressing how evaluative values are grammatically encoded and what motivates their use in discourse (Grandi & Körtvélyessy 2015; Merlini Barbaresi & Dressler 2020). Data comes from a traditional Central Andean oral story, *Atuqmantawan Imillasmantawan* "The Fox and the Girls", part of a collection of oral stories audio- and video-recorded from 2023 to 2024 in Bolivia. In this paper, we ask: (i) what expressive value *-ri* contributes in storytelling, and (ii) how the suffix's evaluative orientation is regulated by oral storytelling strategies.

Two findings support a morphopragmatic account. First, *-ri* does not modify the descriptive proposition; instead, it contributes an expressive dimension indexing storyteller's or character's emotions i.e., (2). This motivates a two-tier analysis separating descriptive and expressive meaning, extending multidimensional treatments of expressives from the lexicon or phrases to derivational morphology (Potts 2007). Second, the interpretation of *-ri* depends on how the storyteller structures participation and perspective using a variety of strategies. There are four recurring oral storytelling strategies conditioning whether the storyteller's and/or the character's affect is expressed: Quotation, Narration, Audiovisual Demonstration, and Storyteller Acting. In Quotation, where the storyteller directly quotes character's speech, a storyteller-oriented joy interpretation of *-ri* is unavailable. In Narration (2), where the storyteller reports her indirect knowledge of the story, *-ri* preferentially tracks character's joy. In Audiovisual Demonstration, where the storyteller provides auditory or visual demonstrations, *-ri* shifts to indicate storyteller's joy. In Storyteller Acting, where the storyteller enacts

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a specific scene using bodily movement or gesture, *-ri* functions as dual indicator, reflecting both the character's and the storyteller's joyful feelings.

(2) Narration strategy (The Fox and the Girls oral story)

*Mancháy tusurisqanku nin.*

Mancháy tusu-**ri**-sqa-nku ni-n

Intensely dance-**AFF**-PST.NAR-3PL.PST say-3SG.PST

Descriptive: 'They (all) danced intensely, says the story.'

**Expressive:** The characters danced **joyfully**.

Overall, this paper contributes to the field in three ways. First, it extends Potts' (2007) multidimensional account of expressives to derivational morphology, offering a mechanism for separating descriptive and expressive tiers. Second, it shows how narrative strategies regulate the orientation of expressive meaning, determining whose affect is encoded at a given moment. Finally, it provides a morphopragmatic account of Andean storytelling, demonstrating how a single suffix enables storyteller to navigate different aspects of emotions across quoted speech, narration, demonstration, and embodied enactment.

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# Mega crowd: Augmentative prefixoid rivalry in Contemporary English

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**Keywords:** *augmentative prefixes, corpus linguistics, intensification, morphological attachment, near synonymy, variation*

This study examines the distributional patterns and competition among six near-synonymous augmentative prefixoids in Contemporary English: *ultra-*, *hyper-*, *super-*, *mega-*, *uber-*, and *maxi-*. While augmentatives are often mentioned in descriptive accounts (Plag 2018; Bauer et al. 2013), they are rarely examined as a coherent system of rivals. This paper investigates how these prefixoids compete for functional niches, specifically focusing on how the morphological expression of "excess" (Abbott 2014; Schneider 2003) intersects with evaluative semantics and pragmatic motivations. Following Sánchez Fajardo (2022: 103), I argue that augmentative prefixation frequently involves an "evaluative trajectory." While excessive amplification of a positive base leads to positive connotation, the intensification of a negative or ideologically sensitive base often triggers a pejorative meaning. This study specifically explores how prefixoids like *uber-* and *ultra-* function as tools for speaker stance, where the morphological unit contributes not merely degree modification but an attitudinal, often pejorative, evaluative value (e.g., *uber-narcissist*). The study adopts a usage-based perspective, analysing data from the English Web 2021 corpus (enTenTen21). To capture register variation, two subcorpora were utilized: informal (blogs) and formal (reference/encyclopedia). A multi-staged quantitative approach was implemented in R to disentangle the drivers of this rivalry. First, Chi-square tests of independence assessed the individual significance of four predictors: orthographic attachment (solid, hyphenated, separate), grammatical category of the base, base length, intensifying/evaluative use. Subsequently, a multinomial logistic regression model (using *super-* in formal contexts as a functional baseline) and a conditional inference tree were utilized to uncover the hierarchical interdependence of these factors. The results demonstrate that prefixoid selection is governed by a rigid hierarchy of structural and pragmatic constraints. Orthographic attachment emerges as the primary determinant of choice. Register-specific niches are clearly identifiable; for instance, *uber-* acts as a specialist for informal registers where orthographic conventions are less strict, often appearing in hyphenated or separate forms with non-nominal bases. In these informal contexts, *uber-* and *hyper-* frequently appear with bases that trigger negative evaluation (e.g., *uber-liberal*, *hyper sensitive*), highlighting their role in morphopragmatics. Furthermore, *mega-* has carved out a statistically dominant niche for nouns written with separate attachment (e.g., *mega popstar*), suggesting a degree of debonding that is less prevalent in its rivals. The conditional inference tree – from which register was excluded to isolate stable linguistic drivers – reveals that semantic "intensifying use" often acts only as a tertiary constraint. This indicates that while prefixoids carry heavy evaluative potential, their selection is first filtered through rigid morphological and orthographic rules. By highlighting how these rules drive competition, this paper contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the English augmentative system and its capacity for pejorative evaluation.

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## Illustrative Examples

- (1) *It will be interesting to see how an **uber-narcissist** handles a looming loss in November.* (enTenTen21\_blog)
- (2) *[...] failed presidential candidate and **uber-liberal**, masquerading as conservative [...]* (enTenTen21\_blog)
- (3) *I am at the other end [of] the scale, **hyper sensitive** and what people call **uber empath**.* (enTenTen21\_blog)
- (4) *Matrix filmmakers Andy and Larry Wachowski are courting the Hong Kong action star to join their **ultracool** sci-fi series.* (enTenTen21\_blog)
- (5) *We have turned a record surplus into a **mega deficit**.* (enTenTen21\_blog)

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## Less is More: Diminutives as Intensifiers in Spoken Spanish

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**Keywords:** *diminutives, intensification, pragmatics, sociolinguistics, Spanish*

*What are the pragmatic motivations for evaluative morphology?* This work addresses this research question by examining, in particular, the intensification value it acquires in specific interactive contexts. In the following examples, taken from our corpus of spoken Spanish, the speakers use the diminutive suffix *-ico/a* as a means of enriching their speech, as a rhetorical strategy to draw their interlocutor towards their point of view; in short, to intensify:

- (1) es to[do] mu[y] típico/ mi pucherico// anda que un puchero que no viene bien// poco más// yo/ la verdad/ es que tengo buena boca para to[do] [GRAN-M12-24]
- (2) pero mira un olorcico que echaba claro todo aquello todo el collar lleno de nardos todo/ y/ y/ muy colorido todo/con muchos colores [GRAN-M11-40]

Albelda and Estellés (2021) identify two main properties for pragmatic intensification: *scalarity* and *evaluation*. Building on Hunston and Thompson's (1999) definition of *evaluation* (in which comparison, subjectivity, and reflection of the speaker's value system participate), for the characterisation of the pragmatic strategy, Albelda (2007) adds a fourth feature: the non-truth-conditional value of the statement. Intensification, therefore, applies to a gradable semantic value by exceeding the assumed maximum possible degree of a scalar dimension; and in that exceeding the introduction of a subjective appraisal by the speaker is entailed.

Drawing on a corpus of 54 sociolinguistic interviews (PRESEEA-Granada) and analysing over 5,000 instances of intensified speech following Albelda and Estellés' (2021) methodology for the qualitative study of intensification, this research sheds light on the pragmatic motivations behind the distribution of morphological intensifiers.

The analysis yields 301 occurrences of intensifying morphemes (corresponding to 10 different types), 204 of which are instances of *-ísimo/a*, which stands out as the morphological intensifier par excellence (67.8% of the paradigm), followed, albeit far behind, by diminutives (19.3%), which speakers prefer over augmentatives (12.3 %) such as *super-*, *-ón/a* or *-azo/a*. Although, in general terms, diminutives represent only 1.1% of the varied set of intensifying strategies of the sample, given that the ratio of each intensifier in the corpus is very low, it is worth noting that the suffix *-ico/a* ranks, in fact, in the second quartile of the most frequent intensifiers in the corpus. Furthermore, this diminutive morpheme, which at the time the sample was taken —the early 2000's— was already in decline compared to *-illo/a* (Manjón-Cabeza 2016), has a specialised intensifying function, as determined by previous work (Castañeda 2025).

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This outcome seems to be related to the so-called cycles of pragmaticalization, namely cycles of change that affect linguistic forms that express more subjective values, dependent on context and on non-truth-conditional meaning (Hansen 2020: 3). Given that diminutives in Spanish are a prominent resource for expressing the subjectivity and cultural idiosyncrasies of the speaker (Reynoso 2005), the desire to make their speech more expressive (more relevant) inclines speakers towards the use of diminutives to perform a function typically associated with augmentative morphemes, so that the interlocutor's expectations are altered and the desired effect of intensification is successfully achieved. Moreover, we argue that the discursive genre of the sociolinguistic interview promotes the more frequent emergence of those semantic-pragmatic values of the diminutive that help to reinforce the speaker's stance and what they say, while avoiding threats to their own image and that of the interlocutor. Hence, the diminutive becomes a privileged strategic resource for expressing intensification in our corpus.

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## Historical development and morphological productivity: The case of -let and -ette

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**Keywords:** *diachrony, diminutives, grammaticalization, productivity.*

Suffixation is widely regarded as one of the most common and productive mechanisms of English word-formation (Bauer et al. 2013). In many languages, derivational suffixes are a frequent resource for diminutives formation, mainly to convey meanings related to smallness (Kovács 2011). In the case of English, however, some scholars have referred to limited diminutive resources and to poorly productive diminutive formation rules (Dressler & Merlini Barbaresi 1994; García-Bravo 2009). Despite extensive scholarship on major English suffixes, relatively little attention has been devoted to less frequent diminutive affixes such as -let and -ette, and most of such studies have adopted a qualitative and synchronic approach, with the exception of Schneider & Strubel-Burgdorf (2012). These two suffixes share a Romance origin and, despite Cannon's (1987) suggestion that they belong to the most productive suffixes of contemporary English, they entered the language at different historical stages and appear to display distinct developmental paths and morpho-semantic profiles. Considering this research gap, the present study investigates the diachronic development of the English diminutive suffixes -let and -ette so as to trace their origins, grammaticalization pathways, and morphological productivity in the course of the English language history. Drawing on a range of historical corpora, the paper concentrates on the common and the differentiating morphosemantic features of these two suffixes in order to account for their largely understudied behavior and potentially complementary usage.

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# Evaluative Morphology and Morphopragmatics via CV-Composition: FPSU Modeling of Evaluative Values, Pejoration, and Polyfunctionality in IE and Non-IE Affixes

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**Keywords:** *Function-oriented PhonoSemantic Universals (FPSU), Evaluative morphology, Morphopragmatics, IE & non-IE affixation, Polyfunctionality*

Concentrating on more than 200 affixes from Bāṃlā, Saṃskṛt, and selected IE and non-IE languages, drawn from standard dictionaries and morphology books and coded for evaluative value(s) (including pejoration) and pragmatic motivation following evaluative-morphology and morphopragmatic criteria, this paper introduces and expands Function-oriented PhonoSemantic Universals (FPSU) (Das, 2025a, 2025b, 2025c). FPSU is defined here by five claims: (i) each phoneme is a minimal meaning-bearing unit with latent semantic potential across a lexico-grammatical continuum; (ii) each phoneme maps to a Function/Functor pairing (Action/Actor; Event/Participant) and to derivative extensions, yielding core lexical meaning together with derived meanings, including evaluative values; (iii) when consonants and vowels combine into cognitively foregrounded morphemic units, consonants are semantically nuclear, whereas vowels, though phonologically nuclear, function as modifiers within CV-composition; (iv) for analytic clarity, FPSU provisionally treats the hypothesised proto-version as a unified reference system and individual languages as regionally differentiated realizations of an underlying phonosemantic architecture; and (v) where an exact phoneme is absent in another language, the phonetically nearest segment is treated as an allophonic proxy for the relevant FPSU slot.

In the present EvalMo context, FPSU is clarified through /k/. Here /k/ is hypothesized to encode a highly general operational nucleus: Function = ‘it can serve/perform any function’; Functor = ‘a functor for any operation’. This helps explain why /k/ may colexify with diverse signifieds in Bāṃlā, Saṃskṛt, and related traditions, such as *ātmā* ‘soul’, *man(as)* ‘mind’, *śarīr(a)* ‘body’, *jal(a)* ‘water’, *rājā* ‘king’, and *mastak(a)* ‘head’: in each case the referent either operates/functions or serves as the bearer/locus of operation. The same operational nucleus is also realized grammatically through affixes. In evaluative morphology, *-k-* and its variants *-kā*, *-ko*, *ku-* etc. are therefore especially suited to encode evaluative derivations, because evaluation itself is a functional recategorization of the base. The examples in the table below show how this one nucleus can yield diminution, approximation, replication, amelioration, and pejoration, including overlap within the same affix.

