

SIZE MATTERS: GRAMMATICALIZATION, METAPHOR, AND THE SPANISH DIMINUTIVE

Martha Mendoza

DEPARTMENT OF LANGUAGES, LINGUISTICS AND COMPARATIVE LITERATURE
FLORIDA ATLANTIC UNIVERSITY

RESUMEN

La lingüística cognitiva ha propagado la idea de que la conceptualización basada en la metáfora juega un papel sumamente importante en la estructuración de las categorías gramaticales. El presente artículo analiza algunas metáforas de tamaño que aparecen en la estructuración de la categoría diminutivo en español; por ejemplo, LA CENTRALIDAD DE UNA CATEGORÍA ES (UNA ESCALA DE) TAMAÑO y LO MARGINAL ES LO PEQUEÑO (Cf. Jurafsky, 1996). Mi análisis del diminutivo en español sugiere que su multiplicidad de funciones refleja un proceso de gramaticalización que ha dado como resultado la extensión de su significado desde el dominio del tamaño físico hacia contextos más y más abstractos. Se demuestra que la metáfora ha tenido un papel crucial en este proceso, así como también mecanismos semántico-pragmáticos, como la convencionalización de implicaturas. Además, se presenta una breve comparación de la categoría diminutivo en inglés y en español, al tiempo que se proveen algunos ejemplos de la aplicación del presente análisis a traducciones de diminutivos del español al inglés.

PALABRAS CLAVE: lingüística cognitiva, metáfora, gramaticalización, diminutivo, sufijos, tamaño

ABSTRACT

Cognitive linguistics has brought to the forefront the notion that metaphorical conceptualization plays a most important role in the structuring of grammatical categories. The present article analyzes size metaphors involved in the structuring of the category diminutive in Spanish; for instance, CATEGORY CENTRALITY IS (A SCALE OF) SIZE and MARGINAL IS SMALL (Cf. Jurafsky, 1996). My analysis of the diminutive in Spanish suggests that its current multiplicity of functions reflects a process of grammaticalization which has resulted in the extension of its meaning from the domain of physical size to increasingly abstract contexts. Metaphor is shown to have played a crucial role in this process, as well as semantic-pragmatic mechanisms such as the conventionalization of inferences or implicatures. In addition, a brief comparison of the category diminutive in English and Spanish is also presented as well as some examples of the application of the present analysis to the translation of diminutives from Spanish to English.

KEY WORDS: cognitive linguistics, metaphor, grammaticalization, diminutive, suffixes, size

Fecha de recepción del artículo: 6 de mayo de 2011
Fecha de recepción de la versión revisada: 30 de enero de 2012
Fecha de aceptación: 17 de abril de 2012

Dirección de la autora:
Martha Mendoza
Florida Atlantic University
777 Glades Rd.
Boca Raton, FL 33431
USA
mmendoza@fau.edu

INTRODUCTION

In Modern Spanish the diminutive does not only convey the idea of smallness but also expresses speakers' attitudes and feelings. This expressive function may at times seem to actually override its diminishing force. Although one may be inclined to agree that this expressive function of the diminutive is most important, the overall picture of the Spanish diminutive is not so simple. Diminutive suffixes are not confined to instances of affective expression or, only sporadically, of actual diminution, but include meanings of approximation and attenuation, intensification, exactness, resemblance or imitation, relatedness, and politeness, among others, as well as participating in derivation (new word formation). The following are a few examples: diminutivization (*Había unos arbolitos* 'There were some small trees'), approximation (*Estaba cansadillo* 'He was rather tired'), intensification (*Se fue derechito a su casa* 'S/he went home right away'), and politeness marker (*¿Gusta un cafecito?* 'Would you like some coffee?').¹

Historically, Spanish has made use of the following diminutive suffixes: *-ico(a)*, *-illo(a)*, *-ito(a)*, *-ín/ino(a)*, *-ejo(a)*, *-ete(a)*, and *-uelo(a)*. With the exception of *-ito* and *-ico*, all these suffixes originate from Latin, where they already possessed diminutive meaning, except for *-ino*, which originally meant 'pertaining/relative to, of the nature of' and only later acquired diminutive force. The origin of two of the most widely used diminutive suffixes in Modern Spanish, *-ito* and *-ico*, remains obscure, but scholars like Hasselrot (1957) argue for their Celtic origin. Their varied shape and origin and their great semantico-pragmatic richness makes diminutives a most attractive area of inquiry within Spanish linguistics, and there have been many studies devoted to them over the years.

Traditional accounts on diminutives usually treat all of their varied uses as a collection of unsystematic "affective" senses, which all happen to share a diminutive ending. Overall, no attempt is made to discuss the relationships that may relate distinct functions as well as the semantic and pragmatic processes that have brought about the diminutive's present polysemy. The following is a typical description of the diminutive: "aunque la valoración y la emoción se hermanan, es de utilidad sistemática diferenciar ambos oficios representacionales en el diminutivo. La fantasía tiene una fuerza dinámica que es emoción, y una conformadora,

¹ For studies of polite diminutives in Spanish, see Mendoza (2005) and Curcó (1998).

deslindadora y ordenadora que colabora con el intelecto, aunque ella misma no es meramente intelectual”² (Alonso, 1961: 181-182). One shortcoming of such description is that it is not clear whether the different senses proposed are truly separate or, rather, they express a single sense with different pragmatic or contextual specifications.

Another such description is one provided by Montes Giraldo (1972: 77): “El diminutivo aplicado a una cosa apunta a otra con la que se relaciona de varias maneras y que es el objeto de la volición de un sujeto a veces indeterminado, como puede serlo también el sujeto en quien se pretende despertar compasión o simpatía.”³ However, we are not told what those different ways in which the diminutive relates a thing to another may be. Given this, it should be apparent that we gain very little from such vague and overly general descriptions.

On the other hand, in recent years more modern accounts have specifically contributed to the analysis of the Spanish diminutive from a contemporary linguistics perspective that incorporates semantic and pragmatic points of view, employing theories that include grammaticalization, subjectification, and cognitive linguistics (Cf. Ruiz de Mendoza, 2000; Reynoso, 2005; Santibáñez, 1999). It is within this more recent tradition that the present study lies.

