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Sardinian evaluative morphology in typological perspective[1]

Abstract

The aim of this paper is to draw a typological sketch of Sardinian evaluative morphology. At first, the issue will be addressed from a theoretical point of view, in order to establish what does the label 'evaluative' really mean and which evaluative constructions are actually attested in Sardinian. Then a list of the more frequent properties of evaluative suffixes will be drawn and the properties of Sardinian diminutives will be described in detail. Later on, we will try to describe the development of the Sardinian diminutive suffixes. In the last two paragraphs we will consider the position of Sardinian on a wider cross-linguistic perspective, firstly in relation to the other Romance languages, then within the Mediterranean area.

1. Evaluative morphology

Within the field of linguistic studies, the term 'evaluation' is generally used when referring to various linguistic constructions concerning different levels of analysis of languages: phenomena of phonetic iconicity, derivation by affixes, reduplication processes, apocope, etc. Despite the diffusion of the term, a clear and commonly accepted definition of it is still lacking. In this contribution, which is dedicated explicitly to the study of derivational processes with evaluative value in Sardinian, the definition of 'evaluation' proposed by Grandi (2002: 52) will be adopted. In short, a construction can be defined as evaluative if it satisfies two conditions, one relating to semantics and the other to the formal level. The first condition indicates that a linguistic construction can be defined as evaluative if it has the function of assigning to a concept a value, different from that of the 'standard' (within the semantic scale to which it is part of), without resorting to no parameters of reference external to the concept itself. The second condition indicates that an evaluative construction must include at least the explicit expression of the standard (by means of a linguistic form which is lexically autonomous and is recognised by the speakers of the language as an actual word) and an evaluative mark (a linguistic element that expresses at least one of the semantic values traditionally classed as evaluative: BIG, SMALL, GOOD, BAD).

This definition allows a form like Srd. *crapitedda* 'small shoe' to be included in the field of evaluation, since a base form expressing the standard meaning (*crapitta* 'shoe') and a morphological item, which expresses an evaluative value (the diminutive suffix –*edda*), are both clearly recognisable. A form like It. *tunisino* 'Tunisian', on the other hand, can not be labelled as evaluative, even if it contains the base form *Tunisi(a)* and the suffix *-ino*, which in Italian generally has an evaluative function. But in *tunisino* the meaning of the suffix has no link with the four evaluative functions indicated above.

Along with forms which are clearly and irrefutably evaluative (such as Srd. *crapitedda* quoted above, French *muret* 'small wall' < *mur* 'wall', Catalan *mega-ciutat* 'big town' < *ciutat* 'town', Slovenian *babúra* 'old hag' < *baba* 'old woman', etc.) and to forms that are undeniably not evaluative (such as It. *tunisino*, discussed above, or *imbianchino* 'house-painter', from *imbiancare* 'to whitewash'), there are linguistic elements on which it is not possible to express an equally clear judgement. For example, in a form such as Srd. *vitellu* 'calf' the mark –*ellu*, which often has an evaluative function in Italo-Romance area (e.g. It. *contadinello* 'peasant boy' from *contadino* 'peasant, farmer'), can be brought back to the semantic function SMALL (the meaning of Srd. *vitellu* can in fact be summarised by the paraphrase 'young and therefore small cow'); but, on a purely synchronic level, it is not possible to identify a base form, namely an autonomous lexical unit that expresses the standard meaning: the morpheme *vit-* in fact does not derive from any actual

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word of Sardinian.[2] The same considerations are valid for forms such as It. *mangione* 'hearty eater' (from *mangiare* 'eat') or Srd. *truddoni* 'fat person' (from *trudda* 'wooden spoon'), whose semantic analysis presents at least two problems. Above all, the evaluative mark that is present in these words (*-one* and *–oni*) do not express only one of the evaluative values under examination, but also another concept evidently not evaluative (agentivity). Secondly, within these forms, it is not always easy to recognise the expression of the standard in the base-word. For example, a *mangione* 'hearty eater' can be defined as a person who overeats; but the base word, however, goes back to the verb *mangiare* 'to eat', that does not express the standard from which the evaluation derives ('a person who eats moderately'). Nevertheless, as seen in the case of *vitellu*, we cannot neglect that in such forms there are also clearly recognisable traces of a semantic function which is at least partially evaluative. Thus, it is necessary to suppose that 'evaluation' is a linguistic category with an internal structure in which different levels of membership can be recognised: there are central or prototypical members (such as Srd. *crapitedda*, Fr. *muret* or Cat. *mega-ciutat*) and members which are placed in marginal positions (such as Srd. *vitellu*, It. *mangione*, etc.), without however being completely excluded from the 'evaluation' domain.

2. A sketch of Sardinian evaluative morphology

The four semantic evaluative functions (SMALL, BIG, GOOD, BAD) can be subdivided into two more homogenous internal groups, based on the nature of the interpretative scale from which the evaluation is derived. This, in fact, can refer to the 'physical' property, objective and verifiable, of the entities taken into consideration (SMALL vs. BIG) or it can refer to the quality of the same entity subjectively perceived by the speakers (GOOD vs. BAD). Therefore, evaluation consents two different perspectives of analysis: one descriptive and one qualitative. However, in evaluative forms more semantic values often come expressed by a linguistic item. In a form such as Srd. *pisitteddu* 'small cat' (from *pisittu* 'cat'), it is obviously difficult to discriminate between a purely descriptive interpretation ('young and therefore small cat') and a qualitative interpretation, capable of expressing the emotion of the speaker ('dear cat', not taking physical dimensions into consideration). Consequently, the interaction of the four semantic functions can be represented as follows:

1)

	Descriptive perspective	Qualitative perspective
+	BIG (	) GOOD
-	SMALL (	) BAD[3]
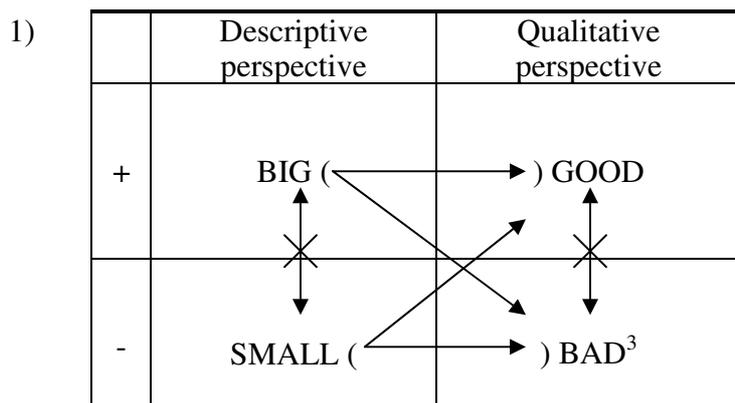
(Grandi 2002: 34)

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[2] The meaning of Srd. *vitellu* is 'young (and therefore small) cow', but in the word *vitellu* any lexical unit meaning 'caw' can be traced. The Sardinian word for 'caw' is *bacca*, from which the diminutive *bakkixedda* can be derived.