These function–functor mappings are absolute, although they are activated through speaker construal and stance in context (i.e., which aspect of an event/participant the user foregrounds for evaluative effect) (Khan, 2001, 2002; Khan & Chakravartī, 2009–2011), and this paper tests whether similar construal-patterns recur across languages. Methodologically, I (a) quantify value distributions across the 200+ affixes, (b) model value intersections (polyfunctionality) as co-occurrence networks, and (c) code morphopragmatic triggers (e.g., contempt, mockery, distancing, mitigation) from attested usage notes and examples. This motivates the following research questions:

- RQ1 (Evaluation+Distribution): Which evaluative values are encoded by phoneme-sized and already-recognised affixes, and how are they distributed cross-linguistically?
- RQ2 (Co-occurrence/Intersection): How do multiple evaluative functions intersect within the same affix, and how does FPSU CV-composition—V-operators over C-nuclei—predict these intersections?
- RQ3 (Pragmatics): What speaker-pragmatic motivations (e.g., contempt, mockery, distancing, mitigation) trigger one FPSU construal over another when selecting an evaluative affix in discourse?

Building on evaluative morphology and morphopragmatics (e.g., Dressler & Merlini Barbaresi, 1994; Finkbeiner et al., 2016; Grandi & Körtvélyessy, 2015), FPSU offers a compositional account of how evaluative values, including pejoration, can be predicted from affixal form and contextual stance. The examples are given in the table below:

phoneme-sized affix and its fundamental meaning	Recognised Affix and derivation of meanings	Example (prefix+base)/(base+suffix)	Evaluation
<p><b>k /k/ = Function:</b> It can serve any function.</p> <p><b>Functor:</b> A functor for any operation.</p>	<p>-k- and its variants [-k, -ka, -ko, ku-] = An operational functor available for diverse evaluative recategorizations like diminution, approximation, replication, amelioration, pejoration</p>	<p><b>Bāṃlā, Saṃskṛt (IE Family)</b>  <i>aśva</i> /æʃʋə/ ‘horse’ + <b>-k</b> → <i>aśvak(a)</i> /æʃʋəkə/ ‘small horse, ugly horse’  <i>hōt</i> ‘ox’ + <b>-kā</b> → <i>hōtkā</i> ‘fat, crude and obstinate like an ox, stray like an ox’  <i>putra</i> ‘son’ + <b>-k</b> → <i>putrak(a)</i> ‘beloved like a son’  <i>stab</i> ‘praise, eulogy’ + <b>-(a)k</b> = <i>stābak</i> ‘eulogiser, sycophant’</p>	<p>(↔ denotes overlap)  <b>-k(a)</b> = diminution (‘small’) ↔ pejoration (‘ugly’)  <b>-kā</b> = approximation (‘...like an ox’) ↔ pejoration (‘crude, obstinate, stray’)  <b>-k(a)</b> = approximation (‘like a son’) ↔ amelioration (‘beloved’)  <b>-(a)k</b> = neutral ‘eulogiser’) ↔ pejoration (‘sycophant’)</p>
		<p><b>Greek (IE Family)</b>  <i>kako-</i> + <i>daimōn</i> /dajmɔ:n/ ‘spirit’ → <i>kako-daimōn</i> /kakodajmɔ:n/ ‘evil spirit’</p>	<b>kako-</b> = pejoration
		<p><b>Spanish (IE Family)</b>  <i>pájaro</i> /ˈpaxaro/ ‘bird’ + <b>-iko</b> → <i>pajar-ico</i> /paxaˈriko/ ‘little bird’</p>	<b>-iko</b> = diminution
		<p><b>Nenets (Uralic Family)</b>  <i>ñawa</i> /ɲawa/ ‘hare’ → <i>ñawa-ko</i> /ɲawako/ ‘small hare’</p>	<b>-ko</b> = diminution
		<p><b>Ket (Yeniseian Family)</b>  <i>dū-m</i> /du:m/ ‘bird’ + <b>-kit</b> ‘offspring’ → <i>dumgit</i> /dumgit/ ‘baby bird’</p>	<p><b>-kit</b> = replication (‘offspring’)  ↔ diminution (‘young’)</p>
		<p><b>Hungarian</b>  <i>kutya</i> ‘dog’ + <b>-ka</b> → <i>kutyuska</i> ‘little dog, doggy’</p>	<b>-ka/-ke</b> = diminution ↔ amelioration
<p><b>u /u/ =</b> (qualitative change into) a new state;</p> <p><b>p /p/</b> possession &amp; possessor;  <b>up(a)-</b> possession into a new state</p>	<p><b>Bāṃlā, Saṃskṛt:</b>  <b>upa-</b> adds “additional / secondary / subordinate / extra / added-on” to the base; often yields “a lesser/secondary X” or “an extra/deputy X”</p>	<p><b>upa-</b> + <i>nadi</i> ‘river’ → <i>upanadi</i> [upənəɖi] ‘tributary’ (lit. ‘subordinate river in addition to main river’).</p>	<i>upanadi</i> : often <b>neutral</b> , sometimes <b>attenuative</b> (“lesser”).
		<p><b>upa-</b> + <i>pati</i> ‘husband’ → <i>upopoti</i> [upəpɔɖi] ‘paramour’ (lit. ‘secondary husband in addition to husband’).</p>	<i>upopoti</i> : <b>pejorative</b> (legal/social; husband’s perspective); <b>ameliorative</b> : (paramour’s self-view in patriarchal setup).
		<p><b>upa-</b> + <i>patnī</i> ‘wife’ → <i>upapatnī</i> / <i>upopotnī</i> [upəpɔɖni:] ‘concubine’ (lit. ‘secondary wife in addition to wife’)</p>	<i>upopotnī</i> : <b>extremely pejorative</b> (legal/social; woman’s perspective); <b>ameliorative</b> (man’s perspective in patriarchal setup).

	<b>Greek:</b> <b>epi-</b> = “in addition to”	<b>Greek:</b> <i>epi-</i> + <i>gonos</i> → <i>Epigonos</i> (lit. ‘Born <i>after/in addition to</i> ’)	<i>epigonos</i> : <b>pejorative</b> (mere imitator).
		<b>epi-</b> + <i>metron</i> → <i>epimetron</i> (lit. ‘Measure in addition’)	<i>epimetron</i> : <b>Augmentative</b> : A surplus; an extra amount given over the standard (bonus).
		<b>English</b> (neo-classical formation): <b>epi-</b> + <b>phenomenon</b> → <i>epiphenomenon</i> (“in addition to the main one”)	<i>epiphenomenon</i> : <b>attenuative</b> (“secondary byproduct”, less important than the cause).

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## Negative Evaluative Semantics of the Modern Greek Prefix *para-*

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**Keywords:** *approximation, depreciative evaluation, excess, Modern Greek, prefix*

Evaluative morphology covers a range of word-formation processes (e.g. affixation, compounding, etc.) which enable the formation of lexemes whose meaning involves an evaluative dimension relative to the base lexeme, including categories such as diminution, augmentation, pejoration, intensification, approximation etc. (cf. Scalise 1984; Dressler & Merlini Barbaresi 1994; Stump 2003; Fradin and Montermini 2009; Grandi & Körtvélyessy 2015, Amiot & Stosic 2022; Masini et al 2023, among others). Evaluative constructions express, in one way or another, deviation from a “standard” that is determined by the base, whether quantitatively, qualitatively, or along both dimensions concomitantly (e.g., Grandi & Körtvélyessy 2015).

This paper examines the evaluative meanings of the prepositional prefix *para-* in Modern Greek, based on data extracted from the Corpus of Greek Texts (CGT) (Goutsos 2010) and the Greek Web 2019 (elTenTen19) corpus at Sketch Engine (Kilgarriff et al. 2014). The prefix *para-* originates from the Ancient Greek preposition *pará* ‘close to (but falling short of)’ (Bortone 2010, 291), and in the course of its grammaticalization, has also developed evaluative meanings. The main process behind the semantic change of *para-* is metaphor (Markopoulou (2014). While these meanings appeared in a few words in Classical Greek, they became productive in Hellenistic and Medieval Greek, and later in Modern Greek, where their use is further expanded through neologisms and loan translations (Anastassiadi-Symeonidi 1986, Pouloupoulou 2002, Ralli 2004, Markopoulou 2014). Building on Efthymiou et al (2015) and Efthymiou (2016), the core evaluative meanings are further elaborated as:

- (1) excess: *para-xrisimopió* ‘over-use’, *para-cimáme* ‘over-sleep’, *para-jemízo* ‘over-fill’
- (2) periphrastic reinforcement (upgrading the determinacy of the propositional content): *íksere ce para-íksere* ‘(s)he knew and he knew very well’
- (3) divergence, error or violation: *para-plirofórisi* ‘misinformation’, *para-pató* ‘stagger, stumble’, *par-erminévo* ‘mis-interpret’, *par-enérjia* ‘side effect’
- (4) (unofficial) parallel existence and function: *para-ikonomía* ‘shadow economy’, *para-krátos* ‘deep state’, *para-trápeza* ‘shadow bank’, *para-stratiotikós* ‘paramilitary’, *para-loyotexnía* ‘second rate literature’

Examples 1–4 all illustrate a “deviation from a standard value”, whether this deviation concerns the referential pole (*para-pató* ‘stagger, stumble’), the pragmatic pole (e.g., *íksere ce para-íksere* ‘(s)he knew and he knew very well’), or both (e.g., *para-trapeza* ‘shadow bank’).

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The analysis focuses primarily on meanings 1, 3 and 4, which represent some of the most productive meanings of the prefix according to Efthymiou et al (2015). The study demonstrates that the prefix *para-* is productively employed in contemporary Greek to convey approximative and excessive values, while also serving a kin-categorizing function (Capelle et al 2023; Micheli 2023; Vassiliadou et al 2023) combined with subjective depreciative evaluation. Against this background, the analysis addresses the fundamental question of the relationship between the categorizing function of word-formation and the evaluative function, as well as the intersections among evaluative functions.

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# Diminutive and Augmentative Forms as Hypocoristics in Romanian: An Empirical Study

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**Keywords:** Romanian evaluatives, diminution, augmentation, hypocoristics, morphopragmatics

This study explores diminutive and augmentative morphology in Romanian as productive and dynamic processes involved in evaluative meaning formation. Rather than treating these mechanisms as merely formal operations, the study examines their role in shaping pragmatic interpretation. The focus is on hypocoristics formations, which frequently emerge through diminutive morphology – with it being widely accepted that they express familiarity, intimacy, or endearment – but also through augmentatives, which occupy the opposite end of the evaluative spectrum. While these mechanisms are generally considered transparent within morphological paradigms, a closer examination of hypocoristics reveals a more complex interaction between morphology and pragmatics in Romanian. Some forms display a dual status, being morphologically diminutive and pragmatically hypocoristic, as Romanian diminutive formations often exhibit a semantic overlap between their morphological and pragmatic values. For example, the diminutive form of *prinţesă* (“princess”), obtained with the suffix *-uţă*, *prinţesuţă* (tiny/small princess) is particularly well suited for hypocoristic usage, due to the way it simultaneously encodes smallness and conveys affective meanings such as affection or familiarity. Augmentative formations, by contrast, do not display the same degree of semantic overlap. Morphologically, they encode largeness, intensity, or exaggeration, values that do not inherently coincide with the affective profile of hypocoristics. For the same noun, now using the suffix *-oaie*, the new form is *prinţesoaie* (“big/large princess). Nevertheless, augmentatives like this one can also be interpreted as affective or affectionate, depending largely on contextual, pragmatic, and interactional factors, even when their semantic potential allows for pejorative or negatively evaluative readings.

In light of the above, the study addresses the Following Research questions

- RQ1: Under what conditions are diminutive and augmentative formations interpreted and used as hypocoristic
- RQ2: How often do contextual and pragmatic factors license affective readings in augmentatives despite the lack of overlapping in their morphological and pragmatic readings?

The data for the study is collected through targeted elicitation: two part organized interviews. The subjects – all native Romanian speakers – are being interview o how they would call/address certain people in a given context (such as their children, spouse, co-worker, relative, etc.). This constitutes the first shorter part, where hypocoristic use will be taken note of. Afterwards, participants are asked if different diminutive or augmentative forms are appropriate, whether they prefer one over the other, or whether they would refrain from using either form altogether. Particular care is taken to clearly

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distinguish affective uses from ironic or pejorative ones. Participants are therefore explicitly asked to assess whether a given form is interpreted as affective and whether they consider it fitting in the specified context. We also take into consideration the spoken affective practice known as *a alinta* (vb. inf.), which has received limited attention in the literature (Zafiu, 2011), and which may help shed light on our main focus. We hope that this study will serve as a useful reference for research on Romanian hypocoristics, particularly by combining empirical data with theoretical analysis.

