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Can suffixal augmentation express approximation?

The case of denominal evaluative nouns

Abstract: The paper focuses on the relationships between so-called diminutive/augmentative morphology and approximation. As this topic is very broad, only the denominal nouns are studied in this article. Our study, based on data from French and Serbian, has a twofold aim: to answer the question asked in the title of this article and, the answer being negative, try to understand why only diminutive suffixes, and not augmentative ones, can express approximation. This should also allow us to understand the specificity of diminutive approximation. Firstly, we show that even though both types of evaluatives express non-conformity with respect to a norm, in the case of diminution the norm is not reached, whereas augmentation entails that the norm is not only reached but is exceeded. This suggests that approximation is fundamentally associated with a certain degree of deficiency, which is consistent with the literature on this topic. Secondly, we demonstrate that the main peculiarity of diminutive approximation is that it is measurative in nature as it is underlined by the orientational metaphor UP/DOWN and based on a set of gradable semantic dimensions such as SMALL/BIG, FEW/MUCH. This is not the case of other morphological devices that trigger approximative meanings (e.g., *pseudo-*, *-oïde*), whose role is to provide a global evaluation of the matching between a given referent and core members of the category expressed by the base.

Keywords: approximation, diminution, augmentation, evaluative morphology, categorization

1. Introduction

Diminutive and augmentative meanings are quite typical of evaluative morphology, whatever the language concerned (see, e.g., Jurafsky 1996; Grandi & Körtvélyessy 2015; Štekauer 2015; Martín Calvo 2022). Evaluative morphology fundamentally provides items that express an appreciation of existing conceptual categories (see for example Scalise 1986; Stump 1993; Bauer 1997; Fradin 2003; Dressler & Merlini Barberesi 1994; Stosic & Amiot 2019), regardless of the category involved: noun (*fille* ‘girl’/*fillette* ‘little girl’), verb (*voler* ‘to fly’/*voleter* ‘to fly’/‘to flutter’), adjective (*propre* ‘clean’/*propret* ‘neat and tidy’), preposition

(Breton: *e-kichen* ‘near’/*e-kichenig* ‘very near’¹), etc. In a previous article (Amiot & Stosic 2022) focusing on diminutive evaluative suffixation, we showed that, in French, approximation can only be expressed by a subset of these derivatives, which we called “strong approximative evaluatives”. In accordance with other contributions from this volume, we do not limit approximation to one of the senses of diminution identified by Jurafsky (1996: 536, Tab. 2), alongside “small, young/offspring, female gender, small-type, imitation, intensity/exactness, individuation/partiality”. This sense of approximation, called by other authors “attenuation”, is considered by Jurafsky, and other authors after him, as characteristic of adjectival evaluation (*yellow/yellowish*). We rely on a broader definition of approximation. This is based on the definition of Mihatsch (2009: 100), who considers that the domain of approximation concerns “explicit linguistic means that serve to blur the categorical limits of the linguistic element they modify”. These “explicit linguistic means” alluded to by Mihatsch are what Lakoff (1973) calls “hedges”, i.e., “words whose meaning implicitly involve fuzziness-words whose job is to make things fuzzier or less fuzzy” (Lakoff 1973: 471; see also Prince et al. 1982; Kleiber 1987; Channell 1994; Gerhard-Krait & Vassiliadou 2017; Vassiliadou & Lammert eds. 2022). In evaluative morphology, whose scope encompasses a variety of lexical categories, the suffix can be this “explicit linguistic mean” (on this subject, see Amiot & Stosic 2022). Consequently, approximation is not taught as a simple attenuation of qualities, but as a range of strategies relating to fuzzy or vague representation of conceptual categories (for further discussion, see Introduction to this issue by Masini et al. 2023, and below).

In this article, we extend our research to suffixal augmentation by investigating whether it can also express approximative meanings. The answer to the question being negative, we will try to understand why, which should in turn give us additional information about approximation itself.

To do so, we proceed in several steps: we first try to give a definition of morphological approximation, but it will be rather restrictive because it fits our specific object: diminutive/augmentative suffixation (Section 2). Then, based on the results of our previous work (Amiot & Stosic 2022), we recall the constraints that enable these approximative meanings

¹ Example from Stump, 1993: 2. On the grammar of Breton, see Jouitteau (2009–2023), and on the suffix *-ig* in particular, see https://arbres.iker.cnrs.fr/index.php?title=-ig#base_adverbiale (accessed 13 December 2022).

to be constructed in French suffixation (Section 3). Since French has a very poor augmentative evaluative suffixation², Serbian, a Slavic language with a more fully developed (diminutive and augmentative) evaluative suffixation, will serve as a reference language. We chose to focus on nouns because, as shown by Grandi (2009: 47), from a typological point of view, nouns play a very central role in the formation of both diminutives and augmentatives and because this category seemed to be more suitable for raising the question of approximation, and thus the degree of membership to the conceptual category associated with the base.

Our analysis, based on a corpus of 814 nouns suffixed with one of the 13 suffixes that can express augmentation in Serbian (cf. Klajn 2003; Jovanović 2010; Bońkowski 2017), shows that evaluative augmentative derivatives, while involving the same formation principles as diminutive derivatives, never express approximation (Section 4). This observation leads us to ask the question of “why” (Section 5).

2. Morphological approximation: a working definition

The present study focuses on a set of evaluative suffixes from French and Serbian that form diminutive (French) and augmentative (Serbian) meanings. Here are some nominal examples:

French:

- (1) a. *-et/-ette*: *île* ‘island’ → *îlet* ‘small island, islet’; *savon* ‘soap’ → *savonnette* ‘small bar of soap’
- b. *-ot/-otte*: *bec* ‘beak, kiss’ → *bécot* ‘small kiss/peck’, *main* ‘hand’ → *menotte* ‘tiny hand’
- c. *-ille*: *brin* ‘sprig, strand’ → *brindille* ‘twig, stalk’

² In French, the suffixes *-issime*, *-on* and *-asse*, more rarely *-âtre*, are sometimes considered as augmentative suffixes, however:

– while this article focuses on nominal suffixation, the suffix *-issime* is an adjectival suffix: *riche* ‘rich’ → *richissime* ‘extremely rich’; *ridicule* ‘ridiculous’ → *ridiculissime* ‘extremely ridiculous’. In French, nominal augmentation can be built by prefixation, especially with *hyper-* (N: *sensibilité* ‘sensitivity’ / *hypersensibilité* ‘hypersensitivity’). Prefixal augmentation (and diminution) raises other complex questions that we could not address in this article.

– The suffixes *-asse* and *-on* do show an augmentative meaning in some nouns, e.g., *-asse*: *barque* ‘rowing boat’ / *barcasse* ‘big rowing boat’, but also ‘bad boat’; *-on*: *balle* ‘ball’ → *ballon* ‘big ball’, but these are usually borrowed nouns: *barcasse* is thus supposed to have been borrowed from Italian (*barcaccia*) or Provencal (*barcasso*), and *ballon*, from Italian (*pallone*). In general, nouns built with these suffixes have other interpretations: e.g., for *-on*, the diminution, with a notion of partitivity (*glace* ‘ice’ → *glaçon* ‘ice cube’), and/or familiarity (*curé* ‘vicar’ → *cureton* ‘vicar, informal’), or, for *-asse*, an essentially pejorative meaning (*vin* ‘wine’ → *vinasse* ‘cheap wine, plonk’).