In what follows, I explore the process of grammaticalization⁴ that has taken place in the development of the category diminutive in Spanish and analyze crucial metaphors that are involved in its current structuring, as well as provide relevant connections to other semantic-pragmatic mechanisms implicated—such as the conventionalization of inferences—with the goal of shedding light on the question of what it is about the semantics of this grammatical category that allows it to perform such diverse functions. Applying the tools of cognitive semantics

² “Even though evaluation and emotion are linked, it is systematically useful to differentiate both representational functions of the diminutive. Fantasy has one dynamic force that is emotion, and one that shapes, delimits and organizes, and which collaborates with the intellect, even though this force itself is not purely intellectual” (my translation).

³ “The diminutive applied to a thing points to another with which it relates in different ways and which is the object of the volition of an individual who is sometimes undetermined, just as the individual in whom one wants to awaken compassion or sympathy can be as well” (my translation).

⁴ Grammaticalization is defined as “the process whereby lexical items and constructions come in certain linguistic contexts to serve grammatical functions, and, once grammaticalized, continue to develop new grammatical functions” (Hopper & Traugott, 1993: xv).

and grammaticalization theory to diminutives enables us to elucidate the nature of the relationships between different meanings and also to demonstrate that these senses are motivated rather than arbitrary.

The variety of Spanish under study here is Mexican Spanish,⁵ although most diminutive functions considered are likely to be found in other dialects of Spanish. The senses that will be discussed are the following: approximation, imitation, relatedness, intensification, and exactness. These meanings are not always brought about by the same suffixes but are for the most part expressed by *-ito* and *-illo*, and, to a lesser extent, *-ín/ino*. Synchronically, only the first two are truly productive in Mexican Spanish while the third is mostly relegated to lexicalizations.

THE THEORY OF METAPHOR

One of the main contributions of cognitive linguistics to linguistic science is the recognition that grammatical categories are in principle much more systematically structured than previously thought and that different senses are not merely arbitrary but motivated. A fundamental area of inquiry within cognitive linguistics is the theory of metaphor. Metaphor theory advances the proposal that a given linguistic category or conceptual domain can be structured in terms of another by means of metaphorical mappings. These arise as the language used to talk about aspects of the source domain is also employed for the corresponding parts in the target domain(s). In the following sentences (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980):

- (1) His theory has no foundation
- (2) Your argument is shaky

our conceptual structuring about buildings is applied to the metaphorically defined domain of theories (and arguments). Thus, expressions such as ‘foundation’, ‘construct’, ‘fall apart’, and so on, can serve to elaborate on aspects of the target domain. To date many other such conceptual metaphors have been identified in the literature of metaphor research (Lakoff, 1987; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

⁵ More specifically, the Spanish of the central-western region of Mexico that includes states like Michoacán and Guanajuato.

The metaphorical mappings involved in the structuring of a particular domain may give rise to networks of senses, called radial categories, where a central sense is connected to other senses, in a motivated way through conventional extension principles, which may not only include metaphor but also metonymy and image-schemas. Although most of this research is based on and has been applied to English, there are many other languages where metaphorical conceptualization plays an important role in the structuring of grammatical categories. The diminutive in Spanish can be analyzed using such theoretical principles, given that it is polysemous and can be said to constitute a radial category which relies on various metaphorical and metonymic extensions based on size metaphors linked to the core meaning 'small'.

Crosslinguistically, the diminutive as a grammatical category starts off as a notion involving physical properties readily observed in the physical world; that is, the diminutive denotes size, specifically 'small size'. From this concrete, experiential basis, the diminutive has extended its domain of application to functions that the contemporary speaker may or may not readily relate to the concept of size. However, as we will see, this concrete semantic basis has had powerful implications for the course of development the diminutive has undergone over time.

THE DIMINUTIVE OF APPROXIMATION

As grammaticalization studies have demonstrated, it is quite common for a grammatical category or item to display divergence along its path of evolution; divergence is defined as the development of two or more distinct functions by the same linguistic form or category (Hopper & Traugott, 1993: 116-120). One of the various semantic functions of the diminutive is to suggest a mitigation or diminution of meaning when attached to adjectives and, to a lesser extent, adverbs. These items typically denote, but are not restricted to, degrees of some variable property such as length, speed, weight, among others. When the diminutive is added, the resulting combination expresses a mitigation or diminution of the meaning of the adjective (or adverb); thus, the diminutive effectively acts as an approximative or attenuative. The speaker wishes to make use of the adjective but may feel that the unqualified form is perhaps "too strong" for the purposes at hand, so employing the diminutive is a way to qualify its force. The diminutive suffix that commonly works as an approximative or attenuative in Mexican Spanish is *-illo* (*-ito* is

mostly reserved for intensification).⁶ This functional specialization of Spanish diminutive suffixes where *-illo* expresses approximation and *-ito* intensification has also been noted elsewhere (Cf. Ruiz de Mendoza, 2000; Reynoso, 2005).

For instance, a speaker may answer the question *¿Dónde está la escuela?* ‘Where is the school?’ with *Está cerquita* ‘It’s very near/it’s really near’, emphasizing the sense that the adverb conveys. However, answering *Está lejecillos/lejillos* does not intensify the adverb’s force but instead mitigates it, expressing something like ‘It’s somewhat far/it’s not too far’. Consequently, *muy* or *bien*, as intensive adverbs, cannot be used given that, rather than stressing or highlighting, the speaker intends to attenuate what is regarded as too strong of a sense. Similarly, *Está carillo* does not mean ‘It’s very expensive/it’s really expensive’ but rather ‘It’s not very expensive/it’s not too expensive’. Other such examples include *altillo* ‘tallish’ < *alto* ‘tall’, *enojadillo* ‘rather angry’ < *enojado* ‘angry’, *feillo* ‘somewhat ugly’ < *feo* ‘ugly’, *larguillo* ‘longish, rather long’ < *largo* ‘long’, and *tristecillo* ‘rather sad’ < *triste* ‘sad’. Spanish is not the only language that has developed this use of the diminutive; the diminutive of approximation is also found in languages such as Cantonese, Middle Breton, Halkomelem, and English (Jurafsky, 1993: 430-431).⁷