[3] The single direction of the arrows, which link the descriptive perspective to the qualitative perspective, indicates that diachronically the original value of evaluative suffixes is usually the descriptive one; the qualitative meaning derives from it, often through metaphorical processes. The only direction of the arrows which is never possible is the vertical one: logically in no language lexical constructions which express simultaneously the opposite values BIG and SMALL or GOOD and BAD are attested. The brackets indicate that the association between two semantic values are not automatic, but rather, determined by the context of occurrence.

The diagram in (1) represents all logically possible (and not contradictory) combinations of the four semantic evaluative values. This is an extremely simplified reproduction of a linguistic reality, which, in truth, is far more complex, since a constellation of semantic, and/or pragmatic nuances, whose limits are not always clearly identifiable, circles around each single evaluative value. Taking all these various possible specifications into consideration, the diagram in (1) can be redrawn as follows:

2)   Descriptive perspective: **SMALL/BIG**
        a. ANIMATE NOUNS
                a'. *temporal* dimension:
                        SMALL: 'young X'
                        BIG: 'old X'
                a". *physical* dimension:
                        SMALL: '(bodily) small X'
                        BIG: '(bodily) big X'
        b. INANIMATE AND COUNTABLE NOUNS:
                b'. *temporal* dimension:
                        SMALL: 'short X'
                        BIG: 'long X'
                b". *physical and spatial* dimension:
                        SMALL: '(pysically/spatially) small X'
                        BIG: '(pysically/spatially) big X'
        c. INANIMATE AND UNCOUNTABLE NOUNS
                c'. *quantitative* dimension:
                        SMALL: 'small quantity of X'
                        BIG: 'big quantity of X'
        Qualitative perspective: **GOOD/BAD**
        a. ANIMATE NOUNS
                a'. *speaker's feelings*:
                        GOOD: 'dear X' (expressing appraisal and affection)
                        BAD: 'bad X' (expressing contempt)
                a". *attributes of the referent*
                        GOOD: 'X to a high degree' (intensification)
                        BAD: 'X to a low degree' (attenuation)
        b. INANIMATE AND COUNTABLE NOUNS:
                b'. *speaker's feelings*:
                        GOOD: 'dear X' (expressing appraisal and affection)
                        BAD: 'bad X' (expressing contempt)
                b". *attributes of the referent*
                        GOOD: 'X to a high degree' (intensification)
                        BAD: 'X to a low degree' (attenuation)
        c. INANIMATE AND UNCOUNTABLE NOUNS:
                c'. *speaker's feelings*:
                        GOOD: 'good-quality X' (expressing appraisal)
                        BAD: 'bad-quality X' (expressing contempt)
                c". *attributes of the referent*
                        GOOD: 'X to a high degree' (intensification)
                        BAD: 'X to a low degree' (attenuation)
        (Grandi 2002: 55)

The list in (2) should cover the whole range of the possible semantic sub-divisions of evaluation. It

is important to note that this list has its foundations if considered in a wide cross-linguistic perspective. The situation of each unique system is in fact normally simpler, since only part of this semantic diagram finds concrete formal expressions. In other words, languages that give formal expression to the entire list reconstructed in (2) are extremely rare. On the contrary, languages in which only a small part of the list in (2) is characterised by a peculiar formal expression are more frequent. Sardinian tends to this second extreme. In fact only a sub-group of the semantic classes located in the first part of the list finds formal expressions through morphological constructions:

3)   Descriptive perspective: **SMALL/BIG**
          a. ANIMATE NOUNS
                    a'. *temporal* dimension:
                            SMALL: 'young X'
                            pisitt(u)-eddu
                            cat-DIM / 'young cat'[4]
                    a''. *physical* dimension:
                            SMALL: '(bodily) small X'
                            brabe(i)-ixedda
                            sheep-DIM / 'small sheep'[5]
          b. INANIMATE AND COUNTABLE NOUNS:
                    b'. *temporal* dimension:
                            SMALL: 'short X'
                            passillad(a)-edda
                            walk-DIM / 'short walk'
                    b''. *physical and spatial* dimension:
                            SMALL: '(pysically/spatially) small X'
                            mes(a)-ixedda
                            table-DIM / 'small table'
          c. INANIMATE AND UNCOUNTABLE NOUNS
                    c'. *quantitative* dimension:
                            SMALL: 'small quantity of X'
                            zuccur(u)-eddu
                            sugar-DIM / 'sugar lump'

It is evident that the evaluative morphology of Sardinian is limited to diminutives (there are therefore no augmentative or pejorative suffixes; 'ameliorative' suffixes are almost always absent from all languages across the world). Obviously, this does not mean that evaluative constructions with a qualitative (e.g. affective or pejorative) interpretation do not exist, but rather, that Sardinian has not developed morphemes specifically devoted to this function. The expression of evaluation in the qualitative perspective occurs through metaphorical extensions of the only diminutive suffixes that are actually productive, *-eddu* e *-ixeddu*,[6] as in the forms in (4),

4)   SMALL > BAD   dottor(i)-eddu
                                    doctor-DIM / 'young doctor' > 'unpractised doctor'
          SMALL > GOOD   fill(u)-ixeddu

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[4] Obviously the physical interpretation ('small cat', apart from age) is possible as well as the affectionate interpretation ('dear cat'). This point will be discussed later.
[5] In this case the temporal interpretation ('young X') should be excluded by the presence of *angioni* 'lamb'. Instead, the affective interpretation is possible.
[6] There are other suffixes with possible diminutive interpretations, but of all them are unproductive: *-itu* (probably with Spanish origin; e.g. *Luisitu* 'Lewie' (It. *Luigino*), *crabitu* 'small goat', *joghitu* 'small game, small toy', etc); *-icu* (used almost exclusively with proper names: *Juannicu* 'Johnny' (It. *Giovannino*), *Antonicu* 'Tony' (It. *Antonino*); *-iscu* and *-uscu* (e.g. *sirboniscu* 'small wild boar', *mardusca* 'small sow'); *-uçu* (e.g.. *carruçu* 'small hand cart').

son-DIM / 'little son (endearing)'[7]