Serbian:

- (2) a. *-ina*: *kuća* ‘house’ → *kućetina* ‘a very big (ugly) house’
 b. *-čuga*: *bolest* ‘illness’ → *boleščuga* ‘serious illness’
 c. *-erda*: *ruka* ‘hand’ → *ručerda* ‘a big odious hand’

Given the studies presented in this volume and our previous paper on morphological approximation (Amiot & Stosic 2022), we can observe that this device constructs at least two main types of approximative meanings, all of which, however, involve an evaluation with respect to a standard: meanings essentially related to fakeness, imitation, non-authenticity on the one hand, and meanings related to diminution on the other hand. The two concepts can overlap, but we will focus on the second concept, the only one represented by our suffixes.

An approximative derivative fundamentally expresses both resemblance and dissimilarity with respect to the norm; approximation thus involves categorizing – or at least an attempt to categorize – an entity in a pre-existing class represented by the base. This general mechanism of matching what is to be designated and the category that a word represents is also present in non-morphological strategies (cf. “hedges”, Lakoff 1973; Prince et al. 1982; Mihatsch 2009):

- (3) Eng. *I saw a very strange creature, **a kind of bird**...*
 Fra. *Il a **une sorte d’engin** qui coupe tout...*
 ‘He has a kind of device that cuts everything’

In all these cases there is an imperfect match, leading to a kind of fuzzy representation, which can be of two types generally speaking: referential or pragmatic.

3. Diminutive suffixation: The construction principles of approximative meaning

3.1 French approximative suffixation

In French, approximation can be expressed by (at least) two sorts of suffixes, as illustrated by examples (4)–(5) vs. (6):

– The first sort can be illustrated by the suffixe *-oïde* (4) and the affixoid *-forme* (5)³:

- (4) a. *une roche granitoïde* ‘a granitoid rock’ is ‘a rock whose texture is close to that of granite’
 b. *un état crétinoïde* ‘a creninoid state’ is ‘a state reminiscent of cretinism, but less pronounced’
- (5) a. *une substance géliforme* ‘a gel-like substance’ is ‘a substance that looks like gel’
 b. *une boisson théiforme* ‘a theiform drink’, that is a ‘drink reminiscent of tea, which is prepared in the same way as tea’

Adjectives in *-oïde* and *-forme* fundamentally express both resemblance and difference with respect to an entity that serves as a norm and that is represented by the base of the derivative.

– The second sort of suffixation is illustrated by the French diminutive suffixes, as in (6)⁴:

- (6) *-et/-ette*: *réforme* ‘reform’ → *réformette* ‘mini-reform with little value or scope’
-âtre: *jaune* ‘yellow’ → *jaunâtre* ‘yellowish’
-ill(er): *sauter* ‘to jump’ → *sautiller* ‘to hop’, etc.

The very use of the term *réformette*, for example, means that the referent does not deserve the name of *réforme* (*c’est une réformette, pas une réforme!* ‘it is a “réformette”, not a reform!); it looks like one but does not have the scope of a real reform. The use of the noun *réformette* seems to imply, from the speaker, a certain detachment based on a kind of meta-linguistic judgment. As for *jaunâtre* ‘yellowish’, it means ‘somewhat yellow’, often with a pejorative value. The meanings built by the suffixations *-oïde* and *-forme* and those built by *-et*, *-âtre* or *-iller* are different, but in both types, a meaning of approximation is built from an implicit comparison between the prototype associated with the base: the derivative then expresses non-conformity with respect to this standard. In addition, *réformette* expresses a second type of non-conformity with a standard: it is pragmatically marked in that it does not belong to the standard vocabulary but to distinctive registers, especially informal ones with a pejorative value.

³ On the analysis of *-form* as an affixoid, see Amiot & Dugas (2020).

⁴ Besides *-et/-ette*, *-âtre* and *-ill(er)*, there are several other diminutive suffixes in French: *-ouill(er)*, *-asse*, *-ot/-ot(t)e*, *-eau*, etc. Authors who have studied evaluative suffixation in French agree that it is difficult to determine the exact number of suffixes (see for example Plénat 1999).

In our previous study, we focused on examples of type (6), which belong to evaluative morphology in the narrow sense. In this sort of morphology, the evaluation is accomplished through a set of binary oppositions that universally structure human conceptual representations, and that can be represented as in Fig. 1.

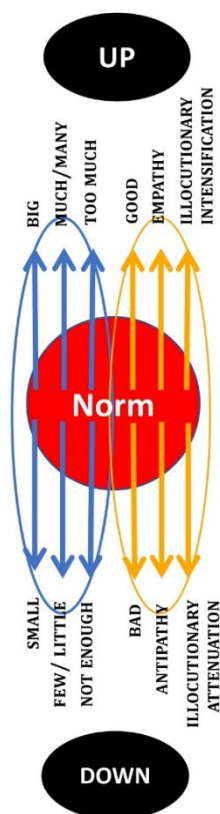


Fig. 1: Bipolarity of evaluative meanings⁵

Following Lakoff & Johnson (1980: 14–21), each axis can be defined as a system of values underlined by the orientational metaphor UP-DOWN that gives the conceptual domain at issue a specific spatial orientation. The authors argue that several fundamental conceptual domains are organized in terms of the UP-DOWN spatialization metaphor: GOOD IS UP/BAD IS DOWN, MORE IS UP/LESS IS DOWN, VIRTUE IS UP/DEPRAVITY IS DOWN, HAPPY IS UP/SAD IS DOWN. As for evaluative morphology, we showed in our previous work, on the basis of the relevant literature (Dressler & Merlini Barberesi 1994; Mel’čuk 1994; Grandi 2002; Fradin

⁵ This representation is based on our previous studies (especially Amiot & Stosic 2019 and 2022, also Stosic & Amiot 2011) but has evolved so as to be consistent with the development of our analyses. As for the bipolarity, i.e., the distinction between the Referential Pole and the Pragmatic Pole, it is inspired by the work of Fradin (2003), taken up in Meunier et al. (2007). The same applies to the term “measurative”, borrowed from Fradin and taken up, among others, by Efthymiou (2017).

