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Roberta d' Alessandro, Gabriele Iannàccaro, Diana Passino, Anna Thornton. Di tutti i colori Studi linguistici per Maria Grossmann. 2017. halshs-02060688

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A cura di

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2017

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Indice

Nominal evaluative suffixes in Italian

Leonardo M. Savoia • M. Rita Manzini • Ludovico Franco • Benedetta Baldi

Abstract

In this article we investigate the nature of the morphological exponents in Romance languages; specifically we concentrate on the evaluative derivational morphology of nouns in Italian, specifically the diminutive (Dim) *-in-,* the endearing (End) *-ett-, -ell-,* the augmentative (Aug) *-on-* and the pejoratives (Pej) *-acci-, -ucci-.* The morpho-syntactic behaviour of evaluatives raises general theoretical and descriptive questions concerning the morphological structure of the words. Our idea is that both the inflectional morphology and the derivational one in nouns are endowed with semantic content, and we provide evidence for their active involvement at the interpretive interface. The proposal we elaborate is that evaluatives express size properties or the grading of individuals with reference to physical or culturally-determined properties and can be understood as predicates that contribute to restricting the argumental variable of the root.

KEYWORDS: nominal morphology • inflection • evaluatives • evaluatives ordering

This article addresses some aspects of the derivational morphology of nouns in Italian. More precisely we will investigate evaluative suffixes and the relation between derivational and inflectional morphemes. These topics form part of a more general theoretical and descriptive question, i.e. the nature of morphological exponents in Romance languages. Our proposal is that both inflectional and derivational morphology in nouns are endowed with semantic content, and we provide evidence for their active involvement at the interpretive interface. Specifically, there is evidence for concluding that evaluatives, as well as other derivational suffixes, can be equated with classifiers, as suggested by the comparison between Romance and other language families (for instance Bantu).

1. N(P) Analysis

In the syntactic literature there is considerable consensus on the idea that the inner core of a N(P) is represented by a non-categorized root. This is immediately dominated by functional layers which embed the root into a nominal classification system. The properties that are directly relevant for Romance (Picallo 2008), or generally Indo-European languages, are gender and countability (the latter often rendered as a Num category). The model of reference for much discussion is represented by the tree in (1), where N (the root) and the functional heads for Class (gender) and Number are built on top of the root. This tree is conceived as syntactic; nevertheless the internal morphological build-up of, say, Spanish *libr-o-s* ('book-masc-pl') reflects (in a mirror image) the syntactic organization in (1).
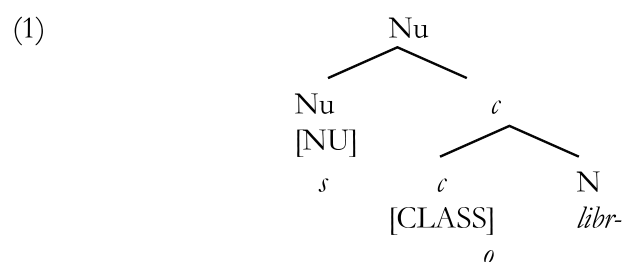
(1)
```
                    Nu
                  /    \
              Nu         c
             [NU]      /    \
              /      c        N
             s    [CLASS]   libr-
                     o
```
Picallo (2008: 59)

In a number of studies more or less contemporary with Picallo (2008), the move is made to identify Marantz's (1997) *n*, specifically in the Romance languages, with the inflectional class/gender vowel immediately following the stem.
 Let us assume that classification into genders (or count/mass etc.) is the crucial property that

nominalizes the root. Following Higginbotham (1985), the category-less root is interpreted as a predicate. The predicate represented by the root in turn has one open argument place (the R-role, Williams 1994), which is ultimately bound by a D/Q operator (Higginbotham 1985). It is natural to assume that g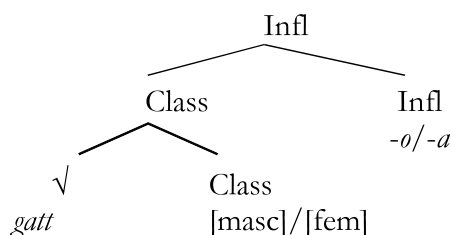ender (and number) specifications, and in general classifiers, apply to the argument *x* open at the predicate. In other words, the category Class operates as a predicate in turn, restricting the content of the argumental variable ultimately bound by D/Q. Similarly, Percus (2011) entertains the possibility of a conjunctive semantics for the (root, gender) pair. Conversely, we reject a variant on the schema in (1) which takes Class to identify with Marantz's (1997) nominalizing category *n* (Kihm 2005, Ferrari Bridgers 2008, Kramer 2014, 2015).

As an initial illustration of the structures that we will be using throughout, we exemplify Italian *gatt-o* 'he-cat' and *gatt-a* 'she-cat' in (2). In (2) the property 'cat' is compatible with both a feminine and a masculine Class, depending on the sex denoted[1]. We tentatively assign the inflectional vowel of Italian to an Infl Position which embeds the root and the Class nodes.

(2) Italian

```
                    Infl
            ┌────────────┴────────────┐
         Class                       Infl
    ┌──────┴──────┐                  -o/-a
    √            Class
   gatt       [masc]/[fem]
```

In instances where selection of a gender by the root is unpredictable from the semantics of the latter (unlike for 'cat'), the best mechanism to insure the correct coupling of nominal roots with gender is via selection. In the framework that we are suggesting, this is to be understood as a restriction that the predicate imposes on its argument; the inflection *-a* or *-o* will combine with the corresponding gender depending on a selectional mechanism whereby *-o* and *–a* search for different roots or root-Class combinations. A different problem is the sexed interpretation of [gatt-o]/ [gatt-a]. A possible answer is to assume that the sex interpretation of [fem] and [masc] is derived at the Conceptual Intentional (C-I) interface level, that is, it is a pragmatic effect due to knowledge of the world. This can explain the variable and uncertain nature of this interpretation, not only in the case of [masc], but also of [fem], as for example *tigr-e, formic-a, balen-a*, etc.

Given (2), if we identify the vocalic inflection of Spanish with the Infl position, it is evident that the specialized *-s* segment for plurality in Spanish must occur on top of Infl itself, as schematized for *libros/libras* 'books/pounds' in (3).

---

[1] In Italian the change from masculine to feminine can be realized by the suffix *-ess-* as in (i) (Thornton 2005). Hence, a derivational morpheme has the same effect as the inflection in *gatt-o/ gatt-a* in (2).

(i)   a.   leon-e   vs.   leon-ess-a
                lion-M   lion-FEM-F
        b.   avvocat-o   avvocat-ess-a
                lawyer-M   lawyer-FEM-F

The predicates 'lion' or 'lawyer' are compatible with both a feminine and a masculine Class, depending on the sex denoted. Besides, in (i), *-ess-* is followed by the inflectional ending *-a* exactly as a feminine root, such as *gatt-a* in (2). In (2) the inflectional vowel of Italian is assigned to an Infl position which embeds both the root and the Class node. If we extend this analysis to feminines in (i), we must admit that Gender Class can also be selected by a derivational suffix specialized for gender, as in (ii).