The substantial shortage of evaluative morphology in Sardinian 'upsets' the Romance panorama and it has generally been commented on by researchers with certain amazement. Hasselrot (1957: 240), for example, notes that "extrêmement communs comme suffixes hypocoristiques sont –ellu (-*eḍḍu*) et –icellu (-*igheḍḍu*, -*ieḍḍu*), mais, chose étonnante, les Sardes prefèrent aux diminutifs et augmentatifs synthétiques les formations analytiques (avec *piticcu* et *mannu*)"[8]

In the Romance area, only French has an evaluative morphology limited to diminutives, but with a wider range of suffixes (-*et(te), -in(e), -eau*, etc.). Among Indo-European languages currently spoken in Europe, we find a similar situation to that of Sardinian in German and Dutch (Germanic group), in Celtic languages and Slovenian (Slavic group). On a wider cross-linguistic perspective, the situation just described for Sardinian has a rather vast comparison: languages of great diffusion like Chinese, in all of its various dialects, and the Arabic dialects belong to the same type. However, even in such cases, the list of diminutive suffixes is never limited to one sole unit. So, as to evaluative morphology, the situation of Sardinian is therefore characterised by peculiar and odd features which, one again, clinches the extremely conservative nature of that language.

In the next paragraphs, the characteristics of Sardinian diminutives will be described in detail (§ 4), not before drawing, in a typological perspective, a sketch of the more commonly diffused cross-linguistic properties of evaluative suffixes (§ 3). Later on (§ 5) we will open a window on diachrony, trying to describe the development of the Sardinian diminutive suffixes *-eddu* and *-ixeddu* with regard to the well-known evolutive tendency (probably universal), which establishes a link between the expression of the parental relation and the emergence of the diminutive meaning. In the last two paragraphs we will consider the position of Sardinian on a wider cross-linguistic perspective, firstly in relation to the other Romance languages (§ 6), then within the Mediterranean area (§ 7).

3. Evaluative suffixes in a typological and cross-linguistic perspective

Evaluative suffixes are the linguistic strategy largely prevalent amongst the languages of the world for the realisation of the four evaluative semantic values (BIG, SMALL, GOOD and BAD). Despite this, in morphological studies the attention granted to evaluative suffixes has been substantially limited. Moreover, over the years a silent identification of 'evaluative' with diminutive suffixes has been made, with consequent exclusion of other phenomena, not only entirely morphological, which can be brought back to the term 'evaluation'.[9]

In the handbooks of morphology, evaluative suffixes are usually placed in a 'grey area' between derivation and inflexion, which seems to avoid all regularity and therefore prohibits any over generalisation.[10]

Data reveals that the actual situation is in fact far less complicated and chaotic than it seems, provided that evaluation, even when presenting homogeneity on a semantic level, is substantially a 'transversal' linguistic operation, as it presents different formal realizations, even within the same language. In this sense, it is not advantageous to try to establish a universal collocation of evaluative affixes within the morphological component: these, although sharing a series of formal and

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[7] Sporadic traces of pejorative and augmentative suffixes are present, but in general they are mere Italianisms (such as *poetastu* 'poetaster'). For the forms in –*oni* (e.g. *conca* 'head' > *conconi* 'brainy person' or *marra* 'hoe' > *marroni* 'mattock') please refer to §§ 6 and 7.

[8] The italics are found in the original. It should be underlined that the paragraph Hasselrot dedicated to Sardinian diminutives is practically a *unicum*: the literature on Sardinian evaluative morphology is really poor.

[9] It is indicative of such a situation that in *International Encyclopaedia of Linguistics,* edited by Bright (1992), only the voice "diminutives" is present (by Lavinia Merlini-Barbaresi) and that there is actually no reference to evaluative affixes in the ten volume encyclopaedia edited by Asher / Simpson (1994).

[10] According to Beard (1981:180), for example, evaluative suffixes are placed "*somewhere* between lexical and purely inflectional forms" (the italics are mine).

semantic properties, could be derivational in any languages (e.g. in Indo-European languages) and inflexional in others (e.g. in Bantu languages). If this perspective of investigation is adopted and reference to a theoretic framework that consents to foresee different degrees of membership to linguistic categories, is assumed, many of the presumed abnormalities of evaluative morphology disappear.

Later on, I shall try to provide a general typological picture of the main properties of evaluative affixes; where possible, examples will be data taken from languages genetically related and typologically similar to Sardinian.[11]

3.1. Properties of evaluative suffixes

The main characteristics of the formal and semantic behaviour of evaluative suffixes can be schematised as follows:

Formal properties:

i. An evaluative suffix can be attached to words belonging to different syntactic categories.

ii. Evaluative suffixes usually do not change the syntactic category of the base-word.

iii. Evaluative suffixes can change
      a. the gender of the base word;
      b. the value of the feature [± countable].

iv. The application of evaluative suffixes is usually constrained by semantic restrictions.

v. There are two ways of interaction between different evaluative suffixes:
      a. on the syntagmatic layer: sequences of more evaluative suffixes (non necessarily with the same meaning) are widely attested;
      b. on the paradigmatic layer: evaluative suffixes violate the 'Rule of Blocking' (cf. Scalise *et al.* (1983)); that is to say, more evaluative suffixes sharing the same meaning (rival suffixes) can be attached to same base-word.

vi. Evaluative suffixes are always preceded by interfixes. The occurrence of these interfixes often cannot be foreseen and explained in terms of readjustment rules.

vii. Evaluative suffixes are not relevant for syntax:
      a. they do not trigger any evaluative agreement;
      b. they are not required by any syntactic context;
      c. they do not change the syntactic context of occurrence.

Semantic properties:

viii. The meaning of evaluative suffixes is usually not referential (that is, the base-word and the derived word usually have the same referent).

ix. There is a hyponymy relation between a word with an evaluative suffix and the base-word.

x. The meaning of evaluative suffixes is attributive and can be foreseen according to four semantic

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[11] The observations which come up in this section are from Bauer (1997) and Grandi (2001) and (2002, above all chapter 3), in which further information on evaluative morphology can be found.

values:

     a. SMALL

     b. BIG

     c. BAD

     d. GOOD

The properties in points i. and ii. represent the so-called 'categorial neutrality', undoubtedly the most problematic feature of the behaviour of evaluative suffixes. In fact, ignoring the Unitary Base Hypothesis (cf. Aronoff 1976 and Scalise 1984 for a modified version), they seem to select words belonging to three syntactic categories (Noun, Adjective and Verb), without modifying the categorical label of the base-word:

5)   French:

     N-DIM > N   coffr(e)-et

                     chest-DIM / 'small chest'

     A-DIM > A   long   >   longu-et

                     'long'   long-DIM / 'not very long'

     V-DIM > V   vol(er)-et-er

                     fly-DIM-INF / 'to fly about, to flutter'

Such peculiar behaviour in reality finds a convincing explanation on a semantic-functional perspective, as suggested by Bauer (1997: 549), "it does seem generally to be the case that evaluative morphology does not change the syntactic category of the base. This might be expected from the function of evaluative morphology. A noun which is noted as being of a particular size is still a noun; a noun which is stated to be liked or disliked is still a noun; an adjective which does not apply with its full force still remains an adjective."

