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# **A preliminary typology of emotional connotations in morphological diminutives and augmentatives**

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## **Abstract**

This article presents a preliminary typology of emotional connotations in evaluative morphology, starting with diminutives and augmentatives. I inventory the emotional meanings and connotations found in a sample of nineteen languages for diminutives, and nine languages plus a few additional regional studies for augmentatives. Given the small size of the samples, this typology can only remain preliminary, but it does highlight a number of points. Across languages and continents, diminutives can express positive emotions such as compassion, love and admiration, as well as negative emotions such as contempt. The emotional connotations of augmentatives are more limited, but do display a blend of positive and negative emotions including contempt and repulsion, admiration and respect, endearment and compassion. Diminutives and augmentatives do not contrast sharply with respect to emotional valence (positive or negative), but while diminutives are anchored in intimacy, the emotions conveyed by augmentatives more often relate to broader social contexts.

**Key words:** evaluative morphology, diminutive, augmentative, expressivity, emotions

## **1. Introduction**

This article presents a preliminary typology of emotional connotations in evaluative morphology, starting with the emotional connotations of diminutive and augmentative morphological devices. I show that although diminutives display a well-acknowledged cross-linguistic tendency to express child-related emotions, in many languages diminutives can also express “deeper” emotions. Diminutives seem to favor positive emotions such as compassion, love and admiration, but they can also express negative emotions, such as contempt. As for augmentatives, their emotional extensions are somewhat more limited, but they do display a blend of positive and negative emotional connotations including contempt and repulsion, admiration and respect, endearment and compassion. Diminutives and augmentatives do not contrast sharply with respect to emotional valence (positive or negative), but while diminutives are anchored in intimacy, the emotions conveyed by augmentatives more often relate to a broader social context.

### **1.1 Defining diminutives and augmentatives**

Grandi & Körtvélyessy (2015a:13) define evaluative morphology as a cross-section of semantic and formal properties, via two essential properties. The first property, at the “functional-semantic” level, states “that a linguistic construction can be defined as evaluative if it has the function of assigning a value which is different from that of the standard or default”. The second property relates to the form and states that “an evaluative construction must include at least the expression of the standard value”, i.e. the construction must be an addition to a base form: in Italian, for instance, *povero* ‘poor’ is included in *pover-ino* ‘poor+DIM’. As thoroughly explored by Dressler & Merlini Barbaresi (1994), this second condition has important linguistic consequences in terms of pragmatics, because it implies that in the default situation, the evaluation of x takes place when x is overtly referred to.

Grandi & Körtvélyessy (2015a) group diminutive, augmentative, pejorative and meliorative affixes, as well as reduplication within evaluative morphology. Diminutives and augmentatives can be defined as morphological devices (in the broad sense of the term) that can evaluate size (or age) and/or quantity. They are sometimes called quantifying evaluative devices (see for instance Mutz (2015)). Diminutives and augmentatives can very often express pejoration and melioration, i.e. qualitative evaluation, but this is not considered a defining property in this work. By contrast, pejoratives and melioratives are defined here as morphological devices that express qualitative evaluation (the speaker’s opinion) to the exclusion of size. They can also be described as purely expressive (Potts 2007). Obviously, quantitative evaluative devices (diminutives and augmentatives) on the one hand and purely expressive/qualitative evaluative devices (pejoratives and melioratives) on the other hand are not independent. Since diminutives and augmentatives can often express pejoration and melioration, their semantics largely overlap. In addition, as discussed by Mutz (2015:148) for instance, and as demonstrated by Rose (this volume), quantitative evaluative devices can evolve historically into purely expressive evaluative devices – although, as shown by Guillaume (this volume), some purely expressive morphemes are historically independent of quantitative evaluative devices.

As for reduplication (the fifth main type of evaluative morphology), it is strictly defined by form. Cross-linguistically, the meanings of reduplication are very diverse but often revolve around the evaluation of quantity, by virtue of the iconic principle that “more of the same” form implies “more of the same” meaning (Sapir 1921:79; Kouwenberg & LaCharité 2001). As such, reduplication qualifies as an evaluative morphological process. Like other evaluative devices, reduplication tends to extend to expressive functions across languages (see Morgernstern & Michaud (2007), Ponsonnet, this volume). In this article, I focus on diminutives and augmentatives, to the exclusion of pejoratives, melioratives and reduplication.

## **1.2 Emotions**

I define emotions here as internal, psychological states (as opposed to behaviors for instance). I consider them distinct from sensations on the one hand (pain, hunger...), and from purely “intellectual” judgements (knowing, believing...) on the other hand. Contrary to pure judgements, emotions include a subjective element. That is, in my definition, emotions cannot be fully explained or justified with respect to a particular state of affairs in the world, but depend on inclinations proper to the experiencer. Given this definition, most attitudes – for instance, approval or disapproval – can be considered emotionally tainted. Emotions are obviously triggered by concrete situations and interactions, so that describing these is relevant to our understanding of emotions. However, the emotions themselves are construed here as psychological states that are not immediately observable. (See Ponsonnet (2014a:9–17) for further discussion of this definition.)

Jurafsky (1996) showed that diminutives typically display broad and diverse, but cross-linguistically very consistent semantic extensions. The same is true of augmentatives (Grandi 2002; Matisoff 1992), albeit perhaps to a slightly lesser extent. A notable extension of these devices is towards emotions, as shown by Jurafsky (1996) and Wierzbicka (1984) for instance. Ponsonnet (2014a:86–93) demonstrates that in many cases, the denotational meaning of diminutives is redundant and most of the time their addition to the base is optional. Therefore, speakers’ choice to use a diminutive should be explained by pragmatics: diminutives can soften the impact of a speech-act, and/or add an emotional coloring to the statement. Ponsonnet’s analysis of the distribution of

diminutives in Dalabon shows that the speaker's emotional experience at the time of utterance plays a significant part in determining the use of diminutives. Therefore, diminutives often index the speaker's emotional perspective on a given situation: they convey emotional connotations. Dressler & Merlini Barbaresi (1994) pointed out that these emotional connotations can usually be interpreted on the basis of pragmatics, but they also acknowledged that pragmatically anchored emotional connotations often become part of the semantics of diminutives (1994:34; 132). The same phenomenon applies to augmentatives (see for instance Gaarder (1966), Böhmerová (2011)), although their emotional extensions are probably less frequent, and therefore less semantically integrated.

Altogether, emotions are a significant semantic dimension of diminutives and augmentatives. Conversely, in some languages, diminutives (and more rarely augmentatives) are a central device when it comes to expressing emotions (Sifianou 1992; Travis 2004; Ponsonnet 2014a:81–126; Ponsonnet & Evans 2015). However, our knowledge of exactly which emotions can be encoded or conveyed by diminutives and augmentatives across languages remains extremely fragmentary so far.

### ***1.3 Aims, methods and limitations***

In this paper, I aim to improve our understanding of the relations between emotions and evaluative morphology by means of a preliminary typology of the encoding of emotions by diminutive and augmentative morphological devices.

Ultimately, a typology of the encoding of emotions by evaluative morphology should cover all the devices listed in §1.1 (thus including pejoratives, melioratives and reduplication). It should also consider the relations between these devices – for instance, under which conditions do diminutives and augmentatives evolve into purely expressive devices? What is the relation between reduplication and other evaluative morphology when they occur in the same languages? In practice, for this first step it was preferable to restrict the field of investigation to quantitative evaluative devices only, i.e. diminutives and augmentatives. In general, they are better known than other evaluative devices, and their emotional dimension in particular is better documented than that of reduplication.

Furthermore, emotions have attracted more attention with respect to diminutives, and for this reason, the section on diminutives is more detailed than the section on augmentatives.