(ii)   [[[leon- √] ess- Suff] [fem] Class] a Infl]

(3) Spanish

```
                    [⊆]
             _____
            |                   |
           Infl                [⊆]
     _____            s
    |               |
  Class            Infl
  _____           o/a
 |      |
 √     Class
 libr  [fem]/[masc]
```
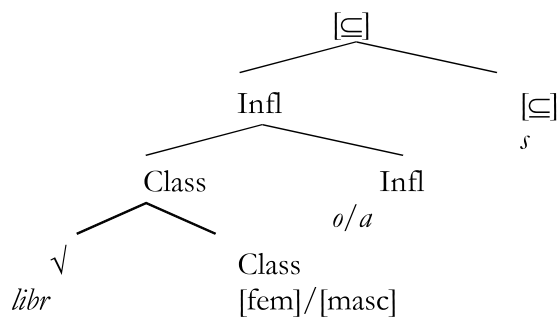
Differently from languages like Spanish, endowed with independent lexicalization for the plural, namely *-s*, Italian plurals are obtained by a change of the inflection. Following Manzini & Savoia (2011a, 2011b, 2012) we formalize the content of the plural node as ⊆; this says that the denotatum of the predicate can be partitioned into subsets. In these terms we may suppose that the plural of *gatto/gatta* in (2), namely *gatt-i* 'cats', *gatt-e* 'she-cats' has the structure in (4).

(4) Italian

```
                 Infl
           _____
          |               |
        Class            Infl
      _____             -e/ -i
     |      |
     √     Class
    gatt   [fem]/[masc]
           [⊆]
```
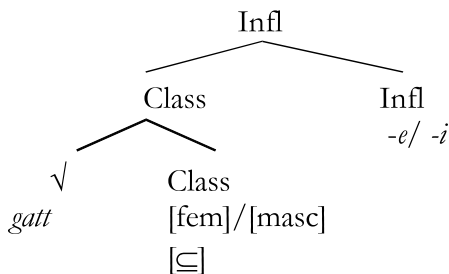
As already noticed, in Indo-European languages the lexicalization of gender, number and possibly case (Manzini & Savoia 2011b), is intertwined with the notion of inflectional class. In (5), we provide an example from Italian; *mamm-a* 'mum' and *madr-e* 'mother' have not only the same structure, but also essentially the same meaning. The endings *-a* and *-e* do not depend on any of these factors, but on the fact that *mamm-* belongs to class I (in traditional grammar terms) and *madr-* to class III. This holds for the masculine as well (e.g. *babb-o* 'dad' and *padr-e* 'father'). Vice versa inflectional class does not predict gender. Thus each of the vowels *-a, -o* and *-e* covers both masculine and feminine.

(5)

```
                 Infl
           _____
          |               |
        Class            Infl
      _____             -a /-e
     |      |
     √     Class
   mamm-   [fem]
   madr-   [fem]
```
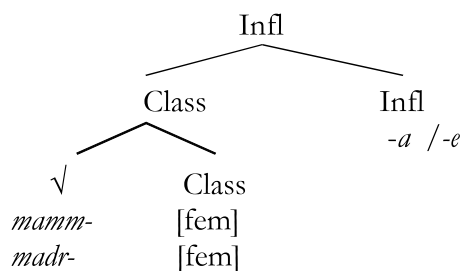
We agree with Kayne (2010) that the most economical means to express inflectional classes is via selection of the root by the class vowel, more precisely by the inflectional class vowels. There are three inflectional class vowels in Italian, namely *-a, -o-, -e* and they partition the roots among them. Thus *-e* selects for √*madr*, among many other roots, while *-a* selects for √*mamm-*, again among many other roots.

 Since we have rejected inflectional class diacritics, it is important to note that plurals cannot be predicted from singulars. Thus feminines inflected by *-a* can have an *-e* plural, as in (4), but also an *-i* plural (e.g. *al-i* 'wings') - vice versa *-i* plurals correspond to *-e, -a, -o* singulars. D'Achille & Thornton (2003) argue that taking into account singular and plurals, Italian should not be characterized in terms of the traditional [I]-[III] classes, but by VII different classes (or VI, considering that class VII is

obsolete). Thus class diacritics could be reintroduced, but much enriched. Alternatively, one could take the same approach to plurals as to singular and simply list which [⊆] morpheme selects which root.

Finally, in disentangling gender (and number) from inflectional class, the diagnostics that plays the most important role is Agree - since agreement between the noun, its modifiers, and determiners is sensitive to gender and number (as well as case), but not to inflectional class. The matching (agreement) of genders between determiner *la* 'the.fem' and noun *mano* 'hand.fem' in (6) means that the inflections *-a, -o* can individuate the same argument, introduced by the root and restricted by Class specifications.

(6)
```
                           DP
              ┌────────────┴────────────┐
            Infl                       Infl
         ┌───┴───┐                  ┌───┴───┐
       Class    Infl              Class    Infl
      ┌──┴──┐    a              ┌──┴──┐     -o
    D/√    Class               √     Class
     l     [fem]             man-    [fem]
```
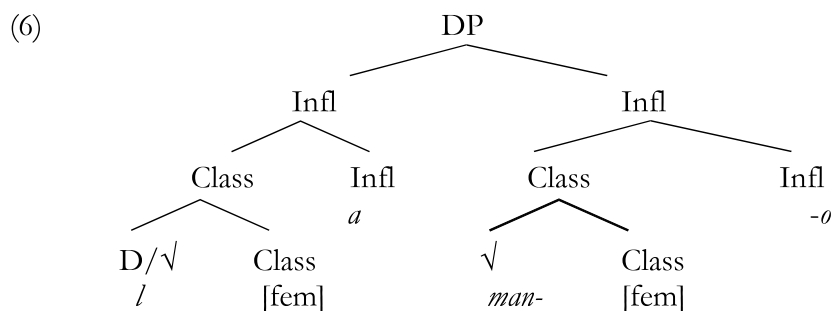
In the minimalist framework (Chomsky 2000, 2001), agreement processes are standardly associated with the rule of Agree - which however is conceived so as to account for one-to-one agreement in the sentential domain. In what follows, we will keep the assumption that Agree also applies within DPs. However we will avoid attributing interpretable/uninterpretable, valued/unvalued status to any of the categories inside DP. We will simply assume that given two elements in a c-command configuration, the higher is the probe and the lower the goal. Everything else proceeds as in the standard definition of Agree, by Minimal Search and Match of the relevant features. We will assume that what impels Agree to apply is the need for creating equivalence classes of phi-feature bundles denoting a single referent (the equivalent of uninterpretable feature deletion). This disregard of the [interpretable], [valued] features is the only respect in which we depart from standard minimalist assumptions[2].

1.1 Inflection and derivation as a unified compositional mechanism

We now come to the relation between inflectional and derivational morphology. Essentially, we face two solutions, both well-known, namely the idea that derivational and inflectional morphology have a different status or, on the contrary, approaches that unify derivation and inflection in a single morphological component. The literature supporting the Split Morphology Hypothesis (Anderson 1982, Scalise 1986) is based on a number of formal and distributional criteria that could confirm a different status for inflection, associated with or incorporated into syntactic operations, and for derivation, internal to the lexicon. Borer (2005: 53) concludes that 'Morpho-phonologically speaking, inflection is every bit as erratic as derivation, involving listed relations between stems and marking, accidental gaps, and stem changes which do not yield easily to a characterization in terms of compositional morphology'. This justifies her idea that inflection is more adequately treated by a Word and Paradigm model, assuming that inflection involves abstract categories like PAST and PLURAL. On the contrary derivation seems to be interpretable in terms of a compositional hierarchical process.

However, as Stump (2001) notes, these criteria are too weak and uncertain to bear out this differentiation. In general, in Romance languages, inflectional morphemes can introduce properties more standardly introduced by derivational tools, for example category change, size properties. Conversely, derivational morphemes can introduce types of content generally associated with inflection, e.g. plural, mass specification, etc. In fact, models unifying derivation and inflection have been proposed by Williams (1981), Lieber (1980), but as models operating within morphology, without interaction with syntax. As we have already mentioned, our approach takes some fundamental tenets of

---

[2] We also assume that DP internal agree (or concord) matches Agreement at the VP level (as assumed in much recent literature, cf. e.g. Baker 2008, also Franco et al. 2015).