The hypothesis, advanced by several scholars, that the same neutrality has also to be extended to the information contained in the sub-categorisation frame is contradicted by the facts. Evaluative suffixes, in fact, often change the gender of the base (e.g. Blg. *brat* masc. 'brother' > *bratlé* ntr. 'little brother' or Portuguese *abelha* fem. 'bee' > *abelhão* masc. 'large bee; hornet'). Moreover, diminutive suffixes can attribute the feature [+ countable] to a mass noun (e.g.. Serbo-Croat *gòvedo* 'cattle > *gòveče* 'a herd of cattle').[12]

The property in point iv. refutes another, diffused common place relative to evaluative suffixes, that according to which their application would be totally free, namely, not constrained by any restrictions. In realty, a recognition of the data is sufficient to realise how evaluatives are rarely formed from abstract and mass nouns. The central domain of evaluative suffixes consists in fact of [+ concrete] and [+ countable] nouns and therefore its definition is based on semantic restrictions. Also within their domain of application, the productivity of evaluative suffixes is far from absolute. In fact, they tend to not join to words when the final syllable sounds the same or similar to that of the suffix (e.g. Italian **lettetto* vs. *lettino* 'small bed' and **cuginino* vs. *cuginetto* 'little cousin'); they have a preference for simple words (e.g. Italian *pizzetta* 'small pizza' vs. *?pizzerietta* 'small pizzeria' or **attaccapannino* 'small coat peg'); they usually exclude learned words or words that belong to elevated or formal registers (e.g. It. *mogliettina* 'little, dear wife' but **consortina* 'little, dear consort', *pretino* 'small, young priest', but **reverendino* 'small, young reverend', etc.); they tend to exclude also words which go back to the so-called subordinate conceptual classes and to the super-ordinate conceptual classes (e.g. while *gattino* 'small cat' is an existing word in Italian, the diminutive of the superordinate term *?mammiferino* 'small mammal' is rarely acceptable, as well as

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[12] These examples deserve individual treatment, as it is not effectively clear if they can be classified as diminutives or singulatives (cf. Cuzzolin 1998). In this paper, it is sufficient to underline that the coincidence, on a formal level, of the two categories is cross-linguistically well diffused. Also in Sardinian diminutive forms are not lacking in which their interpretation is very close to the singulative: *zuccuru* (mass noun) 'sugar > *zuccureddu* noun [+ countable] 'sugar lump'.

the diminutives of the subordinate terms such as [?]*siamesino*, [?]*persianino* o [?]*certosinetto*, etc.).
The properties indicated in point v. can be exemplified with data taken from the modern Indo-European languages. As tothe possibility of creating sequences of more evaluative suffixes, not necessarily synonyms, the examples can be seen in (6):

6)   Fr.   princesse   >   princip-icul(e)-ette
            'princess'   princess-DIM-DIM / 'young princess'
      Sp.   ri(o)-ach(o)-uelo
            river-DIM-DIM / 'small river'
            picar(o)-on-azo
            rascal-AUG-AUG / 'little rascal'
      Rum.   cal-uş-él
            horse-DIM-DIM / 'little horse'
      Blg.   glav(á)-ič(a)-ka
            head-DIM-DIM / 'small head'

The breaking of the so-called 'Blocking Rule'[13] is the clearest display of the notable 'exuberance' of the evaluative morphology in the majority of modern Indo-European languages:

7)   Port.   livr(o)-eco
              livr(o)-ete
              livr(o)-inho
              livr(o)-ito
              book-DIM / 'small book

      Sp.   pajar(o)-ico
              pajar(o)-illo
              pajar(o)-ito
              pajar(o)-uelo
              bird-DIM / 'small bird'

The property vi. can be considered as an effect of the property indicated in point v.a.: in a sequence of evaluative suffixes, the elements in the internal position tend to weaken in the phonetic body and in their semantic contribution, becoming interfixes.[14]
The properties in point vii. have, as we will see in the next paragraph, a great theoretical relevance. In fact, despite very few exceptions, evaluative suffixes are never obligatory: no evaluative suffix is applied due to syntactic necessity and no syntactic construction can determine the use of an evaluative suffix, as the Italian sentences in (8) show:

8)   un   gatto   bello
      ART   cat   beautiful
      un   gattino bello
      ART   cat:DIM beautiful
      un   gatto   bellino
      ART   cat   beautiful:DIM
      un   gattino bellino
      ART   cat:DIM beautiful:DIM

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[13] Scalise (1994: 224) defines the 'Blocking Rule' as follows: "data la regola produttiva …$_X$+Suf1$_Y$, altre regole con la stessa semantica vengono bloccate se Suf1 è un suffisso produttivo per la classe di parole X".
[14] Although a large part of interfixes derives from the transformation of evaluative suffixes employed in sequence, also the use of interfixes for which it is not possible to reconstruct an origin of this type is widely documented. For an accurate examination of the relationship between evaluative suffixes and interfixes, see Dressler and Merlini Barbaresi (1989).

In short, in the noun phrase the use of the diminutive on the head does not trigger the additional use of the diminutive on the adjectival modifiers. Moreover, the diminutive can be applied to the modifiers, but not to the head. Therefore, evaluative suffixes never create evaluative agreement.

As far as semantics is concerned, in the previous paragraphs we have already said that the meaning of evaluative suffixes is not referential and we have already discussed the two dimensions of evaluative morphology (descriptive: SMALL vs. BIG; qualitative: GOOD vs. BAD). As far as the properties in point ix. are concerned, by saying that an evaluative form is a hyponym with respect to its own base, I mean that between a word and its evaluative form there is a relationship of implication: saying that X is a *cagnolino* 'small dog' implies that X is a *cane* 'dog' (while supposing that X is a *canile* 'dog-kennel' does not imply that X is a *cane* 'dog'). This relationship could be formalised through the paraphrase 'is a type of ': a *cagnolino* is a type of *cane* (while a *canile* is not a type of *cane*).

3.2. Derivation of Inflexion?

After having presented the main properties of evaluative suffixes, it is necessary to briefly address the problem relating to their position within the morphological component.