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# Evaluative morphology in literature: suffixation in two Catalan Modernist novels

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**Keywords:** *appreciative suffixation, Catalan literature, Modernist novels, Els sots feréstecs, Solitud*

The relationship between evaluative morphology and literature has traditionally been addressed only tangentially in linguistic studies, often subordinated to stylistic or lexical analyses and rarely examined in depth. However, the study of evaluative derivation in literary texts makes it possible to observe how morphological mechanisms become first-order expressive resources, capable of conveying pragmatic, affective, and ideological values within narrative construction. From this perspective, Catalan Modernist literature constitutes a particularly fertile field for analysing the interaction between formal creativity and communicative function.

The aim of this paper is to analyse and describe the morphological and pragmatic patterns of evaluative suffixation in two Catalan Modernist novels: *Els sots feréstecs* [‘Dark Vales’] (1901) by Raimon Casellas and *Solitud* [‘Solitude’] (1905) by Víctor Català/Caterina Albert. These two contemporary narrative works make intensive and functionally motivated use of evaluative suffixation. In the case of *Els sots feréstecs*, Castellanos (1996: 38) already notes that the lexicon is “triat especialment per la seva contundència i deformat per l’acumulació d’augmentatius, diminutius i despectius” [‘selected especially for its forcefulness and deformed by the accumulation of augmentatives, diminutives, and pejoratives’]. In *Solitud*, evaluative derivation is particularly prominent in the narrative voice (Garcia-Pinos 2019), as well as in the speech of the characters, most notably that of the shepherd (Boix i Llonch 2016).

Accordingly, the corpus analysed consists of more than 700 occurrences of evaluatively suffixed lexical units (and approximately 400 unique items). In order to delimit the scope of the analysis, the study focuses on the following nine Catalan evaluative suffixes: *-arro/-a*, *-às/-assa*, *-ell/-a*, *-et/-a*, *-ic/-a*, *-ísim/-a*, *-ó/-ona*, *-ol/-a*, and *-ot/-a* (see GIEC 2016: §10.3.1). This corpus allows for a systematic analysis of the semantic and pragmatic values associated with the different suffixes, although, as D’Angelis (2019) argues, such values can be difficult to systematise, since each item must be interpreted in context to grasp its full meaning. Nevertheless, as Antolí Martínez (2024: 156) maintains, this “seguit de valors emocionals [...] es poden identificar, classificar i jerarquitzar” [‘set of emotional values [...] can be identified, classified, and hierarchised’].

The methodology involves the analysis of these 700 contexts, drawing upon the classifications established by Gràcia & Turón (1998) and Grandi & Körtvélyessy (2015), following the framework of Dressler & Barbaresi (1994). Special attention is given to recent studies on the diminutive suffix *-et/-eta*, which represents the highest frequency in the corpus and exhibits the broadest range of morphopragmatic values in Catalan. Specifically, the study distinguishes between denotative and connotative morphopragmatic contexts. Within the latter, we identify and categorize the specific values conveyed, such as approximation, politeness, contempt, irony, affectivity, compassion, and childhood-related emotions.

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In this regard, both the corpus and the results derived from the morphopragmatic analysis of these evaluative suffixes should make it possible to observe how the two authors characterise their characters and modulate the expressive intensity of the narrative through both narration and dialogue by means of evaluative suffixation (Lloret 2015). Essentially, this suffixal richness not only imbues the discourse with a strong emotional charge and humanises the characters but also highlights the singularity of the language employed. We therefore argue that the use of evaluative morphology in *Els sots feréstecs* and *Solitud* is not merely a stylistic device but rather constitutes an essential component of the narrative structure, whereby the lexicon contributes an emotional dimension that extends beyond the strictly denotational level of the text.

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## Semantic categories and expressive component in Modern Greek verbal evaluatives

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**Keywords:** *verbal evaluatives, boosters, maximizers, diminishers, expressive component*

The semantic properties and constraints governing the derivation of verbal evaluatives appear to be far less homogeneous than those of nominal and adverbial evaluatives (Kiefer & Németh (2015: 232). Focusing on this domain, the study investigates the functions of verbal evaluatives in Modern Greek (MG), focusing on evaluative morphology in the verbal domain (cf. Greenberg 2010; Grandi 2009; Tovená & Kihm 2008; Katunar 2013; Amiot & Stosic 2014; Weidhaas & Schmid 2015; Efthymiou 2017, among others).

In MG, intensification and deintensification constitute two major components of verbal evaluative morphology. These components are typically expressed through preverbal degree modifiers. Following Gavriilidou (2013) and Quirk *et al.* (1985), I propose that verbal intensifying elements fall into two classes. The first includes *boosters* (e.g. *para-* ‘over’, *yper-* ‘over’, *kalo-* ‘well-’), which indicate a high degree in a scale, as in *para-vrazo* ‘to over-boil’. The second includes *maximizers* (e.g., *kata-* ‘completely’, *skylo-* ‘to death’, *xilio-* ‘deeply’, *mirjo-* ‘deeply’), which denote the upper boundary of a scale, as in *skylo-varieme* ‘to be bored to death’).

In contrast, elements such as *psilo-* ‘a bit’, *miso-* ‘half-’, *koutso-* ‘poorly’, *psefto-* ‘affectedly’, and *xazo-* ‘poorly’ function as deintensifying prefixes. These elements attach to verbal stems and express mitigation or the speaker’s negative evaluation of an event. In this sense, they behave as *diminishers*, often conveying litotic meanings (e.g. *psilo-efaga* ‘I ate a bit’).

To account for the semantic differences among these evaluative classes, I propose a semantic analysis in which each class of evaluative morpheme introduces a distinct relation to a scale of degree for gradable predicates, as in (1), where the value SUFFICIENTLY represents the threshold close to the contextual norm:

- (1) *Scale of degree*  
<extremely, a lot, sufficiently, a little, none>

The denotations of boosters, maximizers, and diminishers are given in (2):

- (2) a.  $[[\text{BOOSTER}]] = \lambda P \lambda x. \exists d [P(x)(d) \wedge (d > \text{SUFFICIENTLY})]$   
b.  $[[\text{MAXIMIZER}]] = \lambda P \lambda x. \exists d [P(x)(d) \wedge (d > \text{A LOT})]$   
c.  $[[\text{DIMINISHER}]] = \lambda P \lambda x. \exists d [P(x)(d) \wedge (d < \text{SUFFICIENTLY})]$

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In addition to their degree semantics, MG verbal evaluatives may convey a speaker-oriented expressive component. More specifically, the preverbs may introduce a comparison between the expressed degree of an action and an implicitly preferred alternative. This comparison often signals that the event does not reach the speaker's expectations or preferences. This is modeled as an expressive index associated with the evaluative morpheme, as in (3):

(3) Expressive content of adverbial preverbs in *c*:

Adverbial preverbs contain an expressive index  $\langle \alpha \ I \ q \rangle$ , where  $\alpha$  is the individual anchor,  $q$  the proposition it embeds, and  $I$  ranges between  $[-.5, 0]$ .

In (3),  $\alpha$  is the individual anchor (typically the speaker),  $q$  is the proposition under evaluation, and  $I$  is a scalar value indicating the speaker's attitude toward that proposition. For an adverbial preverb, the value of  $I$  lies within a mildly negative range (-0.5 to 0), reflecting a moderate negative stance toward the described event.

To conclude, MG verbal evaluatives can be systematically classified as *boosters*, *maximizers*, and *diminishers*, each associated with a distinct degree-semantic denotation. In addition, certain evaluative preverbs encode a speaker-oriented expressive component, introducing a subtle negative preference through an implicit contrast with alternative degrees of the same event.

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## Exploring the semantico-pragmatic motivations of *-splain* blends: Towards a usage-based cognitive-functional approach

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**Keywords:** *lexical blend, usage-based, Construction Grammar(s), epistemic, interactional*

This presentation addresses lexical blends (i.e. the combination of two (or more) segments of words into one lexical item, e.g. *mancession* < *man* + *recession*) in present-day English from a usage-based constructionist view of language (Goldberg 2006, 2024) grounded in a cognitive-functional approach (Butler & González-García 2014). Specifically, it delves into the semantic and pragmatic functions of lexical blends with *-splain* as a splinter in the light of 157 types extracted from the NOW Corpus, supplemented with additional material from the SplinterCorpus and Google. Our investigation provides provisional evidence for the following claims: First, building on the claim that general cognitive mechanisms play a crucial role in lexical blends (Kemmer 2003; Gries 2012; Beliaeva 2014), it is shown that cognitive operations in general and metonymic reduction (specification) in particular are essential to provide a principled account of the meaning shifts in blends of this kind (e.g. *mansplain* ‘explain (something) to someone, typically a woman, in a condescending or patronizing way’) -> *-splain* ‘explain in a condescending, patronizing or unwarrantedly authoritative way’ (Oxford English Dictionary/Merriam Webster) (Peña-Cervel 2022a, b). Concomitant with this reduction process is the fact that the meaning of the splinter is no longer connected with gender, although the original social negative judgement is retained as a core semantic feature. Second, *-splain* blends are characterized by a high degree of morphosyntactic as well as semantico-pragmatic flexibility, which has a direct bearing on the modulation of the negative social evaluation toward the explanation which they provide. In this connection, *-splain* can productively attach to a wide range of morphosyntactic categories of varying degrees of complexity, including nouns (*dietsplain, Trumpsplain, Batmansplain*), compounds, (*blowjobsplain*), adjectives (*thinsplain, greensplain, britsplain*), verbs (*asksplain*), noun phrases (*all-American-man-splain*), and even full sentences (*I-m-not-yet-a-man-splain*). From a discourse-pragmatic perspective, some groupings can also be discerned, involving cases where one of the elements conveys an agent (e.g. *mansplain, womansplain, Janesplain*), the topic under discussion (e.g. *sportssplain, dietsplain, coronasplain*), the means/instrument used (*Googlesplain, chartsplain, mapsplain, eggsplain*), the manner used (*Trumpsplain, Batmansplain*), or a relevant attribute of the referent (*thinsplain, richsplain, greensplain*) (see Peña-Cervel 2022a: 289-290; González-García & Peña-Cervel under revision). Finally, *-splain* blends perform an epistemic interactional function as they help interlocutors manage interaction and power relations (see also Fultner 2022; Lutzky & Lawson 2022; Bridges 2023). More specifically, they enable speakers (i) to monitor and enforce conversational norms (*Unless you’ve actually grown up in the startlingly tech-free wizarding world, I feel like I don’t need to Mugglesplain Amazon to you*), (ii) to signal ideological positioning (*I don’t want to Whitesplain, but you might be underestimating the Black community voters*), (iii) to build in-group solidarity (*[O]ur beautiful guest William Taylor joined us this week to ‘gaysplain’ his own experiences with being a gay man*), and (iv) to challenge attempts to monopolize what counts as legitimate

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knowledge, often in conjunction with the expression of irony (*Alright fellow Georgians, we're going to spin the big wheel and find out how a certain group of people are going to coronasplain this to us*).

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# Expressive Superlatives: A Morphologically and Semantically Complex Phenomenon in Romanian and Spanish

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**Keywords:** *expressive morphology, reduplication, diminution, superlative*

Evaluative morphology is a complex grammatical and semantic aspect of language that is not restricted to mere affixation. This paper aims to illustrate this idea through a morphological and semantic analysis of the Romanian and Spanish A-A.DIM structures. Adjectival structures such as Rom. *singur-singurel* and Sp. *solo-solito* ‘very lonely/ all alone’, as well as adverbial structures such as Rom. *încet-încetişor* and Sp. *suave-suavecito* ‘very slowly’, employ reduplication and diminution. The general compositional rule is the following:  $f(a) = a + (a + \text{suffix homonymous to the diminutive suffix})$ . There are also morpholexical constraints for the words  $a$  in order to be able to undergo this pattern: the adjectival/adverbial class to which they belong, number of syllables, etc. The semantic results of this pattern encode both the grammatical meaning of superlative (‘very  $a$ ’) and expressive pragmatically-determined meaning (Dressler & Merlini Barbaresi 1994) that is generally, but not always, hypocoristic. Expressive morphology (Fortin 2011, Fortin & Rainer 2022) is particularly abundant and productive in languages such as Romanian and Spanish, where it is not uncommon for diminution and intensification to interact (Rainer et al. 2015). However, such constructions allow for great contextual flexibility. Thus, diminutive suffixes may be used in certain contexts to express irony or even pejoration.

Semantically, in cases like this, it is difficult to discriminate between the evaluative input of the repetition and that of the diminution. It might be argued that the superlative meaning is due to the repetition (cf. Bonacchi 2017, Stala 2019) and the pragmatic one to the affixation (cf. Cruz 2024), but in absence of sufficient comprehensive experimental proof, this pattern should be regarded as an independent expressive and grammatical device with its own particular function and, consequently, treated as a whole.