The approximation or attenuation sense exemplified in *altillo* ‘tallish, rather tall’ < *alto* ‘tall’ can be explained as arising from the following metaphors: 1) CATEGORY CENTRALITY IS (A SCALE OF) SIZE, and 2) MARGINAL IS SMALL (adapted from Jurafsky, 1996).⁸ Thus, we have two metaphors where the concept of size is used as an abstraction to represent varying degrees of category membership and, therefore, closeness or distance from the category prototype. These metaphors clearly evince

⁶ Other diminutives, such as *-ejo* and *-ín* can also carry the approximation sense, although they are much less common in this function than *-illo* and may carry pejorative connotations: for example, *malejo* ‘poorish, on the bad or poor side’ < *malo* ‘bad, poor’, *medianejo* ‘fairish, more or less average’ < *mediano* ‘medium sized, average’, *rubiejo* ‘blondish, fairish’ < *rubio* ‘blond, fair’, *tontín* ‘somewhat stupid’ < *tonto* ‘fool, stupid’.

⁷ The present study focuses on Mexican Spanish, but Jurafsky (1993: 431) has also found this sense of the diminutive in the Spanish of the Dominican Republic. See also Reynoso (2005) and Ruiz de Mendoza (2000), who provides the following example of this use of the diminutive: *Muy guapo no es, sólo guapillo* (364).

⁸ The metaphor CATEGORY CENTRALITY IS SIZE (Jurafsky, 1996) has been modified in order to highlight the notion of scalarity which is involved in the approximation sense of the diminutive.

the interplay between metaphorical structure and prototype effects in the semantics of the diminutive. Through these metaphors, diminutives signal marginality with regard to membership in abstract categories; that is, they express non-central membership⁹ (and non-prototypicality) since any lexical item marked by the diminutive *-illo* will not be considered a central member of the category in question.

Thus, in *atillo* the diminutive is used to mark a marginal member of the category 'tall'. This indicates that, in the eyes of the speaker, the adjective 'tall' is not fully applicable and that an entity described by *atillo* does not constitute a good exemplar of this category.¹⁰ This also takes place in English where, for example, a 'reddish' object denotes a marginal member of the category of red objects, one to which the predicate 'red' does not fully apply.

This suggests that, via the two categorial metaphors presented above, the core meaning 'small' has been extended to the domain of abstract qualities. The shift from marker of small size to degree modifier constitutes a process of increased abstraction, typical of grammaticalization, by which the diminutive extends its domain of application to more contexts, performing new functions (*Cf.* Hopper & Traugott, 1993). This development also agrees with the cline proposed by Claudi and Heine (1986: 301), whereby any category to the left can be metaphorically represented by any category to its right:

QUALITY ← PROCESS ← SPACE ← OBJECT ← PERSON

In the case of the approximation diminutive, via the metaphor QUALITY ← OBJECT, smallness in terms of size as applied to physical objects serves as a metaphorical vehicle for the expression of diminution of abstract qualities and, in pragmatic terms, diminution of strength of predication.

Ruiz de Mendoza (2000) analyzes the Spanish diminutive in terms of an ICM (idealized cognitive model) based on size—which also integrates aspects of the ICM's of control and cost/benefit—and states that “*-ito* potencia, pero *-illo* aminora, el efecto subjetivo que produce en el hablante una propiedad, relación o

⁹ This is related to George Lakoff's concept of *membership gradience*: “The idea that at least some categories have degrees of membership and no clear boundaries” (Lakoff, 1987: 12).

¹⁰ Prototypicality effects associated to qualities have been shown in experiments with focal colors by Berlin and Kay (1969).

acontecimiento [...] por medio de *-ito* expresamos que una propiedad, relación o suceso nos resulta agradable, mientras que a través de *-illo* se le resta importancia” (364).¹¹ From his exposition, however, it is not exactly clear why the diminutive should have been recruited to perform this attenuative function at all, although he mentions the activation of the mental spaces associated with corollary e) of his ICM as a possible reason: “e) Los objetos pequeños son poco importantes [...] pueden percibirse como desagradables; de ahí que pasen a representar lo desagradable” (359).¹² Although the importance of ICM’s in semantic description is undeniable, the question still remains: Upon what basis is the diminutive as a marker of “the unpleasant” able to express approximation?

-Ilo in its approximation/attenuation sense is typically applied to antonymic, gradable, adjectives and can be considered a degree modifier (Cf. Maat, 2006) or semantic hedge,¹³ as in: *carillo* ‘somewhat/rather expensive’ < *caro* ‘expensive’, *flojillo* ‘somewhat loose/lazy’ < *flojo* ‘loose, lazy (Mexico)’, *gordillo* ‘fattish’ < *gordo* ‘fat’, *azulillo* ‘somewhat blue, bluish’ < *azul* ‘blue’, *lejecillos* ‘rather far’ < *lejos* ‘far’, *tempranillo* ‘rather early’ < *temprano* ‘early’. Thus, on the scale of expensive things, *carillo* ‘somewhat expensive’ is less expensive than some prototype of expensiveness, which does not constitute a fixed concept, as this may depend on extralinguistic, socio-cultural factors.¹⁴

As mentioned, the adjectives that undergo this modification are predominantly the ones classified as gradable, where some kind of scale exists that allows different values of a certain quality (fatness, tallness, etc.) to be assigned to a given item. The application of the diminutive results in the lowering of the item’s value on the scale in question and, therefore, its marginalization with respect to more central items that have not been thus modified.¹⁵ It does not appear to be a

¹¹ “*-ito* intensifies, but *-illo* attenuates, the subjective effect that a property, relationship or event causes in the speaker [...] through *-ito* we express that we find a property, relationship or event pleasant, while through *-illo* we give them less importance” (my translation).

¹² “Small objects are of little importance [...] they can be perceived as unpleasant; consequently, they come to represent the unpleasant” (my translation).

¹³ According to Talmy (2000: 155), hedges “qualify the categoriality of a linguistic element’s referent.”

¹⁴ For more on the significance of scales in human reasoning and language, see Chapter 5 of M. Johnson’s *The body in the mind* (1987).