A survey of the properties listed in the last paragraph does not give an encouraging result: the characteristics in points iii., iv. and vii. are typically derivational; those in points ii., viii. e ix. are inflexional, and finally the properties indicated in i., v., vi. and x. cannot be attributed to derivation nor inflexion.[15] This situation seems to weaken the possibility of collocating evaluative suffixes within the morphological component in a clear and unambiguous way. However, before discarding this possibility, it is necessary to assess whether the properties listed above form an internally homogeneous whole; in other words, whether they all have the same 'weight'. I believe that the answer to this question must be negative: some of the properties of evaluative suffixes seem to play a more important role compared to the others. I am referring to the properties listed in point vii., relative to the relationship between evaluative suffixes and syntax: evaluative suffixes in most languages have no syntactic relevance, since they are never obligatory and do not trigger any kind of agreement. I believe that this characteristic plays a fundamental role in defining their collocation: evaluative suffixes are in all ways derivational suffixes. In fact, while inflexional suffixes are obligatorily required by specific syntactic contexts and trigger off mechanisms of agreement, typically derivational suffixes are always free and do not determine mutations in the syntactic context of occurrence.[16]

This conclusion must not however encourage any neglecting of the fact that few properties of evaluative suffixes have an undeniable similarity with that of inflexional suffixes. However, if inflexion and derivation come to be considered as the two extremes of a *continuum* and not, rather, as two sealed off compartments reciprocally independent,[17] the peculiar characteristics of evaluative suffixes cease to be an inconvenient abnormality and become the most evident clues of their 'peripheral' position within derivation. In other words, as proposed by Dressler and Merlini

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[15] Obviously the result of this recognition depends in a close way on the theoretical framework which is assumed and on the definition of derivation and inflexion which derives from it. In this paper, I shall make reference to the model of the morphological component which emerges from Bybee (1985), Plank (1994) and Haspelmath (2002).

[16] Cf. Bybee (1985: 81): "one of the most persistent undefinables in morphology is the distinction between derivational and inflectional morphology. While linguists seem to have an intuitive understanding of the distinction, the objective criteria behind this intuition have proved difficult to find. The most successful criterion is *obligatoriness* [...]. Obligatory categories force certain choices upon the speaker. In English every noun phrase must be either Definite or Indefinite, every finite clause either Past or Present. Derivational morphemes are not obligatory in this sense" (the italics are in the original).

[17] Cf. Plank (1994: 1627): "[t]his view of a more or less continuous gradation between kinds of morphological categories, possibly punctuated differently in different languages, appears to be more realistic than that of taking the neat dichotomy of inflectional and derivational morphology for granted".

Barbaresi (1992: 21), evaluative suffixes, even though they are of derivational nature, can not be considered as "a prototypical representative of derivational morphology". That is equivalent to saying that evaluative suffixes are less derivational that other suffixes (e.g. suffixes which create agent nouns), but not to the point of being defined as inflexional or being located in an autonomous and distinct class.

As mentioned above, this conclusion, even though supported by an extremely vast cross-linguistic comparison, cannot be defined as a linguistic universal. In fact, there are languages in which evaluative suffixes have an eminently inflexional character. This is the case, for example, in Bantu languages, in which the addition of an evaluative prefix to the head of a noun phrase implies the addition of the same prefixes to all its modifiers too:

9)   kikuyu: (Stump 1993: 9)
        ka-mundu   ka-ria   ka-nini
        DIM-person   DIM-that   DIM-little / that little person'

4. The properties of Sardinian diminutive suffixes

The table of reference is by now sufficiently clear to consider the data of Sardinian in more depth. As mentioned above, the evaluative morphology of Sardinian is decisively poor: it is made up of only two productive diminutive suffixes (*-eddu* e *–ixeddu*).[18]

The remainder of this paragraph will therefore be dedicated to a comparison between this table of reference and the behaviour of the suffixes *-eddu* e *-ixeddu*. In fact, they reproduce a good part of the properties of the list above, even though there are some noteworthy exceptions.

The diminutive suffixes *–eddu* e *-ixeddu* do not follow the Unitary Base Hypothesis: they can be added to nouns and adjectives, as demonstrated by the following words ending in *–eddu*:

10)   A-DIM   piticu   >   pitik-eddu
                    'small'   small-DIM / 'very small'
                    matucu   >   matuk-eddu
                    'big'   big-DIM / 'not very big'
       N-DIM   partidu   >   partid-eddu
                    'party'   party-DIM / 'small party'
                    màriga   >   marigh-edda
                    'jug'   >   jug-DIM / 'jug'

Looking at these data, it is appropriate to be more specific. Sardinian does not follow the Unitary Base Hypothesis formulated by Aronoff (1976), according to which the same suffix can not be attached to nouns, verbs and adjective, but not the Modified Unitary Base Hypothesis elaborated by Scalise (1984 and 1994), which asserts a complete compatibility between nouns and adjectives on the one side, and between adjectives and verbs on the other. In other words, suffixes which are able to select both nouns and verbs should not exist.[19] So, the Modified Unitary Base Hypothesis cannot be checked on Sardinian, because in Sardinian evaluative forms derived form verbs are not attested. In this sense, Sardinian reproduces a rather diffused tendency amongst languages in the Romance group.[20]

The data in (10) show that Sardinian diminutive suffixes do not change the syntactic category of the base, in agreement with the already mentioned neutrality category. The same is true for the

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[18] As seen in notes 6 and 7, there are other suffixes with evaluative meaning, but they are completely unproductive and often diatopically marked.

[19] In this picture, the adjective, characterised by both nominal and verbal features, would be a sort of transition category between N and V.

[20] French constitutes a partial exception to this generalisation (cf. data in (5)), but, in slight justification of this situation, the non Romance origin of the suffix *–et(te)* (probably Celtic*)* should be noted.

sub-categorisation frame: normally Sardinian evaluative suffixes maintain the gender of the base.[21] Singulative forms, in which the evaluative suffix attributes the feature [+ countable] to a mass noun (e.g. *zuccureddu* [+ countable] 'sugar lump' < *zuccuru* [- countable] 'sugar') are very rare. In Sardinian evaluative morphology, the only real exception to the categorial neutrality is represented by the augmentative suffix *–oni*, which is absolutely unproductive: in some of its rare occurrences it can change the syntactic category of the base and some of the information contained within the sub-categorisation frame. In a form such as *imbriagoni / umbriagoni* 'drunkard', for example, the suffix transforms a verb (*imbreacàre* 'to get drunk') into a noun. In *conconi* 'brainy person, very intelligent person', the suffix creates a [+ human] noun from a [- animated] noun (*conca* 'head'). Formations of this type (widely attested in the Romance languages, Modern Greek and also, in a less uniform way, in Slavonic languages),[22] however, have only a partial evaluative character: in fact, they express, in addition to the evaluative meaning BIG, a semantic category which is not evaluative at all (e.g. agentivity). So, such forms can be placed half way between evaluation and derivation: as expected, they are made up of properties from one and the other.

