

Dissecting Morphological Theory 3: Diminutivization, Allomorphy and the Architecture of Grammar

Workshop to be held in conjunction with the *20th International Morphology Meeting* Budapest, 1-4 September 2022, <http://www.nytud.hu/imm20/>

Workshop website: <https://sites.google.com/view/morphologytheories-diminutives>

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This workshop is the third of a series of workshops on diminutive morphology and its implications for morphological theory. The workshops are held in conjunction with different international conferences: <https://sites.google.com/view/morphologytheories-diminutives>.

Diminutive morphology presents a number of challenges to morphological theory and various issues have been discussed extensively: whether diminutivization is derivation or inflection (Dressler 1989; Scalise 1988; Stump 1993; Manova 2011; Grandi & Körtvélyessy 2015); are diminutive suffixes heads and/or modifiers (Wiltschko and Steriopolo 2007; Steriopolo 2009, 2015, 2016; Gouskova & Bobaljik, to appear); do they attach “low” or “high” in the syntactic tree (De Belder et al. 2014; Cinque 2015); which meanings are associated with diminutive morphology (Dressler & Merlini Barbaresi 1994; Jurafsky 1996) and so on. Nevertheless, there are still issues that have remained unaddressed:

- 1) Why do some languages have large sets of diminutive affixes, while others have very limited sets?
- 2) What is a diminutive allomorph? (Should allomorphs have the same semantic-pragmatic function, e.g. could they have different readings, either positive or negative, depending on the situation?)

Should allomorphs be associated with the same inflection class? Should allomorphs have the same syntactic function: are they either heads or modifiers or could they be both; could they attach at different “heights” in the syntactic tree, resulting in “high” vs. “low” allomorphs?)

- 3) How does allomorph selection take place in diminutivization? (Is it based on semantics, on form, on syntactic structure, on linearization, or on extragrammatical information?)
- 4) Are gender and inflection class encoded in the same way in diminutive and non-diminutive nouns? (If diminutive affixes impose gender and inflection class, what does this mean for our understanding of the morphology-syntax interface?)
- 5) What architecture of grammar best captures the peculiarities of diminutive morphology?
 - (a) Phonology after morphology, i.e. morphologically conditioned phonology (and consequently phonology-free syntax)
 - (b) Phonology before morphology, i.e. phonologically conditioned morphology (and maybe also syntax)
 - (c) A mixture of (a) and (b).

Human languages can be broadly divided into diminutive-rich and diminutive-poor. Intriguingly, even some of the diminutive-poor languages (e.g. English is of this type) have more than one diminutive affix. As can be expected, diminutive-rich languages (e.g. Slavic and Romance languages) possess extensive sets of diminutive affixes. To illustrate, Bulgarian (Slavic) uses the following suffixes for derivation of diminutive nouns:

- (1) Nominal diminutive suffixes in Bulgarian (examples in Manova & Winternitz 2011)
-ec, -l(e), -č(e), -k(a), -ic(a), -ičk(a), -čic(a), -c(e), -ic(e), -enc(e), -(e)

With respect to (1), the following research questions arise. First, why does a language need a (large) set of diminutive affixes? And second, are all diminutive affixes phonological and suppletive variants (i.e. allomorphs) or is there an additional motivation for them, e.g. structural, semantic, cognitive, pragmatic, psycholinguistic, sociolinguistic?

Affix allomorphy

In linguistic literature, affix allomorphs are usually defined as variants conditioned by the bases to which they attach. They express the same meaning and occur in complementary distribution. Such definitions do not mention the feature-set specification of allomorphs or their position in the syntactic tree. However, a diminutive variant is not always conditioned by the base, and diminutive affixes are not necessarily in complementary distribution, as shown in (2).

- (2) No conditioning by the base, *Hund* ‘dog’ (m.) (German)
 - a. *Hünd-chen* (n.), *Hund-chen* (n.)
 - b. *Hünd-ilein* (n.), *Hund-ilein* (n.)
 - c. *Hünd-lein* (n.)
 - d. *Hund-erl* (n.)
 - e. *Hund-ili* (n.)
 - f. *Hund-i* (n.)

In (2a) and (2c), both suffixes *-chen* and *-lein* derive Standard German diminutives. Overall, *-chen* forms are more frequent, while *-lein* diminutives appear old-fashioned and more typical of literary texts. Nevertheless, in some cases *-lein* is used instead of *-chen*, due to phonological restrictions, as in (3).

- (3) Phonologically conditioned allomorphy: *-chen* vs *-lein* (German)
 - a. *Buch* (n.) ‘book’ → **Büch-chen*, *Büch-lein* (n.) (**chch*)
 - b. *Ball* (m.) ‘ball’ → *Bäll-chen* (n.), **Bäll-lein* (**ll*)

Allomorph selection can also be conditioned by style and register. For example, *Hund-ilein* in (2b), *Hund-ili* in (2e) and *Hund-i* in (2f) are all child-centered forms. Allomorphy can also be conditioned by sociolinguistic factors, e.g. a dialectal use, as in (2d), *Hund-erl* is used in Bavarian dialects.

Additionally, if a language has a rich set of diminutive affixes, some of them may be gender-preserving, while others may be gender-changing, as shown in (4) for Bulgarian. Are *-ec* and *-č(e)* allomorphs of the same diminutive suffix?