¹⁵ Even though gradable adjectives are the ones predominantly used in this sense, items such as the following may be possible in cases of rather jocular and/or ironic uses: **casadillo* < *casado*

coincidence that many of the adjectives selected to be modified in this way by *-illo* are rather concrete, a fact that suggests that speakers quite often rely on concrete, physical, apparent characteristics when deciding whether something qualifies as a central member of a given category or not. This also seems to suggest that the conceptual metaphors at work have a strong sensory—perhaps mostly visual—basis¹⁶ which allows speakers to judge whether an item and its associated qualities conform to common expectations. For instance, a person standing in some open space will be able to perceive different physical characteristics of objects or people close by in a much clearer way than if they are farther away at the margins of his/her field of vision.¹⁷

Furthermore, given that the diminutive of approximation involves evaluative subjective judgments on the part of speakers, since they actually have no way of objectively assessing qualities or properties, this meaning of the diminutive clearly exemplifies the move towards increased subjectification that is typical of processes of grammaticalization (*Cf.* Traugott, 1982; Traugott, 1989; Traugott & Dasher, 2002). Applying Traugott's theories, Reynoso (2005) refers to this use of the diminutive as “valoración cuantificadora descentralizadora,” whereby the diminutive suffix “debilita el significado de la base a la que se afija y con ello descentraliza la referencia, es decir, el diminutivo es usado en estos casos para disminuir las características inherentes a la entidad marcada, presentándola como el peor ejemplo dentro de su dominio semántico” (81).¹⁸ This view is not incompatible with the metaphorical analysis presented here on the diminutive of approximation. Reynoso's description makes use of the word “descentralizadora,” a term which accords rather well with the metaphor CATEGORY CENTRALITY IS (A

‘married’ (in the sense ‘somewhat married’); **divorciadillo* < *divorciado* ‘divorced’ (in the sense ‘rather divorced’); **muertecillo* < *muerto* ‘dead’ (in the sense ‘somewhat dead’); or **legalillo* < *legal* ‘legal’ (in the sense ‘somewhat legal’).

¹⁶ Gerard Steen (*personal communication*) has suggested that these size metaphors would seem to arise from our sensory experience of space, where objects that are near us appear to be bigger than the same objects when they are farther away. This is certainly something to be explored further.

¹⁷ Talmy (2000) discusses extensively the parallels between vision and language as two cognitive systems that share structural modes of representation.

¹⁸ “[the diminutive] weakens the meaning of the base to which it attaches and thus decenters the reference; that is, the diminutive is used in these cases to attenuate the inherent characteristics of the entity in question, presenting it as the worst example in its semantic domain” (my translation).

SCALE OF) SIZE as the semantic basis for this function of the diminutive. Furthermore, in grammaticalization studies, it is widely recognized that the interaction of both semantic (for instance, metaphor) and pragmatic (for example, subjectification) factors are usually at play in the meaning extensions of grammatical categories.

With respect to marginality, in languages like Cantonese and Nez Perce, diminutives mark social outcasts and foreigners (Jurafsky, 1996: 547-548). In Spanish, when used with particular nouns, certain diminutive suffixes, such as *-illo* and *-uelo* have developed a clear sense of pejoration, given that a marginal member of a category is, evidently, not too good of an example of said category. This pejorative connotation has tinted *-uelo* to such a degree that nowadays it may be more appropriately described as a pejorative suffix.¹⁹ For instance, *mujer* ‘woman’ + *-uela* turns into *mujerzuela*, which means ‘disreputable woman, prostitute’; other examples are *abogadillo* ‘incompetent lawyer’ < *abogado* ‘lawyer’ and *autorzuelo* ‘third-rate author’ < *autor* ‘author’. We should note that these items border on lexicalization.²⁰

IMITATION AND RELATED-TO DIMINUTIVES

A further extension of the diminutive along metaphorical lines is its imitation sense. Diminutives associated with this function are applied to nouns and designate objects seen as copies or imitations of body parts or other natural objects; the derived objects are closely related to the primitive either in form, function or both (examples from Gooch, 1970):

- (3) *boquete* ‘hole, gap’ < *boca* ‘mouth’
brazuelo ‘forearm (animal)’ < *brazo* ‘arm’
caballete ‘trestle’ < *caballo* ‘horse’

¹⁹ Santibáñez (1999) expresses that “the use of *-illo* (*regalillo*, ‘wretched little present’) generally has a pejorative bias” (175) and that *-ejo* and *-uelo* are “more pejoratively marked than *-illo* itself” (175).

²⁰ It is worth noting that Spanish augmentative suffixes are also linked to this metaphorical structuring involving size. However, in opposition to diminutives, they represent category centrality, full-fledged membership, via the metaphors CATEGORY CENTRALITY IS SIZE and CENTRAL IS BIG. For example: *grandulón* ‘vey big’ < *grande* ‘big’, *tontón* ‘really foolish’ < *tonto* ‘stupid, foolish’ mark prototypical members of their respective categories. Thus, predicates modified in this manner by augmentatives express an intensification of their force, leaving the task of signifying approximation or mitigation to the diminutive.

careta 'mask' < *cara* 'face'
colilla 'cigarette end, stub' < *cola* 'tail'
lengüeta 'shoe-tongue, flap, tab' < *lengua* 'tongue'
lentejuela 'sequin, spangle' < *lenteja* 'lentil'
manecilla 'hand (clock, watch)' < *mano* 'hand'
manilla 'baseball glove' < *mano* 'hand'
manita 'trotter' (pig) < *mano* 'hand'
serpentina 'streamer, paper-ribbon' < *serpiente* 'snake'
trebolillo 'triangular formation' < *trébol* 'clover'

All of these items have already become lexicalized and may be more common or less so in different Spanish speaking regions. The derived lexical items are not necessarily smaller than the corresponding source nouns, and the domain of size is in effect superseded. Nevertheless, the metaphor MARGINAL IS SMALL is involved here as well, since imitations certainly do not qualify as central members of a given category.