It is not only the morphopragmatics and the semantics of this pattern that pose challenges for a systematic approach, but also the production of these structures. For example, in Romanian, both *maşini nou-nouţe* (cars new.MASC.SG-new.FEM.PL.DIM) and *maşini noi-nouţe* (cars new.FEM.PL-new.FEM.PL.DIM) are possible alternative outputs (Zwicky & Pullum 1987) that occur in everyday speech. Therefore, a mixture of quantitative (corpus-based) and qualitative methods is required. Various uses of the structures under analysis were identified through queries of the CoRoLa annotated corpus and targeted Google searches. By examining the frequency of the internal agreement of the stem  $a$  and the lack of this overt agreement, it should be possible to formulate some hypotheses for the way in which this special type of superlative is generated and the degree to which it is lexicalised in certain constructions.

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## Inherited evaluation of morphemes

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**Keywords:** *embellished clipping, diminutive suffix, hypocorisms*

This paper wants to explore the semantic relationship between evaluative morphemes and their origin.

Dutch has two suffixes that can be used for embellished clippings *-o*, /*o*/, and *-ie*, /*i*/.

(1) Embellished clipping with final <i>-o</i>		possibly independent clipped form
alto	< alternatief	‘alternative person’ *alt
depro	< depressief	‘depressed person’ *depr
sago	< chagrijn(ig)/saggerijn	‘grumpy person’ *sag

(2) Embellished clipping with final <i>-ie</i>			
jochie	< jongen	‘young boy’	joch
gympie	< gymschoen	‘gym shoe’	?gymp
makkie	< gemakkelijk	‘something which can easily be done’	*mak

The suffix or suffix-like segment *-o* goes back to disyllabic clippings of forms with a vowel *-o-* as nucleus of the second syllable such as:

(3) homo	< homoseksueel	‘homosexual’
aso	< asociaal	‘antisocial person’
pedo	< pedoseksueel	‘pedosexual’

The examples under (3) all have a pejorative meaning. However, this negative meaning is not automatically connected to *-o*, as the data in (4) show.

(4) info	< informatie	‘information’
disco	< discotheek	‘discotheque’
afko	< afkorting	‘abbreviation’

As the examples presented in (3) and (4) show, the feature [+human] is required for the pejorative meaning. In addition, [-human] *-o* cannot be used for the formation of embellished clippings.

Suffix *-ie* is related to a regional or substandard diminutive suffix of Dutch. The suffix *-ie* is the normal informal, regional variant in the western part of the country, the so-called Randstad, the cultural, political and economic center.

(5) briefie	< brief	‘letter’
stekkie	< stek	‘cutting from a plant’ or ‘place’
vissie	< vis	‘fish’

These examples do not necessarily refer to a small letter, cutting or fish. They can also have an informal, familiar meaning. This endearment reading is further reinforced in its use in hypocorisms.

(6) Ali	< Adelheid	+ <i>-ie</i>	*Aal
Hannie/Hanny	< Johannes	+ <i>ie</i>	Han
Japi(e)	< Jacob	+ <i>ie</i>	Jaap

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Gerrie            < Gerrit            + ie            Ger

The examples presented in (6) all exhibit a clear endearment reading, whereas the data shown in (3) all share a pejorative meaning.

This makes it obvious to conclude that the positive connotation of *-ie* originates from its normal and frequent use as an endearment diminutive, while the series of examples in (3), which all share a negative meaning, combined with the feature [+human], leads to a pejorative connotation.

The evaluative aspect therefore seems to go back to frequent use elsewhere. The examples discussed here show the evaluative aspect associated with these morphemes to be a matter of transfer of the evaluative meaning from sequences of “source words” in which these morphemes occur to the morphemes themselves.

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# Diminutives in spoken German as evaluative constructions

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Diminutives not only express that something is relatively small, but are often associated with a value judgement. They can indicate the speaker’s attitude toward the subject being discussed. Thus, they are a perfect example for evaluative morphology (Grandi & Körtvélyessy 2015; Grandi 2017; Körtvélyessy 2017; Arndt-Lappe & Bonami 2026), respectively for morphopragmatics (Dressler & Barbaresi 1994, 2001, 2017): “Diminutives are the morphological mechanism that best exemplifies the variety of relevant morphopragmatic meanings. They allow the largest number of strategic uses in speech acts and speech situations [...]” (Dressler & Barbaresi 2017: 498).

In the case study presented in our talk, we combine the perspective of evaluative morphology with a corpus-based investigation of diminutive patterns in spoken German. More precisely, we will focus on German diminutives with the suffix *-chen* in the FOLK corpus of the “Database for Spoken German”<sup>1</sup> (cf. Example 1).

## Example 1: Phone call (FOLK\_E\_00084)

```
0564 FR ich hab halt zum beispiel kein bock so_n (.) äh legeres  
kleidchen das schulterfrei is irgendwie im winter anzuziehn
```

Engl. ‘For example, I just don’t feel like wearing a casual, shoulder-baring **little dress** in winter’

All occurrences of *-chen* diminutives were extracted and manually inspected, yielding a dataset of 1,772 tokens. On this basis, we provide a quantitative overview of their frequency, distribution, and productivity in contemporary spoken German. In addition, the data are analyzed qualitatively with a focus on the evaluative and interactional uses of *-chen* diminutives (Couper-Kuhlen & Selting 2017; Imo 2015). The analysis is based on a context-sensitive annotation of formal and pragmatic parameters and pays particular attention to occasional and interactionally emergent formations whose interpretation is shaped by the immediate co-text and conversational context, including their embedding in more complex evaluative constructions such as [ADJ<sub>klein</sub> ‘small’ X-chen] (cf. Example 2).

## Example 2: Coaching session (FOLK\_E\_00460)

```
0808 IL ich bin dann umgezogen in äh hatte dann so_n kleines  
zimmerchen °hh und konnte mich [auf meine s]achen fokussieren
```

Engl. ‘I then moved into, um, a **small little room** and was able to focus on my work’

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<sup>1</sup> [dgd.ids-mannheim.de/dgd/pragdb.dgd\\_extern.welcome](http://dgd.ids-mannheim.de/dgd/pragdb.dgd_extern.welcome) (01/26/2026).

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Using data from spoken language is promising in two senses: First, especially direct interaction seems to be suitable to identify pragmatic effects like euphemism, irony, pejoration etc. (Dressler & Barbaresi 2017: 498–500). Second, the description of word-formation phenomena based on spoken language data remains a desideratum in research and for sure needs further investigation (but cf. Stumpf 2022, 2023; Hein & Antonioli 2025; Helmer 2022).

In a second step, the results of our study are modeled within the theoretical framework of Construction Morphology (Booij 2010; Hein & Michel 2023). Diminutive patterns are described as conventionalized pairings of form and meaning/function that emerge from recurrent usage events. In line with more recent developments in Construction Grammar, we explicitly consider the sociopragmatic functions of constructions (Leclercq & Morin 2025; Merten 2025), viewing diminutive formations not only as morphological patterns but as resources for evaluative stance-taking and interactional positioning. In doing so, we also address the question to what extent these pragmatic functions can be considered an integral part of morphological meaning or whether they are primarily shaped by contextual and interactional factors.

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## Mapping Diminutive Evaluativeness in Spanish Prefixes: A Comparative Study of *micro-* and *mini-*

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Within evaluative morphology, diminutives are well known for expressing a wide range of meanings, corresponding both to a quantitative (size) and a qualitative (affectivity) assessment of the base, and carrying a more or less strong pragmatic value. The main reference in this respect is Jurafsky's (1996) attempt to systematize this variety around the basic concept of 'small' (see also Prieto 2015). Romance languages display complex evaluative systems in which these dimensions are often intertwined (cf. Sp. *-ito/a*, It. *-ino/a*). However, the semantics of diminutives has mostly been investigated with respect to suffixation, despite the fact that diminution can be expressed both by suffixation and prefixation (Grandi & Montermini 2004; Grandi 2015). When discussed, diminutive prefixes are generally implicitly considered functionally similar to suffixes or are simply described as indicating small size, without further analytical investigation of their semantic or pragmatic functions (e.g., Rodríguez Ponce 2002; Serrano-Dolader 2011; Fábregas 2024).

Our study aims to address this gap by examining the semantics of the two Spanish prefixes *micro-* and *mini-*. Drawing on data from the Observatori de Neologia, we investigate the semantic behavior of these two elements to assess to which extent they convey descriptive versus evaluative meanings. In particular, we propose to place diminutive constructions along an **evaluativeness scale**: while *micro-* is descriptive and evaluatively neutral, and suffixes such as *-ito/a* display a strong evaluative value, *mini-* occupies an intermediate position, functioning either as purely descriptive or as both descriptive and evaluative. The examples in (1) exemplify three prototypical uses of the constructions in question.

- (1) a. El 50% de las crías nacen con el gen alterado, convirtiéndose en *microcerdos*.  
50% of the offspring are born with the altered gene, becoming *micro-pigs*. (descriptive)
- b. ¡Oh, mira, un *minicerdito*!... Muy monos, ¿verdad?  
Oh, look, a *mini-pig-DIM*!... Very cute, right? (descriptive & evaluative)
- c. ¿Alguna vez vieron algo más tierno y conmovedor que este diminuto *cerdito* negro?  
Have you ever seen anything cuter and more touching than this tiny black *pig-DIM*? (evaluative)

Our analysis identifies at least two factors underlying this scale. First, *micro-* is typically encountered in specialized scientific or technical domains, whereas *mini-* attaches more often to concrete nouns. Second, the semantic instruction of *micro-* is more complex, as it can express 'smallness' in multiple dimensions, while the semantic mechanism of *mini-* is simpler, primarily involving direct modification of the base. We propose to distinguish the meanings associated with the two prefixes into two types.

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In Type A (direct modification), the semantic instruction of the element applies to the base as a whole and is encountered with both *micro-* and *mini-*. In Type B (indirect modification) the semantic instruction of the element applies to a component associated with the referent of the base not directly expressed by it, for instance the participant to a complex event. This type is primarily associated with *micro-*, and often selects deverbal or deadjectival nouns as bases. When Type B is activated, the element functions indirectly by modifying internal aspects of the base rather than the base referent itself.

- (2)
- a. *minicerdo* ‘a small pig’ (Type A: size)
  - b. *minicrisis* ‘a less serious, short-lived, and manageable episode of difficulty or disruption’ (Type A: qualitative)
  - c. *microempresa* ‘a small-scale company involving a limited number of people and low levels of production’ (Type B: quantitative)
  - d. *micromanagement* ‘management that focuses on highly detailed aspects of work processes’ (Type B: granularity and technical precision)

The simplicity of the semantic mechanism of *mini-* makes it easier for speakers to convey their opinions or evaluative judgments through this element, allowing pragmatic and evaluative meanings to be naturally expressed. Moreover, a contextual analysis of *mini-* in our database reveals a range of evaluative values. While most instances convey affectionate or affective meanings, *mini-* may also express pejorative or critical attitudes, reflecting the inherent flexibility of this diminutive element in enabling intersecting evaluative functions driven by speakers’ pragmatic motivations.

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## Pejoration through diminution: the case of the Italian *-ino* and the Portuguese *-inho*

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**Keywords:** *evaluative morphology, pejoration, diminution, Italian -ino, Portuguese -inho*

The morphological expression of pejoration is currently at the center of an intense debate (Finkbeiner, Meibauer & Wiese 2016; Fajardo 2022; Van Goethem, Norde & Masini 2023, Fajardo & Mattiello 2025), which builds on and further develops insights that have emerged over the past three decades in the field of evaluative semantics (Dressler & Merlini Barbaresi 1994, Grandi 2002, Merlini Barbaresi 2004). In particular, the polysemous networks of evaluative suffixes have been represented using radial models, especially for diminutives (Jurafsky 1996, Prieto 2005), augmentatives (Prieto 2005, Mutz 2015) and pejoratives (Mutz 2015). These studies show how different evaluative meanings, even those that appear distant from each other, can coexist within the semantic networks of evaluative suffixes as a result of processes such as metonymy, inference and metaphor.

Given that the link between diminution and pejoration has been extensively studied (Jurafsky 1996, Grandi 2002, Prieto 2015), this work focuses on the expression of pejoration through the most productive diminutive suffixes in Italian and in Portuguese, *-ino* and *-inho*, respectively, that have received attention by many scholars (e.g., Merlini Barbaresi 2004, Sandmann 1989, Bacheschi 2014, Silva & Lebler 2020, Rio-Torto 2022). Although they are formally and functionally similar, they also differ; for instance, Italian *-ino* does not express intensification, whereas Portuguese *-inho* frequently does (Hummel 2015: 1538). While both suffixes may require an interfix for phonological reasons (Maiden 1998: 199; Rainer 2023: 216), the status of *-inho* and *-zinho* in Portuguese remains debated: some scholars treat them as allomorphs (e.g., Grandi 2002, Fortin & Rainer 2022, Rio-Torto 2022), while others consider them distinct suffixes due to formal properties (Villalva 2007), sociolinguistic factors (Freitas & Barbosa 2013) or subtle semantic differences (Bacheschi 2014: 142).