In spite of this focus, even the section on diminutives can only be a preliminary step in a broader typological enterprise. The data on emotional values and connotations of diminutives and augmentatives remains relatively scarce for the moment. Many publications dedicated to these devices focus on morphosyntactic properties (this is the case of most of the contributions in Grandi & Körtvélyessy (2015b) for instance). For a number of larger languages, there exist detailed studies covering emotional values, but unfortunately, these works are often embedded in relatively old and local publications that I was not always able to access.<sup>1</sup> When diminutives and augmentatives are mentioned in grammars and other linguistic descriptions, the emotional dimension is often mentioned and qualified as positive or negative, more rarely specified by a couple of key words, but seldom discussed in any detail. As a result, randomly investigating a large number of individual grammars seemed pointless. Instead, I focused on dedicated publications where semantics, and in particular the semantics of emotions, was not left aside – starting with several contributions in this volume. I have thus worked with small language samples (see §2.1 and §3.1 for details about these samples), in order to concentrate on languages for which I had detailed data.<sup>2</sup> It is hoped that the present study will trigger interest and help researchers investigate this aspect of evaluative morphology, thus providing data to further elaborate the typology.

Based on these parameters, the main achievement of this article consists in identifying which emotions can be conveyed by diminutives and augmentatives across languages and continents. For each emotion identified, I offer hypotheses as to why evaluative devices display this extension. Sometimes, observations on the distribution can be made. Given the limited extent of the data, I was not in a position to present firm regional profiles (e.g. diminutives in area x have such and such emotional values), although I do offer hypotheses on geographical distribution. Correlations between emotional values and linguistic properties (e.g. augmentatives in languages that have morphological property

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<sup>1</sup> This was the case for some sources on Dutch, German or Russian for instance.

<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, the levels of documentation differ significantly between languages within the samples.

x have such and such emotional values) are articulated wherever possible, but they are bound to remain very preliminary. Generalizations of this type should be further investigated in future research.

#### **1.4 Outline of the paper**

Section §2 discusses the emotional values of diminutives. I show that beyond milder emotions typically associated with the universe of children (endearment, feeling of familiarity), diminutives also convey emotional categories that derive conceptually from these milder emotions, but are not related to children and can be deep emotions typically experienced by adults with respect to adults. These are compassion, romantic and/or sexually oriented love, admiration and respect, comfort and control associated with personal routines. Although diminutives are primarily positive, in most languages they can also encode negative emotions, such as contempt. Diminutives can evolve into purely qualitative evaluative devices that only express specific emotions. On the other hand, they may also evolve further to express generic emotional coloring.

Section §3 deals with augmentatives, which are found to convey a blend of positive and negative values. Among negative values are negative judgement but also the stronger emotions of contempt and repulsion (usually with respect to socially inappropriate behavior), and marginally fear. Among positive emotions are generic approval, as well as the more specific admiration for high status on the one hand, and endearment and compassion on the other hand. A significant proportion of the emotions conveyed by augmentatives across the nine languages of my sample seem to relate to social status and behavior.

Finally, Section §4 compares emotional values in diminutives and augmentatives. They do not contrast sharply either in valence, or in the specific emotional categories conveyed – in fact, these categories largely overlap. However, looking at the particular nature of each emotional category, it appears that diminutives relate primarily to the domestic universe of interaction with children (as is well-known, see Wierzbicka (1984) and Jurafsky (1996) for instance), while augmentatives tend to encode emotions directly rooted within the public, social sphere.



## 2. Diminutives

In general, the functions of diminutives can be described as three-fold. Diminutives have a) denotational meanings, where they specify a property of the referent (smallness or young age), and related extensions (e.g. specification, approximation, partitive meaning); b) emotional connotations, where speakers' decisions to use a diminutive or not is influenced by the emotional coloring of the situation; and c) interactional functions, where diminutives are used to attenuate the effect of a speech-act and manage 'politeness' effects (Dressler & Barbaresi Merlini 1994:29–36). As for emotional connotations (b), diminutives typically express endearment, for instance in hypocoristic use, when diminutives are added to kin terms and first names (Wierzbicka 1984). In his study of the semantics of diminutives, Jurafsky (1996:543) also mentions a handful of emotions such as "affection", "sympathy", "contempt". In this section, I discuss a larger range of emotional connotations of diminutives, as observed in my language sample.

### 2.1 Data

While diminutives are probably the best documented of all emotionally loaded morphological devices, data on the *emotional* values of diminutives remains scarce. This preliminary typological study relies mostly on data from 19 languages for which I was able to find substantial data on emotional connotations. This small sample covers 14 language families on all five continents. These languages and corresponding sources are listed in the Appendix. The data for these languages come mostly from published articles focusing on interactional functions of diminutives ('politeness' effects) and covering emotions as well, from other contributions in this volume, or from unpublished work focusing on emotional values of diminutives. In addition, I will occasionally mention languages for which I only found less complete data on emotional values. These languages are not part of the sample, but they will be cited where relevant (and for these languages, the source will appear in the text).

## 2.2 'Mild' and 'serious' emotions

As pointed out by Wierzbicka (1984), Dressler & Merlini Barbaresi (1994) and Jurafsky (1996) *inter alia*, diminutives are closely associated with children. Their most frequent values are those that relate to children and the context of care: most commonly endearment and affection, familiarity and proximity. These emotional connotations are often very prominent – sometimes as prominent, or more, as denotational meanings (there is evidence that these emotional connotation are acquired first in the acquisition process; Savickienė & Dressler (2007:345). Child-related emotional connotations are reported in most studies of diminutives across the world's languages, and for some languages (or probably for many), they are the only emotional value of diminutives – especially lexical as opposed to morphological diminutives. This is the case for instance in Mwotlap (Oceanic, Vanuatu), where François's close investigation of the particle *su* never revealed emotional values other than endearment relative to childhood. Child-related emotions conveyed by diminutives are modulated by the general “jocular” or “ludic” connotation of diminutives (Dressler & Barbaresi Merlini 1994:197–201). To that extent, they are milder, less “serious” emotions.<sup>3</sup> These emotions are represented in the second line in Figure **Erreur ! Source du renvoi introuvable.**, just below the pragmatic context from which they derive.

In addition to these child-related emotional values, diminutives in the languages of the sample convey emotions that are not directly related to the original pragmatic context:<sup>4</sup> compassion, love in the sense of romantic and/or sexually-oriented love, admiration, and the comfort and control experienced in daily routines. These emotions are often stronger, more serious emotions experienced in the universe of adults. They are conceptually related to the first set of child-related emotions directly derived from the original pragmatic context, and it can therefore be hypothesized that more serious emotional values derive from child-related ones. Reflecting this hypothesis, these non-child-related emotions are represented in the third line in Figure **Erreur ! Source du renvoi**

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<sup>3</sup> This does not imply that all emotions related to children lack intensity, but only that the emotions expressed by diminutives in this context are fairly ordinary, low-intensity emotions.

<sup>4</sup> All through the article I will use the word ‘pragmatic’ to refer to the *interactional contexts* in which diminutives are used and the extensions resulting from use in such context. To avoid any confusion, I do not use ‘pragmatic’ to refer to any of the *usages* of diminutives, which are instead labeled ‘emotional connotations’ or ‘interactional functions’.

**introuvable.**, further from the pragmatic context; they are discussed in §2.4 to §2.7 below. The last line in Figure **Erreur ! Source du renvoi introuvable.** accounts for semantic bleaching, where diminutives are reported to lose specific emotional connotations, becoming discourse markers with a very vague emotional connotation (§2.8).

This diagram differs from Jurafsky's (1996:542) radial category in that the arrows signal the conceptual or pragmatic sources of each connotation (the paths of conceptual association are spelt out in the following sections). As such, they do not necessarily reflect attested semantic extensions (unlike Jurafsky's representations). Conceptual distinctions between emotions are loose by nature. For instance, admiration is probably not entirely distinct from respect, or from love, and it probably relates to affection as well. Each emotional category will be defined in the corresponding section below, but of course, in the domain of emotions, categories are bound to remain flexible. This should not prevent us from presenting semantic phenomena in an orderly fashion, based on enlightening category distinctions – bearing in mind that categories are porous (Ponsonnet 2014b:5–6).