Metaphorical abstraction also occurs in the case of another set of lexicalizations involving diminutives, where the derived item is somehow related to or is a substitute of the base (examples from Gooch, 1970):

- (4) *bolsillo* 'pocket' < *bolso* 'bag, handbag'
camilla 'stretcher' < *cama* 'bed'
camiseta 'T-shirt' < *camisa* 'shirt'
chocolatina 'small chocolate bar' < *chocolate* 'chocolate'
madrina 'godmother' < *madre* 'mother'
neblina 'mist' < *niebla* 'fog'
padrino 'godfather' < *padre* 'father'
purpurina 'purpurin, metallic paint' < *púrpura* 'purple, purple dye'
sombrilla 'sun-shade' < *sombra* 'shade'
tesina 'short thesis' < *tesis* 'thesis'

Even though these words are all lexicalizations and some of the suffixes involved are no longer productive in noun formation, as Jurafsky (1993) has pointed out, the related-to sense involves a categorial metaphor which expresses a conceptual transfer from the category of 'size' to the category of 'quality'. Once

more, MARGINALITY IS SMALL applies here given that the related-to items are not considered central members of the base category because they are not the “real” thing. These items, nevertheless, occupy a position in the semantic space that will be more or less close to the base depending on the extent to which they resemble the original. The suffix *-ino* is especially suited for the resemblance sense, given that its original meaning was precisely ‘related to, of the nature of’.²¹

Additionally, the process exemplified reflects a generalization of diminutive suffixes like *-ino* or *-illo*, which have lost particular features of meaning and undergone changes in their distribution and, as a result, can be applied in a wider variety of contexts. In effect, the transfer from ‘small’ to ‘related-to’ again proceeds from the physical domain of size to a domain where size recedes in favor of qualities and attributes, in a unidirectional cline, *i.e.* from more concrete to more abstract (*Cf.* Traugott & Heine, 1991; Heine, Claudi & Hünnemeyer, 1991).

With regard to lexicalized diminutives, one should not consider their semantic development as entirely arbitrary or unpredictable. The role played by metaphorical projections and other mechanisms of semantic change in the meaning extensions undergone by the diminutive needs to be acknowledged. Even when a lexicalized form takes on a life of its own and speakers fail to associate it with the diminutive base from which it derived, it has reached such a point by virtue of the semantics of size (small size, to be precise) associated with diminutives, which may arguably still be present to this day in many of these lexicalizations. Furthermore, the continued productivity of the diminutive as a source of lexicalized derivatives is possible only because of the particular meanings it can carry (resemblance, approximation, imitation, etc.). As an example, in Uruguay we find the lexicalization of *chivito* < *chivo* ‘goat’ as ‘bocadillo, sandwich’ and in Mexico that of *mamacita* < *mamá* ‘mother’ as ‘beautiful woman’. Even though some of these items may be colloquial or regional, the fact that these particular meanings exist has a lot to do with attested (universal) tendencies of the category diminutive.

All of this also brings us to the more general question of why the diminutive should be employed for such varied functions. The answer seems to lie in the tendency for languages to develop linguistic forms that are coherent with the conceptual system upon which the language is based. Since, as we have seen, many of our abstract concepts are elaborated in terms of size, it makes sense for the

²¹ Also, *-ino* often implies an added connotation of inferiority with respect to the base.

language to use a category like the diminutive. Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 136) note: “The use of the same words and grammatical devices for concepts with systematic metaphorical correspondences (like TIME and SPACE)²² is one of the ways in which the correspondences between form and meaning in a language are ‘logical’ rather than arbitrary.” A point worth making here is that the conventionalization of the metaphorical system involving size in Spanish means that speakers use it all the time, automatically, and without conscious awareness.

The processes illustrated up to this point involving the diminutive are by no means a relic of past stages of the language, although they may be more noticeable in lexicalized forms. Although lexicalization is often seen as a fossilization mechanism, it is indeed a reflection of a greatly dynamic process where the expansion of contexts of occurrence and possible bleaching of meaning allow the rise of novel meaning(s) (Cf. Hopper & Traugott, 1993).

THE DIMINUTIVE OF INTENSIFICATION

Besides approximation, imitation, and resemblance, the intensification sense associated with Spanish diminutives is widespread. As the theory of grammaticalization has shown, grammatical categories typically present divergence in their path of evolution, often developing two or more distinct functions. Through this process of divergence, on the one hand, the diminutive in Spanish, through suffixes like *-illo* and *-ino*, has developed the semantics of approximation and relatedness, and, on the other, is able to convey intensification, especially via *-ito*. The grammaticalization of diminutives thus results in the coexistence of concrete and more abstract meanings for the same suffix (a phenomenon known as persistence (Cf. Hopper & Traugott, 1993; Heine, Claudi & Hünnemeyer, 1991: 20)); *-ito*, for example, can still be used to denote smallness in size alongside intensification.

The diminutive as an intensifier indicates a greater degree or intensity of the property or quality in question with respect to the base, as in the following examples: *solito* ‘all alone’ < *solo* ‘alone’; *igualito* ‘exactly alike’ < *igual* ‘alike, equal’; *limpiecito* ‘completely clean’ < *limpio* ‘clean’; *blanquito* ‘intensely white’ < *blanco* ‘white’; *fresquito* ‘very cold’ < *fresco* ‘cool’; *rapidito* ‘very quickly/

²² To these we could also add SIZE and CATEGORY MEMBERSHIP.

very fast' < *rápido* 'quickly/fast'; *mismito* 'the very same' < *mismo* 'same'.²³ In the case of past participles, the intensifying diminutive has a rather more limited domain of application. It applies mostly to a few verbs indicating state and occurring with human subjects, such as *calladito* 'very quiet' < *callado* < *callar* 'to be quiet', *dormidito* 'fast asleep' < *dormido* < *dormir* 'to sleep', and *paradito* 'standing straight up' < *parado* < *parar(se)* 'to get up, to be standing'.

As to the possible path of development of this function of the Spanish diminutive, historical evidence appears to support the idea that this intensification of meaning probably began with predicates already carrying the notion of scarcity, smallness, and the like, such as *pequeño* 'little, small', *chico* 'little, small', *poco* 'a little', *pedazo* 'piece', and *parte* 'part'. In fact, these constitute some of the most frequently diminutivized forms in earlier periods of the language. González Ollé (1962: 206, 231) finds *poqui(e)llo*, *poquito*, *chiqui(e)llo*, and *chiquito* "innumerable" times in the Medieval period and reports that *poquillo* occurs more frequently than *poco*, and that there was also a high frequency of *poquito*, *chiquito*, and *chiqui(e)llo*.