- (4) Gender-preserving vs gender-changing diminutive suffixes (Bulgarian)
- a. *glas* (m.) 'voice' → *glas-ec* (m.) 'light voice'
 - b. *glas* (m.) 'voice' → *glas-č(e)* (n.) 'light voice'

The issue of diminutive affix allomorphy has been extensively discussed for Russian diminutive nouns. For example, Gouskova and Bobaljik (to appear), contra Bonet & Harbour (2012) for other languages, maintain that the Russian suffix *-onok* has two variants: the gender- & inflection-class-changing *-onok* deriving baby diminutives and the gender-preserving inflection-class-changing *-onk(a)*, an evaluative suffix with a dismissive/affectionate flavor. They classify *-onok* as a head and *-onk(a)* as a modifier. By contrast, Steriopolo (2009) assigns the status of a syntactic head to all inflection-class-changing diminutive suffixes. Thus, a question arises: Could allomorphs differ in syntactic function / be associated with different sets of morphosyntactic features in theories that do not use the head-modifier distinction?

How should all this be modeled theoretically?

Current morphology is dominated by realizational theories such as Distributed Morphology (DM, Halle & Marantz 1993, Bobaljik 2017, among others) and Paradigm Function Morphology (PFM, Stump 2001, 2016, among others). Such theories treat meaning and form separately, i.e. they assume that morphological derivation first happens at an abstract level (semantics associated with syntactic terminal nodes in DM; content paradigms in PFM) and only afterwards, phonological realizations (vocabulary items) are inserted in DM; forms are linked to content in PFM. In other words, in realizational theories, phonology is postponed. Thus, a question arises: How does a diminutive meaning match its phonological realization, especially when different realizations that seem neither phonologically nor morphologically conditioned are available and/or when there are gaps in the derivational paradigm, such as the ones in (5)?

- (5) Derivational paradigm involving diminutive nouns and verbs (German)
- a. *tanzen/ Tanz* 'to/ dance' → *Tänzchen, Tänzelein, Tanzerl, ?Tänzerl, ?Tänzel*, dim. verb: *tänzeln*
 - b. *buchen/ Buch* 'to/ book' → **Büchchen (*chch), Büchlein, Bücherl, Büchel*, dim. verb: **bücheln*
 - c. *kochen/ Koch* 'to/ cook' → **Köchchen (*chch), ?Köchlein*, dim. verb: *köcheln*
(? - rather potential than actual)

It is important to point out that theories that operate with classical morphemes (e.g. Natural Morphology (Dressler et al. 1987) and Minimalist Morphology (Wunderlich 1996)), i.e. theories that recognize the morpheme as the smallest unit of language structure relating meaning and form have a similar problem with data such as these in (5), i.e. the question remains: How do speakers select a diminutive morpheme?

A diminutive morpheme may impose gender and inflection-class, as in (4) and (6). However, these are different types of features: gender determines agreement classes, while an inflection class is "a set of lexemes whose members each select the same set of inflectional realizations" (Aronoff 1994: 64). Inflection class information is not syntactically motivated but diacritic and it is also not syntactically active at the level of Logical Form (Alexiadou 2004).

- (6) The diminutive suffix **-chen** imposes neuter gender and zero plural (German)
- [+ gender change, + inflection class change]
der Ball m. sg. ‘ball’, *die Bälle* m. pl. (-e + umlaut) → *das Bäll-chen* n. sg., *die Bäll-chen* n. zero pl.
 - [+ gender change, – inflection class change]
der Beutel m. sg. ‘bag, pouch’, *die Beutel* m. zero pl. → *das Beutel-chen* n. sg., *die Beutel-chen* n. zero pl.
 - [– gender change, + inflection class change]
das Schiff n. sg. ‘ship’, *die Schiffe* n. pl. (-e) → *das Schiff-chen* n. sg., *die Schiff-chen* n. zero pl.
- Is the gender feature encoded in the diminutive morpheme? If yes, what does this mean for a-morphous theories of morphology (PFM; Word-Based Morphology (WBM), Blevins 2006; Construction Morphology, Booij 2010) where one cannot encode features in morphemes and for syntax-based theories (with abstract morphemes) such as DM, Nanosyntax (Caha 2020) and Cartography (Cinque & Rizzi 2015)? The latter two are one-feature-one-head and do not allow feature clustering (feature clustering is possible in DM).
 - Inflection classes are particularly prominent in WBM and PFM. Thus, is inflection-class information in diminutives encoded at the level of the word (WBM), at the level of the stem (PFM) or at the level of the morpheme (DM)? In generative grammar, some scholars consider inflection class a syntactic feature (Steriopo 2017, Kučerová 2018), while others see it as a post-syntactic phenomenon (Alexiadou & Müller 2008, Embick 2010, Kramer 2015). We especially encourage proposals addressing the relationship between diminutivization and inflection class from both a cross-linguistic and a language-specific perspective.
 - Is a diminutive suffix listed in the mental lexicon (and inserted, in the sense of vocabulary insertion) as a complex piece of structure together with the inflection it imposes, that is, as a fixed two-suffix combination (= bigram), cf. Manova & Knell (2021)?

We invite papers that tackle any aspect of diminutive allomorphy within any linguistic theory, including papers on the diachronic development of allomorphy in diminutive morphology. Contributions that analyze not only selected affixes but also complete diminutive systems and/or relate their findings to the architecture of grammar are particularly welcome.

Abstract submission

2-page anonymous abstracts for 20-minute presentations (plus 10 minutes for discussion) should be submitted via EasyChair: <https://easychair.org/conferences/?conf=dmt3>. Submissions can be modified in EasyChair until 16 February 2022 (click on “View” and then select the necessary update option).

Submission of the same abstract to both the workshop and the IMM20 main session is not allowed. IMM20 submissions are limited to one individual and one joint abstract (or two joint ones) per person. For additional information on abstract submission for the main session, check the IMM20 website: <http://www.nytud.hu/imm20/>.

Important dates

Abstract submission deadline: ~~15 January 2022~~ **16 February 2022**

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