2003; Fradin & Montermini 2009; Grandi & Körtvélyessy 2015 eds.; Štekauer 2015), that two sets of values can be distinguished, forming respectively two different poles: the Referential Pole (RP), in blue, which represents the set of interpretations involving a measurative dimension; it gives rise to measurative meanings of the type: SMALL/BIG, LITTLE/MUCH, NOT ENOUGH/TOO MUCH, i.e., the meanings of diminution, augmentation, excess, etc. The other axis, in yellow, represents the Pragmatic Pole (PP), which contains the set of interpretations involving the subjective or appreciative dimension, and gives rise to more qualitative meanings, closely related to speaker affect ((dis)satisfaction, (dis)approval...): GOOD/BAD, EMPATHY/ANTIPATHY, etc. In both cases, however, the evaluation is carried out from a standard inherent in the concept of the base, namely, the reference point (the “Norm” placed in the middle of the two axes) of the evaluation system. As for the arrows oriented in the two directions, toward the UP or toward the DOWN side, they represent the evaluation process itself that takes place in relation to N: excess or a large quantity, for example, are located on the upper part of the axis (UP). Conversely, smallness or insufficiency are located on the lower part of the axis (DOWN). This placement on either side of the zero point of the system on an oriented axis constitutes, in our opinion, the specificity of evaluative suffixation in the strict sense as it expresses diminution or augmentation. We shall see that this specificity has an influence on the capacity of suffixes to express approximation (Section 3.2), and on the type of approximation expressed by these suffixes (Section 5.3). Consequently, the UP-DOWN orientational metaphor can be considered as providing the basis on which the evaluation process is carried out either in its referential or in its pragmatic dimension. It is worth noting, however, that the two axes are independent of each other, and the morphological evaluation clearly shows that one should not attempt to match the values of the poles located on the same side of the axis. On the contrary, the correspondences are rather crossed: generally, the diminutive meanings of the referential pole (lower part of the RP axis) are rather positively connoted (upper part of the PP axis; e.g., *menotte* ‘little hand, handy’, from *main* ‘hand’) and conversely, the augmentative meanings (upper part of the RP axis) are rather negatively connoted (lower part of the PP axis; e.g., in Serbian, *sovuljaga* ‘big, awful owl’, from *sova* ‘owl’). These correspondences, however, are only trends (see Grandi 2002: 34; see also Radial categories from Jurafsky 1996 or Mutz 2015): it is quite possible to find diminutives with negative connotations

(*réformette*, already cited, or *Paris* → *parigot* ‘parisian’, with a negative connotation) and augmentatives with positive connotations (e.g., in Serbian, *momčina* ‘big guy’, from *momak* ‘boy’). A noun can also receive one connotation or the other depending on the context. For example, in French *églisette* could be interpreted as a ‘small church (DOWN) that is quite charming (UP)’, or a ‘small church (DOWN) that is of little importance (DOWN)’⁶.

When the Referential Pole alone is involved, which is quite infrequent, the derivative expresses one of the quantitative meanings (e.g., SMALL/BIG, FEW/MUCH) noted on the diagram:

- (7) dimin. *île* ‘island’ → *îlot* ‘small island’, *sauter* ‘to jump’ → *sautiller* ‘to hop’,
pauvre ‘poor’ → *pauvret* ‘fairly poor, poorish’

When only the Pragmatic Pole is involved, the derivative expresses one of the qualitative meanings (e.g., GOOD/BAD, EMPATHY/ANTIPATHY) noted on the diagram:

- (8) *frère* ‘brother’ → *frérot* ‘bro’, *traîner* ‘to hang around’ → *traînasser* ‘to dawdle’,
merder ‘to screw up’ → *merdouiller* ‘to mess things up’

In examples (8), the discrepancy from the standard does not concern the reduction of one or more referential dimensions expressed by the semantics of the base – *frère* and *frérot*, *traîner* and *traînasser*, etc. have exactly the same denotation –, but it concerns the standard associated with the use of the language itself. Thus, the terms cited under (8) can only be used in a colloquial or informal register. Other values are often present: a hypocoristic value (*frérot*) or a depreciative one (*traînasser*) for example.

In most cases, however, both poles are involved:

- (9) *bec* ‘beak’ → *bécot* lit. ‘small beak’, ‘peck’, *simple* ‘simple’ → *simplet* ‘simple-minded’, *beige* ‘beige’ → *beigeasse* ‘loosely beige’, *travailler* ‘to work’ → *travailloter* ‘to potter’

The evaluative derivatives⁷ under (9) express both types of non-conformity with the standard: (a) they are pragmatically marked in that they do not belong to the standard

⁶ Thanks to one of our reviewers for having led us to clarify this point through his/her remarks.

⁷ Evaluative morphology is considered as part of derivational morphology (cf. in this respect the synthesis of Grandi 2017, and, among others, Dressler & Merlini Barbaresi 1994; Haspelmath 2010; Körtvélyessy 2015), contrary to Scalise (1984) who makes it a “third morphology”, alongside inflectional and derivational morphology (see also Fortin 2011; Martín Calvo 2022). We will therefore speak of “evaluative derivatives”, even

vocabulary but to distinctive registers, involving in many cases the speaker's positive or negative attitude; (b) they also express referential discrepancy from the standard: a *bécot* is a 'small kiss', i.e., a rather quick and light kiss, and *travailloter* is to work in a certain way: slowly or sluggishly.

3.2 The constraints leading to an approximative reading

Amiot & Stosic (2022) report that only a subset of diminutive derivatives can express this approximative meaning. To do this, they must display the following properties:

(i) Formally, homocategoriality must be at work, i.e., the category of the derivative must be identical to that of the base. This is the case of the nouns, adjectives and verbs in (10), where the input and the output of the derivation process belong to the same lexical category, and which all display an approximative meaning:

- (10) N/N: *livre_N* 'book' → *livret_N* 'booklet', *île_N* 'island' → *ilot_N* 'small island, islet'
 Adj/Adj: *gentil_A* 'kind' → *gentillet_A* 'kind enough', *jeune_A* 'young' → *jeunot_A* 'a bit young, immature'
 V/V: *voler_V* 'to fly' → *voleter_V* 'to flutter around', *boiter_V* 'to limp' → *boitiller_V* 'to hobble'

These examples show that the use of evaluation, as it reports a sort of discrepancy with respect to a standard, is closely linked to the difficulty of categorization (X is almost a Y but cannot be unconditionally categorized as a Y). This difficulty of categorization, which gives rise to the approximate interpretation, seems to imply a metalinguistic judgment: since the base name is not suitable to denote the entity in question, the diminutive suffixation makes it possible to create another term, which signals both similarity and non-conformity with the base. The homocategoriality can thus be thought of as a direct consequence of both the similarity of the referent to the standard and the impossibility of classifying it in another category. As a result, strictly speaking, only one referential category is cognitively processed, which implies, at the linguistic level, that the base and the derivative belong to the same lexical category. When two different referential categories are involved, the derivative cannot have this approximation meaning, as in examples (11):

for non-lexicalized forms, or "approximative derivatives", to refer to suffixed forms manifesting, respectively, an evaluative and/or an approximative meaning.

- (11) V/N: *sucer* ‘to suck’ → *sucette* ‘lollipop’
 A/N: *bleu* ‘blue’ → *bleuet* ‘cornflower’, ‘blueberry’

Sucette ‘lollipop’ and *bleuet* ‘cornflower’/‘blueberry’ do not have an approximative meaning, even though they still appear to have an evaluative meaning⁸.