But the addition of a suffix that supposes diminution to a base which already carries this notion effectively implies an intensification of its diminutive force. Starting from its original application to such words, it is not difficult to imagine how this intensifying sense could have been generalized to other adjectives and adverbs that did not imply any kind of diminution at all. González Ollé (1962) cites a 13th century Spanish example that shows the equivalence of *poquiello* and *muy poco* 'very little' even at this early stage of the language: "*non pudo el rey Belo ganar della tierra si non muy poco [...] onde razonan algunos que por aquello poquiello que el gagno [...]*" (231).²⁴ In effect, it is the application of the diminutive to forms already denoting some sort of diminution which reinforces or intensifies their meaning, enabling the diminutive to go on this particular semantic path. This also demonstrates the semantic interplay between particular suffixes and specific kinds of bases, which ultimately determines the types of values a grammatical form will acquire.

²³ The augmentative suffix that most commonly expresses the intensification sense is *-ote*: *lejotes* 'very far' < *lejos* 'far'; *altote* 'extremely tall' < *alto* 'tall'.

²⁴ "King Belo wasn't able to earn much from his land but only very little [...] from this some conclude that given how little he earned [...]" (my translation)

Reynoso (2005) calls this use of the diminutive “valoración cuantificadora centralizadora” in which the diminutive “cumple una función intensificadora del significado de la base a la que se adhiere y con ello centraliza la referencia” (81-82).²⁵ In explaining this and other meanings of the diminutive, she gives preeminence to pragmatic factors: “El uso del diminutivo en el español actual presenta un condicionamiento pragmático, al parecer culturalmente determinado” (85).²⁶ However, the pragmatic effects observed are undoubtedly firmly planted on the semantic soil that constitutes the notion of size. Hence, what we seem to have is the gradual strengthening of the association of intensifying characteristics with the diminutive due to its earlier use with particular lexical items and their eventual conventionalization as part of its semantics. This occurs via the mechanism known as conventionalization of inferences or conventionalization of implicatures, a metonymic type of change, defined as the process whereby meanings that routinely become activated in certain contexts gradually take over as the primary meanings of a linguistic form (Cf. Heine, Claudi & Hünemeyer, 1991). The frequent co-occurrence with “diminution” adjectives and the subsequent routinization of the meaning of intensification results in yet another extension of the functions of the diminutive.²⁷ From here on, further factors, cultural or other, may continue to strengthen this conventionalization.

Another meaning extension associated with the intensification diminutive in Spanish is the exactness sense (Cf. Jurafsky, 1996) that appears when *-ito* is attached to certain adverbs or gerunds, such as the following:

- (5) *ahorita* ‘right now, just now’ < *ahora* ‘now’
acabandito ‘right after finishing’ < *acabando* ‘finishing’ < *acabar* ‘finish’
llegandito ‘immediately after arriving’ < *llegando* ‘arriving’ < *llegar* ‘arrive’
en cuantito ‘right at the moment when’ < *en cuanto* ‘as soon as’
lueguito ‘immediately, right away’ < *luego* ‘after, later’

²⁵ “[the diminutive] fulfills an intensifying function of the meaning of the base to which it attaches and thus centers the reference” (my translation)

²⁶ “The use of the diminutive in contemporary Spanish evinces a pragmatic conditioning, apparently culturally determined” (my translation).

²⁷ See Bybee (2007) and Bybee & Hopper (2001) for more on the role of frequency and routinization in the emergence of linguistic structure.

These all constitute time expressions where the application of the diminutive appears to intensify the sense of precision in temporal terms; for instance, going from *ahora* ‘now’ to *ahorita* ‘right now, just now’ or from *en cuanto* ‘as soon as’ to *en cuantoito* ‘right at the moment when’. One way to account for this use of *-ito* is to once more turn to metaphor (in this case, TIME IS SPACE) and the ability of the diminutive to express a range of values, which permits us to again conceptualize the diminutive in terms of some scale corresponding to a line in space which links the concept of size with that of time by means of the TIME IS SPACE metaphor. Conceiving time in terms of space is indeed one of the most pervasive metaphors in human conceptualization and language. Through this metaphor, time is understood as a physical location that can be plotted along a line. We see this metaphor at work in the use of spatial prepositions to talk about time (The concert is *at* 8 o’clock) or when time is conceived as a moving object (This *coming* weekend). In effect, when applying the diminutive to a temporal expression, its value along the time scale (or time line) becomes so diminished that it comes to indicate a specific point, a particular moment in time, as in the examples below:

- (6) *En cuantoito lo vea aparecer, le doy un golpe*
 ‘Right when/as soon as I see him appear, I’ll punch him’
- (7) *Pero si comienza a llover, luegoito se regresan a la casa*
 ‘But if it starts raining, you guys immediately come back home’

In the case of spatial expressions involving adverbs, such as: *adentrito/dentrito* ‘right inside’ < *adentro/dentro* ‘inside’; *atrasito/detrasito* ‘right behind’ < *atrás/detrás* ‘behind’; *adelantito* ‘right in front, right ahead’ < *adelante* ‘in front, ahead’, and so on, there is also a sense of exactness/precision whereby the diminutive greatly reduces the extent along the space line, thus marking an exact area or point in space.²⁸ We see this effect in the following examples:

²⁸ Jurafsky (1996) proposes lambda-abstraction, which forms second-order predicates, as the specific semantic mechanism responsible for this effect of the diminutive: “the sense ‘small(x)’, which has the meaning ‘smaller than the prototypical exemplar x on the scale of size’ becomes ‘lambda(y) (smaller than the prototypical small distance x from a point y)’” (551).

- (8) *¿Ve aquella loma que parece vejiga de puerco? Pues detrasito de ella está la Media Luna*
'See that rounded hill that looks like a pig's bladder? Well, exactly behind lies the Media Luna' (Rulfo, 1992: 69)
- (9) *Mi vecina estaba adentrado del zaguán* 'My female neighbor was right inside by the door'
- (10) *Y si tú la quieres ver, allí está afuerita*
'And if you wish to see her, she is right outside' (Rulfo, 1992: 132)

For instance, in (10) by the application of *-ito* the spatial extent denoted by *afuera* 'outside' gets further specified to mark an exact area in space, resulting in *afuerita* 'right outside', which denotes a more precise location than the unmodified *afuera*.

