



Unlocking Evaluative Morphology II
Semantic values and pragmatic motivations

UNIVERSITY OF GRAZ



Mapping Diminutive Evaluativeness in Spanish Prefixes

A Comparative Study of *micro-* and *mini-*



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Diminutives in evaluative morphology

Diminution can be expressed both by suffixation and prefixation in Spanish, as in other Romance languages (Grandi & Montermini 2004; Grandi 2015; Martín García 2016, 2017).

- (2) **Prefixes:** *mini-*, *micro-*, *nano-*...
Suffixes: *-ito/a*, *-uelo/a*, *-illo/a*, *-ico/a*...

However, diminutive prefixes are

- ▶ less often focused on
- ▶ implicitly considered functionally similar to suffixes, or
- ▶ simply described as indicating small size, without further analytical investigation of their semantic or pragmatic functions

(Rodríguez Ponce 2002; Serrano-Dolader 2011; Fábregas 2024)

Evaluativeness scale

Introduction

Methodology

Base classification

Descriptive meaning

Parameters

Semantic instructions

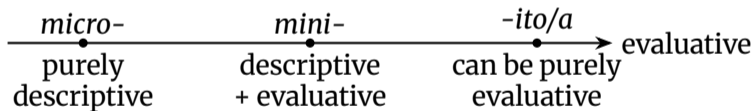
Evaluative meaning

Underlying factors

Conclusion

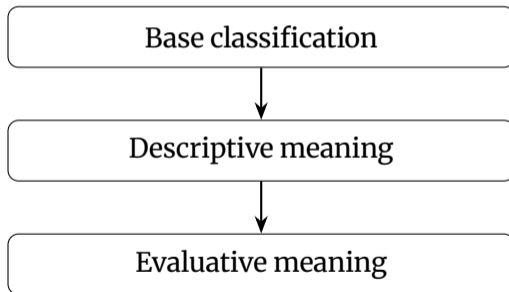
This study examines the semantic and pragmatic functions of the Spanish prefixes *micro-* and *mini-*, with particular attention to their evaluative value, here termed *evaluativeness*.

We propose the following *evaluativeness scale*:



Methodology

Drawing on data from the Observatori de Neologia, the dataset comprises 107 *micro-X* formations and 63 *mini-X* formations, including *prefix X*, *prefix-X* and *prefixX*.



Introduction

Methodology

Base classification

Descriptive meaning

Parameters

Semantic instructions

Evaluative meaning

Underlying factors

Conclusion

Base classification

The bases of *micro*- formations tend to be more specialized and technical and exhibit greater syntactic diversity:

- ▶ nouns (*microinversión* ‘microinvestment’)
- ▶ adjectives (*micro-híbrido* ‘micro-hybrid’)
- ▶ verbs (*microsegmentar* ‘to microsegment’)

The bases of *mini*- formations are typically more concrete and closely related to everyday life:

- ▶ nouns (*minicerdo* ‘minipig’, *minihamburguesa* ‘minihamburger’, *minigimnasio* ‘minigym’)
- ▶ adjectives that can also function nominally (*mini hidráulico* ‘mini hydraulic’, *minizoológico* ‘minizoo’)
- ▶ only one personal pronoun (*mini yo* ‘mini me’)

(i) Direct modification (Type A)

When only Type A is activated, *micro-* directly modifies the base itself.

In the dataset, most semantic types of the bases in this group are annotated as *art* (artifact), *nat* (natural entity), *coll* (collective base), and *tim* (time):

microhabitación (art): a room of smaller physical size than a standard room

microcasa (art): a house of small size

micrococina (art): a kitchen of small size

microfalda (art): a short skirt, i.e., a reduced-size garment

microvaso (nat): a very small blood vessel

microgénero (coll): a genre that constitutes a smaller unit within a broader genre

micromomento (tim): a very short moment

(ii) Indirect modification (Type B)

Animate bases

- ▶ *microinfluencer* (anm): an influencer with a limited number of followers or reduced audience reach
- ▶ *microbloguero / microbloguera* (anm): an individual who produces short, frequent, and informal blog posts
- ▶ *microproductor / microproductora* (anm): someone who operates at a small production scale, for example in agriculture, crafts, food production, or mining

Non-animate bases

- ▶ *micromensajería* (evt/ist): a form of digital communication that enables the exchange of short text messages, typically in real time via web or mobile applications such as Twitter, WhatsApp, Telegram, or WeChat

(iii) Direct + indirect modification

In this type, *micro-* modifies both the base (Type A) and components associated with it (Type B). These bases are typically annotated as *evt* or *art*ist*.

- ▶ *microaprendizaje* (evt): a smaller unit of learning (Type A) with limited content and reduced cognitive effort (Type B)
- ▶ *micromasaje* (evt): a short massage (Type A) focused on a localized area (Type B) with precise care (Type B)
- ▶ *microencuentro* (evt): a meeting that is shorter (Type A), involves fewer participants (Type B), and requires less cognitive effort (Type B)
- ▶ *microempresa* (art*ist): a small company (Type A) with few employees (Type B)

Introduction

Methodology

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Parameters

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Evaluative meaning

Underlying factors

Conclusion

Comparison of semantic instructions between *micro-* and *mini-*

