

TOWARDS A RELEVANCE-THEORETIC PROCEDURAL APPROACH TO DIMINUTIVE AND AUGMENTATIVE MORPHEMES

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Through various research stages (Carston 2016), practitioners in the cognitive-pragmatic framework of *relevance theory* (Sperber and Wilson 1995) have analysed a variety of linguistic elements in *procedural* terms, i.e. as encoders of processing instructions or *procedures* constraining mental computations during comprehension and yielding specific outputs. The first procedural analyses were dedicated to discourse or pragmatic markers, which were considered to lack a conceptual semantics. They were argued to encode procedures limiting the selection of candidate implicated premises or the range of conclusions to be drawn from various pieces of information (Blakemore 1987). Then, procedural analyses were extended to linguistic elements contributing to the proposition expressed by the speaker: namely, personal pronouns, deictics, indexicals and demonstratives (Blakemore 1992; Wilson and Sperber 1993), as well as inflections for tense and aspect (e.g. Escandell Vidal and Leonetti 2011).

A third stage in the development of the notion of *procedural meaning* focused on mood indicators, word order, evidential adverbs –e.g. ‘obviously’, ‘evidently’, etc.– *hearsay* adverbs –e.g. ‘allegedly’, ‘reportedly’, etc.– the *hearsay* particles in some languages like Japanese or Sissala, or parenthetical phrases –‘I/they say/believe/claim’, etc. Their procedural semantics was argued to enact inferences about the sort and amount of evidence available to the speaker when making claims or about the speaker’s degree of commitment to what she says (e.g., Wilson and Sperber 1993; Ifantidou 1992, 2001). Next, a fourth stage dealt with elements falling within the broad and heterogeneous category of *expressives*: interjections, intonation, gestures or facial expressions. They were contended to facilitate identification and attribution of psychological states (e.g. Wharton 2009; Blakemore 2015). Finally, open-class words have been claimed to lack a clear conceptual semantics and to activate procedures enacting lexical-pragmatic processes resulting in occasion-specific contents, which are known as *ad hoc concepts* (Carston 2013, 2016).

This presentation will extend the relevance-theoretic procedural analyses to nominal diminutive and augmentative morphology, which has a higher degree of occurrence and productivity in Romance languages like Spanish or Italian, Modern Greek or Jordanian Arabic, to name but some. Although diminutive and augmentative morphemes are often presented as connected with notions such as smallness, littleness or bigness, and, therefore, as modifying the meaning of the word to which they are attached in terms of size (e.g., Volek 1987; Wierzbicka 1991), they are used with a variety of functions. On the one hand, they can be used to indicate intensification (1), approximation (2), pejoration (3), showing modesty (4) or bragging (5), among other functions (e.g., Sifianou 1992; De Marco 1998; Mendoza 2005; Badarneh 2010):

- (1) a. La habitación está *limpita*. (‘The room is clean[+DIM]’)
b. Juan se ha comprado un *cochazo*. (‘John has bought a car[+AUG]’)
- (2) a. El regalo es *carillo*. (‘The gift is expensive[+DIM]’)
b. El filete es *grandote*. (‘The steak is big[+AUG]’)
- (3) a. ¡Vaya *examencito* has hecho, joven! (‘What an exam[+DIM] you have done!’)
b. ¡Qué *mariconazo* eres! (‘What a queer[+AUG] you are!’)
- (4) Me he comprado un *pisito* en la playa. (‘I have bought an apartment[+DIM] on the coast’)
- (5) Me he comprado un *casoplón* en el pueblo. (‘I have bought a house[+AUG] in my town’)

Rather than adding nuances about the size of an object or the amount of a quality denoted by the nouns or adjectives to which the diminutive or augmentative morphemes are attached, these morphemes seem to trigger occasion-specific, highly idiosyncratic, maybe one-off concepts. Accordingly, this presentation will argue that these morphemes could also be considered procedural elements encoding an instruction enacting *ad hoc* concept construction, whereby the denotation of the concept encoded by the word to which they are attached is modulated or adjusted.

On the other hand, diminutive and augmentative morphemes are also frequently used in order to show affection or endearment (6) or hedging speech acts like requests or orders (7):

- (6) a. ¡Qué *perrito* más bonito! (‘What a beautiful doggie!’)
b. ¡Vaya *viajazo* chulo habéis hecho! (‘What a great trip[+AUG] you had!’)
- (7) ¡Anda, dame un *cigarrito*! (‘Come on, give me a ciggy!’)

When thus used, these morphemes would not seem to trigger ad hoc concepts. Rather, they are used to express attitudes, emotions and/or feelings. As a result, they will also be contended to encode procedures, even if those procedures facilitate identification of affective attitude and inferential construction of some sort of conceptual schema capturing the perceived speaker's affective attitude.

Arguing that diminutive and augmentative morphemes encode these two types of procedural meaning, though, challenges the standard relevance-theoretic characterisation of procedural meaning as monosemic (Carston 2016). For this reason, diminutive and augmentative morphemes will be contended to encode *meta-procedures*, i.e. instructions to enact a procedure out of a set of candidate ones (Wharton 2009). Actual activation of one or another procedure will be shown to depend on paralinguistic and contextual features.

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