DM, assuming that morphological composition of the word is essentially a process operating on syntactic objects. In keeping with Berwick & Chomsky (2011), morphology can be understood as the linguistic process that converts 'internal syntactic objects to the entities accessible to the sensorimotor system'. In this perspective, inflection and derivation do not seem to meaningfully differentiate.

In the following sections we will investigate evaluative suffixes in Italian and the size interpretation associated with -o/-a class contrast in Italian. What unifies these case studies is that both inflection and derivation introduce comparable semantic specifications, specifically, gender, number, count/ mass distinction, evaluative meaning. Our approach, as we have seen, assumes that morphemes merge with the root, constructing a compositional content of the word. Besides, a corollary of our hypothesis is that all and only the content lexicalized by formal elements present in the word, i.e. root and other morphemes, is interpreted at CI level.

As regards inflectional morphology we find both possible orders, namely {x{x, y}}, with inflection exponents in initial position, as in Bantu Languages, or {{x, y}x}, with inflection in final position, as in Romance, generally in Indo-European languages, and, at least in a subset of nouns, in Semitic languages. A crucial aspect, apparently independent of order, is that inflection is in a position where it closes the predicative stem (including its Class and other restrictors) - a well-known typological generalization (Bybee 1985). Thus in the noun, evaluative morphemes are inserted between the root and the inflectional endings in both Indo-European and Bantu languages. Besides, quantificationally relevant inflection such as the plural, follows or precedes, according to the prevalent order, the gender /noun class morphology.

2. Aspects of evaluative morphology in Italian

In Italian evaluative morphology includes a large set of suffixes. We will concentrate on the diminutives (Dim) -in-, -uzz-, the endearing (End) -ett-, -ell-, the augmentative (Aug) -on- and the pejoratives (Pej) -acci, -ucci-. The morphological and distributional properties of these elements have been investigated in the descriptive literature (Rainer 1990, Merlini Barbaresi 2004). Scalise (1988) points out some of the restrictions that characterize the occurrence of evaluatives, such as the possibility of recursive embedding (e.g. -ett-in- -End-Dim-), the external position with respect to the other suffixes, the internal position with respect to the inflection, some macro-semantic effects, etc.

Before going into the different questions posed by evaluative forms, the semantic and morpho-syntactic nature of these morphemes must be defined. Evaluatives express size properties or grade of individuals with reference to physical or culturally-determined properties, as in (7).

(7)   *lett-in-o*
        bed-DIM-INFL
        'small bed'

Evaluatives can be understood as predicates that contribute to restricting the argumental variable of the noun root, as proposed by Percus (2011) for gender (section 1). In other words, we extend the analysis of adjectives in Parsons (1979) to the evaluatives. For Parsons (1979: 157), adjectives in the attributive position are 'operators on the predicate contributed by the noun ... these operators can be further analysed in terms of conjunction with a predicate', whereby 'red box' can be translated as '*x* is red and a box'. In this sense, we pursue the idea that evaluative morphology is essentially restrictive/ intersective, i.e. it corresponds to the intersective interpretation of adjectives defined in Partee 1995 (cf. Cinque 2014 for Italian adjectives), giving rise to the denotation $\lambda x[(letto)x \ \& \ (piccolo)x]$.

In what follows, we will associate the evaluative morphemes with different Class nodes, as illustrated in (8) for the diminutive -in-, exemplified in (7). In (8) Dim is to be construed as DimClass, and so on in the case of the other evaluative class nodes.

(8)

```
                                              Infl
                                        _____
                   Classφ                              Infl
              _____                          -o
           Dim              Class
        _____           [masc]
       √         Dim
      lett-      [size]
                 -in
```
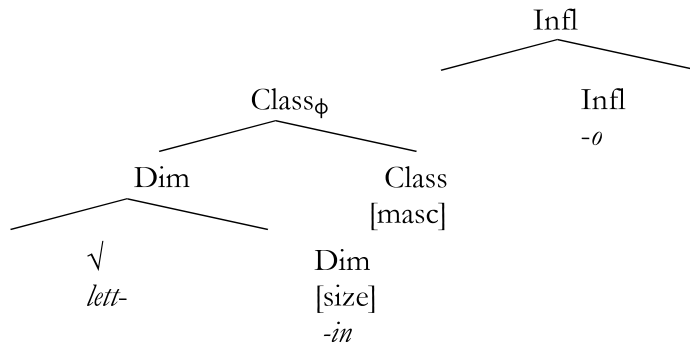
2.1 Singulative properties

Recent proposals in the generative framework aim to relate the nature and morphemic status of evaluatives to the discussion on the internal structure of the noun, also in a cross-linguistic perspective, as in Wiltschko (2006), Wiltschko & Steriopolo (2007), Ott (2011), de Belder et al. (2014), Cinque (2007, 2015). Wiltschko (2006) assumes that diminutive suffixes are 'light nouns', and specifically that they correspond to numeral classifiers.[3] Wiltschko's idea is that they are equivalent to German words like *Stück* 'piece', *Blatt* 'sheet', etc. which change mass nouns into count nouns and with which diminutives are in complementary distribution[4]. Consider the example *12 Stück Vieh* '12 pieces of cattle' (example 10 in Wiltschko 2006), as represented in (9).

(9)

```
                   n
             _____
           n              N
         Stück           Vieh
         -chen
```
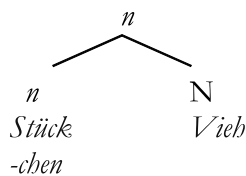
Ott (2011), based on Wiltschko (2006), proposes a more detailed structure whereby the dimunitives are analysed as 'numeral classifiers'. (10) illustrates the analysis in Ott (2011: 16) for *Wässer-ke-s* 'the-water-Dim-pl' 'a glass of water' (Low Rhenish German dialect).

(10)

```
              AArtP
          _____
        Art        Unit P
         |        _____
        die     Unit    NumP
                 |      _____
                -ke    Num     nP
                        |     Wasser
                       -s
```
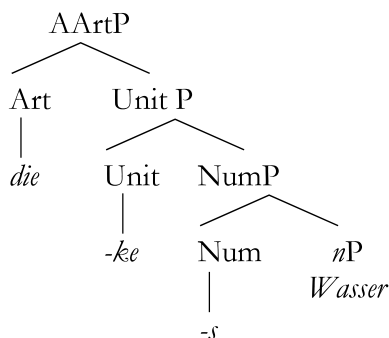
Both authors converge in identifying the diminutive suffix with a lexicalization of a nominal head independent of the root, *n* in Wiltschko and *Unit* in Ott. We adopt this insight, assuming that the diminutive suffix *-in-* corresponds to something as 'a small/ little individual' to which the properties introduced by the root apply. As we just saw (Wiltschko 2006, Ott 2011 for German; see also Déchaine et al. 2014 on Bantu) evaluatives, precisely diminutives, are able to change mass nouns into count nouns.

---

[3] Concerning this point, note that in Dutch diminutives are commonly used only as singulatives (e.g. *water – watertje* = water – a bottle of water; see De Belder et al. 2014). We thank an anonymous reviewer for highlighting this fact.

[4] Examples concerning the complementary distribution of diminutives and light nouns are provided by Ott (2011: 15) as in German **vier Salat* 'four lettuce' / *vier Kopf Salat* 'four head lettuce' / *vier Salätchen* 'four lettuce.DIM.').

