

**MEASURING DIMINUTIVE SUFFIX  
PRODUCTIVITY ACROSS VARIETIES OF  
SPANISH: THE CASE OF *-ITO* AND *-ILLO***

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# INTRODUCTION

## GOALS OF THE PROJECT

- A cross-dialectal analysis of morphological productivity (Baayen, 2009; Denistia & Baayen, 2019; Hay & Baayen, 2005), using the competing Spanish diminutive suffixes *-ito* and *-illo* as a test case.
- We consider dialectal variation, as varieties of Spanish might not necessarily display the same trend.

## GOALS OF THE PROJECT

- The problem: numerous studies on diminutives, but representative cross-dialectal studies are still scarce, as are implementations of statistical measures of productivity.
- Goals:
  - (1) Examine the evidence provided in prior research to summarize potential restrictions on the formation of diminutives in Spanish.
  - (2) Explore the cross-dialectal distribution of competing diminutive suffixes in a representative, cross-dialectal corpus.
  - (3) Apply statistical measures of productivity to the data and assess whether such differences are reflected across varieties.

# THE MORPHOLOGICAL PATTERN

- Diminutive formation.
- Function: form a complex word denoting a smaller version of the base (Haspelmath & Sims, 2010).

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| a. <i>un hombre-cito</i><br>a man-DIM.SG<br>"A little man." | b. <i>muy chiqu-ito</i><br>very small-DIM<br>"Very small." |
| c. <i>com-iend-ito</i><br>eat-PROG-DIM<br>"Eating."         | d. <i>ahor-ita.</i><br>now-DIM<br>"(Right) Now."           |



*El principito*  
“The little prince”

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## DIMINUTIVES IN USE

- Cross-linguistically, the diminutive has an “extraordinary, often contradictory range of its senses synchronically (small size, affection, approximation, intensification, imitation, female gender)” (Jurafsky, 1996).
- In Spanish, stylistic uses of diminutives express pragmatic meanings as diverse as irony, mitigation, courtesy, and augmentation (Regúnaga, 2005).



# MOTIVATION

- Productivity has implication for functional models of language use and language learning (Bybee 2006; 2010; Bybee & Torres Cacoullos 2009).
- Diminutivization is a structure that lends itself well to analyses of productivity.
- Statistical measures of productivity (Baayen, 2009; Denistia & Baayen, 2019) can provide quantitative evidence for the claims made in descriptive work about the prevalence of a given suffix.

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