In addition to the context-related emotional connotations, diminutives often express disapproval or criticism. As shown by its position in Figure **Erreur ! Source du renvoi introuvable.**, this emotional coloration does not relate to the pragmatic context, but derives from the denotational meaning 'small' (see §2.3). The stronger emotion of contempt also derives from the sense 'small', and from disapproval.

In the following sections, I discuss each 'serious' emotional connotation (third line in Figure **Erreur ! Source du renvoi introuvable.**) in turn: contempt (§2.3), compassion (§2.4), romantic and/or sexually oriented love (§2.5), admiration and respect (§2.6) and the comfort and control associated with personal routines (§2.7). In §2.8, I briefly discuss semantic bleaching. Humility and self-irony are not discussed in detail as they were only very scantily attested in the sample (irony itself is considered part of the basic "jocular", child-related connotations). Uses of diminutives reflecting humility and self-irony are a matter of investigation for future research: it is expected that a broader sample would reveal further cases.

### 2.3 *Disapproval and contempt*

Diminutives are well known for developing contrary semantic values. In the denotative domain, they can express both specification/intensification and approximation for instance (e.g. *ahor-ita* ‘now+DIM’, which means ‘immediately, right now’ in Mexican Spanish and ‘soon, in a little while’ in Dominican Spanish, Jurafsky (1996:534)) or intensification and attenuation (e.g. *chidi* in Tacana [Takanan, Bolivia, Guillaume, this volume], *-hVko* in Izkonawa [Panoan, Peru, Zariquiey, this volume]). Contradictory values are also common with emotional connotations. Positive emotional connotations are more frequent cross-linguistically and usually more salient within each language, but as I will show here, negative connotations are very well represented as well in my language sample. They can surface as plain criticism, or as irony and teasing. In many languages, the jocular character of diminutives mitigates the negative values, but in some languages, negative connotations are more serious. They sometimes even seem predominant, or at least as significant as positive connotations.

The basic negative emotional value of diminutives is disapproval (i.e. pejoration, subjective negative evaluation). The semantic relationship with the core denotational sense ‘small’ is evident: being small, while a cute property of children, can be seen as defective for many other referents.<sup>5</sup> The denotational sense ‘young’ can relate to lack of experience (e.g. the suffix *-ví* in Ewe (Gbe, Ghana), the suffixes *-et/-ette* in French, Fradin (2003:53)) or immaturity, which in turn can connote defectiveness (e.g. the diminutive noun class prefix *ki-* in Swahili, in (1)); and diminution can also associate with insignificance. Ponsonnets often qualify the disapproval or negative stance expressed by diminutives in terms of the stronger emotion of contempt (considering someone as not good enough or not important enough to deserve interest, attention etc., also illustrated for Swahili in (1)). This can also relate to low social status (Hong Kong Cantonese, with the tone-changed diminutive qualifying socially marginal women, Jurafsky (1988:311)). In Hassaniyya Arabic, diminutives produced via *-ay-* infixation are reported to pragmatically express aggression.

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<sup>5</sup> But note that Tersis (2008) reports a suffix *-wassiaq* in Tunumiisut (Inuit, East Greenland) meaning ‘small’ as well as ‘of the right size’.

Swahili, Africa

- (1) Diminutive noun class prefix *ki-*  
*ki-bahaluli* 'fool'  
*ki-gundu* 'person with unusually protruding buttocks'  
*ki-weto* 'hen that doesn't lay'  
*ki-tembe* 'lisp, speech defect'  
(Contini-Morava 2002:27)

Negative values are very widespread. They are found across Romance languages, as well as in Africa and Asia. Although positive connotations of diminutives are usually dominant over negative ones, the reverse can be true. Two cases were identified, both on the African continent: negative connotations are prevalent with the Swahili noun class prefix (*ki-*); and with the suffix *-ví* in Ewe (Gbe, Ghana), negative connotations appear to be at least as frequent as positive connotations.

Given that negative emotions are reported in a majority of the languages in the sample, I will now consider languages for which negative values of diminutive devices are not reported or are reported as marginal. Diminutives are not reported to significantly combine positive and negative emotions in the autochthonous Indigenous American languages of the sample, nor in Passamaquoddy (Algonquian, Canada, LeSourd's (1995) description of the *-hs-* diminutive suffix). In Passamaquoddy, this may be due to a lack of documentation, but in Tacana (Takanan, Bolivia), it is clear that negative emotions are not among the values of diminutives formed with *chidi* (suffix with verbs and enclitic with other parts of speech). In Mojeño varieties (Arawak, Bolivia), the negative values of the diminutive suffixes *-chicha* and *-gira* are marginal (attested only with inanimate nouns for *-chicha*). Diminutives in Mexican and Columbian Spanish (suffixes *-ito/ita* and other evaluative suffixes of Spanish origin), on the other hand, have negative values – like standard Spanish. In Tunumiisut (Inuit, East Greenland), *-quyuk* is the only suffix, among nine diminutive suffixes described by Tersis (2008),<sup>6</sup> to express negative emotions. All the languages cited are polysynthetic, and the other language in the sample where the diminutive cannot express negative emotions is the Australian Dalabon (non-Pama-

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<sup>6</sup> Tersis describes six suffixes of nominal derivation N-N: *-aNaq-* 'small and young', *-Vtaq* va. *-(V)saq* 'small or similar', *-ŋŋiwaq* 'small', *-kkutuk* 'small, compassion', *-wassiaq* 'small (of the right size)', *-quyuk* 'small, compassion'; one suffix of verbal derivation V-N: *-saaq* 'a bit'; and two diminutives found on nouns and verbs: *ŋaik* 'small, endearment, compassion' and *+ŋiiu* 'small, endearment'. Tersis also describes affixes expressing attenuation as a "verbal modality" category, but these affixes are not considered here.

Nyungan, Gunwinyguan, central northern Australia, enclitic =*wurd*), which is also polysynthetic. Bowler (2015:443) reports negative values for diminutive suffixes in Warlpiri, which is Australian but not polysynthetic (Pama-Nyungan, Central Australia). More will be said about the role of abundant morphology in §2.4

Another language where negative values of diminutives may be absent or very marginal is Modern Greek. Sifianou's (1992) detailed account of the pragmatics of Greek diminutives (diminutive *-aki*) makes no mention of contemptuous or other negative usage, as the author emphasizes the use of diminutives to express empathy and proximity.<sup>7</sup> Negative connotations also appear to be limited in Portuguese. But in some other languages from the Mediterranean area<sup>8</sup> such as Catalan, negative values are reported among core values of diminutives (*advocat-et*, 'lawyer+DIM', 'bad lawyer', Bernal (2015:210)). It thus seems that even within the same region, negative values are more prominent in some languages than in others, which offers some ground to Sifianou's claims that the positive values of empathy and solidarity encoded by Greek diminutives are culturally specific to Greek society.

## 2.4 Compassion

Compassion is experienced when something bad happens to someone else. Interestingly, a number of languages that are reported to express compassion by means of diminutives are languages where the negative values of diminutives are absent or marginal (see 2.3). This may be because, although compassion entails a negative dimension (something bad happens), this emotion is strongly associated with a positive emotion, namely affection (see Rose, this volume, who describes the semantic change from affection to compassion in Mojeño as a case of specialization). Affection is a condition of compassion, and therefore compassion entails actions that demonstrate affection. Among many Australian groups for instance, compassion is in fact treated as a correlate of affection (Myers 1986; Ponsonnet 2014a:196–199). Feeling compassion for someone amounts to offering love

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<sup>7</sup> Natalia Chousou-Polydouri, a native speaker of Greek, reported that diminutives may be used with a disapproving and contemptuous connotation with respect to social status, but this value seems relatively rare and highly determined by context.

<sup>8</sup> A geographical unit relevant to the study of evaluative morphology, as demonstrated by Grandi (2002).

and consideration. Among these Australian groups, compassion is a highly valued emotion which stands as a cornerstone of the emotional moral system.

This perspective on compassion may explain why some diminutives come to encapsulate compassion, as an extension of affection. It could also explain why this typically occurs with diminutives that do not convey negative emotions. Since compassion considered under this perspective is a very positive emotion, this extension could be more frequent in languages where diminutives lean towards the positive side.