This process of extension of the diminutive to signal exactness also reveals increasing subjectification on the part of speakers, as they contribute more of their own assessment of temporal or spatial circumstances; the diminutive with its properties as a degree modifier and quantifier is again a natural choice to encode this kind of meaning. Once more, by taking the notion 'small' and manipulating it in a specific manner, the language has developed further ways of articulating rather abstract concepts.

A BRIEF COMPARISON WITH ENGLISH

Contrary to what one may think, English makes use of diminutives in similar ways to Spanish and other languages, albeit with a much reduced number of suffixes. The few diminutive suffixes that exist in English, however, convey many of the same meanings that exist in other languages. Mary Haas (1972: 148-49) points out the following methods of expression for English diminutives: 1) Vowel symbolism (*Cf.* substitution of /iy/ for /ay/: *tiny* > *teeny*). 2) Reduplication (*teeny* > *teeny-weeny*, with replacement of initial /t/ of the reduplicated form by /w/). 3) Affixation: a) *-y*: Jimmy, Johnny, mommy; b) *-ie*: *doggie*, *baggie*; c) *-s*: *moms*, *pops*; d) *-s* combined with *-y*: *momsy*, *popsy*. 4) Syntactic modification: *i.e.* the adjective 'little' (*little hand*, *little footsie*). 5) Grammatical displacement: the use of third person pronouns in place of the second person (*e.g.* *Does she want mommy to wash her little hands?*) or, what constitutes a further displacement, the

use of the neuter pronoun ‘it’ instead of ‘s/he’ (e.g. *Does it want mommy to wash its little hands?*). One obvious difference between English and Spanish is the greater extent to which Spanish makes use of morphological means involving the modification of the internal constituency of words for the expression of the diminutive. On the other hand, English diminutivization seems to be largely confined to syntactic modification with the adjective ‘little’, as most of the English suffixes listed above are not very common and are often restricted to particular registers or limited contexts.

With respect to the semantic range of English diminutives (Jurafsky, 1993), they serve to express meanings of: 1) Diminutivization: *doggy, little book, little house*; 2) Approximation: *reddish, tallish, a little expensive*; 3) Affection: *Jimmy, Johnny, my little friend*; 4) Pejoration: *starlet, childish, you little so-and-so*; 5) Child: *duckling, piglet, my little ones*; 6) Related-to/resemblance: *hamlet, leatherette, little finger*; and 7) Partitive: *a little food, a little wine, sleep a little*.²⁹ All of these senses have their counterpart in Spanish, which indicates great similarity in the semantics of the diminutive in both languages. However, one fundamental difference is that, whereas in Spanish all of the meanings of the diminutive can be expressed using suffixes only, in English the periphrastic diminutive with ‘little’ is in some cases the only means available.

To be sure, some of the English diminutives are rather limited or stylistically restricted. Nonetheless, the diminutivization, approximation, and partitive senses appear to be quite productive. A crucial point to keep in mind is that size in English, as in Spanish, is taken as fundamental in the metaphorical conceptualization of various abstractions. The parallel uses of Spanish and English diminutives are another indication of the degree to which our conceptual categories are experientially based (Cf. Lakoff, 1987)

A very direct application of the comparison between English and Spanish diminutives is in the area of translation where the appropriateness and accuracy of particular translations can be greatly improved by paying more attention to the differences—not only the potential similarities—between the two languages regarding the senses that diminutives can convey. For instance, a single Spanish diminutive suffix, such as *-ito*, can carry more meanings than an English suffix

²⁹ Jurafsky (1993) shows that a radial category along the lines of his universal radial category for diminutives can in fact be established for the English diminutive.

like *-ish*, which carries a single meaning (*i.e.* approximation). Thus, there will be instances where *-ito* can be translated by ‘little’ but also there will be others where ‘little’ will not be appropriate at all since *-ito* may not only convey diminutivization but also intensification and exactness, not to mention more pragmatic uses, including politeness. Therefore, the most appropriate translation will depend on the translator being able to distinguish the distinct meanings of Spanish diminutives and understand the differences of expression of corresponding senses in the two languages.

A few examples, taken from an English translation of Juan Rulfo’s famous novel *Pedro Páramo*, should illustrate the importance of discriminating between the various senses of a suffix like *-ito*:

(11a) *Pedro Páramo los miraba [...] Detrasito de él, en la sombra, aguardaba el Tilcuate* (Rulfo, 1992: 166).

b) Pedro Paramo watched them [...] El Tilcuate stood behind him in the shadows (Rulfo, 1959: 95).

(12a) *Le dirás a la Lola esto y lo otro y que la quiero. Eso es importante [...] Eso harás mañana tempranito* (Rulfo, 1992: 103).

b) Tell Lola this and that and the other thing, but tell her I love her. That’s important [...] So arrange that business tomorrow (Rulfo, 1959: 35).

(13a) *No, ruido ni hizo. Sólo se la pasó haciendo circo, brincando de mis pies a mi cabeza, y maullando quedito como si tuviera hambre* (Rulfo, 1992: 157-158).

b) No, no noise. It [the cat] just had a circus jumping from my feet to my head and back again, and mewling for something to eat (Rulfo, 1959: 86).

Examples (11b), (12b), and (13b) illustrate that, at least in this particular translation, the diminutive is for the most part ignored when attached to words that would not be translated into English by adding ‘little’ (such as *tantito* or *poquito*). The translator has chosen to leave out the conceptual information provided by the diminutive altogether, perhaps believing that it is only of an “affective” nature and that it does not add anything substantial to the narrative. For instance, *tempranito* in (12a) is entirely left out from the translation in (12b) but could possibly have been translated as ‘very early’, giving us something like “So ar-

range that business very early tomorrow,” which fittingly adds to the sense of urgency that the narrative requires. By the same token, in (11a), *detrasito* is translated as ‘behind’ (11b) even though ‘right behind’ would make for a more faithful translation, due to the sense of exactness added by *-ito*.