However, homocategoricity is not a sufficient criterion as some homocategorical derivatives do not have this approximative meaning either:

- (12) N/N: *lune*_N ‘moon’ → *lunette*_N ‘glasses’
 N/N: *fenouil*_N ‘fennel’ → *fenouillet*_N ‘variety of apple that smells like fennel; fenouillet’

Although the nouns in (12) are homocategorical (they are denominal nouns), the derivatives do not express approximation because the construction of their meaning involves either a metaphor (glasses are shaped like small moons) or a metonymy (the smell of the apple reminds one of fennel), which leads to the processing of two distinct conceptual categories. There is no referential evaluation here (for example *lunette* does not denote a ‘small moon’), nor, by way of consequence, any difficulty in categorization⁹.

(ii) In addition, the evaluation made in reference to a standard, as mentioned above, must necessarily involve the Referential Pole, either exclusively, as in (13a), where the derivatives express only diminution (a *cuisinette* for example has the bulk of the properties of a cuisine ‘kitchen’, but it is smaller and less functional than a “normal” kitchen); or in association with the Pragmatic Pole, which is illustrated by the words in (13b) which, in addition to their meaning of diminution that allows an approximative interpretation, belong to non-standard language registers (hypocoristic, depreciative, colloquial). Only examples (13c), which exclusively involve the Pragmatic Pole, cannot express approximation:

⁸ The evaluative meaning of words like *sucette* and *bleuet* is not obvious. Some authors have shown that, even if they are lexicalized, words suffixed with *-et* still denote small, manageable entities, etc. (see for example Fradin 2003; Meunier et al. 2007). Amiot & Stosic (2022) also show that many *-et* suffixed words are vernacular names of entities that often have scientific names. *Bleuet*, which is one of the vernacular names for *Centaurea cyanus*, is a good example of such a case. We are therefore faced with a pragmatic evaluation, not a referential one.

⁹ This case is not very frequent in French, whereas it is widespread in Serbian, which is why, in Section 4.2, two types of homocategoricity are distinguished: a morpho-syntactic homocategoricity and a conceptual one. In French, the two types of homocategoricity generally coincide, except in cases such as this one, where only morpho-syntactic homocategoricity is present (about this distinction, see Section 4.2).

in this case the derivative has exactly the same denotation as its base, and only the register and the pragmatic value change.

- (13) a. *cuisinette* (< *cuisine* ‘kitchen’) ‘small kitchen, kitchenette’¹⁰, *mordiller* (< *mordre* ‘to bite’) ‘to nibble’
- b. *angelot* (< *ange* ‘angel’) lit. ‘small angel’, ‘cherub’, *suret* (< *sur* ‘sour’) ‘tart, slightly sour’, *amourette* (< *amour* ‘love’) ‘casual love affair’, *vivoter* (< *vivre* ‘to live’) ‘to get by’, ‘to barely survive’
- c. *frérot* (< *frère* ‘brother’) hypocoristic ‘bro’, *traînasser* (< *traîner* ‘to dawdle’) depreciative ‘to dawdle’, *merdouiller* (< *merder* ‘to screw up’) informal ‘to screw up’

3.3 Semi-categorization

Approximative derivatives cannot refer to autonomous conceptual categories, so they cannot integrate lexical hierarchies based on the hyperonymy/hyponymy relation (see Amiot & Stosic 2022). For example, unlike such compounds as *vert pomme* ‘apple green’, *vert émeraude* ‘emerald green’ or *vert d’eau* ‘aqua green’, the French adjective *verdâtre* ‘greenish’ cannot be considered a hyponym of *vert* ‘green’. *Verdâtre* (< *vert* ‘green’) does not denote a kind of green but only a non-prototypical green, with a depreciative nuance (cf. **le verdâtre est une nuance de vert* ‘greenish is a hue of green’ vs. *le vert pomme est une nuance de vert* ‘apple green is a hue of green’), which is usually the case with the suffix *-âtre*.

If these derivatives cannot integrate a hierarchy based on hypo-/hyperonymy relations, it is because it is not possible to identify a set of stable and recurrent properties – the *differentiae specifica* –, which would make it possible to constitute subclasses and be located among possible co-hyponyms (cf. *Les siamois et autres chats...* ‘Siamese and other cats...’ vs. **Les chatons et autres chats...* ‘Kittens and other cats...’). For these reasons and based on a sort of conceptual derivation, what such evaluatives denote seems to correspond to kinds of “parasitic semi-categories” (see Amiot & Stosic 2022) rather than to true sub-categories of the category expressed by their base¹¹. Consequently, it is difficult to establish the

¹⁰ The term *kitchenette* is also used in French.

¹¹ Amiot & Stosic’s term “parasitic semi-category” stems directly from Ungerer & Schmid’s (1996: 74–76) notion of “parasitic categorization” that is used to explain a specific way of defining some superordinate categories without common “underlying gestalt that applies to all category members” (e.g., FURNITURE, FRUIT). To denote such categories, one can “borrow” the gestalt properties of the superordinate category from the basic-level categories involved”. See also Mihatsch (2007: 361) who argues for an extension of this

corresponding prototype, because their representation seems to be both highly dependent on the category fixed by the base, and not sufficiently elaborated in speakers' minds to give rise to an autonomous category. Such referents can be considered as gravitating in a kind of in-between space delimited by the core of the base category on the one hand, and by neighboring categories on the other hand.

As for non-approximative diminutives (e.g., *sucette* 'lollipop'), they generally denote entities that constitute autonomous categories, and thus appear in hierarchies based on the hyponymy/hyperonymy relation: a *sucette* 'lollipop' for example is a type of candy, just like a hard candy, an acid drop, a gummy worm, and so on. *Bonbon* 'candy' is therefore the hyperonym of *sucette* 'lollipop', which in return is its hyponym. And *sucette* 'lollipop' has other candy names as its co-hyponyms¹².

We now turn to suffixal augmentation, to see if it can also express approximation. As announced in the introduction, the data will be provided by Serbian.

4. Suffixal augmentation in Serbian

We assume that suffixal augmentation is construed according to the same principles as diminution: the evaluation is done through the same bipolar axis, but it targets the opposite pole and expresses an excess in relation to the norm (see Fig. 1 above).

This is very clear from the examples from Serbian below:

- (14) a. *hrid* 'rock' → *hridina* 'big rock'
 b. *dete* 'child' → *detište* 'pest child'
 c. *kapetan* 'captain' → *kapetančina* 'famous, very worthy, admirable captain'
 d. *magla* 'fog' → *magluština* 'very thick and awful fog'
 e. *momak* 'boy' → *momčina* 'big good boy' 'big guy'

principle to the transfer of attributes from basic-level categories to categories belonging to other levels (including the lower one).

¹² An exception, however, is the evaluative derivatives which only involve the pragmatic pole (e.g., *frère* 'brother' → *frérot* 'bro'); these words cannot integrate a hierarchy of this type because they have exactly the same denotation as their base. There is no specific difference between them and their base and they cannot have the status of a hyponym.