2.2 Singulative content of *-in-*.

The singulative effect of diminutives is at work in Italian, as exemplified in (11), where diminutives, in (11b-b''), turn mass nouns or adjectives in (11a-a'') into coun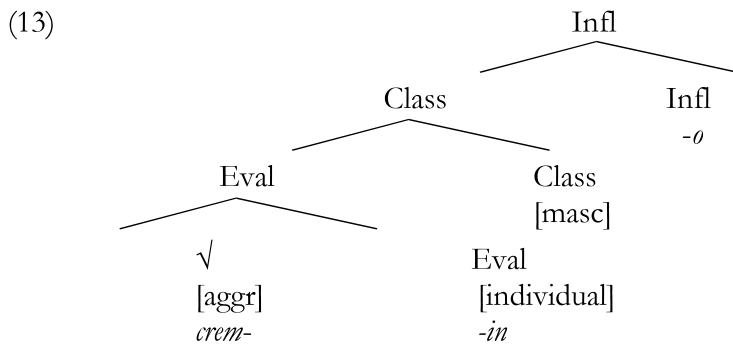t nouns. The data in (11) show that: (i) the mass-count alternation is triggered by the evaluative, actually generally by diminutives *-in-* and possibly *-uzz-*; (ii) diminutives can combine in suffix sequences like *sonn-ell-in-o* 'nap'; (iii) the diminutive *-in-* suffix gives rise to masculine derived forms independently of the class gender of the root, as in (11a'-b'). It is noteworthy that the derived forms in (11a',b') are lexicalized, in the sense that the count interpretation is not immediately predictable from its mass counterpart. In (11c-c') we exemplify some cases only apparently similar to the ones in (11a-a',b-b'). In fact, the simple forms in (11c) admit both interpretations, as mass nouns but also as count nouns, as illustrated in (11c''). The only restriction in effect is that combining with diminutives implies the count reading alone.

(11)   a.   zuccher-o   'sugar'   a'.   zuccher-in-o   'sugar cube'
           piomb-o   'lead'   piomb-in-o   'sinker'
           sonn-o   'sleep'   sonn-ell-in-o   'nap'
      b.   crem-a   'cream' b'.   crem-in-o   'cream chocolate *count*'
           cer-a   'wax'   cer-in-o   'wax match'
           cioccolat-a   'chocolate'   cioccolat-in-o   'chocolate *count*'
           frutt-a   'fruit'   frutt-in-o   'jam stick'
           paglia   'straw'   pagli-uzz-a   'blade of straw'
      c.   legn-o   'wood'   c'.   legn-ett-o   'stick of wood'
           spag-o   'twine'   spagh-ett-o   'a single spaghetti strand'
           gess-o   'chalk'   gess-ett-o   'piece of chalk'
           bronz-o   'bronze'   bronz-ett-o   'statuette in bronze'
           cord-a   'cord'   cord-ic-ell-a   'small cord'
           gran-o   'grain'   gran-ell-o   'grain *count*'
   c''.   un legno   /   molto legno
        'a piece of wood' /   'much wood'
        un grano (di sale) /   molto grano
        'a grain of salt'   /   'much wheat'

Evaluatives, including diminutives, can also freely combine with all mass nouns, giving rise to a predictable (compositional) 'light type/ kind' interpretation, as exemplified in (12a-a'). As to *rossetto* in (12b'), it is of note that the form *rossetto* itself allows two interpretations, mass and count, as we can expect from applying an evaluative to an adjectival predicate, *per se* not associated with an individual argument.

(12)   a.   vin-o   'wine' a'.   vin-ell-o   'a light type of wine'
           lan-a   'wool'   lan-in-a   'a light wool'
           acqu-a   'water'   acqu-er-ugi-ol-a   'drizzle'
      b.   ross-o   'red' b'.   ross-ett-o   'lipstick *mass/ count*'

We first focus on the cases in (11), which show that the diminutive *-in-* is endowed with the interpretive specification of 'individual'. More precisely, we can think that diminutives include a more general content introducing a 'size' specification that, under the right pragmatic conditions, may specify pieces of a continuum or of a mass, i.e. singletons. (13) illustrates an example in which *-in-* lexicalizes the properties of diminutives and selects [masc] in turn. (13) suggests that suffixes really behave as noun roots insofar as they can autonomously introduce gender and other interpretive properties. We may expect this in view of the fact that evaluative, gender and other suffixes can combine in recursive sequences.

(13)

```
                                        Infl
                                   ┌──────┴──────┐
                              Class               Infl
                          ┌─────┴─────┐            -o
                      Eval             Class
                  ┌────┴────┐          [masc]
                 √          Eval
               [aggr]    [individual]
               crem-         -in
```

The singulative, individuating content of *-in-* also emerges in deverbal evaluatives, as the examples in (14a) illustrate. Inserting a diminutive on the verbal root generates an individual interpretation, more precisely specifies properties associated with an individual referent. The verbal root in turn contributes (a part of) its semantic content; the resulting noun is never an event nominal, more like an instrument -*er* formation in English (e.g. *strainer* 'instrument with which one strains'), or an agent, like in (14a'). (14b) suggests that all evaluatives, for instance *-ell-* sand *-acci-*, when merged with a verbal base, imply reference to an individual.

(14) a.   col-in-o   'colander, strainer'   a'.   col-are   'to strain'
           passegg-in-o   'push-chair'   passeggi-are   'to walk'
           accend-in-o   'lighter'   accend-ere   'to light'
           cancel-in-o   '(blackboard) eraser'   cancel-are   'to delete/ to wipe out'
           asciugh-in-o   'cloth'   asciug-are   'to dry'
      a'. imbianch-in-o 'painter'   imbianc-are   'to paint'
           strozz-in-o   'usurer'   strozz-are   'to strangle'
      b.   gir-ell-o   'baby walker'   b'.   gir-are   'to turn, to go around'
   strofin-acci-o 'dish cloth'   strofin-are   'to rub'

Italian shows alternations which exploit the contrast between evaluatives which maintain the gender of the root and evaluatives, like *-in-/ -on-*, which can select a specialized gender of the suffix, as in (15b, c). That the masculine gender is selected by the suffix is shown by the fact that only the change [fem] to [masc] is possible while the reverse change is not admitted, **marit-in-a* 'husband-Dim-f'; besides, only a sub-set of the evaluative suffixes admit this possibility. Endearing suffixes such as *-ett-, -ell-* do not have any gender instruction of their own. It is of note that other evaluatives admit this type of alternation as well; this is the case of Pejorative *-a/ucci-* in (15) and of Diminutive/ Endearing *-uzz-* in (15'). The same holds for Augmentatives like *-on-* in (15). The mechanism in (15') concerns not only sexed nouns but also inanimates, where the masculine *-in-o* introduces a reduced size interpretation, as in (15'c) and the masculine *-on-e* introduces a big size interpretation, as in (15'c').

(15) a.   donn-a [fem]   b.   donn-in-a [fem]   c.   donn-in-o [masc]
           'woman'   'small woman'   'little entity which is woman'
                                donn-on-a [fem]   donn-on-e [masc]
                                'big woman'   'big entity which is woman'

           mogli-e [fem] b.   mogli-ett-in-a [fem]   mogli-ett-in-o [masc][5]
           'wife'   'small pretty wife'   'small pretty entity which is wife'
                                                            mogliett-on-e [masc]
                                                            'big entity which is wife'

---

[5] As suggested by an anonymous reviewer *mogliettino* is sometimes employed with reference to male homosexual partners or husbands with feminine characteristics. In any event, a Google search we performed also reports instances of *mogliettino* referring to female partners in a heterosexual couple.