Compassion is explicitly reported in some Romance languages, for instance in Portuguese and, as a natural extension from endearment and affection, it is probably a connotation of diminutives in French, Italian or Spanish (e.g. compassionate ‘poor’+DIM forms: French *pauvre-tte*– a feminine form in French –, Italian *pover-ino*, Spanish *pobre-cito*). Apart from these connotations, compassion represents one of the most prominent emotional senses of diminutives in only a handful of languages in the sample. This is true of the enclitic =*wurd* in Dalabon (non-Pama-Nyungan, Gunwinyguan, Australia), and in languages of the American continent: in Mojeño varieties<sup>9</sup> (Arawak) in Bolivia, and Tunumiisut<sup>10</sup> (Inuit) in East Greenland. Compassion is also attested for *chidi* in Tacana (Takanan, Bolivia), as illustrated in (2), for the suffix *-rá* (va. *-ratsun*) in Kakataibo (Panoan, Peru, Zariquiey, this volume), as well as for the suffix *-hs-* in Passamaquoddy (Algonquian, Canada, LeSourd (1995)).

Tacana, South America, Bolivia –rn060\_ott<sup>11</sup>

(2) *Jid'iu-pe-taiti-a=wekwana*      *mida*      *yawe=chidi*  
 peel-COMPASS-A3-PFV-PST=3pl      2sg      husband=DIM

‘[The frogs] peeled you entirely, my poor husband [Spanish maridito].’  
 (Ottaviano, 1980, Guillaume, this volume)

Given the distribution of compassion in the languages of the sample, it is possible to articulate two compatible hypotheses. Firstly, the expression of compassion may be

<sup>9</sup> Suffixes *-chicha* and *-gira*.

<sup>10</sup> Suffixes *-kkutuk* and *-ŋaik*.

<sup>11</sup> Abbreviations. AUG: augmentative; CL: noun class marker; COMPASS: compassion; DIM: diminutive; IMPFV: imperfective; INDF: indefinite (article); INTJ: interjection; IV: initial vowel; MNR: manner; PR: pronoun; R: realis; REDUP: reduplication; Vstem: verbal stem.

avored by the wealth of evaluative suffixes; secondly, it may reflect the prominence of compassion as a cultural value.

Tacana, Mojeño and Tunumiisut all have several evaluative suffixes (diminutives, pejoratives or melioratives), often specialized for differentiated emotional values. In Tunumiisut, at least two of the nominal diminutives described by Tersis (2008) encode compassion as their main value. In Tacana, Guillaume (this volume) reports a diminutive with compassionate usage, along with two purely qualitative suffixes (i.e. suffixes that express subjective evaluation to the exclusion of size, see 1.1). One of them is specialized for compassion and the other for depreciation. Rose (this volume) describes a similar situation in Mojeño varieties. Rose also reports purely pejorative and purely meliorative suffixes, and she demonstrates that *-chicha*, which is a purely compassionate suffix in one of the varieties, originated historically in a diminutive. Lamunkhin Even (Tungusic, Siberia) is another instance of a language with rich morphology, including a particularly rich set of evaluative suffixes described by Pakendorf (2016), which has developed purely emotional suffixes capable of expressing compassion (*-A:n* and *-jA:t*).<sup>12</sup> A plausible hypothesis is that in languages with many affixes (i.e. typically in polysynthetic languages), the proliferation of affixes, verbal and nominal, allows for further semantic differentiation, including a stricter separation between positive and negative values, and specialization towards specific emotions – compassion in particular. A diminutive can thus gain a strong compassion sense, and finally lose its quantitative sense to the benefit of compassion only, as Rose demonstrates for Mojeño. The device then becomes a compassionate qualitative device and is replaced by another diminutive form. Note, however, that compassion is reported as a central emotional value of diminutives for Columbian Spanish,<sup>13</sup> which is spoken in South America but obviously does not have a particularly rich morphology compared to many languages of South America. This value may be explained by contact with Colombian languages.

Another, compatible hypothesis is that the expression of compassion by means of evaluative morphology could correlate with the cultural prevalence of compassion. This may be the case among Australian languages. As discussed above, compassion is reported

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<sup>12</sup> But some of the diminutive suffixes in Even Lamunkhin can convey negative emotions.

<sup>13</sup> Travis (2004) uses the term 'sympathy'.



as the most central value of diminutives in Dalabon (non-Pama-Nyungan, Gunwinyguan), which in spite of being polysynthetic has few evaluative affixes, and no purely expressive one. At this stage, it is not known whether diminutives in other languages of the continent express compassion, but purely qualitative suffixes specialized for compassion are reported in several languages across Australia. One of these languages is polysynthetic,<sup>14</sup> and others have less morphology.<sup>15</sup> Therefore, in Australia, the expression of compassion by means of evaluative morphology does not correlate with morphological properties. Instead, this continental trend happens to match cultural values. Cultural significance may also apply on the American continent, and it is not incompatible with the morphological constraints of polysynthetic languages hypothesized earlier. It will become possible to refine these hypotheses when further data becomes available.

### ***2.5 Romantic and/or sexually oriented love***

Love can be generally defined as a positive emotion triggered by another being, but this general definition breaks down into very different types of love, depending on intensity and context. While the term *love* may be too strong to qualify friendship, it does apply in the context of relationships between family members (including parents and children), although this is a very different emotion from the type of “love” triggered by romantic and/or sexually oriented relationships. In many languages (including English), the same word can describe all these emotions. Romantic and/or sexually oriented love is often considered a stronger and rather serious (even noble, or sometimes dangerous) emotion, which contrasts with the relatively ‘mild’ character of emotions relative to children most commonly encoded by diminutives (§2.2). Nevertheless, the extension of diminutives from ‘affection for children’ to ‘romantic/sexually oriented love’ is attested, albeit only in a few languages and usually in specific registers.

Dressler & Merlini Barbaresi (1994:193–197) discuss love-related uses of diminutives, focusing mostly on Italian diminutive suffixes (and similar usages are mentioned – albeit not described in detail – by Alonso (1996) for Spanish diminutives). Dressler & Merlini

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<sup>14</sup> Ngalakgan, non-Pama-Nyungan, Gunwinyguan, Merlan (1983:66).

<sup>15</sup> Mparntwe Arrernte (Pama-Nyungan group, Arandic family, Central Australia, Wilkins (1989:358)), Ngiyambaa (Pama-Nyungan group, Wiradhuric family, New South Wales, Donaldson (1980:194)); Nhanda (Pama-Nyungan group, Kartu family (?), coastal Western Australia, Blevins (2001:70)).

Barbaresi show that diminutives are commonly used between lovers to establish or re-confirm the fact that the relationship is indeed love-oriented. Diminutives are then used hypocoristically (i.e. to create nicknames), and they are also found on nouns referring to body-parts and belongings of the beloved person. Dressler & Merlini Barbaresi show that Italian diminutives used in love-related situations are playful and convey a connotation of non-seriousness. This connotation also applies to lexicalized terms for lovers such as *amich-etta* ‘girl-friend+DIM’, which could not be used in the context of a serious love-affair between adults. Accordingly, diminutives are pervasive in Italian pastoral poetry, which adopts a jocular approach to love (Dressler & Barbaresi Merlini 1994:382–385). By contrast, in pieces where love is treated dramatically (e.g. operas), diminutives are far less frequent. Therefore, the love-related use of Italian diminutives seems mostly circumscribed to playful, non-serious contexts.

Apart from Italian, the only languages where love (as an adult and serious emotion) is reported as a value of diminutives are African languages, namely Hassaniyya Arabic (Mauritania) illustrated in (3, *-ay-* infixation), and Beja (Cushitic, Sudan – sound shift *r>l*).

Hassaniyya Arabic, Africa

(3) [From a courteous poem where the author praises the woman he loves.  
Diminutives occur in most verses.]