This poster aims, first, to show that Italian *-ino* and Portuguese *-inho*, despite their formal and functional similarity, do not entirely overlap and instead refer to partially different semantic networks, and second, to demonstrate how this partial divergence is reflected in the selection of bases to which each suffix attaches.

The study uses two comparable corpora on *Sketch Engine* (Jakubíček et al. 2013): the *itTenTen20* corpus to extract Italian nouns ending in *-ino* and the *ptTenTen23* corpus to extract Portuguese nouns ending in *-inho*. Subsequently, non-evaluative and lexicalized items were manually excluded from the list of the 1,000 most frequent results, and this procedure was repeated until a minimum frequency of 50 was reached. While examining the frequency list, the concordance lines were inspected to verify a potential pejorative meaning; when attested, a randomised sample of 200 occurrences was extracted for qualitative analysis. In cases with fewer than 200 occurrences, all of them were analysed.

This work shows the different levels of productivity of these suffixes following Baayen (2009). Most importantly, it compares the behaviour of *-ino* and *-inho* through two semantic maps highlighting

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areas of convergence and divergence. In addition, it investigates whether Portuguese shows a preference for expressing pejoration using *-inho* or *-zinho*.

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## Pejorative Evaluation in Italian: a corpus-based study

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**Keywords:** *derogation, corpus linguistics, Italian suffixation, morphopragmatics, evaluative gradience*

Evaluative morphology constitutes a complex domain in which the values conveyed by evaluative markers frequently intersect rather than forming discrete categories. While quantitative morphology (diminutives and augmentatives) has received substantial attention, pejorative morphology remains comparatively understudied (Grandi 2002). This study contributes to filling this gap by offering an empirically grounded analysis of seven Italian suffixes associated with the expression of contempt: *-accio*, *-astro*, *-onzolo*, *-uncolo*, *-uccolo*, *-accolo*, and *-ercolo*. The aim of this study is to map their evaluative values, examine how these values interact, and identify the pragmatic factors that drive pejorative interpretations, addressing the three research questions of the workshop.

The dataset for the study is extracted from ItTenTen20, a large web-corpus of Italian (Jakubíček *et al.* 2013), from which occurrences of each suffixed form were extracted, filtered, and annotated with 13 parameters relating to the form of the evaluative, the context, and the value conveyed by the suffix. The analysis of the data is both quantitative and qualitative.

Among the findings emerging from this analysis, I point out three of them. First, with respect to RQ1, from the data emerge that Italian pejorative morphology encompasses a wider range of evaluative values than traditionally assumed. In detail, the set of pejorative suffixes appears to be distributed along a continuum of prototypicality, ranging from unequivocally pejorative markers (e.g. *-accio*), expressing solely the semantic value bad together with any attendant morphopragmatic effect, to suffixes not traditionally classified as pejorative (Merlini Barbaresi 2004) but which, in practice, nonetheless encode the semantic value bad (e.g. *-onzolo*).

Second, regarding RQ2, the results provide clear evidence that evaluative functions systematically intersect. Derived forms often express combinations such as bad + small (*omuncolo*<sup>2</sup>), bad + approximation (*medicastro*<sup>3</sup>), or bad + irony (*poetaccolo*<sup>4</sup>), reflecting the radial and non-discrete nature of evaluative semantics (Prieto 2005, Prieto 2015, Grandi & Körtvélyessy 2015). The combinations of values encoded by these Italian suffixes emerge from morphopragmatics effects of the suffixes, observed through qualitative analysis, and from factors related to the linguistic context, emerged through statistical analysis.

Third, addressing RQ3, I highlight that the pejorative value encoded by the suffixes does not appear to follow uniform patterns across different suffixes. A qualitative analysis aimed at identifying their

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<sup>2</sup> *uomo* 'man' + pejorative/diminutive suffix *-uncolo*.

<sup>3</sup> *medico* 'doctor' + pejorative/approximative suffix *-astro*.

<sup>4</sup> *poeta* 'poet' + diminutive-pejorative suffix *-accolo*.

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morphopragmatic effects therefore seems to be the most appropriate approach for understanding pejoration in Italian. Importantly, some derived forms function as hate words, showing that evaluative morphology can play a role in the construction of socially derogatory or discriminatory meaning. Eventually, even prototypical pejorative suffixes, thanks to morphopragmatics effects, can encode other values than derogation, such as affection: for example, *ragazzaccio*, meaning “bad boy” may carry a positive connotation in certain contexts.

Overall, the study offers an empirical account of Italian pejorative morphology, shedding light on how evaluative values are distributed, how they interact, and how they are pragmatically activated. The findings open pathways for cross-linguistic comparison and contribute to theoretical discussions on evaluative semantics, morphological categorization, and the morphopragmatic shaping of derogatory meaning.

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## Evaluative values that are not (so much) expressed morphologically: the case of prototypicality

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Evaluative morphology encodes deviations from a default/prototype/standard, affecting different aspects and resulting in various function types, which, according to Grandi & Körtvélyessy (2015), can be classified based on two parameters: (i) descriptive perspective (e.g., diminutive, augmentative) vs. qualitative perspective (e.g., intensifying, pejorative); (ii) deviation towards the ‘positive’ pole (e.g., augmentative, intensifying) vs. ‘negative’ pole (e.g., pejorative, diminutive) pole. Some functions, like diminution and intensification, have been extensively studied (e.g., Dressler & Merlini Barbaresi 1994; Jurafsky 1996; Grandi 2002; Rainer 2015; Napoli & Ravetto 2017), while others, like approximation or pejoration, have been less explored until recent times (e.g., Sánchez Fajardo 2022; Masini et al. 2023).

One neglected function in this picture is prototypicality and/or authenticity, which Grandi & Körtvélyessy (2015) classify as qualitative and positive, like intensification. Besides being less explored, this evaluative function remains somewhat uncertain from a definitional viewpoint, as it seems to convey full adherence to the prototypical core rather than deviation from it, thus indicating a *lack* of deviation (Masini 2025a,b, 2026).

Prototypicality and/or authenticity can be expressed morphologically in some languages. For example, in (1), it is conveyed through an intensification marker combined with a nominal base.

- (1) Kwaza (isolate; Brazil; adapted from van der Voort 2015: 608)  
*kanwa-tete* (canoe-int) ‘real canoe’

However, Grandi & Körtvélyessy’s (2015) handbook contains a handful of examples for this function, and, in general, its morphological expression through derivation or compounding seems rather uncommon in the world’s languages compared to the great variety of morphological markers for diminution/augmentation or intensification/approximation (Masini 2025b). A possible exception to this generalization is reduplication, a well-known strategy to convey prototypicality in many languages (e.g., Gimeshi et al. 2004; Mattioli & Barotto 2023). See the renowned Italian example *caffè caffè* ‘coffee coffee’ (Wierzbicka 1986), referring to “an authentic quality” (Lepschy & Lepschy 1984:103) or “the full realization of a prototype” (Grandi 2017:60). However, even in languages that display prototypicality-conveying reduplication, this strategy is little used by speakers, as recent studies based on corpus data show (Masini 2026).

In this paper, we further explore the relationship between prototypicality and its expression through morphological vs. non-morphological means, by showing that there is an asymmetry between

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prototypicality on the one hand and approximation and intensification on the other. To this end, we use a qualitative corpus-based methodology to investigate two languages that are rich in evaluative morphology, namely Italian and Russian. We show that, while they display a vast array of morphological markers for approximating (2a)-(3a) and intensifying (2b)-(3b), they barely express prototypicality morphologically (except for reduplicative patterns).

- (2) ITALIAN (from *itTenTen20*)
- a. *pseudo-intervista* ‘pseudo-interview’, *simil-estivo* ‘summer-like’, *forse-fidanzato* ‘maybe-boyfriend’
  - b. *stra-bello* ‘super-beautiful’, *ultrafreddo* ‘ultra- cold’, *fortissimo* ‘very strong’
- (3) RUSSIAN (from the *Russian National Corpus*)
- a. *psevdo-kommunisty* ‘pseudo-communists’, *okolo-literaturnyj* ‘pseudo-literary’, *lžebolel’ščik* ‘pseudo-supporter’
  - b. *preskučnyj* ‘very boring’, *naisložnejšij* ‘the very most difficult’, *ul’tralëgkij* ‘ultra-light’

Prototypicality is rather expressed through independent lexical items – like Italian *vero e proprio* ‘true, real’ or Russian *nastojščij* ‘true’ – although some marginal and creative cases were identified (4)-(5) that resemble (or mimic) the affixoid-like strategies in (2a)-(3a).

- (4) ITALIAN (from *itTenTen20*)
- Era il meglio che Boncompagni potesse aspettarsi per divertirsi, con battute finto-comprehensive e vero-cattivelle.*
- ‘It was the best Boncompagni could hope for in terms of entertainment, with fake-sympathetic and **genuinely mean** (lit. true.SG.M-mean.PL.F) jokes.’
- (5) RUSSIAN (from the *Russian National Corpus*)
- Cvetki čisto-žěltye, bez aromata.*
- ‘The flowers are **purely yellow** (lit. clean-yellow), without scent.’

Although further interlinguistic and intralinguistic (quantitative) investigations are necessary to confirm the observation that prototypicality tends to be less morphologized, the asymmetry emerging from our study already calls for an explanation, which we hypothesize to be rooted in both semantic and discourse-pragmatic dynamics.

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# Micro-typology of evaluative reduplication in the languages of the Pacific Northwest

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**Keywords:** Pacific Northwest, Reduplication, Evaluative, Typology, Areal linguistics

The Pacific Northwest is well-known as one of the most linguistically diverse areas with approximately 20 different language families plus several isolates. This particularly diverse situation has favored intense contact among people (and thus languages) which has led to one of the most famous linguistic areas. Among the linguistic properties of the Northwest Coast Sprachbund (NWCS), reduplication (RED) (“the repetition of part or all of one linguistic constituent to form a new constituent with a different function” Inkelas 2014: 169) is one of the most frequently cited both in general-typological literature (Rubino 2005) and studies specifically dedicated to NWCS languages (Thompson & Kinkade 1990; Campbell 1997; Mithun 1999; Beck 2000). Among the various functions that RED expresses in the languages of this area, evaluatives are very frequent (4), just after verbal and nominal plurality (by-far the most frequent, (1)-(3)). Despite this makes NWCS languages particularly interesting, a comprehensive investigation of evaluative RED (EVA-RED) in the NWCS is still lacking.

(1) Nuuchahnulth (Wakashan, Southern Wakashan; Davidson 2002: 31, 59, 62, 240)

- a. Additive plural: *ta:yi* ‘older brother’ > *ta:ta:yi* ‘older brothers’, *nu:k* ‘song’ > *nu:knu:k* ‘songs’;
- b. Iterative: *mitxw* ‘turn’ > *mitxmitxš* ‘turn at intervals’

(2) Takelma (Isolate, Oregon; Sapir 1990: 74, 144):

- a. Habitual: *he<sup>el</sup>-* ‘sing’ > *hele<sup>hal<sup>e</sup></sup>* ‘he used to sing’;
- b. Participant plurality: *sgō<sup>ut</sup>* ‘cut’ > *sgot!osgad-* ‘cut to pieces’.

(3) Clallam (Salishan, Coast Salish; Montler 2015: 179, 180, 284):

- a. Collective plural: *ləmətú* ‘sheep’ > *ləmləmətú* ‘bunch of sheep’;
- b. Additive plural: *ŋəqsən* ‘nose’ > *ŋiŋəqsən* ‘noses’.

(4) Evaluative functions in the NWCS

- a. Kwak’waka (Wakashan, Northern Wakashan; Kalmar 1999: 4)  
*bá~bəg<sup>w</sup>ənən* ‘small boy’ (RED~male)
- b. Upper Chehalis (Salishan, Coast Salish; Kinkade 1964: 46)  
*šʔóm* ‘cry’ > *šʔá~šʔom* ‘cry hard’
- c. Clallam (Salishan, Coast Salish; Montler 2015: 179, 180, 284)  
*sqáxaʔ* ‘dog’ > *sqáʔqáʔxaʔ* ‘little dog, puppy’  
*štáŋ* ‘walk’ > *šáʔštáŋ* ‘walk a little’

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This contribution aims at proposing a micro-typology of EVA-RED in the languages of the NWCS, paying particular attention to their functional and formal properties, their geographic distribution and possible areal spreading. To do so, a sample of 50 languages (Map 1) belonging to the NWCS has been designed. Then, an example taken from different sources (descriptive grammars, dedicated papers, etc.) for each construction (form-function pairings) identified has been extracted and tagged according to some formal and functional parameters:

- Formal:
  - type (partial, full, etc.);
  - position (initial, internal, final);
  - formal schema of the reduplicant (string and its structure);
  - lexical category of the base (noun, verb, etc.);
  - lexical category of the output (noun, verb, etc.);
- Functional:
  - specific function (diminutive, intensive, attenuative, etc.).