As far as the property indicated in point iv. of paragraph 3.1 is concerned, the behaviour of Sardinian is not different from that of the other languages in the same family: evaluative forms derived from concrete and countable nouns are widely attested, while evaluative forms derived from abstract nouns and mass nouns are much less frequent.

The possibility of forming sequences of more evaluative suffixes is obviously inhibited by the presence of only two productive suffixes (and by the fact that, as will be seen shortly, they are almost in complementary distribution). So, in Sardinian words in which two or more different evaluative suffixes are present are considerably rare:

11) jogu   >   jogh-itu   >   jogh-it-eddu
     'play'   play-DIM   play-DIM-DIM
     Antoni >   Anton-icu   >   Anton-ik-eddu
     'Antony'   Antony-DIM   Antony-DIM-DIM
     carru   >   carr-uçu   >   carr-uc-eddu
     cart, wagon cart, wagon-DIM   cart, wagon-DIM-DIM

Words in which the same suffix is attested recursively are more frequent:

12) matucu>   matuk-eddu   >   matuk-edd-eddu
     'big'   big-DIM   big-DIM-DIM
     piticu >   pitik-eddu   >   pitik-edd-eddu   >   pitik-edd-edd-eddu
     'small'   small-DIM   small-DIM-DIM   small-DIM-DIM-DIM
     pipiu >   pipi-eddu   >   pipi-edd-eddu   >   pipi-edd-edd-eddu
     'child'   child-DIM   child-DIM-DIM   child-DIM-DIM-DIM

Since most sequences of more evaluative suffixes are in fact constituted by the repetition of the same suffix, the phenomenon of transformation of the suffixes placed in the intermediate position into interfixes has a rather low rate. In Sardinian, interfixes have an essentially euphonic function:

13) cunjau >   cunja-d-eddu
     'field'   field-INTF-DIM / 'small field'
     dinai >   dina-d-eddu
     'coin'   coin-INTF-DIM / 'small coin'

It is not clear whether the relationship between *–eddu* and *–ixeddu* can be explained in terms of a

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[21] Usually, when the gender changes, this is a clue of a process of lexicalisation: *cria* (fem.) 'lock' > *crieddu* (masc.) 'lock fastening'.
[22] See paragraph 6 for further information.

process of 'interfixation' (in which, the sequence –ix- can be interpreted as an interfix). The distribution of the two suffixes seems to suggest a negative response. In fact, they seem to be in complementary distribution: -eddu seems to privilege words containing more than two syllables (e.g. *pòpulu* 'people' > *populeddu* 'common people', *bestiri* 'dress' > *bestireddu* 'little outfit', etc.); -ixeddu, on the other hand, is inclined to join to bi-syllabic words (es. *bentu* 'wind > *bentixeddu* 'breeze', *fragu* 'smell' > *fraghixeddu* 'a nice smell', etc.). However, this is a tendency, not a rule: also bi-syllabic terms which employ the suffix –eddu are attested (e.g. *conca* 'head' > *conkedda* 'small head', *femmia* 'woman' > *femmiedda* 'pretty, little woman'). The fact that in Sardinian the presence of the sequence –ixeddu can be foreseen with good reliability would induce not to consider this suffix as the union of the interfix -ix- to the suffix –eddu, because in evaluative morphology the presence of interfixes, in most cases, is not foreseeable at all. However, this is just a partial affirmation; a deepest examination of the data is needed in order to confirm (or deny) it. However, even the fact that pairs of synonym words, one with the interfix and one without it (such as Modern Greek μύτη 'nose' > μύτος 'big nose' / μύταρος 'big nose'), do not exist (or, at least, are extremely rare) seems to support the hypothesis that –eddu and –ixeddu are two different suffixes.

As to Sardinian, the breaking of the Blocking Rule, or in other words, the rivalry between synonym suffixes. In fact, the only productive suffixes (and therefore the only potential candidates for rivalry) are –eddu and –ixeddu, but the fact, as has just been affirmed, that there are practically no attested words in which they can be used interchangeably gives up the discussion before it starts. This is probably the aspect that really makes Sardinian different from the other Indo-European languages of Europe, at least on the synchronic level.[23]

As far as the relationship between evaluative suffixes and syntax is concerned, it should be point out that Sardinian conforms to the prevalent tendency among world's languages: evaluative suffixes have no syntactic relevance, because they do not trigger any evaluative agreement, they are not required by any syntactic context and do not determine any mutation in the syntactic context of occurrence. This obviously allows us to assert the derivational character of Sardinian evaluative suffixes.

With respect to semantics, the specificity of Sardinian is that it can express only the meaning SMALL by means of specific morphemes. As to the other semantic properties of evaluative suffixes, Sardinian is not different from the other Indo-European languages: the meaning of the evaluative suffixes is attributive and non-referential (the evaluative suffix does not introduce a different referent with respect to the one of the base)[24] and evaluative forms are hyponyms of their bases.

Before closing the section relative to the characteristics of Sardinian evaluative morphology, the pragmatic side should still be considered. In fact, considering the list of properties in the previous paragraph, it could be surprising that there is no reference to pragmatics, despite the fact that evaluative suffixes are a linguistic strategy very closely linked to pragmatics (they are considered by Dressler and Merlini Barbaresi (1994) as the best expression of morpho-pragmatics, which is the study of regular pragmatic effects due to the application of Word Formation Rules). However, pragmatics rarely lends itself to cross-linguistic and typological comparison and it is therefore difficult to identify more or less common pragmatic tendencies in different languages. Therefore, in this case, there is a lack of theoretical picture of reference: literature on cross-linguistic studies on the relationship between pragmatics and morphology is rich, but a true typology of morpho-pragmatics still needs to be done. At this point, I therefore limit myself to just mention two pragmatic characteristics of Sardinian diminutives. The first concerns the decidedly marked linguistic use of the so-called baby-talk. In Romance languages the process of intensifying by reduplication is well diffused; in this case, either the base form of the adjective (e.g. Italian *una*

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[23] Other important differences will be presented in §§ 6 and 7, but in reference to diachronic processes.