<i>ʔvläyḥ=əḵ</i>	<i>bī=h</i>	<i>ʔn-xammäm</i>
DIM.glamor[of]=PR.2F.SG	with=PR.3M.SG	1SG.IMPV-think

‘I think of your charm(DIM)’ (Taine-Cheikh, this volume)

In both languages, diminutives are used in courteous poetry, where they are mostly found on body-parts, praising a woman’s attractive and sometimes admirable features. As shown by Taine-Cheikh (this volume, and 1988), in this type of poetry, diminutives can convey ambivalent emotions alternating between love and bitterness. Such inversions of values can be ironic, but diminutives in this register are not systematically playful. Unlike Italian diminutives in pastoral poetry, the tone of diminutives in this type of African poetry is serious or even emphatic rather than jocular. In both Hassaniyya Arabic and Beja, diminutives also express child-related milder emotions (endearment, affection, with a jocular connotation, Taine-Cheikh (1988:94), and this volume), but the higher poetical register transcends this connotation of non-seriousness.

There are also traces of the extension of diminutive suffixes to love *stricto sensu* in two Central Tano languages in Africa, Akan (Ghana) and Baoule (Ivory Coast). In both languages, words for ‘lover’ can occur with a diminutive suffix (-*ba/-wa*) that does not change the sense of the lexeme (unlike in Italian where *amich-etta* ‘girl-friend+DIM’ has negative or childish connotations) (Jérémie N’Guessan Kouadio, pers. com. Oct 2015). I have not found this extension of diminutives to seriously considered romantic and/or sexually-oriented love anywhere else in the world than on the African continent.

## 2.6 *Admiration and respect*

Emotional approval (associated with positive judgement) is a component of affection and is therefore a component of the basic emotional value of diminutives. In a small number of languages, diminutives are reported to extend to stronger positive emotions more closely associated with positive values, namely admiration (strong approval) and respect (strong approval combined with some component of distance, sometimes fear). This is another case of extension towards a serious emotion, clearly not related to the universe of childhood. There are very few clear cases in the sample and they are very diverse, so that it is difficult to articulate even hypothetical generalizations.

The clearest case of expression of respect in my sample is Beja (Cushitic, Sudan). As shown in (4), diminutives can occur on a place name to express the nobility of its inhabitants. (Here the diminutive meaning results from a gender shift: when a masculine noun receives a feminine determiner, a diminutive meaning results.)

Beja, Africa – BEJ\_MV\_NARR\_07\_ORPHAN\_445-448

(4)	<i>e:=nda</i>	<i>e:n</i>	<i>i=su:r</i>	<i>anto:j</i>
	DEF.PL.M.ACC=man.PL	PROX.PL.M.ACC	REL.M=before	here
	<i>bari:to:</i>	<i>to:=mhi:n</i>	<i>d?i-ja:=b</i>	
	3PL.F.GEN	DEF.SG.F.ACC/DIM=place	do-CVB.MNR=INDF.M.ACC	
	<i>i-kti=je:b</i>	<i>i=malik</i>		
	3SG.M-be.PFV=REL.M	DEF.M=king		

‘The king (gives him) the place he had given to the men who were here before.’  
 Lit.: ‘The men who were here before, their place, that he had given them, the king.’  
 (Vanhove & Hamid Ahmed, this volume)

In addition, in Classical Nahuatl a former diminutive suffix *-tsin* (*-tsi*, *-tzin*) has become a marker of respect (Launey (1981:107) quoted by Chamoreau (2012:77)) – confirming the tendency of languages with a rich morphology to develop purely expressive suffixes from diminutives. Admiration, especially in the context of praise, is a somewhat more frequent value of diminutives. As presented in §2.5, in Beja (Cushitic, Sudan) and Hassaniyya Arabic (Mauritania), diminutives express praise – which is close to admiration – in association with love in courteous poetry. Praise is also mentioned for Dutch in the context of advertising.

## 2.7 *Comfort and control in personal routines*

The child-related context in which diminutives are primarily used is embedded in daily intimacy (between child and carer), and therefore diminutives often index proximity and intimacy between speech participants. There exists another type of usage that indexes the feelings of individual intimacy and comfort found in daily routines, independent of the relationship to children or between speech participants. Diminutives are used to describe or allude to small gestures of everyday life that are appreciated for the emotional comfort and reassurance they provide. This type of usage has been clearly identified by Ponsonnet (2014a:89–90) for Dalabon (non-Pama-Nyungan, Gunwinyguan), where the diminutive enclitic =*wurd* can be used to describe the intimacy of sitting by a fire alone in the night, listening to one’s favorite music in isolation, or as in (5), combing one’s hair as part of an evening routine before going to bed.

Dalabon, Australia – 20120720\_003\_LB 229 [Film]

(5) *Ka-h-marru-yarrk-mu bordo... kirdikird nunda... yawkyawk=**wurd**.*  
 3sg-R-hair-comb-PRS INTJ.surpr woman DEM young.woman:REDUP-DIM

‘She’s combing her hair, oh look... this woman... the little young girl.’ (Ponsonnet 2014a)

Fradin (Fradin 2003) describes the French diminutive as an “appropriation marker” that coins objects as pertaining to the speaker’s “intimate sphere” (for instance *zapette* ‘TV remote control’, *cigarette* ‘cigarette’, *allumette* ‘match’, all lexicalized with the feminine

diminutive suffix *-ette*<sup>16</sup>), and a comparable expression is found in Alonso's (1996:200) discussion of Spanish diminutives. Fradin points out that the "appropriation" achieved by the diminutive implies control and the emotions related to control, such as comfort and reassurance. The notion of comfort arising from familiarity is also reported for diminutives of Beja (Cushitic, Sudan) when used on place names.

It is not yet possible to comment on the distribution of this value of diminutives. Apart from the cases quoted above, it seems that this type of use has often been overlooked or remains poorly conceptualized. For instance, Gaarder (1966:586) clearly identifies a case where, in Mexican Spanish, the feminine diminutive suffix *-ita* is used to describe the daily routine of smoking marijuana and going to sleep. However, Gaarder describes this use as "tenderness for the surrounding environment", and does not clearly recognize that the diminutive actually flags the comfort of a familiar routine. Even in more recent publications, some authors simply cannot explain these diminutive forms (e.g. Dressler & Barbaresi Merlini 1994:127). As a result, the distribution of this usage cannot be assessed for the moment.

## **2.8 Emotional coloring**

The above sections show that diminutives can specialize for particular emotions beyond those immediately induced by their use in child-related contexts. As already mentioned, this specialization can lead to loss of other meanings, so that a diminutive can become a purely expressive suffix expressing just one emotion. On the other hand, diminutives can also undergo the opposite development, namely generalization or semantic bleaching, and finally encode very generic 'emotional coloring' (a term used by Mahieu (2015), following Fortescue (1983) who talks about 'suffixes of subjective coloration').

Such a generic emotional coloring is well described by Taine-Cheikh (1988) for the *-ay-* infixation diminutive of Hassaniyya Arabic. While this device can index specific emotional values such as romantic/sexually oriented love, the diminutive of Hassaniyya Arabic can

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<sup>16</sup> The diminutive also flags small size, at least for the last two, but Fradin's point is that French (lexicalized) diminutives are frequent for small objects in the sphere of personal intimacy, rather than other types of small objects.

also be used as a “marker of subjectivity”, a “means to express the speaker’s subjectivity within language” (1988:99), raising the expressive force of a statement irrespective of the particular emotional value of this statement. Taine-Cheikh is thus pointing at an interactional function of the diminutive that is not one of attenuation and softening (as is most commonly reported for diminutives), but rather one of emphasis and emotional arousal (including aggression, in Taine-Cheikh’s actual example). Such diminutives are akin to discourse makers that punctuate speech and add emotional coloring. This type of use of emotionally loaded morphemes is also reported by Mahieu (2015) for Inuktitut (Inuit, East Greenland). In this extremely polysynthetic language, “emotional coloring suffixes”, such as /*kuluk-* (broadly: compassion) or /*aarjuk-* (broadly: endearment), tend to proliferate to convey a general emotional dimension rather than a more specific emotional message. The role of emotional coloring played by these emotional morphemes may be compared with the role played by interjections in languages that have less morphology.