The dataset counts 71 constructions from 21 languages. From the functional side, the most frequent function is diminution (4c), followed by intensive (4b); while formally, partial initial RED is the leading strategy. At the areal level, EVA-RED is basically found only in the languages from the Central sub-area (Beck 2000). This is interesting since it aligns with the idea that this sub-area might possibly be the origin of RED areal spreading (Mattiola 2025a, In prep.).

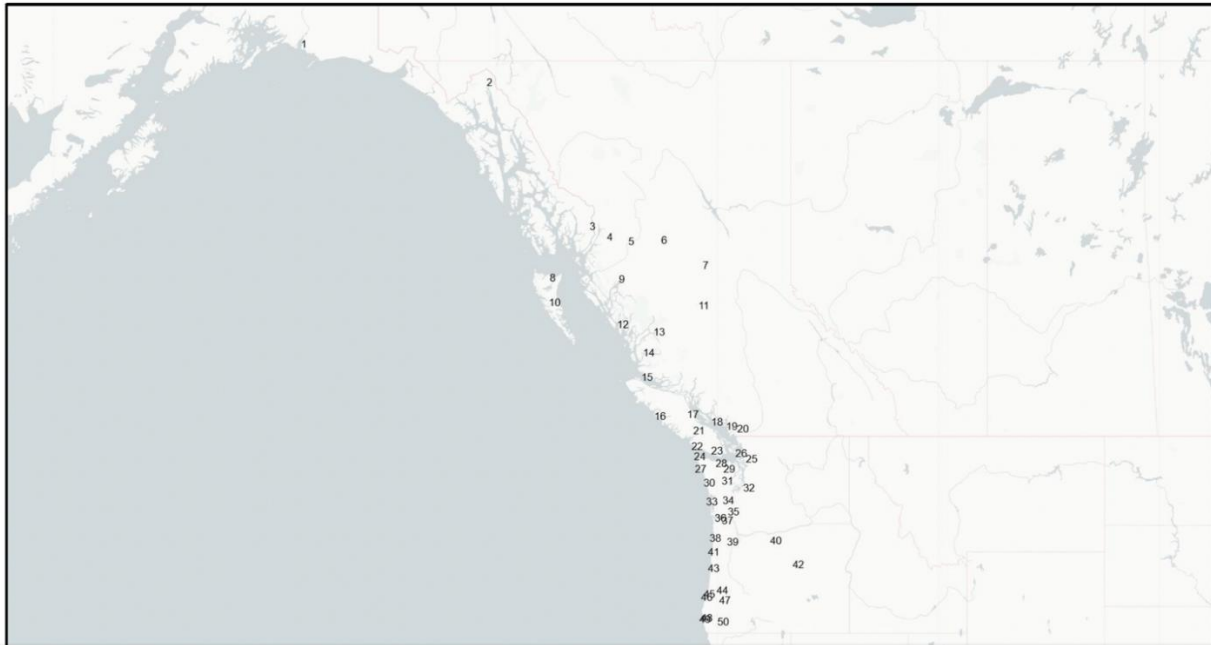
Since this contribution adopts a *discourse-sensitive* approach (Mattiola 2025b), the micro-typological investigation will be accompanied by a corpus-based analysis of Lushootseed (Salishan, Coast Salish) which displays RED expressing both diminutive and distributive values (Kye 2023). This case-study (based on glossed corpora in Zahir 2018, ca. 200 occurrences) allows to directly look at discursive behavior of RED that might ultimately help in explaining general patterns of co-expression.

Alongside the descriptive objective, the data will be compared with the micro-typological properties of (EVA-)RED in the whole Pacific Northwest area (comprising languages from neighboring cultural areas: 41 from California, 20 from Oregon Plateau, and 22 from Subarctic), but also at the general cross-linguistic level. Indeed, while often acknowledged (e.g., Kouwenberg & LaCharité 2005), a general thorough account of EVA-RED with a functional explanation for co-expression patterns with other domains (such as plurality) still lacks.

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1. Eyak	8. No. Haida	15. Kwak'wala	22. Ditidath	29. Chimakum	36. Kathlamet	43. Alsea-Yaquina
2. Tlingit	9. Haisla	16. Nuuchahnulth	23. No. Str. Salish	30. Quinalt	37. Kwalhioqua-Clatskanie	44. Yoncalla
3. Tsetsaut	10. So. Haida	17. Comox	24. Mahah	31. Twana	38. Tillamook	45. Hanis
4. Nisga'a	11. So. Carrier	18. Sechelt	25. Nooksack	32. So. Pgt. Snd. Salish	39. Tualatin-Yamhill	46. Miluk
5. Gitksan	12. So. Cstl Tsimshian	19. Squamish	26. No. Lushootseed	33. L. Chehalis	40. Galice	47. U. Umpqua
6. Witsuwit'en-Babine	13. Bella Coola	20. Halkomelem	27. Quileute	34. U. Chehalis	41. Cnt. Kalapuya	48. Tututni
7. Cnt. Carrier	14. Heiltsuk-Oowekyala	21. Pentlatch	28. Clallam	35. Cowlitz	42. Coquille	49. Siuslaw
						50. Takelma

*Map 1. The languages of the NWCS sample.*

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## Blending in Arabic: Templatic or Linear?

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This study investigates the phenomenon of blending in Arabic, a word-formation process that creates new lexical items by combining elements from two or more words. Classical Arabic blends, though relatively rare, typically follow a root-and-pattern system in which root consonants from source words are inserted into prosodic templates such as *faʿlal*. Traditional examples include *ʿabsham* < *ʿabd shams* and *jaʿfad* < *jaʿal fidāʾ*, which often function as nouns, adjectives, or names of tribal affiliation. Modern Standard Arabic shows a higher frequency of blends, particularly in media and scientific discourse, where innovative forms sometimes deviate from classical templates. These contemporary blends—such as *shankabūtiyya* (from *shabakah ʿankabūtiyyah*)—employ linear merging strategies reminiscent of English blending. Although Arabic blending is not an evaluative category in the narrow typological sense, the process is strongly driven by semantic and pragmatic pressures that parallel those observed in evaluative morphology. Classical templatic blends reflect system-internal constraints on morphological economy, while modern blends—especially those in media and scientific domains—are motivated by communicative efficiency, semantic transparency, and stylistic compactness. These motivations push speakers to adopt linear strategies that diverge from classical root-and-pattern morphology. In this way, Arabic blending provides a productive testing ground for theories of morphological structure and innovation, particularly concerning the interaction between templatic constraints and usage-driven change. The study analyses 99 existing blends (classical and modern stable forms) and 1,483 novel blends elicited through surveys and experiments with native Arabic speakers. Results reveal that classical blends predominantly follow the first-two-root-consonant rule with the *faʿlal* pattern. In contrast, modern blends show an approximately equal split between traditional templatic methods and sequential merging. The findings indicate both continuity and innovation in Arabic blending, reflecting the dynamic interaction between morphological structure and communicative pressures, and demonstrating how pragmatic motivations can reshape even canonically templatic systems.

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## Diatopic variation of intensification processes. A study on Italian dialects

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Intensification, i.e. an evaluative strategy used to express and “modulate the degree of a given entity, quality or event” (Micheli, to appear), is a largely investigated topic in linguistics nowadays (Napoli & Ravetto 2017; Rainer 2015; 2025 among others). Apart from its formal, semantic and pragmatic properties, intensification has recently attracted the attention of researchers concerning its variation, be it sociolinguistic (Beltrama 2015) or diatopic (Lesage 2024).

In this context, although several works exist concerning intensification in standard Italian (Grandi 2017; Piunno 2023: 399 for an overview), there are still no specific studies focusing on variation across Italian dialects. Our work represents thus a first attempt to fill this gap. For this purpose, we designed a linguistic questionnaire containing 12 Italian sentences that we asked participants to translate into their respective dialects. We also collected sociodemographic information and a self-evaluation of the participants’ competence in the dialects spoken. All sentences contained a high-frequency adjective modified by a different intensifying strategy, two of which were morphological (the prefix *super-* and the suffix *-issim(o)*), whereas two others were syntactic (molto ‘very’ and proprio ‘really’). Each strategy appeared in two different sentences, and four distractors, containing non-intensifying adverbs (e.g. quasi ‘almost’), were added. Two of the stimuli are presented in (1) and (2).

(1) *Questo film è lunghissimo*  
This movie be-PRES.3SG long.ELATIVE  
‘This movie is very long’

(2) *Questa stanza è molto calda*  
This room be-PRES.3SG very hot  
‘This room is very hot’

The research was conducted on-line between December 2025 and January 2026. 227 participants responded to the questionnaire, of which 219 were retained for the analysis. The data collected included dialects distributed across all the country (Figure 1).

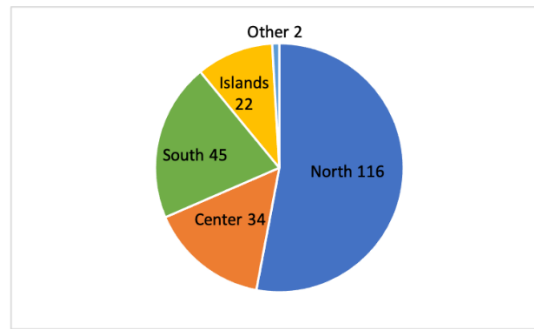


Figure 1. Geographic distribution of participants

The results show a clear preference for syntactic strategies, as adverbial intensification represents almost 62% of the total answers (Figure 2), although with differences according to the stimuli presented (Figure 3). Morphological conditions globally trigger a raise in the use of morphological strategies by subjects and suggest that morphological intensification strategies are available in Italian dialects, although at a lesser extent than syntactic ones. Focusing on morphology, while prefixation is marginal, and almost exclusively triggered by a prefixal stimulus, suffixation appears to be more vital. Interestingly, reduplication, a morphological strategy that is known to often convey intensification (Wierzbicka 1986) and was not included in the original stimuli, was also selected as a strategy in a relevant number of cases. An example corresponding to the translation of the stimulus presented in (1) by a participant from Lecce (Puglia), is provided in (3).

(3) *Stu filmi ete lengu lengu*

In particular, when speakers are not influenced by the stimulus in choosing a morphological strategy, reduplication seem to be the default morphological process, as in the case of the stimuli containing the adverb molto.

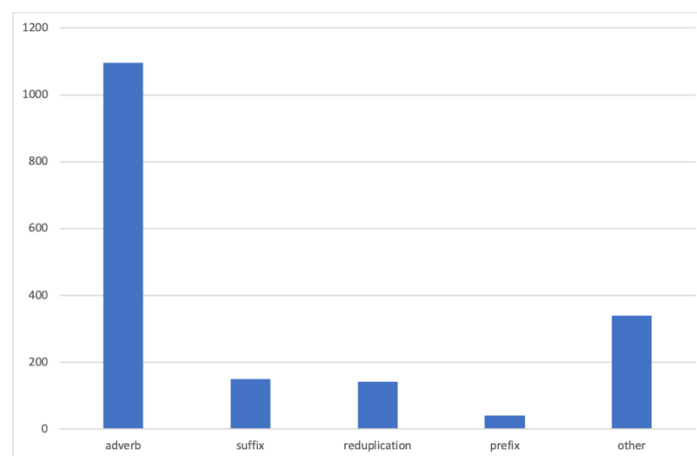


Figure 2. Global distribution of the intensification strategies chosen

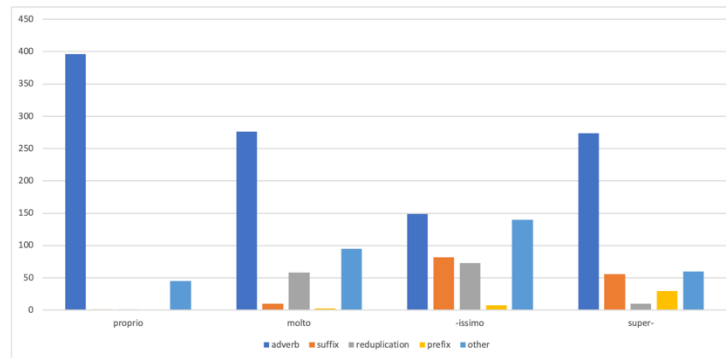


Figure 3. Distribution of intensification strategies for each condition

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# The Semantic–Pragmatic Complexity of Evaluative Verbs: An Experimental Study

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**Keywords:** *appreciative derivation; appreciative verbs; morphological awareness; semantics*

Appreciative or evaluative verbs (Fábregas, 2017; Oltra-Massuet, 2019; Rifón Sánchez, 1998, inter alios), understood as those that express one or more of the values associated with evaluative morphology through a derivational affix, have been the subject of debate both because of their morphological entity as derivatives and because of their complicated semantic interpretation. There is a wide variety of languages in which we have ample knowledge about the existence of this particular class of verbs: from Romance languages such as Spanish (Portolés Lázaro, 1999; Rifón Sánchez, 1998), Catalan (Lloret, 2015), Italian (Artusi, 2019) and French (Amiot & Stosic, 2011), to Baltic languages such as Latvian (Martín Calvo, 2019) and Slavic languages such as Serbian (Amiot & Stosic, 2015). However, in all of them, these verbal units seem to have a common denominator: on a semantic level, there is an intersection between aspectual values (intensive/attenuative; iterative/frequentative) and appreciative values (usually pejorative):