[24] Exceptions are made for the forms ending in –oni quoted above (very similar to Italian forms such as *mangione* 'hearty eater'), that are not entirely evaluative.

casa piccola piccola 'a very small house'; but lit. 'a small small house'), or its diminutive form (e.g. Italian *una casa piccolina piccolina* 'a very tiny house'; but lit. 'a small:DIM small:DIM house') can be reduplicated. However, the forms of the first type seem to be more common than those of the second. On the other hand, in Sardinian (above all in the Logudorese variety), reduplication of the diminutive form of the adjective is clearly more frequent (e.g. *una domo minoreddha minoreddha* lit. 'a small:DIM small:DIM house') with respect to that of the base-form (e.g. es. *una domo minore minore* lit. 'a small small house').[25]

The second peculiarity of Sardinian diminutives concerns their use in anti-phrastic ironic expressions. The diminutive form of nouns and adjectives is the morphological resource that is used by default for anti-phrastic expressions of irony. For example, to indicate something extremely big, the most common terms seem to be *mannixeddu* (masc.) / *mannixedda* (fem.) lit. 'not very big' (cf. It. *grandicello/a*) or *pitticheddu* (masc.) / *pittichedda* (fem.) 'very small' (cf. It. *piccolino*). Therefore, a word such as *omineddu*, besides the expected meaning 'dwarf, wee chap, little fellow', anti-phrastically can also mean 'big man'.[26]

5. A window on diachrony: the origin of diminutive suffixes

In the previous paragraph the characteristics of Sardinian evaluative morphology were described, in a rigorously synchronic perspective. The general picture that emerges is largely similar to that of the other Romance languages, with the only exception of the really poor number of productive evaluative suffixes which Sardinian has at its disposal.

If the range of data is widened by opening a window on diachrony, the analogies, which have just been observed, find substantial confirmation. In fact, the history of Sardinian diminutive suffixes tracks that the diminutives of other Romance languages, and more generally, of the diminutives of most World's languages.

The issue of the origin of diminutives has been repeatedly addressed by scholars and today there is a substantial agreement in assigning a crucial role to animate nouns in the process of the formation of diminutives (cf. e.g. Grandi 2003 and Martino to appear). In brief, the diminutive value would be developed in the semantic area of the young (and therefore small) animate beings: from the meaning 'young X' it would be passed to the meaning 'small X' by the evident cognitive closeness of the two interpretations. In fact, with animate nouns the conceptual class 'young X' can have two possible interpretations, in relation to the value of the feature [± human]. In the case of non-human animate beings (that is animals), X normally corresponds to the name of the species (e.g. It. *elefantino* 'young elephant' < *elefante* 'elephant'). Instead, in the case of human beings, X generally corresponds to the proper name of the father or to the family name (e.g. Old It. *Lanfranchino di ser Lanfranco* lit. 'Lanfranchino son of Lanfranco', *Lanfranco* being the proper name of the father - from *Memoriale dei camarlinghi del Ceppo dei poveri di Prato* (1296-1305); and *Mannellino de' Mannelli*' lit. 'Mannellino member of Mannelli family', *Mannelli* being the family name – from Donato Velluti, *La cronica domestica* (1367-70)).

It is essential to underline that the formal elements from which the diminutive value will originate (suffixes in Romance languages, a mark of a neuter gender in Slavonic languages, etc.) are nearly obligatory with respect to the semantic class of young animate beings: in Italian, almost all nouns which designate a young living being have a diminutive suffix (e.g. *pulcino* 'chick', *vitello* 'calf', *lattonzolo* 'piglet', *cerbiatto* 'fawn', etc.); in Slavonic languages almost all nouns which designate a young living being have the neuter gender (e.g. Serbo-Croat *déte* 'child', *jàre* 'little goat', *tèle* 'calf'), etc. Therefore, diminutive suffixes (or the neuter gender) play, as to the semantic class of young animate beings, the role of classifiers, or better, of markers of noun class, since they are, as already stated, obligatory.[27]

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[25] I would like to thank Emilia Calaresu for this information.

[26] I would like to thank Ignazio Putzu for this information.

[27] Consequently, the semantic class represented by the paraphrase 'young X' presents all the requirements for being a

Sardinian seems to confirm this tendency: the suffix *–eddu*, in fact, is found in several nouns indicating young animate beings, in all the diatopic varieties of the language.[28] Maps A and B show the distribution of the terms for calf, foal, piglet and chick: [29]
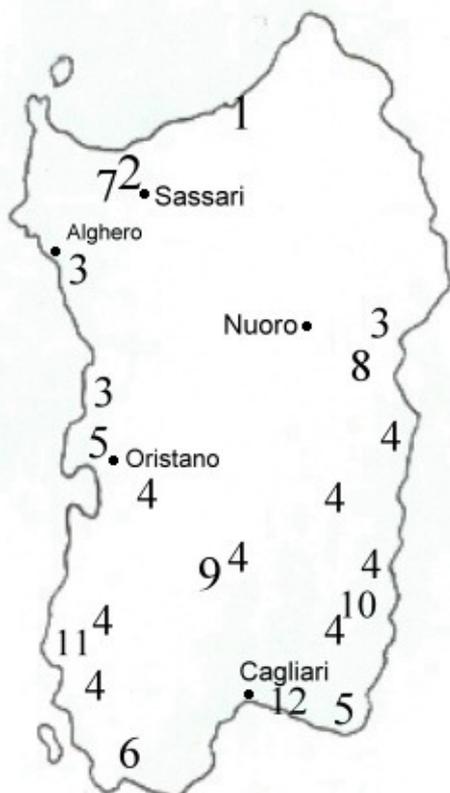
Map A
Calf (1-6) and **foal** (7-12)
1 itéddu
2 viddéddu
3 itéllu
4 vitéllu
5 vitelléddu
6 fitéllu

7 bbudréddu
8 purdéddu
9 βurdéddu
10 βuδréddu
11 βuddekkéddu
12 βuddekéddu

Map B
Piglet (1-11) and **chick** (12-18)
1 pułćéddu
2 poχχéddu
3 porkéddu
4 βorkéddu
5 βrokkeddu
6 βorćéddu
7 proćéddu
8 pporćeddéddu
9 βroćeddéddu
10 porkižéddu / porćeddéddu
11 βorćeddeddu

12 pudzonéddu
13 puġġonéddu
14 piłonéddu essa βúdda
15 pižonéddu

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cognitive category: all nouns that belong to it, in fact, share, on the formal level, the same mark (which obviously varies from language to language, but which inside each single language is absolutely constant.).
[28] On the contrary, the suffix *–ixeddu* seems not to be attested in nouns belonging to this conceptual class.
[29] The data on Sardinian in this section have been traced from Atlas of Italian dialects edited by Jaberg and Jud (1971[2]).