Although the examples given appear to betray a lack of knowledge about basic aspects of the meaning of Spanish diminutives and perhaps also about differences in register (the diminutive being more used in colloquial, informal registers), the same translator in the same work translates *afuerita* as ‘right outside’ and *igualito* as ‘exactly like’, both of which are quite accurate. This seems to indicate that there exists some awareness on his part about the semantic richness of these suffixes. Yet, more consistency and attention to their specific semantic nuances would be needed in order to improve the quality and accuracy of this kind of literary translation.

CONCLUSION

This analysis of the diminutive in Spanish suggests that the modern functions of the diminutive reflect a process of grammaticalization that has resulted in the extension of its meaning from the domain of physical size to increasingly abstract domains, such as the attenuation or intensification of abstract qualities. Metaphor, as well as other semantic-pragmatic mechanisms, has been shown to have played a crucial role in this process. It also appears to be the case that the diminutive categories of English and Spanish have more than a few features in common.

Finally, a very practical application of a study such as this one is in the domain of translation of diminutives from Spanish into English, which often evinces a lack of accuracy because of the tendency to overlook the specific conceptual contribution of diminutive suffixes. This can certainly be corrected if the translator is made aware of the range of meanings Spanish diminutives can convey and the more appropriate ways of translating them by taking advantage of linguistic resources that are also found in English (for instance, the use of adverbial *right* in the translation of such forms as *detrasito* ‘right behind’ and *afuerita* ‘right outside’).

REFERENCES

- ALONSO, A. (1961). Noción, emoción, acción y fantasía en los diminutivos. *Estudios lingüísticos. Temas españoles* (pp. 161-189). Madrid: Editorial Gredos.
- BERLIN, B. & P. KAY (1969). *Basic color terms. Their universality and evolution*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- BYBEE, J. L. (2007). *Frequency of use and the organization of language*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- BYBEE, J. L. & P. J. HOPPER (2001). *Frequency and the emergence of linguistic structure*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- CLAUDI, U. & B. HEINE (1986). On the metaphorical base of grammar. *Studies in Language*, 10 (2): 297-335.
- CURCÓ, C. (1998). ¿No me harías un favorcito? Reflexiones en torno a la expresión de la cortesía verbal en el español de México y el español peninsular. In H. Haverkate, G. Mulder & C. F. Maldonado (eds.). *La pragmática lingüística del español. Recientes desarrollos* (pp. 129-171). Amsterdam/Atlanta: Editorial Rodopi.
- GONZÁLEZ OLLÉ, F. (1962). *Los sufijos diminutivos en castellano medieval*. Madrid: Revista de Filología Española, Anejo LXXV.
- GOOCH, A. (1970). *Diminutive, augmentative and pejorative suffixes in modern Spanish. (A guide to their use and meaning)*. Oxford/New York: Pergamon Press.
- HAAS, M. (1972). The expression of the diminutive. In M. E. Smith (ed.). *Studies in linguistics in honor of George L. Trager* (pp. 148-152). The Hague: Mouton.
- HASSELROT, B. (1957). *Études sur la formation diminutive dans les langues romanes*. Uppsala: Uppsala Universitets Arsskrift.
- HEINE, B., U. CLAUDI & F. HÜNNEMEYER (1991). *Grammaticalization. A conceptual framework*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- HOPPER, P. J. & E. C. TRAUGOTT (1993). *Grammaticalization*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- JOHNSON, M. (1987). *The body in the mind*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- JURAFSKY, D. (1993). Universals in the semantics of the diminutive. In *Proceedings of the nineteenth annual meeting of the Berkeley Linguistics Society* (pp. 423-436). Berkeley, CA: Berkeley Linguistics Society.
- (1996). Universal tendencies in the semantics of the diminutive: Structured polysemy and the semantic shift from children to second-order predicates. *Language*, 72 (3): 533-578.
- LAKOFF, G. (1987). *Women, fire and dangerous things: What categories reveal about the mind*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

- LAKOFF, G. & M. JOHNSON (1980). *Metaphors we live by*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- MAAT, H. P. (2006). Subjectification in gradable adjectives. In A. Athanasiadou, C. Canakis & B. Cornillie (eds.). *Subjectification. Various paths to subjectivity* (pp. 279-320). Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- MENDOZA, M. (2005). Polite diminutives in Spanish: A matter of size? In R. T. Lakoff & S. Ide (eds.). *Broadening the horizon of linguistic politeness* (pp. 163-173). Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- MONTES GIRALDO, J. J. (1972). Funciones del diminutivo en español: ensayo de clasificación. *Thesaurus*, 27 (1): 71-88.
- REYNOSO NOVERÓN, J. (2005). Procesos de gramaticalización por subjetivización: el uso del diminutivo en español. In D. Eddington (ed.). *Selected proceedings of the 7th Hispanic Linguistics Symposium* (pp. 79-86). Somerville, MA: Cascadilla Proceedings Project.
- RUIZ DE MENDOZA IBÁÑEZ, F. J. (2000). El modelo cognitivo idealizado de tamaño y la formación de aumentativos y diminutivos en español. In R. Maldonado (ed.). *Estudios cognoscitivos del español*. Castellón/Querétaro: *Revista Española de Lingüística Aplicada/Universidad Autónoma de Querétaro* (pp. 355-374).
- RULFO, J. (1959). *Pedro Páramo*. L. Kemp (trans.). New York: Grove Press.
- (1992). *Pedro Páramo*. Madrid: Ediciones Cátedra.
- SANTIBÁÑEZ SÁENZ, F. (1999). Conceptual interaction and Spanish diminutives. *Cuadernos de Investigación Filológica*, 25: 173-190.
- TALMY, L. (2000). *Toward a cognitive semantics*. Cambridge, MA: The Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press.
- TRAUGOTT, E. C. (1982). From propositional to textual and expressive meanings: Some semantic-pragmatic aspects of grammaticalization. In W. P. Lehmann & Y. Malkiel (eds.). *Perspectives on historical linguistics* (pp. 245-271). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- TRAUGOTT, E. C. & B. HEINE (1989). On the rise of epistemic meanings in English: An example of subjectification in semantic change. *Language*, 65 (1): 31-55.
- (1991). Introduction. In E. C. Traugott & B. Heine (eds.). *Approaches to grammaticalization*. Vol. 1 (pp. 1-14). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- TRAUGOTT, E. C. & R. B. DASHER (2002). *Regularity in semantic change*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.