The semantic bleaching of diminutives is not explicitly reported in any other languages of the sample. However, Dressler & Merlini Barbaresi’s study of the pragmatically determined extensions of Italian diminutives assumes a very general pragmatic effect that can be compared to emotional coloring<sup>17</sup> (see for instance Dressler & Barbaresi Merlini 1994:205), and comparable analyses probably hold for some other languages such as Modern Greek for instance (Sifianou 1992).

## **2.9 Conclusions**

As pointed out by Wierzbicka (1984) from the point of view of semantics, Jurafsky (1996) from the point of view of etymology, and Dressler & Merlini Barbaresi (1994) from the point of view of pragmatics, morphological diminutives are anchored in the intimate context of relationships with children. This context favors semantic extensions towards mild positive emotions such as affection and endearment. These are not, however, the only emotional values of diminutives. They also have negative emotional values, arising from the negative connotations of small size. These negative values are usually secondary

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<sup>17</sup> This emotional vagueness is precisely the reason why they turn away from the study of the emotional values of diminutives and prefer to focus on their pragmatic effects.

as compared to positive ones, but they are nevertheless attested for most languages, and in some languages they are as important as positive connotations, or more. Morphological diminutives also encode a range of emotions that are deeper and more serious than child-related emotions. These are compassion, romantic and/or sexually oriented love, admiration and respect, comfort and control associated with daily routines. The distribution of each emotional category in the sample is presented in Table **Erreur ! Source du renvoi introuvable.** Although no firm conclusions can be drawn based on such a small sample, some extensions could display areal distribution. For instance, romantic and/or sexually oriented love, in its full-fledged dimension, is only attested on the African continent. Compassion is a predominant value of diminutives in the indigenous languages of the American and Australian continents, where the negative values of diminutives are absent or secondary. The tendency of diminutives to encode specific emotional categories may be favored by rich morphologies: a wealth of morphological evaluative devices may allow for further semantic differentiation. In some cases, on the other hand, diminutives may also evolve towards further generalization, and as a result express generic emotional coloring.

[Table 1]

### 3. Augmentatives

It is now well known that augmentative morphemes are cross-linguistically far less frequent than diminutives (see for instance Dressler & Barbaresi Merlini 1994:430). Creissels (1999:55) also notes, about African languages, that augmentatives have fewer semantic extensions than diminutives.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, the semantic profiles of morphemes classified as augmentatives display more variation than that of diminutives. Most diminutives can evaluate size (or age), and this is a defining feature. On the other hand, only some augmentatives denote large size, but devices that denote large quantities are also called augmentatives. In terms of etymology, some augmentatives originate in adjectives meaning 'big' (e.g. Ewe, Niger-Congo, Africa), and another significant set

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<sup>18</sup> Some languages with rich evaluative morphologies, like Italian or Evenki (Tungusic, Siberia) for instance, have morphemes that can be either diminutive or augmentative from a denotational point of view. This does not invalidate the diminutive/augmentative distinction: the semantic extensions of such ambivalent morphemes can simply be considered under both categories.

originates in nouns meaning ‘mother’ (Asian and African languages, see Matisoff (1992)). We are thus facing a far less unified phenomenon as compared to diminutives. Nevertheless, diminutives and augmentatives share the property of expressing or conveying emotions, and as we shall see, they can sometimes convey the same emotions.

### **3.1 Data**

Altogether, there are fewer published studies dedicated to augmentatives, and even fewer to the semantics of augmentatives – let alone emotional values of augmentatives. When emotional connotations are documented, there are usually considered in much less detail than for diminutives. The most comprehensive accounts are Grandi’s (2002) and Matisoff’s (1992) studies, the former on the Mediterranean region (French, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish, Modern Greek, Bulgarian, Rumanian, Moroccan Arabic), the latter on thirteen languages of East and South-East Asia. Beyond these two areal studies, I have been able to access somewhat detailed additional data on the semantics of augmentative morphological devices for nine languages: Italian (Romance) and Slovak (Slavic) in Europe, Mexican Spanish in Latin America, Beja (Cushitic, Sudan), Ewe (Gbe, Togo, Benin) and Luganda (Bantu, Uganda) in Africa, Tunumiisut (Inuit) in East Greenland, Evenki and Even (Tungusic) in Siberia. The sources for these languages are listed in the Appendix, and more occasional sources are cited throughout the text. Even within this sample, the data for augmentatives is usually less detailed than for diminutives, so that the resulting study is less fine-grained. I have not been able to identify reports of significant emotional connotations of augmentatives either for the Latin American continent or for languages of Oceania.<sup>19</sup> Indeed, the contributions in Grandi & Körtvélyessy (2015b) seem to confirm that augmentatives are not frequent in these regions, and that their emotional connotations are even scarcer. Whether this reflects a more reduced documentation, or that such semantic extensions are less frequent, is a question for future research.

Based on the above sample, it appears that the emotional connotations of augmentatives across languages are quite consistent. As a result, while this sample cannot suffice for a typology – however preliminary –, it makes it possible to inventorize these emotional

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<sup>19</sup> Note that these two areas feature polysynthetic languages, so this lack cannot result from scarcer morphology.



connotations. In §3.2, I present negative connotations. Apart from negative judgement, these include contempt and repulsion, as well as (marginally) fear. Negative connotations are overall predominant, but augmentatives also have very clear positive connotations, discussed in §3.3. Apart from a general notion of emotional approval, these include admiration for high social status, as well as endearment and compassion.

### **3.2 Negative values of augmentatives**

In many of the languages in the sample, augmentatives endorse pejorative connotations: they express criticism and negative judgement. This is reported by Grandi (2002) for the Mediterranean area (e.g. the suffixes *-one* in Italian, *-ón* in Spanish, *-ard* in French) and is also the case in Slovak (suffix *-(i)sko*), in Mexican Spanish (*-ón* and a number of other suffixes of Spanish origin), in Luganda (Bantu, Uganda) with the noun class prefixes *li-*, *ki-/bi-* and *gu-/ga-*, in Beja (Cushitic, Sudan) with the suffix *-lo:j*, as well as in Tunumiisut (Inuit, East Greenland) with the suffix *-kaik*. Negative values often combine with positive values, but they are usually prevalent. There are, however, languages for which pejorative connotations are *not* reported: South and South-East Asian languages, Ewe (Gbe, Togo, Benin), Even and Evenki (Tungusic, Siberia). This will be further discussed in §3.3. In many languages spoken in Europe, augmentatives express critical judgement and even contempt, relating to socially condemned excessive attitudes such as vulgarity and obscenity. In a few other languages, augmentatives seem to relate to fear.

#### **3.2.1 Contempt and repulsion with respect to excess**

Dressler & Merlini Barbaresi (1994:443) mention an association between large size and lack of aesthetic qualities – i.e. “big is ugly”. This association is culturally specific, and it is not clearly borne out in the languages of my sample. Rather, the notion of excess (also mentioned by Dressler & Merlini Barbaresi (1994:445)), seems to offer a ground for the pejorative connotations of augmentatives in several languages. Excess is evocative of lack of control and disruption of social order, so that augmentatives gain a broad contemptuous connotation (see for instance Böhmerová (2011:77) on Slovak augmentatives, e.g. *lotr-isko* ‘scoundrel+AUG’, ‘villain’). Socially inadequate behavior can also inspire disgust and repulsion (the need to avoid contact): in Slovak, augmentatives are also reported to qualify vulgarity, and in Luganda (Bantu, Uganda), the augmentative

noun classes convey aggression (illustrated in (6)) and obscenity. Ugliness, suggested by Dressler & Merlini Barbaresi (1994) as the conceptual link between large size and pejoration, can also inspire repulsion and disgust.

Luganda, Africa

(6) [Dismissive description of someone arguing loudly and aggressively.]

