

Dissecting morphological theory: Diminutivization in root-, stem- and word-based morphology

Proposal for a workshop to be held during the [46th Austrian Linguistics Conference](#), Vienna, 4-6 December 2020

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

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Call for papers

This workshop scrutinizes and compares theoretical assumptions in morphology. Diminutivization serves as a testing ground. The goal is to bring together scholars working within different theoretical frameworks as well as computational and experimental morphologists.

Diminutive morphology presents a number of theoretical challenges. Just a few issues illustrated primarily with organizers' research:

- ❖ Diminutive affixes if attached to nouns denoting persons do not derive diminutives (proper), e.g. Russian *mamočka* 'mother-DIM, mommy' does not mean 'small mother'; thus, some diminutive forms appear closely related to hypocoristics (Dressler & Merlini Barbaresi 1994; Korecky-Kröll & Dressler 2007; Simonović & Arsenijević 2015; Manova et al. 2017).
- ❖ Diminutive affixes can change fundamental properties of nouns such as gender and countability (Manova & Winternitz 2011; Arsenijević 2016); in the verbal domain, diminutive affixes can change the conjugation class and/or valency of the base (Oltra-Massuet & Castroviejo 2014).
- ❖ Unlike diminutive nouns, not all diminutive verbs are derived from verbs (Grestenberger & Kallulli 2019); and "small is many in the event domain" (Tovena 2011).
- ❖ Diminutive affixes can be repeated; all diminutivizers express the same semantics but they do not combine with each other freely (Manova & Winternitz 2011; Merlini Barbaresi 2012).

To make theoretical assumptions comparable, we differentiate between composition and decomposition and recognize three types of *composition* exemplified with the organizations of three theories of morphology: Distributed Morphology (DM), Paradigm Function Morphology (PFM) and Natural Morphology (NM) :

- 1) **Root-based:** composition in DM (Halle & Marantz 1998, Bobaljik 2017) is of this type, i.e. in a syntax-oriented model such as DM, a derivation takes place step-by-step starting from the root, e.g. from $\sqrt{\text{read}}$. In DM, roots have a special status and are categoriless; the affix attached to the root provides the syntactic category, i.e. affixes are heads. However, recent DM studies (De Belder 2011; Lowenstamm 2015; Creemers et al. 2018) have claimed that some affixes are roots, i.e. categoriless too (on the categorization of diminutive suffixes, Grestenberger & Kallulli 2019).

- 2) **Stem-based:** PFM (Stump 2001) links words in slots of inflectional paradigms but derives those words stem-based. Stump (2016) speaks of content paradigm, form paradigm and realized paradigm; the composition of a word form takes place in the form paradigm and starts from a stem (e.g. *read*; Latin *hortā-*, from *hortor* ‘encourage’) to which then pieces of word structure without semantics (PFM is a-morphous) are attached by rules of exponence. The prototypical stem has the shape of [root + morpheme]. Similar to roots, stems may be categoriless, i.e. morphemes (Aronoff 1994). Morphemes are not associated with specific semantics, cannot be derived syntactically and are evidence for the existence of morphology by itself, i.e. against DM where morphology is distributed between syntax and phonology. Nevertheless, recent DM studies seem to use morphemes: combinations of categoriless roots and categoriless affixes (mentioned in 1) are morphomic stems in a stem-based analysis.
- 3) **Word-based:** NM (Dressler et al. 1987) is morphology by itself, functionalist and cognitively oriented, and allows for root-, stem- and word-based composition. Since words have a primary role in discourse, word-based morphology is seen as the most natural, root-based morphology being the least natural, i.e. if a root or a stem coincides with a word (e.g. *read*), the base is classified as a word.

With respect to **decomposition**, all three theories agree that people communicate with words and that the latter have internal structure, i.e. decomposition seems exclusively word-based. Recent DM-related neurolinguistic research has provided experimental evidence for this assumption: speakers decompose the (visual) stimulus (e.g. *teacher*) into morphemes, look these up in the mental lexicon, and recombine them (Fruchter et al. 2013; Fruchter & Marantz 2015). It has to be mentioned herein that PFM and NM have not explicitly addressed decomposition. Additionally, in PFM composition is exclusively related to form (a-morphous production of forms); in NM composition involves meaning and form (NM morphemes relate meaning and form); and in DM composition refers to meaning (DM morphemes are abstract and correspond to syntactic terminal nodes), while decomposition involves form and meaning (visual stimuli such as *teacher* are well-formed words and thus have meaning). On the relation of meaning and form in morphology, see Manova et al. (2020).

Finally, regarding the **organization of morphology**, i.e. the derivation-inflection divide:

- ❖ in DM, there is no principal difference between derivational and inflectional affixes, i.e. both types of affixes can serve as heads; note, however, that the recent claim that some affixes are roots (references in 1) holds only for derivational affixes;
- ❖ PFM has been explicitly defined as a theory of inflectional morphology (Stump 2001) but paradigms have been postulated for derivational morphology as well (Bonami & Strnadová 2019 and references therein);
- ❖ in NM derivation and inflection are the two poles of a continuum and there are thus prototypical and non-prototypical derivation and inflection (Dressler 1989), diminutivization of nouns being an example of non-prototypical derivation, i.e. between derivation and inflection but on the derivational side (Dressler & Korecky-Kröll 2015).

We invite papers that, based on diminutives, discuss the (dis)advantages of a single theoretical framework or different theories comparatively. Papers that profit from a mix of theories are also welcome. Possible topics include, but are not limited to:

- Diminutivization of major word classes
- Diminutivization and non-major word classes
- Diminutivization and the derivation-inflection divide
- Gender, animacy, countability and diminutivization of nouns
- Aspect, pluractionality and diminutivization of verbs
- Diminutives versus hypocoristics
- Diminutivization of diminutives
- Acquisition of diminutive morphology
- Diachrony of diminutive morphology
- Diminutive morphology in language contact
- Sociolinguistic variation of diminutive morphology
- Experimental and computational evidence versus theoretical assumptions

We plan a publication of a selection of the workshop papers.

Important dates

Deadline for *abstract registration*: **27 July 2020** (this is for organizational purposes, required are the title of the abstract and a few keywords)

Deadline for *abstract submission*: **15 September 2020**

Acceptance notifications: 1 October 2020

Workshop: 4-6 December 2020 (please note that the workshop may be moved to an online format)

Abstract registration / submission

Please use the following link: <https://easychair.org/conferences/?conf=dmttd2020>. Abstract format: anonymous PDF, max. 500 words (examples and references do not count), single spaced, justified alignment.

Selected references

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