(15') a. padell-a   b.   padell-in-a   c.   padell-in-o
     'frying-pan'   'small frying-pan'   'small entity which is frying-pan'
     macchin-a   macchin-in-a   macchin-in-o
     'car'   'small car'   'small entity which is car'
     vi-a   vi-uzz-a   vi-uzz-o[6]
     'street'   'little street'   'little entity which is street'
   a'. padell-a   b'.   padell-on-a   c'.   padell-on-e [masc]
     'frying-pan'   'big frying-pan'   'big entity which is frying-pan'
     macchin-a   macchin-on-a   macchin-on-e
     'car'   'big car'   'big entity which is car'

Among evaluatives some do not select a gender, so that the only gender allowed is that inherited from the root. For instance, -ett- excludes a mechanism like the one seen in (15) for -in-. This evaluative lets the gender of the root emerge, as in (16), where the requirement [fem] by the -a inflection is satisfied by the gender associated with the root. In other words, forms like *donn-ett-o 'woman-End-m' are impossible.

(16)
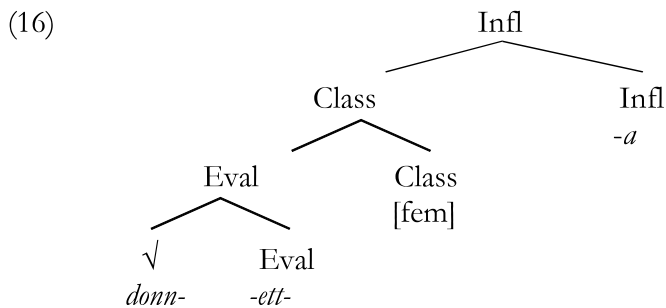
At least two issues immediately arise. First, we may wonder why masculinization is possible while femininization is excluded, so that we have *donn-a* 'woman-f'/ *donn-in-o* 'woman-Dim-m' / *donn-on-e* 'woman-Aug-m', *macchin-a* 'car-f'/ *macchin-in-o* 'car-Dim-m'/ *macchin-on-e* 'car-Aug-m', but not *uom-o* 'man-m' / **om-in-a* 'man-Dim-f' / **om-on-a* 'man-Aug-fem', **libr-o* 'book.m' / *libr-in-a* 'book-Dim-m' /*libr-on-a* 'book-Aug-m'. A second issue that emerges concerns the difference between suffixes like -in-/-on-, available for gender alternations, and other evaluative suffixes which do not admit it. In particular, the question is whether this differentiation has something to do with the order of suffix in complex sequences of evaluatives.

     Let us begin by considering the first question. In Italian, or at least in some regional varieties, the alternation in nominal class (here, between feminine and masculine) encodes a size contrast in a lexical sub-class including artefacts or spatial denotata like *cest-o/cest-a* 'basket-m/big basket-f', *buc-o/buc-a* 'hole-m/pothole-f', *foss-o/foss-a* 'ditch-m/pit-f[7]; moreover -o denotes trees, e.g. *mel-o* 'apple-tree-m', as opposed to fruits, e.g. *mel-a* 'apple-f'. We note that -a is associated with big size, extended objects or, in the case of fruit nouns,[8] to the parts of a conceivable aggregate, while -o is associated with an individuated (small) object. We can draw some insights from these alternations. Semantic effects are associated with the gender properties of lexical items. If we are on the right track, we can think that [masc] implies [individual] while [fem] implies [aggregate] or [aggregate part] (Manzini & Savoia in press

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[6] *Viuzzo*, as suggested by an anonymous reviewer, seems to be consistently employed mostly in Tuscan varieties of Italian.

[7] Other Romance examples include Portuguese *ram-o* m.sg 'branch (count)', *ram-a* f.sg 'branch (mass)'. Mascaró (1985: 101) provides a set of Catalan and Spanish cases where gender distinguishes the size of artefacts, as in the pairs *cistell/cistella* 'basket.m/big basket.f' (Catalan), or *saco/saca* 'sack.m/big sack.f' (Spanish) (see also Crisma et al. 2011, Franco et al. 2015, a.o.).

[8] As pointed out by an anonymous reviewer, there are Italian varieties in which nominal class shifts do not necessarily trigger the relevant contrast. For instance both *arancio* and *arancia* can be accepted by some speakers/varieties to denote 'orange fruit', hence without a deep contrast with *arancio* denoting 'orange tree'. In the varieties spoken by the authors such a contrast is, however, quite sharp.

characterize collective plurals in-*a* in terms of the notion [aggregate]).

Let us then apply these conclusions to *-in-o/ -in-a* alternations. In (13) *-o* corresponds to a property [individual] introduced by *-in-*. As for why this mechanism only triggers the change from a feminine root to a masculine complex noun, and not the opposite, we surmise that the change to feminine of masculine roots could not give an interpretable reading insofar as the *–a* inflection seems to deactivate or void the individuating interpretation. We can deduce this effect from the hypothesis that *-a* in Italian and in general in Romance is able to imply an aggregate interpretation (Manzini & Savoia submitted). This interpretation is present in particular in so-called collective plurals like *dit-a* 'fingers', *oss-a* 'bones' (on their semantic characterization, see Acquaviva 2008).

Returning to the data in (13), concerning deverbal evaluatives, we note that the individuating result is triggered not only by *-in-* but also by the other evaluative suffixes, as in (14b). Again, we must conclude that the merger of the evaluative with the nominal inflection is sufficient to impose an individual interpretation to a predicate. Quite interestingly, the inflection alone is also generally able to obtain a single event interpretation from verbal roots, as in the case of *rincar-o* from *rincarare* (Scalise 1988). Hence, the contribution of the evaluative mainly concerns the introduct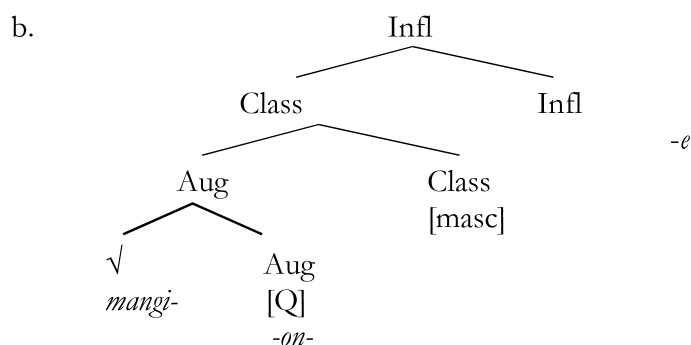ion of an individual meaning (whereas event nouns are known to behave essentially like mass nouns). In (17) the verbal root is of course devoid of gender, which on the contrary is introduced by the diminutive.

(17)

```
                        Infl
              _____
             |                      |
           Class                   Infl
      _____                        -o
     |            |
    Eval        Class
   _____       [masc]
  |      |
  √      Eval
 col-   [individual]
         -in-
```
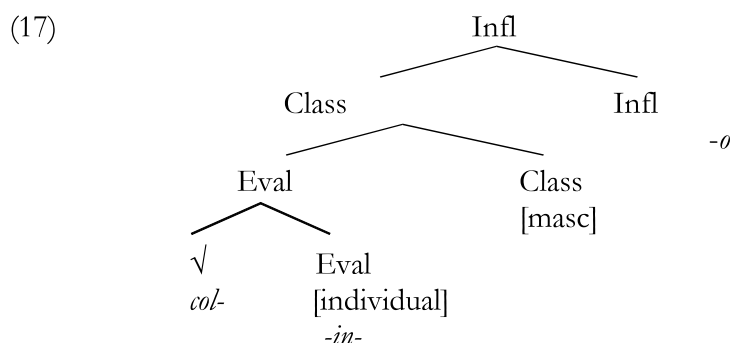
This characterization of the suffix *-in-* as endowed with the [individual] property is consistent with the further occurrences of *-in-* in nouns referring to town inhabitant, as in *fiorent-in-o* 'of Florence, Florentine', *regg-in-o* 'of Reggio' and in small sub-classes of individuals, like *gall-in-a* 'hen', *reg-in-a* 'queen'.