*Ka-lina*

*o-gu-mwa*

DIM.CL12.AGR-has.Vstem

IV-AUG.CL20.AGR-mouth/lip

‘She has a big mouth.’ (Namugala 2014:63)

Grandi (2002) shows that the semantic path leading from size to contempt via the notion of excess is somewhat more complex in the Mediterranean area, where augmentatives display a cross-linguistically rare association between size, animacy and pejoration. In these languages, augmentatives can turn a body-part noun into an animate noun denoting someone with a salient body-part (e.g. Spanish *barrig-ón*, ‘belly+AUG, ‘person with a big belly’); or an inanimate noun into an animate noun with pejorative connotations, as in the French *soiff-ard*, ‘thirst+AUG, ‘someone who drinks too much’. As pointed out by Grandi (2002), the augmentatives shift the denotation of the noun from ‘x’ to ‘the one who has/is/does x to a high degree’. Salient bodily attributes and habits attract pejorative connotations, particularly in the context of Ancient Roman and Greek comedy, satire and mime (Grandi 2002).<sup>20</sup>

### 3.2.2 *Danger, threat and fear*

The pejorative evaluation encapsulated in augmentatives can also relate to danger and fear (which can be defined as the emotional response to danger). This connotation is often limited to vaguer connotations than contemptuous judgement, but it does occur in several languages. For instance, in Tunumiisut (Inuit), the augmentative suffix *-kaiit* can mean ‘in bad condition’, but also ‘mean’, ‘nasty’, and it can be used to describe dangerous beings – a bear in (7).

Tunumiisut, Greenland (Tersis 2008; 2013)

(7) *naniq-tua-kaiit*

‘big nasty bears’

<sup>20</sup> This association between (bad) habits and pejoration points to the idea of excess in a way that may contribute to explain the frequent association between aspect and pejoration (Fortin 2011:75–105; Németh & Sórés this volume).

bear-large-**nasty.pl(AUG)**

*tii-kaik-pa-a* 'the nasty one takes him'  
take-**nasty(AUG)**-INDIC-3sg.3sg

Here the conceptual association between large size and fear, via danger and threat, is relatively obvious. As discussed above, in Luganda (Bantu, Uganda), the augmentative noun classes can qualify animates as aggressive or abusive (see example (6)) – which makes them dangerous and scary. Augmentatives are also reported to occur in threats in Italian and Slovak.

### **3.3 Positive values of augmentatives**

While the positive values of augmentatives are overall less widespread than negative values, in a few languages they seem predominant. This is the case in Ewe (Gbe, Togo, Benin), as well as apparently in Tswana (Bantu, Botswana and around, Creissels (1999)) on the African continent, in Evenki and possibly in Even (Tungusic) in Siberia, and in the South and South-East Asian languages discussed by Matisoff (1992). In Luganda (Bantu, Uganda) on the other hand, augmentative noun classes are reported to have positive connotations as well as (prevalent) negative ones. In Italian, Slovak and Mexican Spanish, augmentatives sometimes gain positive connotations by virtue of their pragmatic behavior, because of their ludic dimension. The most salient positive emotional connotation of augmentatives is admiration and respect resulting from high social status. In addition, in some languages, augmentatives are reported to convey endearment and compassion.

#### **3.3.1 Admiration for high social status**

Augmentatives can often convey generic appreciation, the idea that something is good. According to Dressler & Merlini Barbaresi (1994:444, 450), this relates to the stereotypes that associate large size with health, comfort and protection, and large quantity with abundance. The conceptual associations that are salient in my sample are those of large size with conceptual significance (or importance) on the one hand, and of large size with age and maturity on the other hand. Both importance and maturity often correlate with high social status. In languages of South and South East Asia, the augmentatives originally

meaning ‘mother’ often extend to connote importance (for instance *bo* ‘mother’ in Japanese compounds in (8)), or even to denote a governing superior (for instance Vietnamese *cáí* ‘female, mother, chief, big principal’ (Matisoff 1992:310)). This dimension remains denotative rather than emotional, but it clearly relates to social status. Comparable extensions are reported in Ewe (Gbe, Togo, Benin) for the suffix *-gã*. In Tswana (Bantu, Botswana and around, Creissels (1999:54)), the noun *mma* ‘mother’ has also developed intensifying values within compounds, and is found in a royal honorific title as well. In my sample, the languages where this extension of augmentatives to high social status is reported are the ones where negative connotations of augmentatives are not reported, or not prominent.

Japanese, Asia			
(8)	<i>bo-kei</i>	‘mother’+‘mold’	‘matrix (printing)’
	<i>bo-sen</i>	‘mother’+‘boat’	‘mother ship’
	<i>bo-shi</i>	‘mother’+‘finger’	‘thumb’
	(Matisoff 1992:316)		

### 3.3.2 *Endearment and compassion*

Endearment and compassion are some of the most prominent positive emotions expressed by diminutives (§2.2, §2.4), where they are correlates of affection. These emotions are much less common with augmentatives, but they are nevertheless reported explicitly for Even and Evenki (Tungusic, Siberia) with the suffixes *-ndä* and *-kAkun* respectively, as well as for Slovak (*chudáčisko* ‘poor thing’, augmentative *-isko*; compare with the diminutivized Spanish *pobrecito* and French *pauvrette*, §2.4) and Mexican Spanish. Compassion is also attested in one example with the suffix *-kaik* in Tunumiisut (Inuit), as presented in (9).

Tunumiisut, East Greenland			
(9)	<i>nutiakkaa-<b>kai</b>-ngaasiit</i>	<i>qanganisa-<b>kaik</b></i>	
	woman- <b>poor</b> (AUG)-again	old.person- <b>poor</b> (AUG)	
	<i>kiissaaq-mi</i>	<i>paaqsi-tiq-pu-q</i>	
	alone-de.3REFL.sg	stay.awake-inchoative-IND-3sg	
	‘a poor (AUG) woman, a poor old (AUG) woman, as usual, stayed awake alone (at home)’ (Tersis 2008; 2013)		

With augmentatives as with diminutives, endearment and compassion may be regarded as avatars of emotional approval, and they may be channeled by the ludic pragmatic dimension characteristic of evaluative morphology including augmentatives (Dressler & Barbaresi Merlini 1994).

### **3.4 Conclusions**

Cross-linguistically, augmentative morphological devices display less emotional connotations than diminutives do, but they can nevertheless index a number of emotional categories, recapitulated in Table 2 **Erreur ! Source du renvoi introuvable.** Among the most frequent emotional connotations of augmentatives are contempt and repulsion with respect to excessive and/or socially unacceptable behavior. Fear is also marginally represented. Negative emotions tend to be prevalent, but positive emotions are not uncommon. The most salient positive connotation is admiration for high social status, followed by endearment and compassion. Therefore, in both negative and positive valences, the most salient emotional categories indexed by augmentatives relate to social status.

[Table 2]

## **4. Comparing emotional connotations of augmentatives and diminutives**

Diminutives and augmentatives are defined as antonyms with respect to their quantitative meanings: diminutives denote small size or quantity; augmentatives denote large size or quantity (Grandi & Körtvélyessy 2015a). It is well known that this contrast does not hold with respect to all semantic extensions of diminutives and augmentatives, since they share some extensions – intensification for instance. As for their emotional extensions and connotations, diminutives and augmentatives display more overlaps than divergences. Looking more closely at the emotional categories in question reveals some subtle resemblances, and in general diminutives and augmentatives do not stand in sharp contrast with respect to their emotional connotations. In §4.1, I argue that at the level of the most basic positive/negative oppositions, the contrast is not obvious at all. In §4.2, I consider specific emotional connotations to show that several of them are common to

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diminutives and augmentatives. Contrasts can however be unveiled with closer scrutiny of the conceptual associations underlying each emotional semantic extension.

#### **4.1 Positive vs negative contrast?**

Diminutives are often considered to primarily express positive emotions, and augmentatives negative emotions. While this may roughly be the case in terms of frequency at the level of each language, it is also well-known that this is not a sharp contrast (Jurafsky 1996; or Pakendorf (2016) for a good illustration). As discussed in §2.3 and §3.3, most diminutives can also convey negative emotions, and reciprocally most augmentatives can also convey positive emotions. Construing augmentatives as emotional opposites of diminutives is misguided and could lead one to overlook their peculiar emotional connotations.