4.1 Data collection

The study is based on a large sample of evaluative lexemes, namely 814 nouns, formed by a set of nominal suffixes traditionally considered as construing augmentatives (cf. Klajn 2003; Jovanović 2010; Bońkowski 2017).

Two main sources were used for data collection: the *Serbian Electronic Dictionary* (about 300 000 entries, see Simić 2005), and a 477-million-word Serbian corpus srWaC (v. 1.2), available in Sketch Engine¹³, which are two complementary resources. By using various sampling methods, we obtained a sample of about 3300 candidates extracted from the dictionary and about 5000 candidates taken from srWaC. Only one tenth of the forms, namely 814 items, were selected as expressing evaluation¹⁴. The list of suffixes and the distribution of the 814 nouns collected for the purposes of this study are shown in Tab. 1.

Tab. 1: Distribution of nouns by suffix

Suffix	Nb occurrences	Suffix	Nb occurrences
-ina ¹⁵	519	-enda	22
-ura	60	-ište	20
-ulja	51	-sk(e/a)ra	16
-uša	40	-aga	9
-č(u/a)ga	26	-injara	1
-uga	25	-udža	1
-(u/e)rda	24		

Some derivatives that we collected are present only in the dictionary (71,5%), others were found only in srWac (9,7%), and some appear in both resources (18.8%).

The bases these suffixes operate on were examined with reference to several criteria. First of all, we observed the part of speech (POS) of all the bases. Homocategoriality is at

¹³ The *Serbian web corpus* (srWaC) is a Serbian corpus made up of texts collected from the Internet by Tomaž Erjavec and Nikola Ljubešić. The corpus was created in January 2014 (see Ljubešić & Klubička 2014).

¹⁴ This score results from a great versatility of some of these suffixes. For instance, the ending *-ina* can form quality nouns from adjectives (e.g., *brz* ‘fast’ → *brzina* ‘speed’, *prazan* ‘empty’ → *praznina* ‘emptiness’), nouns denoting meat from the corresponding nouns for animals (e.g., *prase* ‘pig’ → *prasetina* ‘pork’), fraction nouns derived from numerals (e.g., *pet* ‘five’ → *petina* ‘fifth’), place nouns derived either from verbs (e.g., *padati* ‘to fall’ → *padina* ‘slope’) or from nouns (e.g., *dô/dol* ‘dell’ → *dolina* ‘valley’), or a series of nouns formed from adverbs (e.g., *mnogo* ‘a lot of’ → *množina* ‘plural’, *koliko* ‘how much’ → *količina* ‘quantity’) (see Klajn 2003: 95–98).

¹⁵ The augmentative suffix *-ina* displays a range of variants: *-čina*, *-etina*, *-ština*, *-urina*, *-ušina*, *-uština*, and so on. Given the methodological approach of this study aiming at building a representative corpus of nominal augmentatives in Serbian, they were all grouped together in this study. It is clear, however, that the allomorphy of *-ina* deserves an in-depth empirical study (see also Klajn 2003: 101–104).

work in 84% of cases (15), but Serbian also allows the formation of nouns with augmentative meanings from verbs (16) and adjectives (17), in about 8% of cases for each¹⁶:

- (15) a. *glava* ‘head’ → *glavurda* ‘big and/or awful head’
- b. *jež* ‘hedgehog’ → *ježina* ‘big hedgehog’
- c. *muškarac* ‘man’ → *muškarčina* ‘big, tough and/or macho man’
- (16) a. *nemati* ‘to do not have’ → *nemaština* ‘scarcity’
- b. *obiti* ‘to burgle’ → *objačina* ‘big and/or memorable burglary’
- c. *pljuvati* ‘to spit/speak ill of’ → *pljuvačina* ‘denigration/defamation’
- d. *škrabati* ‘to scrawl’ → *škrabotina* ‘scribble/daubing’
- (17) a. *dobar* ‘good’ → *dobričina* ‘a very kind person’
- b. *glup* ‘stupid’ → *gluperda* ‘a ridiculously stupid person’
- c. *lenj* ‘lazy’ → *lenčuga* ‘lazybones’

Second, we took into account several semantic features of the nouns serving as a base for forming augmentatives in order to better understand what kinds of concepts are best suited for such an interpretation. One of them is the category of animacy. Our data indicates that in this type of evaluation the base can refer to both animate and inanimate entities in more or less equal proportions (respectively 47,5% and 52,5%). The second one is the concrete-abstract distinction, which shows a clear imbalance in favor of concreteness: 97% of bases represent concrete denotata such as humans (e.g., *đak* ‘pupil’ → *đačina* ‘big and/or very good pupil’), objects (e.g., *čizma* ‘boot’ → *čizmetina* ‘big, awful boot’), animals (e.g., *ptica* ‘bird’ → *ptičurina* ‘big and/or dangerous and/or disgusting bird’), and so on. We found only two abstract categories supporting augmentative evaluation: events (e.g., *bankrot* ‘bankruptcy’ → *bankročina* ‘serious bankruptcy’) and qualities (e.g., *bezobrazn(ost)* ‘insolence’ → *bezobraština* ‘brazen insolence’).

Another relevant feature of the data collected pertains to the way the opposition between the Referential and Pragmatic Poles (RP vs. PP) is exploited in augmentative

¹⁶ One of our reviewers suggests that, in this case, the suffix *-ard* in French can also be considered as an augmentative suffix (*pleurnicher* ‘to grizzle’ → *pleurnichard* ‘whiny’, *gueuler* ‘to shout’ → *gueulard* ‘loud-mouth’), but in our opinion, these nouns rather express habituality, which “presupposes a more or less regular iteration of an event, such that the resulting habit is regarded as a characterizing property of a given referent. The notion of habituality is thus strictly related to iterativity, although the two should not be confused” (Lenci 2012).

suffixation in Serbian. Our corpus brings to the fore a very interesting interplay between them (see Tab. 2). First, one can observe that in 76% of cases, the two poles go hand in hand. Next, the “bigness meaning” most frequently has a pejorative value (71%) (e.g., *knjižurina* ‘big and/or unpleasant book’), but some derivatives (about 4%) combine bigness and melioration (e.g., *herojčina* ‘famous, admirable hero’). Note also that in a very few cases (9 nouns, 1%), the same augmentative item can, depending on its use, express either a positive or a negative attitude of the speaker (e.g., *mudarčina* ‘wise man, sage’ or ‘someone who pretends to know everything’). Finally, in only 6% of cases, augmentation is not associated with any pragmatic reading (e.g., *koferčina* ‘very big suitcase’).

Tab. 2: Interplay between Referential and Pragmatic Poles

PRAG. POLE REF. POLE	PEJ	MEL	PEJ / MEL	Ø
BIG/MUCH/MANY/TOO MUCH	71%	4%	1%	6%
Ø	17%	1%	x	x

The same table also shows that in 18% of cases, the evaluative derivatives at study only involve either pejoration (17%) or melioration (1%), without affecting in any way the referential dimension. Putting aside the two least productive suffixes (*-injara* and *-udža*), the most prominent suffixes with this behavior are *-uša*, *-ura* and *-ulja*. As shown in Fig. 2, *-uša* is highly specialized in the expression of speaker affect, and *-ura* and *-ulja* do so in more than 50% of their derivatives in our corpus.