## (1) a. Spanish

bes-uqu-ea-r (< *besar*)

kiss-EV-VRB-INF

‘to kiss someone or something repeatedly’

## b. Catalan

plor-iqu-eja-r (< *plorar*)

cry-EV-VRB-INF

‘to cry weakly and without sufficient cause’

## c. Italian

cant-icchi-are (< *cantare*)

sing-EV-INF

‘to hum: to sing softly’

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#### d. French

mord-ill-er (< *mordre*)

bite-EV-INF

‘to bite something repeatedly and gently’

#### e. Latvian

raks-telēt (< *rakstīt*)

write-EV

‘to write chaotically or by stopping and starting’

#### f. Serbian

povlažiti (< *vlažiti*)

wet-EV

‘to wet lightly or superficially’

In the current bibliography on Spanish, the morphological, syntactic and semantic aspects of these deverbal derivatives are treated, in all cases, from a theoretical-descriptive perspective based on lexicographical documentation or in-depth introspection by the researcher. This is why, in this work, we have opted to implement an experimental methodology based on testing morphological awareness in first-year secondary school students in order to answer the following questions: Q1: Does any of these semantic values predominate over the others? P2: How do speakers interpret this type of verbal formation if it involves pseudo-verbs or neologistic verbs created *ad hoc*? P3: Is each of the semantic values related to specific morphemes? Based on the responses of the 24 sixth-form students, it has been confirmed that there is a clear semantic and pragmatic association in the speakers' minds with the derivational pattern typical of appreciative verbs. We emphasise the contribution of the derivational pattern because, as we have seen, this relationship has been established with invented neologisms or morphological pseudo-verbs. Overall, the data show that speakers associate the appreciative derivational pattern with the non-prototypical realisation of the action and that the pragmatic motivations are complex and varied, although the results suggest that the morphological eccentricity and creativity of the speaker (Bajo Pérez, 2020, 2023) condition the performance of these units, and that expressiveness is always a goal pursued through the use of this class of verbs.

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## Addressee- and referent-motivated morpho-semantics: case study of Kartvelian verbs

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**Keywords:** address, forms of address, verbs, verbal morphology, evaluative morphology, diminutives, verb diminutives, imperative

Looking into relatively under-researched areas within address theory and evaluative morphology, this paper presents analysis of a set of Kartvelian verb forms. Kartvelian complex verbal morphology has a unique person-coding expressed in the combination of polypersonalism, version, and TAM. Analyzing data derived from the recordings of spoken conversation between native speakers by using interactional linguistic methods, the analysis makes it possible to think about certain verbs as forms of address and/or forms of reference. Traditional scholarship on address has largely overlooked verbs, focusing instead on pronominal and nominal systems mostly within Indo-European linguistic frameworks (Clayman, 2013, 2012, 2010; Oyatade, 1995; Braun, 1988; Brown & Ford, 1961; Brown & Gilman, 1960; and others.). This paper is an attempt to fill the significant gap in literature by using novel data from Kartvelian, a language isolate, to look at morphologically coded semantic change and pragmatic motivations in a set of verb forms.

Kartvelian, a polypersonal, pro-drop language, productively encodes pragmatic information about interlocutors directly inside its verbal structure. It demonstrates two distinct mechanisms of addressee-motivated person coding in verbs pointed out by L. Brown (2020):

Lexical substitution, where speakers choose between different verb stems (e.g., *tʃa-tʃetsʰɣl-e* = “eat.PEJ.IMP.SG” vs. *tʃam-e* = “eat.IMP.SG” vs. *miitʰv-i* = “eat.HON.IMP.SG”) to express degrees of intimacy and index the position speaker holds relative to the addressee. A clear case of evaluative lexical allomorphy.

Morphological substitution, where the use of specific interfixes, such as *-tʃlaxun-* and *-brdzan-* in the verb for “to come” (e.g., *mo-tʃlaxun-di* = “come.PEJ.IMP.SG” vs. *mo-di* = “come.IMP.SG” vs. *mo-brdzan-di* = “come.HON.IMP.SG”), function as deference markers. In the use of a plural marker (e.g., *-tʰ* in *mo-brdzan-di-tʰ* = “come.HON.IMP.PL”) for singular subjects, polite referent further demonstrates an elaborate system of addressee-motivated pragmatics integrated into morphology.

The above (A) illustrates how evaluative values are grammaticalized in verb paradigms; (B) challenges the current literature that limits such phenomena to mostly east and Southeast Asian languages (L. Brown, 2015; Kim & Findlay, 2023); and (C) presents the phenomenon of double (im)politeness indexed through morphological markers (e.g., in *-brdzan-...-t* used to address a singular subject).

This is particularly clear in the ability of Kartvelian verbs to form diminutives by using specific onomatopoeic stems (e.g., *-kʰunkʰul-* in *isʰa-v-kunkul-di-tʰ* = *I/we went away.DIM* or *Let’s go.DIM*

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instead of *ts'a-v-ed-i-t<sup>h</sup>=I/we went away* or *Let's go*), indexing approximation or “smallness” and its morpho-semantic intersection with the manner of action.

The paper argues that certain verb forms are motivated by addressee and/or referent-specific pragmatics. The interplay between the obligatory and conscious morphology enables speakers to index the relative intimacy and evaluate the interlocutor by assigning them specific approximative values reflected in the pejorative, honorific, or diminutive stems inserted inside neutral verb forms. Bringing verbs to the foreground, the paper expands the scope of research on address and evaluative morphology by highlighting how morphology can be the carrier of pragmatic meaning in verbs. Kartvelian diminutive verb forms in particular present clear evidence for the morphological expression of evaluative semantics.

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# Adjectival Reduplication in Seychelles Creole: Scalar Constraints and Pragmatic Motivation

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**Keywords:** reduplication, evaluative morphology, scalarity, Seychellois Creole

Reduplication is a productive morphological process in Seychellois Creole and has primarily been described as encoding attenuation (Michaelis & Rosalie 2013). Previous work suggests that adjectival reduplication may be pragmatically motivated (Pejakovic 2023), but this link has not been systematically investigated. In particular, the semantic conditions that license adjectival reduplication and the nature of its pragmatic effects remain underexplored. This paper argues that adjectival reduplication in Seychellois Creole is semantically constrained by scalar structure but pragmatically motivated by face-saving strategies.

Informed by Henri's (2012) scalar analysis of attenuative verbal reduplication in Mauritian Creole and by a scale-based theory of gradability (Kennedy & McNally 2005), I argue that reduplication is licensed only with predicates associated with open degree scales -those lacking inherent endpoints and permitting non-maximal interpretations. Its distribution is governed by two constraints: a semantic restriction to open-scale adjectives, excluding absolute predicates linked to closed scales and a pragmatic preference for predicates expressing negative evaluative properties.

The analysis combines previously published elicitation data (Pejakovic 2023) with new expert judgments. The earlier study surveyed 25 gradable adjectives with three native-speaker experts, while the present study adds new data from three additional experts on absolute adjectives associated with closed scales. In the first stage of the study, it was found that reduplication is systematically accepted with negatively evaluated predicates (e.g. *vilenn-vilenn* 'rather ugly'), while positively evaluated adjectives (e.g. *for* 'strong') resist reduplication, despite being scalar. In the second stage, additional data on absolute adjectives associated with closed scales show strong rejection of reduplication, confirming scalar structure as a necessary semantic condition.

The findings reveal a division of labour between semantics and pragmatics: scalar structure determines the semantic availability of attenuation, while pragmatic evaluation conditions its actual use. Adjectival reduplication in Seychellois Creole thus emerges as a form of evaluative morphology that both encodes degree and mitigates face-threatening assessments.

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## Conveying multiple evaluative values through partially filled morphological constructions: A case study

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The last two decades have witnessed an upsurge of interest in the way non-morphemic fragments like *-zilla* (< *Godzilla*) recurrently attach to some (parts of) bases to create neologisms like the lexical blend *bridezilla* (Mattiello 2023). These affix-like truncated sources have been variously referred to as combining forms or splinters depending on their degree of linguistic and conceptual entrenchment, and on their productivity and frequency (Bauer, Lieber & Plag 2013, Beliaeva 2019). By contrast, the combination of particular recurrent whole bases with truncated sources remains underexplored. This proposal contributes to filling this gap by examining the partially filled construction ‘*man* + truncated base’ (e.g., *manther*) from the joint perspective of Construction Morphology (Booij 2010) and Evaluative Morphology (Grandi & Körtvélyessy 2015). To this end, a corpus of 250 examples of *man*-formatives gathered from *CogSplinter* (which includes data retrieved from sources like the *News on the Web Corpus* and from slang dictionaries) has been examined. Special attention is paid to the different evaluative values conveyed by the fixed element ‘*man*’ in the construction object of study. Notice should be taken though that the meaning of *man*-formations also depends on the semantico-pragmatic properties of the truncated base. Some blended words like *manbrarian* (< *man* + *librarian*) mainly express a denotative meaning devoid of overt evaluative connotations. By contrast, the majority of the examples in our corpus convey an evaluative, typically pejorative meaning, that arises through a metonymic reduction process whereby ‘*man*’ evokes one or more socially constructed, stereotypical attributes associated with men: (i) male disproportionate affective behavior, as in *manstruating* (*man* + *menstruating*; ‘a male experiencing a period of heightened irritability and mood instability’). Moreover, by making use of a source word that can only be predicated of women (*menstruating*), we are made explicitly aware that a comparison is being drawn between men and women. Men are depicted as displaying a more exaggerated attitude than women would in the same situation; (ii) male pretentious attitude, usually also involving patriarchal behavior, as in *manswer* (< *man* + *answer*; ‘when a man answers a question even though he lacks the relevant knowledge’ or ‘when a man answers a question in a patronizing way taking for granted that the woman lacks knowledge on the subject’); (iii) male promiscuous behavior, which is negatively regarded as a sign of manliness involving a sexist attitude, as in *manther* (< *man* + *panther*; ‘a cougar’); (iv) male carefree and fun-loving attitude, as in *manbecue* (< *man* + *barbecue*; ‘a barbecue that consists of a lot of beer and meat and in which there is a lot of yelling and loud music involved’).

Crucially, the evaluative force of these formations constitutes a central functional component of the ‘*man* + truncated source’ construction. The data provide compelling evidence that *man*-blends predominantly fulfil sarcastic and humorous functions, often serving to criticize, caricature, or socially sanction certain forms of behavior by encoding negative assessment in a compact and salient

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morphological format. In this connection, Sánchez-Fajardo (2022: 39) argues that “evaluative morphology... represents an excellent opportunity to explore the intersection of morphology, pragmatics, and cognition.”

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# When negation interacts with approximation: the example of the Italian prefix *non-*

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Despite recent interest in evaluative morphology and its range of functions, from diminution to intensification, approximation has received comparatively less attention (Masini, Norde & Van Goethem 2023). Within the domain of approximation, a more specific area emerges at the interface between approximation and negation. In particular, as part of reduplication (Masini & Di Donato 2023) or prefixation patterns (Algeo 1971 for English; Dugas 2016a, 2016b, 2017 for French), the morpheme *non-* has been shown to exhibit an approximating function. Traditionally, the prefix is associated with a contradictory meaning (see descriptive studies on the English prefixation system as Jespersen 1917; Zimmer 1964; Marchand 1969; Allen 1978; Hamawand 2009). Nonetheless, its approximative value would be justified by the role of negation markers as ‘degree modifiers’ (Bolinger 1972; Paradis & Willners 2013).

This presentation brings the Italian negative prefix *non-* as a case of interaction between negation and approximation, based on corpus-data. As Iacobini (2004) describes, *non-* is the only prefix specialized in expressing contradiction. However, its meaning may shift towards approximation when occurring with concrete nouns that indicate materials (*metallo* ‘metal’ > *non-metallo* ‘non-metal’) and with more abstract nouns (*storia* ‘story’ > *non-storia* ‘non-story’): in these cases, it forms a derivative that is deprived of some of the prototypical features of the base noun. In addition, Mattiello (2009), following a morphopragmatic approach (Merlini Barbaresi & Dressler 2020) shows that the prefix generates pragmatic effects related to mitigation (e.g. *non-intelligence* sounds less harsh than *stupidity*).

To quantitatively assess the approximating nature of *non-*, naturally occurring data were extracted from the 2021 version of CORIS (Favretti, Tamburini & De Santis 2002)<sup>5</sup>. The query targeted hyphenated forms of [*non* - [Y]<sub>X</sub>]<sub>X</sub>, to maximize the chance of extracting relevant data. After manual revision, the resulting dataset (see Table 1) was annotated according to morphological parameters (derivational category) and semantic parameters (ontological class of the base and function of the prefix).