Also, the Aug *-on-* can combine with a verbal root giving rise to nouns as in (18a). The combination of Aug *-on-* crucially differs from the deverbal Nouns formed by *-in-* in that *-on-* does not specify individuals. In *quell'uomo è un mangione* 'that man is a big eater', *-on-* quantifies over the event, characterizing it as habitual/ repeated or intensifying it. Hence, *mangione* means 'one that eats very much/ repeatedly/ habitually' and not 'a big man that eats' (cf. Grandi 2003a,b, Lo Duca 2004), as suggested in (18b), where Aug introduces a quantificational interpretation on the event. Again we must conclude that it is the suffix that selects Gender Class, specifically masculine.

(18) a. mangi-on-e   'big eater'   cf.   mangi-are   'to eat'
          chiacchier-on-e   'chatterer'   chiacchier-are 'to chat'
          poltr-on-e   'lazybones'   poltr-ire   'lie around'
          spi-on-e   'spy'   spi-are   'to spy on'

b.

```
                        Infl
              ┌──────────┴──────────┐
           Class                   Infl
      ┌──────┴──────┐               -e
    Aug          Class
  ┌───┴───┐      [masc]
  √       Aug
 mangi-   [Q]
          -on-
```

3. Sequences of evaluative suffixes

In a recent experimental study with an Italian agrammatic speaker, Franco et al. (2013) did not detect any impairment in either evaluative or gender morphemes. Both categories were spared[9] despite the fact that other grammatical categories were deeply impaired in the patient. In fact, his spontaneous speech revealed reduced phrase length, many omissions of free standing functional morphemes, a high percentage of substitutions of tense and agreement morphology, mainly consisting of the substitution of the required tense/agreement inflection by an infinitival form (e.g. *io studiare arte* 'I study(inf.) arts'), violations in number agreement/inflection.

These results point to the idea that evaluative morphology and gender may be similar grammatical strategies for the classification of nominal roots. Indeed, as shown in the present article, their respective semantics may overlap (cf. the gender alternation *buc-o* 'small hole-m' vs. *buc-a* 'big hole-f' and the augmentative alternation *bors-a* 'bag' vs. *bors-on-e* 'bag-Aug-m, big bag'). Thus, a unified approach, assuming that these grammatical phenomena are part of a single grammatical domain (i.e. classification) seems empirically well-motivated.

Diachronically, nouns are the most common source for (at least) diminutives and augmentatives. As shown in Jurafsky (1996), the word for 'child' is the most common base for the grammaticalization of diminutives in the languages of the world. This process begins when these words are employed as a type of classificatory element to refer to young animate individuals and then are extended to inanimate entities, targeting small sizes with countable items and small quantities with uncountable items, and also being employed to turn mass items into count nouns (Heine & Kuteva 2002: 65-66, Di Garbo 2014). In Jurafsky's view (1996: 553), the 'connected to X' meaning of diminutives (cf. e.g. *Marocco > marocchino* 'Morocco>Moroccan', *imbiancare > imbianchino* 'paint (a wall)> painter (of walls)') may represent a late stage of grammaticalization, when an item expressing size is reanalysed in order to convey a more abstract meaning, roughly according to the scale: small size > small type of > connected to. An opposite pattern (the inverse scale) may also be conceivable. So affixes expressing relational content or resemblance can be turned into diminutives. This is the case for Italian *-in-o/a*, derived from Latin *-in-us/a,* which originally meant roughly 'connected to X' and then developed as diminutives morphemes (Grandi 2001, Di Garbo 2014). In short, the range of facts explored in relation to the competence of Italian native speakers can be seen displayed in the historical development process as well.

The preceding discussion leads us to reconsider the question of the order of evaluative suffixes and the relation between them and inflection endings. As noted in Cinque (2007, 2015), embedding of the evaluative suffixes presents constraints that prevent some combinations. Specifically, the endearing suffixes *-ett-* and *-ell-* can only precede diminutive *-in-*, inserting between the root and *-in-*.[10] The

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[9] Data from different languages indicate that aphasic patients do not have problems in accessing the gender category or, at least have fewer problems with gender, when compared with other grammatical categories. Indeed, it has been reported that they are able to access grammatical gender in single-word naming, independently of whether they are able to actually process the target word or not. For instance, in a study using a picture-naming task in which German and Dutch agrammatic Broca's aphasics had to generate nouns, it was demonstrated that they produced determiners correctly inflected for gender (Bastiaanse et al. 2003).

[10] In several types of combinations we discuss in this article there is marginal uncertainty partially due to regional, but also

sequences where pejorative *-acci-/-ucci-* precedes *-in-/-ett-* are excluded. In (19a), (20a) the admissible forms including one suffix are listed. In (19b) the grammatical combinations such as *-ett-in-* are presented, while (19c) shows the banned sequences such as **-in-ett-*. A similar distribution characterizes clusters formed by *-uzz-, (-ic)-ell-* and *-in-*, which can close sequences but not occur in the intermediate position.

The banned sequences where intermediate or final *-in-* is incompatible with augmentative *-on-* and pejorative *-acc(i)-/-ucc(i)-* are presented in (20b) and (20c).[11] Sequences where the pejorative precedes the augmentative are acceptable, like *om-acci-on-e*.[12]

(19)

a.		b.		c.	
	libr-in-o/libr-ett-o		libr-ett-in-o		* libr-in-ett-o
	book-DIM-/END-INFL		book-END-DIM-INFL		book-DIM-END-INFL
	voc-in-a/voc-ett-a		voc-ett-in-a		* voc-in-ett-a
	voice- DIM-/END-INFL		voice-END-DIM-INFL		voice-DIM-END-INFL
	om-in-o/om-ett-o		om-ett-in-o		* om-in-ett-o
	man- DIM-/END-INFL		man-END-DIM-INFL		man-DIM-END-INFL
	donn-in-a/donn-ett-a		donn-ett-in-a/-o		* donn-in-ett-a/-o
	woman- DIM-/END-INFL		woman-END-DIM-INFL		woman-DIM-END-INFL
	ven-uzz-/-ett-a		ven-uzz-in-a		*ven-in-uzz-a
	vein-DIM-/END-INFL		vein-END-DIM-INFL		vein-DIM-END-INFL
	pied-uzz-o/ pied-in-o		pied-uzz-in-o		*pied-in-uzz-o
	foot-DIM-/END-INFL		foot-END-DIM-INFL		foot-DIM-END-INFL
	salt-er-ell-o/salt-in-o		salt-er-ell-ino		*salt-(er)-in-ell-o
	jump-END-/DIM-INFL		jump-END-DIM-INFL		jump-DIM-END-INFL
	stupid-ello/stupid-in-o		stupid-ell-in-o		*stupid-in-ell-o
	silly- END-/DIM-INFL		silly- END-DIM-INFL		silly- DIM-END-INFL
	pont-ic-ello/pont-ic-in-o		pont-ic-ell-in-o		*pont-ic-in-ell-o
	bridge- END-/DIM-INFL		bridge- END-DIM-INFL		bridge- DIM-END-INFL

(20)

a.		b.		c.	
	om-acci-o/ om-on-e		om-acci-on-e		*om-on-acci-o
	man-PEJ-/AUG-INFL		man-PEJ-AUG-INFL		man-aug-pej-infl
			*om-on-in-o		*om-in-on-e
			man-AUG-DIM-INFL		man-DIM-AUG-INFL
	om-ucci-o		om-ett-ucci-o		*om-ucc-ett-o
	man-PEJ-INFL		man-END-PEJ-INFL		man-PEJ-END-INFL

---

individual, differences. Specifically, our judgements on Italian reflect Tuscan or Florentine native competence. We follow Cinque (2007, 2015) in assuming that sequences allowing endearing morphemes to follow *-in-* are confined to lexicalized forms, as for instance in the case of *tavolinetto* 'nice coffee table', where *tavolino* 'table, coffee table' is stored as a root in the lexicon. This analysis is adopted for all sequences where the internal suffix is completely lexicalized as a part of the lexical base, like *bambin-o/a* 'child', *tavolin-o* 'coffee table', *motorin-o* 'moped', *fornell-o* 'stove fire', *porton-e* 'street door', *lampadin-a* 'light bulb' etc. In some instances a corresponding simple base is missing, as **bamb-*, etc. More in general these forms have non-compositional semantic contents. Thus, *fornello* is not a 'little oven', *lampadina* is not a 'little lamp', *motorino* is not a 'little motor', and so on. We note that De Belder et alii (2014) propose two different positions for the evaluatives. The most internal suffix is inserted within the LexP projection, which can then combine with a higher inflectional slot for evaluatives. In present terms, the lower position of Belder *et alii* (2014) hosts what we treat as a lexicalized element.