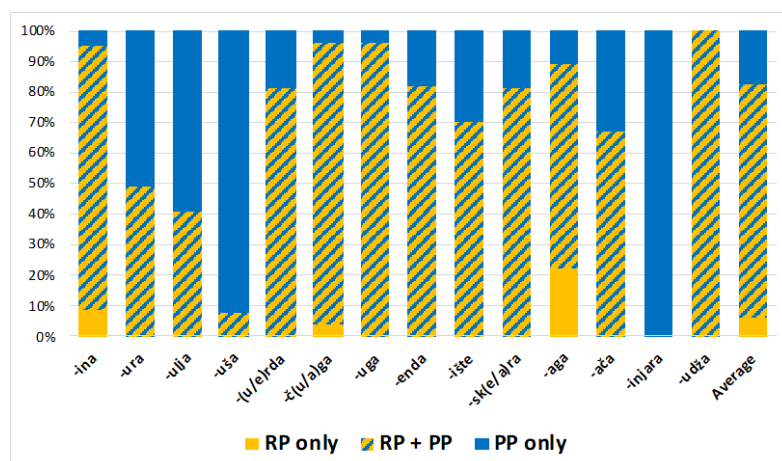


Fig. 2: Distribution of referential (RP) and pragmatic (PP) interpretations by suffix

Our sample thus provides a wide variety of nominal derivatives obtained by a series of so-called augmentative suffixes in Serbian (see Klajn 2003; Jovanović 2010). As such, it offers

a solid base for analyzing semantic values involved in this type of evaluative morphology, and consequently the relation between augmentation and approximation.

4.2 Augmentation and approximation: two irreconcilable values

As recalled above (see Section 3.2), only a subset of diminutive suffixed derivatives can express approximation. The approximative meaning is thus driven by two main constraints: homocategoriality and involvement of the referential dimension in the evaluation. In this section, we examine the relevance of these two constraints for an approximative reading of augmentative suffixed derivatives in Serbian.

The Serbian data suggest that two types of homocategoriality should be distinguished: a morpho-syntactic one and a conceptual one. The first type is illustrated by the examples in both (18) and (19), the latter only by the pairs in (18).

- (18) a. N/N: *krv* ‘blood’ → *krvuština* ‘very impure, sullied blood’
 b. N/N: *kuća* ‘house’ → *kućerina* ‘big and/or creepy house’
 c. N/N: *rupa* ‘hole’ → *rupčaga* ‘very big and/or very embarrassing hole’
- (19) a. N/N: *krv* ‘blood’ → *krvulja* ‘very nasty, perverse woman’
 b. N/N: *krokodil* ‘crocodile’ → *krokodiluša* ‘very sly, treacherous, perfidious woman’

There is morpho-syntactic homocategoriality in all these examples because in all of them, the evaluative noun is formed using a nominal basis (N/N). But in (18a), we are dealing with only one conceptual category, the category of BLOOD¹⁷, whereas the examples in (19) evoke two distinct conceptual categories, namely BLOOD and WOMAN in (19a), and CROCODILE and WOMAN in (19b). Consequently, what distinguishes the two sets of examples is the fact that in (17) the derivatives do not refer to autonomous conceptual categories, but rather to “parasitic” semi-categories, just as diminutives do (see Section 3.3 above), whereas in (19), even though both the bases and the derivatives belong to the category of nouns, and share the same root, two distinct conceptual categories are dealt with. Interestingly, in such derivatives, the so-called conceptual and evaluative morphology seem to be comfortably entwined, in that the evaluative derivatives perfectly fix new conceptual categories

¹⁷ We are using small caps for conceptual categories.

that can integrate lexical (rather non-conventional) hierarchies. Nevertheless, these nouns have both an augmentative and a depreciative meaning, as shown by the glosses.

Following what has been shown for the approximative reading of diminutives (Section 3.2), examples such those in (18), involving both morpho-syntactic and conceptual homocategoriality, are the best candidates for an approximative interpretation. However, this type of reading is not possible, whatever the semantic type of the base (see (18) above). The following examples stress the difference between diminution and augmentation with respect to approximation:

- (20) a. N/N: *knjiga* ‘book’ → *knjižurak* ‘booklet, small (cute) book’ or ‘book of poor value’
 b. N/N: *knjiga* ‘book’ → *knjižurina* ‘big and/or unpleasant book’
- (21) a. N/N: *gomila* ‘pile’ → *gomilica* ‘little pile’
 b. N/N: *gomila* ‘pile’ → *gomiletina* ‘big and/or embarrassing pile’

Even though the four derivatives undergo an evaluation process which involves deviation from the prototypical representation associated with the base, only the two derivatives in (20a) and (21a) involve approximation due to the marking of diminution, which suggests that the expected representation conveyed by the base is not reached. On the contrary, the augmentatives in (20b) and (21b) entail that the prototypical representation provided by their base is reached and even exceeded. By the very fact of excessiveness, they indicate that their referents are not prototypical members of the categories of books and piles, but this does not give them an approximative meaning. Consequently, in the case of augmentatives, homocategoriality does not trigger an approximative reading.

The involvement of the referential dimension in the process of evaluation is the second facilitating factor for an approximative reading in the case of diminutives. Consequently, one can expect that an approximative interpretation will be available for those augmentatives that involve the Referential Pole. This implies the modification of certain referential dimensions of the entities they denote, which is the case of a large part of our corpus. Again, this prediction does not work, as shown in (22). Although the evaluation with respect to a standard clearly entails the Referential Pole (it is about a big bitch, or a great robber), the approximative meaning is not present: *kurvetina* refers not to a usual whore but to an exceptional one, who carries out too many sexual acts, while *pivčuga* is used to

glorify the excellence of a given beer, which not only fulfils the requisite conditions to be categorized as beer, but largely exceeds them by its qualities.

- (22) a. N/N: *kurva* ‘whore, bitch’ → *kurvetina* ‘someone who engages in a lot of sexual acts for money, and/or big, fat bitch’
 b. N/N: *lopov* ‘robber’ → *lopovčina* ‘who steals a lot, impressive and/or disgusting robber’
 c. N/N: *pivo* ‘beer’ → *pivčuga* ‘true, genuine, great beer’

In all these examples, the evaluative process consists in picking out a given attribute or a set of attributes of the referent of the base, and in intensifying it along a scale in an ascending order from the norm¹⁸.

In view of the above explanation, neither diminutives nor augmentatives can be considered as prototypical means for labelling stand-alone categories; in the vast majority of cases, they serve to label a kind of “semi-category”, which is ontologically dependent on the category denoted by the base, but unable to form a separate category. However, our analysis clearly suggests that while diminutive suffixes can be considered to be, under certain conditions, approximators, i.e., triggers for approximation, augmentative suffixes cannot. In the following section, we explain why this is so.