	<b>Dataset</b>	<b><i>non</i>-N</b>	<b><i>non</i>-Adj</b>
<b>Tokens</b>	2152	1382	770
<b>Types</b>	830	558	272

Table 1: Dataset size.

The analysis revealed a significant proportion of *non-* occurrences expressing a non-prototypicality value (e.g. *Il corpo delle persone anoressiche è un non-corpo* ‘The body of anorexic people is a non-

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<sup>5</sup> <https://corpora.ficlit.unibo.it/TCORIS/>

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body’). These results help situate the Italian prefix *non-* within broader research on approximating (pseudo-)prefixes, raising the question of whether these patterns are in competition (Masini & Micheli 2020; Micheli 2023). Moreover, the data are discussed in relation to psycholinguistic research on negation (Giora et al. 2005; Giora 2006) and within a morphopragmatic framework following Mattiello’s analysis. The study thus provides a first corpus-based dataset of approximative *non-X* formations, which may serve as a foundation for future research on the interaction between negation and approximation.

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## Intensification and offensiveness in Modern Greek taboo nouns

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**Keywords:** *intensification, offensiveness, prefix cumulation, taboo nouns, Modern Greek*

In the present study, we examine the degree of offensiveness resulting from the cumulation of intensifying prefixes in Modern Greek (hereafter ModGr) taboo nouns. Taboo words are emotionally arousing and negatively valenced ‘bad’ words (Jay 2018: 54), which show different degrees of offensiveness (Janschewitz 2008). Offensiveness refers to how offensive or annoying an interlocutor considers a word (Janschewitz 2008: 1067, 1070-1071; Jay & Janschewitz 2008: 269). Intensification can be defined as an increase in quantity or quality (‘very/extremely X’) (Dressler & Merlini Barbaresi 1994: 416). Cross-linguistically, languages use several strategies for the expression of intensification in both general and slang vocabulary (Grandi & Körtvélyessy 2015: 11-12), such as prefixation, e.g., *hiper-pendejo* INT-wanker ‘extreme wanker’ in Spanish, and suffixation, e.g., *stronz-one* jerk-INT ‘extreme jerk’ in Italian.

In ModGr taboo words, the degree of offensiveness has already been investigated with respect to the base and/or the use of a single affix (Christopoulou 2016; Christopoulou et al. 2022; Xydopoulos & Christopoulou 2021), e.g., *kara-putána* INT-whore ‘extreme whore’ vs *putána* ‘whore’. A notable phenomenon in taboo vocabulary is the cumulation of intensifying prefixes, e.g., *arxi-kara-kathiki* INT-INT-bastard ‘extreme bastard’ (Sissamperi 2025). In Modern Greek, we identify the following patterns for the intensification of ModGr taboo nouns: (a) the cumulation of two, e.g., *arxi-kara-malákas* INT-INT-wanker ‘extreme wanker’, or three different prefixes, e.g., *kara-arxi-palio-malákas* INT-INT-INT.PEJ-wanker ‘extreme wanker’, and (b) the repetition of the same prefix two or three times, e.g., *kara-kara-malákas* INT-INT-wanker ‘extreme wanker’, *kara-kara-kara-malákas* INT-INT-INT-wanker ‘extreme wanker’ (Sissamperi 2025).

In this study, we focus on prefixes that can be used for intensification, although several strategies can be used. We assume that the different patterns of intensification differ with respect to their offensiveness. Thus, the morphological formations are positioned along a continuum of offensiveness, with those on the left indicating a lower degree of offensiveness that gradually increases toward the right. We also examine the morphological and semantic features of intensifying prefixes in ModGr taboo nouns, as these can be related to the degree of offensiveness. A major semantic feature that plays a role is the classification between: (a) *bona fide* intensifiers, i.e., prefixes inherently and consistently denoting intensification (cf., among others, Efthymiou 2015), e.g., *arxi-*, *tri(s)-*, and (b) pejorative intensifiers (cf., among others, Kallergi et al. 2023; Mattiello & Sánchez Fajardo 2025; Sánchez Fajardo 2022), e.g., *palio-*.

We investigate whether the position of cumulation patterns along the continuum of offensiveness is influenced by: (a) the type of cumulation (combination of different prefixes or repetition of the same prefix); (b) the type of prefix (*bona fide* or pejorative prefix); (c) the number of prefixes. Based on similar surveys (cf., among others, Janschewitz 2008; Micheli & Verdelli 2025), we designed a questionnaire consisting of seven sections and twenty-one questions to address the above research questions. The first section collects demographic data (e.g., gender). The following six

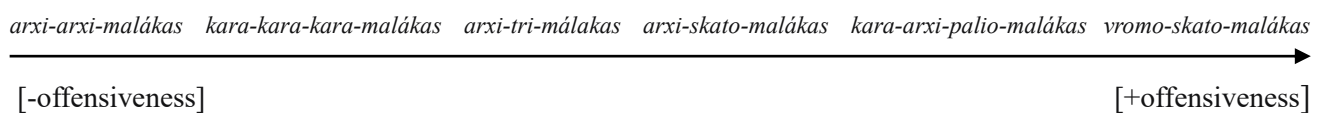
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sections include closed-ended questions where participants compare word forms and rank them by perceived offensiveness, accompanied by brief justifications. The final section asks which factors make a word more offensive (e.g., the number or type of prefixes). After the pilot study was conducted with thirty-six participants, the final version of the questionnaire was administered to 150 undergraduate students in the Department of Philology at the University of Patras.

Both the pilot study and the preliminary findings show that the cumulation patterns vary in their degree of offensiveness. Specifically, our findings show that taboo nouns formed through the repetition of two or three identical *bona fide* intensifiers (e.g., *arxi-arxi-*) are rated as less offensive and convey a mocking or playful nuance. Thus, they are positioned toward the lower end of the continuum. Conversely, formations containing two pejorative intensifiers (e.g., *vromo-skato-*) elicit a high degree of offensiveness and are positioned toward the right end of the continuum. Finally, the degree of offensiveness does not seem to be significantly affected by the number of prefixes (see Figure 1).

Overall, this study bridges the gap between the analysis of morphological formations with the cumulation of intensifying prefixes, the semantic value of these prefixes, and the pragmatic motivation of the use of different patterns to express offensiveness. Our findings may lay the groundwork for future cross-linguistic analysis.

**Figure 1:** Continuum of offensiveness



**Abbreviations:** INT = intensifier, PEJ = pejorative

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# How do simulative morphological constructions differ in their semantic functions? A corpus-based study of *-esque*, *-ish*, *-like* and *-oid* with proper names in English

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**Keywords:** *simulative suffixes, evaluation, semantic functions, proper names*

In evaluative morphology, simulative elements belong to the domain of approximation as their approximative reading is directly related to the simulative one glossed as ‘like/as’, ‘seem/resemble’ or ‘similar/alike’ (Masini et al. 2023: 9). The reading of ‘approximating some qualities’ (but not being exactly the same) is ascribed to four simulative suffixes *-esque*, *-ish*, *-like* and *-oid* in English (Bauer et al. 2013: 313). This group of suffixes shows no apparent difference in their semantics, and therefore, doublets and triplets are possible (Bauer et al. 2013). Being highly productive, they are used even together competing in the same contexts (Eitelmann & Haumann 2023; Šuković 2025).

The attested corpus examples with proper nouns and names and simulative suffixes suggest that four morphological constructions [ProperN-*esque*]<sub>A</sub>, [ProperN-*ish*]<sub>A</sub>, [ProperN-*like*]<sub>A</sub> and [ProperN-*oid*]<sub>A</sub> share the same semantic specification ‘similar to/resembling x’ (Šuković 2025: 111). In all four cases, resemblance is conceptualized via the LINK image schema (Johnson 1987) i.e. there is a non-physical link between two objects which share at least one similar feature. If there are more similar features between the objects in extra-linguistic reality, multiple contextual readings occur e.g. *Oprah-like moment and apology*, *Oprah-like role model and guru*, *Oprah-like stroll down*, *Oprah-like coffee klatch* etc. (Šuković 2025: 99).

Although the four simulative morphological constructions share the same semantics, form doublets and triplets, show a high degree of productivity and may have multiple contextual readings, the choice of the simulative suffix with proper names is not random. As this presentation demonstrates, it is based on evaluative semantic functions (Grandi & Körtvelyessy 2015). Drawing on examples with proper names from two large corpora, the *Corpus of Contemporary American English* (COCA, Davies 2008) and *News on the Web* (NOW, Davies 2008), this study adopts a qualitative approach to simulative suffixes in English and it shows that there is a cline in evaluation when speakers link two objects based on their similarity. Novel constructs with proper names are created depending on the position of the simulative suffix along the evaluative cline with the semantic primitives GOOD and BAD at its ends. The suffix *-esque* is placed at the positive end indicating its semantic connection to the French borrowing *picturesque* (Marchand 1969: 286). Despite its semantically diverse usages, the suffix *-ish* shows consistency in associative similarity sense with proper names (Eitelmann et al. 2020) as well as its interchangeability with *-esque* (Adams 2001). The suffix *-like* is neutral and takes a central position, which is attributed to the adverbial *like* “expressing sameness of manner” (Haspelmath & Buchholz 1998: 278). The suffix *-oid* is found central with scientific terms and at the negative end if its derivatives are modeled on the Greek word *android* implying a lack of reasoning or emotions like in robots (Šuković 2024: 85). Apart from illustrating the existence of a cline in simulative evaluation, we

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also compare the attested doublets and triplets with proper names in order to determine what exactly creates a special pragmatic effect: semantic functions, contextual situations, or interaction of the two.

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# A saucepan for democracy: A corpus-based study of Romanian pejorative blends

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**Keywords:** *lexical blending, pejoration, evaluative blends, Romanian morphology, nonce word*

The current study presents a corpus-based analysis of pejorative Romanian blends. Pejoration, understood as a universal evaluative category conveying speaker's negative stance, is encoded through a variety of linguistic expressions (Grandi & Körtvélyessy 2015; Finkbeiner, Meibauer & Wiese 2016). Among these, a powerful, albeit marginal device is lexical blending, i.e. the process of coining new words out of two (or more) bases, involving some phonological loss (Renner 2023; e.g. *brunch* < *breakfast* + *lunch*). While blends are typically assumed to encode a combination of their source-words' meanings (Bat-El 2006, Ronneberger-Sibold 2006, Mattiello 2013, a.o.), and have been described as the preferred morphological process in naming hybrid entities in English (Renner 2020), their evaluative potential has often been overlooked. Moreover, some approaches (Ralli & Xydopoulos 2012) restrict blending to semantically compositional formations and exclude jocular creations functioning as phonological paronyms of a base-word (e.g. Gr. *melitsúla* < *melisúla* 'tiny bee' + *tsúla* 'slut'). We argue that such formations are best analysed as evaluative blends, as they do not name a hybrid object, but rather fulfil pragmatic functions by conveying the speaker's stance. In political discourse and journalese, nonce blends are weaponized and used to perform out-group exclusion, often targeting proper names (Cacchiani & Le Donne 2025; Lalić-Krstin 2025).

Our qualitative analysis draws data from RoTenTen21, a 2.7 billion-word web corpus part of the TenTen family (Jakubiček et al. 2013). The corpus reveals three main pejorative blending patterns.

First, pejoration is performed by blending a base with a taboo word. 76 formations appear as blends of Ro. *pizdă* '(slang) vulva', yielding primarily derogatory names for female professionals, e.g. *ziarizdă* '(offensive) female journalist' < *ziaristă* 'female journalist', *piarizdă* '(offensive) female PR agent' < *piaristă* 'female PR agent'. Masculine back-formations (e.g. *analizd* '(offensive) male analyst' < *analist* 'male analyst'), and coinages from inanimate bases (e.g. *accizdă* '(pejorative) excise' < *acciză* 'excise') suggest that *-izdă* is gaining morphemehood (Vasileanu & Niculescu-Gorpin 2025).

Secondly, an explicitly pejorative, but not taboo, word is blended with a base in order to convey negative stance, e.g. *idiotarist* '(offensive) journalist' < *idiot* 'idiot' + *ziarist* 'journalist', *tembelizor* '(pejorative) TV' < *tembel* 'stupid' + *televizor* 'TV'. This strategy is attested cross-linguistically, e.g. in Spanish *telebobela* 'silly soap opera' < *telenovela* 'soap opera' + *boba* 'silly' (Merlini Barbaresi 2015: 40).

The third pattern employs apparently neutral words to pejorate the base. For instance, Ro. *cratiță* 'saucepan' yields ironic blends such as *democratiță* '(pejorative) democracy' < *democrație* 'democracy', *tehnocratiță* '(pejorative) technocrat' < *tehnocrat* 'technocrat', catalysed by phonetic similarity with the final combining form *-crație* 'cracy'. In these cases, speakers express disregard

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towards political concepts usually held in high esteem through association with a trivial household object.

Although the cited examples are occasionalisms, with low token frequency, they attest to a systematic use of lexical blending to express negative stance. When not referentially motivated, lexical blending exploits phonological similarity, taboo language and semantic incongruity to convey negative evaluation in an economic and expressive fashion.

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