[11] As pointed out by an anonymous reviewer, *-ucc-* could not be a morpheme with only a Pejorative value. Indeed, it can also have a diminutive or an endearing value, as in *beccuccio* ('nozzle', diminutive), or *calduccio* ('nice warmth', endearing).

[12] We note that our native judgements on the sequences *om-in-on-e* and *om-in-acci-o* are different from Cinque (2015: 72) in that we assign them an unacceptable/ ungrammatical status.

	*om-ucc-in-o	
	man-PEJ-DIM-INFL	
	*om-acc-in-o	*om-in-acci/ucci-o
	man-PEJ-DIM-INFL	man-DIM-PEJ-INFL
	*om-ucci-on-e	*om-on-ucci-o
	man-PEJ-AUG-INFL	man-AUG-PEJ-INFL
donn-ucci-a	donn-ett-ucci-a	*donn-ucc-ett-a
woman-PEJ-INFL	woman-END-PEJ-INFL	woman-PEJ-END-INFL
	*donn-ucc-in-a	*donn-in-ucci-a
	woman-PEJ-DIM-INFL	woman-DIM-PEJ-INFL
libr-acci-o	libr-ett-acci-o	*libr-acc/ucc-ett-o
book-PEJ-INFL	book-END-PEJ-INFL	book-PEJ-END-INFL

Finally, it should be recalled that evaluative suffixes can be repeated, as in the examples in (21). These sequences are associated with strongly expressive and affective effects, where the repetition has therefore a pragmatic value; alternatively, it is possible that doubling acts as an intensifying device, with respect to the size referred to by the evaluative.

(21)   a.   om-in-in-o   b.   gatt-in-in-o
                  man-DIM-DIM-M   cat-DIM-DIM-M
                  'very little man'   'very small/cute cat'

Cinque (2015) accounts for the order and mutual exclusions between evaluative suffixes in the spirit of the cartographic model. A structural spine is proposed in which, the order *root-endearing-diminutive-pejorative-augmentative* is obtained in accordance with the Mirror Principle (Baker 1985). The lowest suffix is the endearing one *-ett-*[13], immediately dominated by the diminutive *-in-*, that in turn is embedded under the pejorative *-acc(i)-* and the augmentative *-on-*, as in (22) (Cinque 2015: 71). Noun movement creates the correct sequences, *-ett-in-* End-Dim and *-acci-on-* Pej-Aug, and possibly, according to Cinque, *(-ett)-in-on-* (End)-Dim-Aug.

(22)

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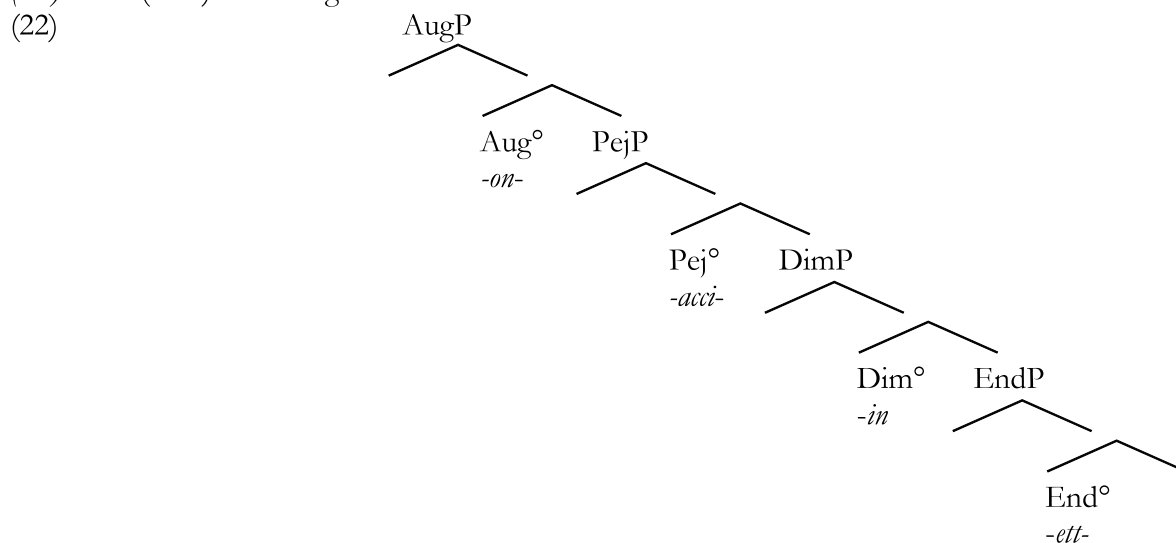
[13] We note that the endearing interpretation of suffixes like *-ett-*, *-ucc-*, *-uzz-*, admits different nuances, that can include evaluation of the type 'modest', 'scarce', etc.

An insight implied by the cartographic distribution in (22) is that the order reflects the semantic content of suffixes. Thus, the endearing suffix, which occurs in a position adjacent to the root, can be understood as an aspectual suffix related to the way of presenting the root. In turn, -*in*- and -*on*- introduce a size evaluation associated, as we saw in the case of -*in*-, to a singulative content [individual]. We have seen that pejorative and other types of evaluatives behave like -*ett*-. In fact, if we take the data in (19)-(20) into account, we obtain the possible combinations in (23i-v). Actually, (23) is a little coarse to the extent that the pejorative suffixes we consider have different distributions. Indeed -*acci*-, but not -*ucci*-, can precede -*on*-, whereas -*ucci*-, but not -*acci*-, can follow -*ett*-. This suggests that the suffixal paradigm is more fine-grained. More precisely, we must conclude that subtle differences of meaning are implied that determine the possible combinations and types of order.