5. Discussion

Taken together, our results allow greater insight into (i) the relationship between morphological augmentation and approximation (Section 5.1), (ii) the gradual nature of approximation (Section 5.2), and (iii) the peculiarities of approximation when conveyed by diminutive suffixation (Section 5.3). In the following sections, we discuss these three questions.

5.1 Why do only some deviations from the norm lead to approximation?

Since the formation of diminutive and augmentative meanings in the nominal domain involves the same principles (both types of evaluatives express non-conformity with respect

¹⁸ Frequently, what is intensified is a salient bad or good property of the base itself; almost half of the bases in our corpus (46%) carry a negative connotation, 5% carry a positive one, and 46% of them are neutral. Such characteristics of the base are often crucial for the pragmatic value conveyed by evaluative derivatives: negatively connotated bases regularly lead to pejorative meanings (see 22a, b), positively connotated bases generally give rise to meliorative ones (e.g., *poštenjak* ‘honest person’ → *poštenjačina* ‘very honest and laudable person’).

to the norm represented by the base, and constitute semi-categories that cannot be integrated into taxonomic hierarchies), it may be difficult to understand why diminutive meanings can, under certain conditions, express approximation while augmentative meanings cannot, regardless of the conditions considered (“full” homocategoriality and implication of the RP).

The only real difference between diminutive and augmentative evaluation lies in the result of the evaluation itself: the meaning of diminution appears only when, despite a very high similarity between the comparator (the base) and the compared (the derivative), the norm is not reached, whereas the meaning of augmentation appears when the norm is not only reached but also exceeded. Approximation thus seems to be necessarily associated with a certain deficiency and negativity. What is interesting is that this negativity does not seem specific to diminutive suffixation. Discontinuous reduplication in Italian studied by Masini & Di Donato (2023) is another very good example: in this process, the structure of the construction itself, [X *non* X], manifests in an almost iconic way both similarity and dissimilarity, and thus the underlying negativity, which can of course take many forms. This is also shown in the study of many of the processes addressed in this volume and is very well summarized in the paper by Hüning & Schlücker (2023: 106) who state that: “It is essential, however, that approximative formations always express that category X – however great the similarity – is ultimately not present, which is why approximation is also referred to as privative.”

All this raises the question of whether approximative diminutives denote entities that are, or are not, included in the category denoted by the base.

5.2 Internal vs. external approximation: a solution?

Brucale & Mocciaro (2023), who analyze the degrees of approximation expressed by the Sicilian suffixes *-ḍḍu/ḍḍa*, propose an interesting distinction between internal and external approximation. Internal approximation “modifies the semantics of the base, but does not alter [its] categorial status” (Brucale & Mocciaro 2023: 28); this sort of approximation evaluates the proximity of the category to the center, i.e., to the prototype, and deals with peripheral members of a category (e.g., Sicilian: *sciccariedḍu* ‘little donkey’ < *sceccu* ‘donkey’). External approximation on the other hand “approximates the category” and “does not

preserve the referential features of the base” (e.g., Sicilian: *fuochiddi* ‘fireworks’ < *focu* ‘fire’). It concerns referents that resemble the category but their actual belonging to it is not always clear-cut. The authors summarize this distinction in a figure:

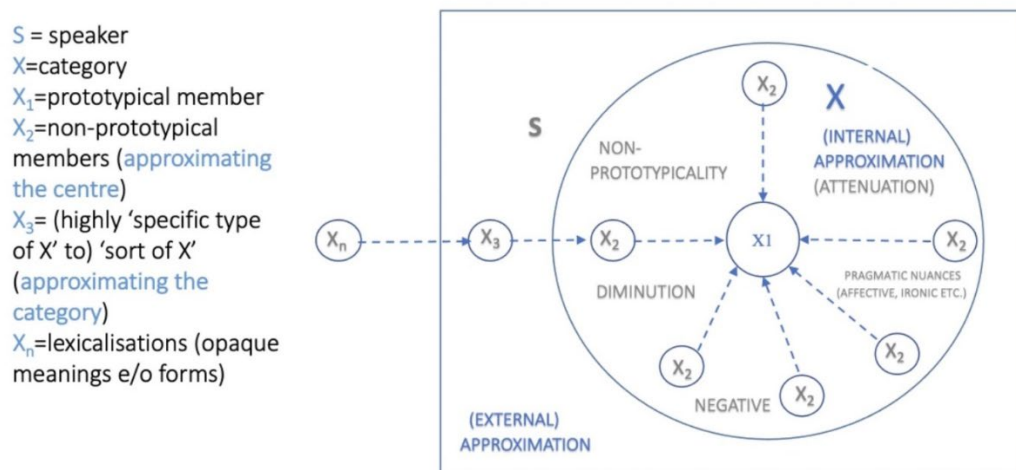


Fig. 3: Degrees of approximation: internal vs. external approximation
 (based on Brucale & Mocciaro 2023)

The distinction between the two types of approximation can be easily transposed to the approximative diminutives that we have studied. Generally speaking, as we have seen, they express non-conformity with respect to a norm, or a prototype, and as such they can be considered as “X₂”, i.e., members falling under internal approximation, and more precisely diminution.

The use of certain diminutives sometimes even seems to call this peripheral categorial membership into question:

- (23) a. *Pouvons-nous appeler cela une réforme? Une réformette plutôt!*
 ‘Can we call it a reform? A cosmetic reform rather!’
- b. *Vraie réforme ou... réformette? (Le Parisien)*
 ‘Real reform or cosmetic reform?’

In (23a), the speaker's metalinguistic questioning leads to the opposition between *réforme* (the base) and *réformette* (the derivative). The use of the hedge *vrai* ‘true’ in (23b) leads to the same opposition. In these cases, the derivative seems to acquire greater autonomy with respect to the concept of the base, without being completely detached from it. In this type of use, the diminutive can switch into external approximation, and acquire the X₃ status (see Fig. 3), which often happens when the speaker's subjectivity comes into play.

This representation, however, cannot be transposed to augmentatives, which express non-prototypicality but not approximation.

5.3 Specificities of diminutive approximation

What seems fundamental in diminutive/augmentative suffixation is the fact that the evaluation is “measurative”, i.e., it is processed in some way along the polar opposition UP-DOWN by means of the orientational metaphor as described by Lakoff & Johnson (1980); the norm, or the prototype, plays the role of zero point of the system (see Fig. 1). This is what induces, for diminution, the possibility of expressing approximation (the norm is not reached), and for augmentation, the impossibility of expressing it (the norm is not only reached, it is exceeded).

We argue that this measurability distinguishes diminutive approximation from other types of approximation, e.g., from the suffixal approximation expressed in the nouns and adjectives in *-oïde* and *-forme* mentioned at the beginning of the article. Here are two nominal examples¹⁹:

- (24) a. *organoïde* ‘organoid’: ‘complex collections of cells that bear a resemblance to human tissue’
 b. *insectoïde* ‘insectoid’: ‘species with insect-like features’

In both examples, the derivative qualifies an entity that only partially possesses the properties associated with the base: organoids are not organs, but clusters of stem cells created to have the same properties as real organs in order to replace them in case of disease. As for insectoids, in science fiction or ufology they are often robots, evil or not, whose form imitates that of insects.

