ON INFLECTIONAL AND DERIVATIONAL DIMINUTIVES

1. OUTLINE:
This talk argues for two different positions for diminutives. The first one is in the inflectional domain of the noun, between nP and NumP/DivP. The second one directly merges with the root. Therefore, it can occur below xP (with xP in the sense of Marantz 2001), for example below nP and vP. The two positions differ with respect to i) productivity; ii) compositionality of meaning; and iii) strategy of word-formation. These effects are defined in terms of syntactic structure.

2. MAIN DATA:
In Italian, morphemes such as –ino and –etto can be used both to diminutivize a noun ((1), labeled Dimsize) and to derive a new lexeme ((2), labeled Dimlex). Dimsize always gives predictable meanings, viz. smallness. Therefore, it is odd to combine it with an augmentative (3).

(1) nas-ino
(2) pan-ino
(3) *? nas-in-one
  ‘little nose’
  ‘sandwich’

Furthermore, it is completely productive; any noun may have a diminutive. In contrast, Dimlex yields unpredictable or specific meanings and shows many lexical gaps. It does not qualify an independent noun, nor does it necessarily imply small size. This is shown by its compatibility with augmentatives (4). Moreover, Dimsize and Dimlex can occur simultaneously (5).

(4) pan-in-etto
(5) *? pan-in-etto
  ‘big sandwich’
  ‘small sandwich’

3. PROPOSAL:
We propose the structure in (6) for pan-in-etto ‘small sandwich’.

(6) \[\text{NumP} \circ [\text{SizeP} \text{-ett}\text{-} \text{nP} \circ [\text{LexP} \text{-in} [\sqrt{\text{pan}]}]]\]

This structure involves the initial merger of a root with a projection LexP, which harbors bound affixes such as Dimlex (-in- in this case). This merger yields meaningful, possibly non-compositional items. LexP may then merge with different xP’s, which in turn can be modified by inflectional material. In the case of a nominal structure (as in (6)), these inflections include Size (in this case -ett- Dimsize, but we assume Augsize is inserted at this level, too) and/or Number (singular -o in (6)).

4. PREDICTIONS:
The structure in (6) makes the following cross-linguistic predictions: i) there can be languages that, unlike Italian, formally distinguish between the two types of diminutives; ii) as in examples (4) and (5), both positions can be filled at the same time in other languages; and iii) the material in LexP could be oblivious to the category above it, whereas the material in SizeP is only licensed as nominal inflection.

Prediction 1: Two different realizations of diminutives
There are at least two strategies of diminutive formation in Modern Hebrew: one is through concatenation of –on (Concat.Dim in (7)), and the other is templatic reduplication (Temp.Dim in (7)).

(7) \[\text{Temp.Dim}_{\text{LEX}} \circ \text{Noun} \circ \text{Concat.Dim}_{\text{SIZE}}\]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Noun</th>
<th>Temp.Dim_{LEX}</th>
<th>Concat.Dim_{SIZE}</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. xazir ‘pig’</td>
<td>xazarzir ‘piglet’</td>
<td>xazir-on ‘small pig’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. bacal ‘onion’</td>
<td>bcalcal ‘small type of onion’</td>
<td>bcalon-on ‘small onion’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. xamor ‘donkey’</td>
<td>*xamarmor</td>
<td>xamor-on ‘small donkey’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The reduplicated diminutive is lexical: it applies to a closed group of roots (‘pig’ and ‘onion’, but not ‘donkey’) and may have a specific interpretation. This behaviour is typical of Lexical material, which we position in LexP. We thus expect this strategy to reflect direct merger.
with the root. Indeed, it is assumed that templaticity results from direct merger of a template morpheme with the root.

In contrast, the suffix -on is always compositionally diminutive (unlike Italian -in-) and is fully productive (=has no lexical gaps). Given these properties, it clearly realizes SizeP (rather than LexP); it is in the noun’s inflectional domain.

We thus observe that Modern Hebrew, like Italian, has two positions for diminutive formation: LexP and SizeP. These two positions are realized using two radically different morphological strategies: concatenation and templatic reduplication. Size-related concatenation is excluded from LexP in Modern Hebrew, and SizeP cannot be realized templatically.

**Prediction 2: The two diminutives can co-occur.**

We have shown that the two positions can be realized simultaneously for Italian (cf. (4-5) above); we predict this will be so for Modern Hebrew as well. Indeed, xazarzir-on ‘small piglet’, which uses both strategies simultaneously, is perfectly licit.

**Prediction 3: LexP can be the base for either nP or vP; SizeP only modifies nP**

We predict that the structure \([_{\text{LexP}} \dim. \sqrt{\mathbf{v}}]\) could serve as the base for either nouns or verbs in Italian. This is indeed the case. We have seen that -ett- is diminutive in (5) above. In (8b), it is used non-compositionally with the root \(\sqrt{\mathbf{fischi}}\). The verb in (8c) includes both \(\sqrt{\mathbf{fischi}}\) and -ett-, but it cannot be derived from the noun, as it is not restricted by the latter’s meaning.

\[
\begin{align*}
(8) \quad a. \ fisci-o & \quad \text{‘a whistle (the sound)} \\
   b. \ fisci-ett-o & \quad \text{‘a whistle (the object used e.g. by referees in football)} \\
   c. \ fisci-ett-are & \quad \text{‘to emit short whistles repeatedly (not necessarily with a fischietto)‘}
\end{align*}
\]

Both the noun and the verb must be viewed as derived from \([_{\text{LexP}}\dim. \sqrt{\mathbf{v}}]\), just like the diminutive verb and noun in Hebrew. (This is the same argument used in the famous (e.g. Marantz 2001) opposition of to hammer (from \(\sqrt{\mathbf{v}}\)hammer) vs. to tape (from the noun tape); only the latter verb contains the meaning of the corresponding noun. The difference is that here even morphologically complex structures (at the proposed LexP level) can be pre-categorical.

5. **SUMMARY: Two diminutives, same cross-linguistic structure**

The two languages differ only in one respect: Modern Hebrew exhibits different morphological strategies in the different positions, whereas Italian uses the same strategy of concatenation in both. This difference follows from the discontinuous character of roots in Semitic languages; the structure, however, is universal. In both languages, meaning is predictable beyond nP. Time permitting, we will show that at least certain aspects of form, as shown by the two morphological strategies of Modern Hebrew, are also predictable beyond nP. Furthermore, having established the existence of the LexP position, the question is raised as to the exact status of the items that realize LexP. Unlike SizeP, LexP may be occupied by morphemes other than diminutives/augmentatives (such as the derivational Italian suffix -egg- in (9)); it is thus not the diminutive nature of the morpheme that allows it to realize LexP.

\[
\begin{align*}
(9) \quad a. \ bors-a & \quad \text{‘handbag’} \\
   b. \ borse-ggi-o & \quad \text{‘the act of mugging’} \\
   c. \ borse-ggi-are & \quad \text{‘to mug (not necessarily a borsa)‘}
\end{align*}
\]

Moreover, we will argue that final vowels such as -o in (8a) and (9a) are to be accounted for by LexP: a more general characterization of LexP (following Acquaviva’s (2008) treatment of L-nodes) is advanced as a closing remark.

**References**


Borer, Hagit. (2005) In name only: Oxford: OUP.