Moreover, positive and negative values are not distributed in the same way in diminutives and augmentatives. On the one hand, diminutives are overwhelmingly reported to express positive emotions, and most of them also endorse less frequent negative values. On the other hand, not all augmentatives are reported to convey negative values. As shown above (§3.3), in some languages positive values of augmentatives are prevalent, and sometimes negative values are not reported at all. By contrast, no diminutives are reported to only have negative values. In general, diminutives display clearer emotional extensions and follow a very standard pattern across languages (i.e. mostly positive with some negative values). Augmentatives have less, and less clear, emotional extensions, and display much more diverse patterns. Altogether, augmentatives can hardly be described as the negative mirror of diminutives with respect to emotions.

#### **4.2 Overlaps and contrasts in emotional values**

Looking at specific emotional categories encoded by diminutives, we find that a number of categories are common to both diminutives and augmentatives. This is the case of endearment and compassion, admiration and respect, as well as contempt. Connotations specific to diminutives are that of romantic and/or sexually oriented love, as well as

comfort and control relative to familiar routines. Connotations of fear are specific to augmentatives (but they are also marginal).

Comfort and control on the one hand, and fear on the other hand are the only dimensions along which diminutives and augmentatives can be said to contrast relatively clearly.<sup>21</sup> Otherwise, the emotional values mostly overlap, and contrasts are to be searched for in the particular conceptual grounds of specific extensions. For instance, diminutives extend to contempt via the notion of insignificance, i.e. lack of consideration (diminutives). Augmentatives, on the other hand, extend to contempt via the notion of excessive and thus inadequate social behavior, hence disgust, repulsion etc. Diminutives extend to admiration via endearment and affection; while augmentatives extend to admiration via the association of size with importance and age with maturity, i.e. via the correlation between size and social status. Overall, the main line of contrast is possibly that diminutives tend to gain emotional connotations with reference to the intimate universe of interactions with children, whereas augmentatives can convey emotions that relate to a broader social context. Both diminutives and augmentatives can express 'social' emotions, but with diminutives these extensions arise *via* child-oriented intimate emotions, while with augmentatives, these extensions arise directly from the size-related denotational meaning. Once again, the contrast is not sharp, since as pointed out by Dressler & Merlini Barbaresi (1994), augmentatives share the ludic and jocular pragmatic values of diminutives, which are typically child-related. In addition social status is listed by Grandi & Körtvélyessy (2015a:10) among the most frequent values of evaluative morphology in general. Nevertheless, in the very modest sample under consideration, emotions related to a broader social context are more salient, and more directly obtained from denotational meanings, with augmentatives than with diminutives.

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<sup>21</sup> However, the paths of extensions leading to these connotations may not be entirely symmetrical. Augmentatives can connote fear because large size can be dangerous and scary. With diminutives, although it may be argued that small size is reassuring, another reason why they connote comfort and control is probably related to the intimate context. Diminutives are frequently used, when addressing children, in a comfortable homely context where the speaker has control.

## 5. Conclusions

In this article, I have presented the first preliminary typology of the emotional values of diminutive and augmentative morphological devices. Although this work remains preliminary, it establishes, for each device, which emotional categories are attested and where.

Apart from relatively mild emotions related to children, diminutives are found to index contempt, compassion, romantic and/or sexually oriented love, admiration and respect, as well as comfort and control relative to personal daily routines. Based on the language sample used in this work, the distribution of some of these emotional categories could be areal, while some emotional values could be channeled by some morphological properties. Both hypotheses – areal and linguistic determination – call for further investigation. In terms of diachrony, typological observations confirm that diminutives sometimes evolve into purely qualitative evaluative devices (i.e. pejoratives and melioratives specialized for one specific emotion), and suggest that they can also bleach into markers of general emotional coloring. The historical development of diminutives with respect to emotions is also open for investigation in further research.

Emotional connotations are less frequent and less clear in augmentatives than diminutives. Nevertheless, several regularly attested emotional connotations can be identified. While negative emotions are predominant in augmentatives, these devices display a mixed range, including a significant proportion of positive emotions. Among negative connotations are contempt and repulsion relative to excessive and inappropriate behavior, as well as marginal connotations of fear. Among positive emotions are admiration and respect related to high social status, as well as endearment and compassion.

Diminutives and augmentatives are antonyms with respect to their quantitative meanings (small vs big), but this contrast is not matched for emotional values. Positive emotions are prevalent with diminutives, but not to the exclusion of negative ones. Augmentatives, on the other hand, are far less skewed towards negative emotions than diminutives are towards positive emotions. In fact, the emotional categories expressed



by diminutives and augmentatives often overlap. The most relevant contrast between the two could be that diminutives express emotions anchored – if only remotely – in the context of intimacy, whereas augmentatives more frequently express emotions grounded in a broader social context.

Given the scarcity of the data on emotional values of diminutives and augmentatives, the results presented here can only remain partial and tentative. It is hoped that this preliminary study can trigger interest and provide conceptual tools for further research on the encoding of emotions in evaluative morphology.

## **Appendix**

### **Languages considered for the study of diminutives**

#### ***America***

Tacana (Takanan, South America, Bolivia), Guillaume this volume

Mojeño (Arawak, South America, Bolivia), Rose this volume

Tunamiisut (Eskimo-Aleut, Inuit, North America, East Greenland), Tersis (2008)

Columbian Spanish (Indo-European, Romance, South America), Travis (2004)

Mexican Spanish (Indo-European, Romance, Meso-America), Chamoreau (2012) based on Reynoso (2001), Gaarder (1966)

#### ***Africa***

Akan (Niger-Congo, Central Tano, Ghana), Appah & Amfo (2011)

Beja (Afroasiatic, Cushitic, Sudan), Vanhove & Hamid Ahmed, this volume

Ewe (Niger-Congo, Gbe, Togo, Benin), Heine, Claudi & Hünнемeyer (1991) and Ameke (2012)

Hassaniyya Arabic (Afroasiatic, Semitic, Mauritania), Taine-Cheikh (1988) and this volume

Luganda (Niger-Congo, Bantu, Uganda), Namugala (2014)

Swahili (Niger-Congo, Bantu, Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Mozambique, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda), Contini-Morava (2002)

## ***Asia***

Hong Kong Cantonese (Tibeto-Burman, Chinese), Jurafsky (1988)

## ***Europe***

Dutch (Indo-European, Germanic), Shetter (1959)

French (Indo-European, Romance), Fradin (Fradin 2003)

Italian (Indo-European, Romance), Dressler & Merlini Barbaresi (1994)

Modern Greek (Indo-European, Hellenic), Sifianiou (1992)

Portuguese (Indo-European, Romance), Rudolph (1990)

Spanish (Indo-European, Romance), Alonso (1996)

## ***Oceania***

Dalabon (non-Pama-Nyungan, Gunwinyguan, Australia), Ponsonnet (2014a), Ponsonnet & Evans (2015)

Mwotlap (Austronesian, Oceanic, Vanuatu), François (2001; 2015)

## **Languages considered for the study of augmentatives**

Beja (Afroasiatic, Cushitic, Africa, Sudan), Vanhove & Hamid Ahmed, this volume

Even (Atlaic, Tungusic, Asia, Siberia), Pakendorf (2016)

Evenki (Atlaic, Tungusic, Asia, Siberia, China, Mongolia), Bulatova (2015)

Ewe (Niger-Congo, Gbe, Africa, Togo, Benin), Agbetsoamedo & Agbedor (2015)

Italian (Indo-European, Romance, Europe), Dressler & Merlini Barbaresi (1994)

Luganda (Niger-Congo, Bantu, Africa, Uganda), Namugala (2014)

Mexican Spanish (Indo-European, Romance, Meso-America), Gaarder (1966)

Slovak (Indo-European, Slavic, Europe), Böhmerová (2011)

Tunumiisut (Eskimo-Aleut, Inuit, North America, East Greenland), Tersis (2008)

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