So, like diminutive/augmentative derivatives, nominal (and also adjectival) derivatives in *-oïde* express both resemblance and difference with respect to an entity that serves as a norm, represented by the base. However, the evaluation process does not involve either of the bipolar axes linked to the Referential Pole (e.g., SMALL/BIG, FEW/MUCH) or the Pragmatic Pole (e.g., BAD/GOOD, ANTIPATHY/EMPATHY): in French, *-oïde* derivatives do not express measurative meanings, either diminution or augmentation. Therefore, the approximation expressed by *-oïde* derivatives is not measurative.

¹⁹ Although *-oïde* forms mostly adjectives, we have chosen to take nominal examples in order to facilitate the comparison, especially with Serbian augmentatives, which all belong to the noun category.

The paper on *pseudo-* in Greek and French by Vassiliadou et al. (2023) highlights, we think, the difference between approximation expressed by diminutive suffixation in the nominal domain and other modes of word formation. According to the authors:

Pseudo-X always implies categorization; it presupposes a comparison between what it designates and an expression X, and it consists in an evaluation of the categorial adequacy between what pseudo-X designates and the category X itself. This evaluation is negatively polarized, i.e., it is focused on features of difference, or rather of deviation from the category (see the term of disproximation; Cappelle et al. 2023). Thus, the referent of pseudo-X deviates in one way or another from X. (Vassiliadou et al. 2023: 248)

As with diminutive suffixation, prefixation with *pseudo-* evaluates the overall degree of matching with a standard, so that this evaluation is done globally, without any specific bipolar semantic dimension such as that underlying evaluation as defined here (see Fig. 1 supra). The same is true for the negative pragmatic values that characterize most derivatives in *pseudo-*: in fact, *pseudo-X* never manifests a meaning that could be called “measurative” (more/less) but rather global “qualitative” meanings such as ‘fake X’ or ‘imitation of X’, etc. (see Vassiliadou et al. 2023 for a detailed analysis of the different possible meanings).

In a way, measurability could be a criterion to distinguish two sorts of approximation, i.e., non-measurative approximation, which is probably the most widespread as conveyed by *pseudo-*, or *-oïde*, and the measurative approximation, which is restricted, as far as we know, to nominal diminutive suffixation, and probably to the different categories of diminutive suffixation.

This distinction between measurative and non-measurative approximation could be related to the distinction that Amaral & Del Prete (2010) make between scalar and non-scalar approximation in their analysis of the adverb *quasi* ‘almost’ in Italian. However, the theoretical approach (fundamentally logical) and the type of data studied (the adverb *quasi* as a modifier of temporal connectives) are not directly transposable to our analyses and the comparison would require further investigation.

6. Concluding remarks: approximation between the norm and negation of the category

Like other papers in this volume, our study suggests that approximation hosts a great diversity of semantic values going from a slight discrepancy with respect to the norm or the prototype to calling into question the category membership. The distance between the latter and the prototypical members is very great, but not sufficient to block the possibility of their representation in terms of a given category. Evaluative morphology, and more precisely diminution, participates in providing means for denoting such peripheral members without completely negating their dependance on the category of the base. This leads to the blurring of the category boundaries.

Based on the schematic representation of the scope of approximation proposed in the introductory paper by Masini et al. (2023) and Brucale & Mocciaro (2023), we can summarize the way in which evaluative morphology contributes to the construction of approximation as depicted in Fig. 4:

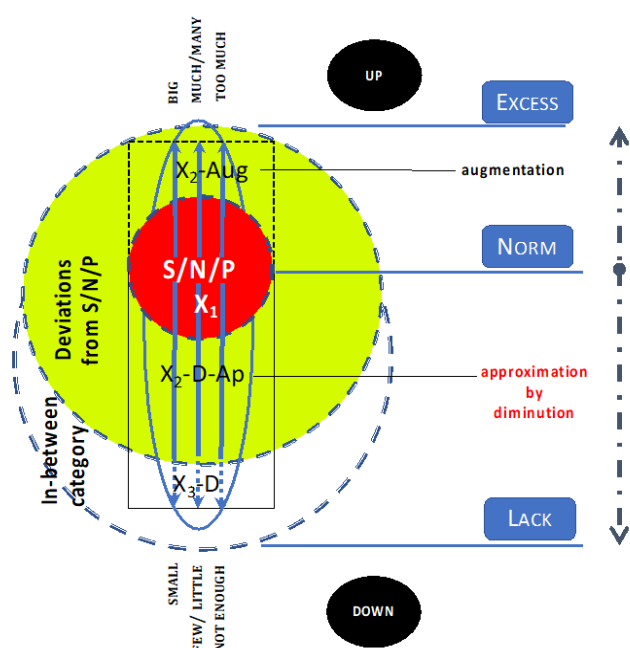


Fig. 4: The scope of approximation as conveyed by evaluative morphology, based on Fig. 1, Fig. 3 above, and the schema by Masini et al. (2023)

The red circle represents the norm or the standard (S/N/P, X_1), the green one a range of peripheral, more or less non-prototypical members (X_2), whereas the grey zone represents a kind of in-between category containing highly problematic, borderline members (X_3).

Due to its grounding in the UP/DOWN orientational metaphor and to a series of bipolar measurative meanings that it is based on, diminutive morphology occupies only a specific portion of the area of approximation, namely the blue rectangle, located in the lower part of the figure. This further means that approximation can only be expressed by a subset of diminutives, those for which the evaluation involves the referential pole, and which express a lack of a series of properties allowing a given referent to adequately integrate the category denoted by the base (X_2 -D-Ap). That can be considered as a default interpretation. However, since the discrepancy with respect to the norm can be more or less marked, diminutive approximation can encroach on the grey area (X_3 -D-Ap, see examples (23) *supra*) and come close to members generally described by devices with a privative meaning (e.g., *pseudo-X*, *simili-X* in some of their uses: *pseudo-cuir* ‘pseudo-leather’ or *simili-cuir* ‘imitation leather’ for example). This reading is generally prompted by the context. Conversely, as one might expect, augmentation does not have a place in the figure since it cannot express approximation: the data from Serbian clearly suggest that once the norm is reached, approximation necessarily disappears (X_2 -Aug, without Ap(proximation)). Nevertheless, augmentatives, which express an excess compared to a norm, can convey non-prototypicality (X_2). That is what the empty rectangle in the upper part of the figure materializes. One can expect that these observations hold equally true for evaluative prefixes (*macro-*, *mega-*, *maxi-*, *archi-*, *hyper-*, *extra-*, *super-*, *ultra-*, *sur-*) in French, but this deserves an in-depth empirical study of these morphemes.

Contrasting diminutives and augmentatives in the light of different kinds of evaluative devices in French and Serbian has allowed us to highlight the specificity of diminutive approximation, which is fundamentally measurative, contrary to non-measurative approximation expressed by other morphological processes.

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