(23)

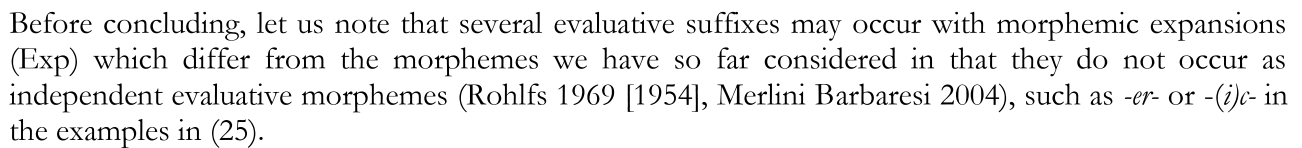|	i.	ii.	iii.	iv.	v.
	END-DIM	END-PEJ	PEJ-AUG	*PEJ/AUG-DIM	*-DIM-PEJ/AUG
	-*ett-in*-	-*ett-ucci*-	-*acci-on*-	*-*ucci-/-on-in*-	*-*in-u/acci-/-on*-

3.1 The order of suffixes

We have seen that evaluative suffixes – like inflectionally expressed number and gender – introduce predicates/ properties that restrict the argument of the root. We assume that order of morphemes reflects requirements regulating the composition of these elements with one another (and with the root) in accordance with their interpretive content. Hence, the fact that -*in*- closes the sequence of the evaluative suffixes can be understood as a consequence of its restrictive content. In particular, its singulative effect requires it to restrict the other evaluatives, especially the endearing -*ett*- lacking the quantificational property [individual]. This explains why -*in*- embeds all endearing suffixes as -*ell*-, -*uzz*-, and therefore follows them. Interestingly, -*in*- is semantically similar or in any event close to inflectional morphology, as suggested by the aphasiological data briefly discussed in section 3. Indeed, we saw that -*in*- has quantificational properties insofar as it is able to work as a singulative/ individual exponent; in this it recalls some quantificational properties generally specified by inflection, i.e. plural, aggregate, individual, etc. (cf. section 3).

As regards forms such as *gessetto, legnetto*, in (11c',c"), the singulative result is only apparently due to the suffix, given that already the corresponding simple roots allow an individual/ count reading. In other words, these forms can be analysed as normal evaluatives of count roots, as *libretto* 'little book'.

The incompatibility between -*in*- and -*on*- can refer mainly to the fact that -*on*- can operate as a singulative as well, that is, it is endowed with the [individual] property. This conclusion is supported by its ability to impose its gender to the complex form independently of the gender of the root, as in *donn-on-e* [masc], exactly like -*in*- does (see section 3). As a consequence, an oddity effect results from combining -*in*- and -*on*-, as we have highlighted. Other restrictions must be at work, given that, for example, -*acci-on*- PEJ-AUG is admitted, while -*acc-in*- PEJ-DIM is strange. A possibility is that the singulative character of -*in*- blocks the evaluative content of -*acci-/-ucci*-. On the other hand, we know that both endearing and pejorative suffixes encode size. This is true for the pejorative -*acci*- that implies a large size individual, thus excluding the combination *-*acc-in*- PEJ-DIM. Conversely, the pejorative -*ucci*- introduces a small size restriction, in some way reduplicating the one introduced by the diminutive -*in*. These properties could also explain why pejorative -*acci*-and -*ucci*- can combine with strictly endearing elements such as -*ett*- giving rise to acceptable forms like *libr-ett-acci-o* 'book-END-PEJ-M'/ *libr-ett-ucci-o* 'book-END-PEJ-M' in (20b).

The clearest conclusion we reach is that suffixes with a quantificational singulative import must apply to the entire set of properties associated with the root, fixing the individual defined by this set of properties. Therefore, they cannot be embedded by, hence restricted by, a non-quantificational suffix, i.e. endearing -*ett-/ -ell*-, pejorative -*ucci*- etc. The latter can be understood as aspectual classifiers expressing the way the speaker thinks of/ evaluates the nominal argument. An individuating suffix is therefore predicated of the entire complex *root-evaluative classifier* cluster, as in (24), modifying its

interpretation. Applying an endearing/ evaluative suffix to an individuating suffix does not give rise to a well-formed interpretation.

(24)

```
                              Infl
                    ┌───────────┴───────────┐
                 Class                     Infl
          ┌────────┴────────┐               -o
      Class_Eval          Class
     ┌────┴────┐        [individ] [masc]
     √      Class_Eval      -in-
   donn-    [endear]
            -ett-
```

Before concluding, let us note that several evaluative suffixes may occur with morphemic expansions (Exp) which differ from the morphemes we have so far considered in that they do not occur as independent evaluative morphemes (Rohlfs 1969 [1954], Merlini Barbaresi 2004), such as *-er-* or *-(i)c-* in the examples in (25).

(25) a. salt-er-ell-o
          jump-EXP-END-M
          'little jump'

          scem-er-ell-o
          fool-EXP-END-M
          'little fool'

      b. port-ic-in-a
          door-EXP-DIM-F
          'little door'

          fium-ic-in-o/-att-ol-o
          river-EXP-DIM-M/EXP-END-M
          'little river'

      c. matton-c-in-o
          brick-EXP-DIM-M
          'little brick'

          leon-c-in-o
          lion-EXP-DIM-M
          'little lion'

Some morphophonological restrictions seem to be at work that avoid alliterations and certain consonantal sequences (Rainer 1990). For example, the roots containing the final sequence …*on* require the insertion of *-c-* before *-in-*, as in *melon-c-in-o* 'little mellon', possibly avoiding the *n* alliteration; nevertheless *-in-* is normally adjoined to roots ending in a coronal nasal, as *can-in-o* 'little dog'.

4. Some conclusions

The minimalist approach we adopt is inspired by the idea that morphology, on a par with phonology, is a process that makes lexical and syntactic objects accessible to the sensorimotor system, in the sense of Berwick and Chomsky (2011: 27):

Language is therefore based on a recursive generative procedure that takes elementary word-like elements from some store, call it the lexicon, and applies repeatedly to yield structured expressions, without bound. Externalization is not a simple task […] We would expect, then, that morphology and phonology - the linguistic processes that convert internal syntactic objects to the entities accessible to the sensorimotor system - might turn out to be quite intricate, varied, and subject to accidental historical events.

An adequate theory must be able to express the variation normally observable in languages. According to the perspective proposed by Berwick & Chomsky (2011), linguistic variation and change can be understood as by-products of the externalization process. In keeping with Chomsky (1995, 2005, 2013), we have developed analyses based on the idea that morpho-syntactic regularities rest on the content of the lexical elements, including inflectional and derivational morphemes.

The morphology of nouns in Italian involves a number of descriptive and theoretical questions, concerning both the internal structure of the noun and the status of the so-called derivational and inflectional morphemes. We have started from the proposal that inflectional morphology in nouns is endowed with semantic content, which provides evidence about its active involvement at the interpretive interface. There is evidence for concluding that evaluative as well as other derivational suffixes can be equated to classifiers, as suggested by recent work comparing Bantu and Romance. In other words, these elements are associated with semantic content, interacting with one another and with inflectional morphemes. Essentially, we have posited no crucial difference between derivational and inflectional morphology, except for their semantic specialization and some distributional restrictions. This is all the more so as we propose an analysis of the internal structure of the noun where inflection is not directly associated with gender (which we identify with a specification of the root) but introduces other types of classification.

The present case study on evaluative suffixes has allowed us to gain some insight into crucial problems concerning the distribution and reciprocal order of derivational suffixes and evaluatives in particular. The different status of the various types of evaluative suffixes, like *-in-*, *-on-*, *-ett-*, *-acci-*, *-ucci-*, etc. has been examined. Specifically we have distinguished *-in-*, as a singulative suffix, from the others. The particular nature of *-in-* is evidenced by many facts, for example by its occurrence in 'inhabitant of' formations and its capacity to change a mass noun into a count one. This latter property can account for certain constraints on the possible combinations between evaluatives, excluding, for instance, sequences like *-in-ett-* Dim-End but admitting sequences like *-ett-in-* End-Dim. We have proposed an explanation that avoids recourse to cartographic stipulation.

In conclusion a theory of nouns based on the hypothesis that all internal morphemes are endowed with semantic import leads to an interesting treatment of morphemes distribution, including order and mutual exclusion phenomena. This result is reached without resorting to an underlying abstract level, as in cartographic (see functional hierarchies) or DM approaches (see Late Insertion): on the contrary, the morpho-syntactic model we discuss assumes that words, here nouns, are the interpretable result of a compositional mechanism, essentially regulated by Chomsky's Merge procedure.

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