16 pillonéddu
17 βillonéddu
18 kaβoniskéddu

In brief, since the semantic area of young animals is usually rather conservative, the fact that the suffix –*eddu* shows an elevated degree of occurrence in it, seems to support the reconstruction of a semantic shift 'young X' > 'small X'.[30]

A more accurate examination of the data offers some further ideas worth developing. In fact, as can be seen, the suffix -*eddu* is not the only mark used for the denomination of young animals.

Take the noun 'chick' into consideration. In the North-West sector of Sardinia (approximately in the province of Sassari) the most commonly diffused term is *lu bbuddigínu*. More to the East, in the zone that lies to the north of Nuoro, the form *su puddikínu* is used. Going down towards the South, *su βuddiɣínu* is found (around Oristano). In these words, we can easily recognize the suffix –*ínu*, probably linked to the Indo-European morpheme **-īno-* (member of a rather complex micro-system of suffixes: **-ĭno-, *-īno-, *-eyno-, *-oyno-*) which gave rise to diminutives in Italian, Spanish, Catalan, Portuguese, and, even if to a lower extent, in French.[31]

These data propose a question of great relevance: why, contrary to what has happened in almost all the other Romance languages, does Sardinian –*ínu* not become a diminutive suffix, even though it is used to express the parental relationship and therefore finds, at least apparently, the most favourable conditions for starting the semantic shift 'young X' > 'small X' described above?

6. Sardinian amongst the Romance languages

The question with which the last paragraph closes poses a crucial problem: why did Sardinian preserve, even in evaluative morphology, a highly conservative configuration, despite having all the conditions that could have sent it in the same process of renewal that had already taken place in the other Romance languages?

The answer to this question is concealed in the stratification of diminutive suffixes used in the Romance languages and in the effects of the emergence of augmentative suffixes after the collapse of Latin.

In brief, the co-ordinates within which we can move are as follows:

i. the results of Lat. -*īnus* with diminutive value show a high degree of productivity in Portuguese, Spanish, Catalan and Italian, while they are scarcely attested in French; the suffix does not become diminutive in Sardinian and in Rumanian;

ii. the results of –*(i)ō, -(i)ōnis* with augmentative meaning, which will be discussed in § 7, are characterised by a high degree of productivity in Portuguese, Spanish and Italian; in Rumanian the augmentative suffix –*oi* is in use, but with minor productivity; in Catalan, French and Sardinian the suffix does not have augmentative value.[32]

If we match up i. with ii., we can identify three distinct situations:

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[30] According to Matisoff (1991) and Creissels (1999), the link between diminutive suffixes and the expression of parental relation is attested also in Bantu languages, in Austro-Asiatic languages, in Thai languages, and in Mao-Yao languages.

[31] Butler (1971) does not consider the Sardinian suffix –*ínu* to be linked to the Indo-European morpheme **-īno-* and suggests a different reconstruction for it.

[32] As it is well-known, in French the suffix is diminutive (e.g. *pagodon* 'small pagoda'). In Sardinian the suffix is used both in nouns indicating young animals (e.g. *angioni* 'lamb') and in a few nouns with augmentative meaning (cf. note 7).

a. Portuguese, Spanish and Italian, in which *-īnus* becomes diminutive and *–(i)ō, -(i)ōnis* augmentative;

b. Rumanian, in which *–(i)ō, -(i)ōnis* is augmentative, but *-īnus* is not diminutive;

c. Sardinian, in which *-īnus* is not diminutive[33] and *–(i)ō, -(i)ōnis* is not augmentative.

In addition to a., b. and c., also a fourth situation should be taken into consideration, that of French in which *-īnus* has, although timidly, diminutive value and *–(i)ō, -(i)ōnis* is not augmentative (but diminutive – cf. note 32).

In this picture, the most intricate situations seem undoubtedly to be those of Sardinian and Rumanian which however constitute the essential key to the entire system.

Sardinian and Rumanian are the most conservative Romance languages, since they are found on the physical and cultural fringe of Latin-speaking region. Therefore, they probably reflect linguistic habits characterized by a high level of conservation. Now, the absence of diminutive results of *-īnus* in Sardinian, as well as in Rumanian, and instead the presence of the Rumanian augmentative suffix *-oi*, descending directly from the Latin *–(i)ō, -(i)ōnis*, lead to assert that the transformation of the relational suffix *-īnus* into diminutive took place after the transformation of the agentive and pejorative suffix *-(i)ō, -(i)ōnis* into augmentative. The hypothesis which these data suggest is that the emergence of augmentative suffixes has triggered the transformation of *–īnus* from relational into diminutive. In other words, the innovation due to the emergence of morphemes devoted to the expression of the function BIG (absent in Latin, as it worth underlining) could have determined, in a sequence of chain reactions, a renewal of the strategies dedicated to the expression of the class SMALL. This renewal has taken form in the substitution of the new diminutives in *–n-* for the most ancient diminutives in *-l-* (es. Lat. *–ulus (-a, -um); –illus (-a, -um), –ellus (-a, -um)*) and *-c-* (es. lat. *-culus (-a, -um)*). Therefore, it is not pure chance that more archaic diminutive suffixes in *–l-* e *–c-*, extremely productive in Latin, occupy an absolutely marginal position in the morphological inventory of Portuguese, Spanish and Italian, whereas the forms in *–l-* are still highly productive in Sardinian (*–eddu* derives from Latin *–ellus (-a, -um)*) and in Rumanian (*–el* is the descendent of *-ellus (-a, -um)*; e.g. *copăcel* 'small tree'), where the forms in *–n-* have not appeared.

Therefore, in general, we can assume as a hypothesis that only the Romance languages in which augmentative suffixes have emerged, have developed at a later time also diminutive suffixes in *–n-*. In the other Romance languages, the fact that augmentative suffixes have not come up, has not created suitable conditions for a renewal of the diminutives. So, in other words, the emergence of augmentative suffixes is to be considered as the *conditio sine qua non* for the renewal of diminutive suffixes by means of the substitution of the new forms in *–n-* for the old ones in *–l-* and *–c-*.

The relative chronology of the events can therefore be sketched, on general lines, as follows. The collapse of Latin, which determined the birth of Romance languages, did not happen suddenly, but gradually; its first step was a differentiation of four macro-areas: proceeding from the West to the East, the Ibero-Romance area, the Gallo-Romance area, the Italo-Romance area and the Balkan-Romance area.[34] The transformation of the agentive and pejorative suffix *–(i)ō, -(i)ōnis* in augmentative took place earlier than this process of differentiation started: in fact its results are attested in all of the four areas (as it is confirmed by the augmentative value of Rumanian *–oi*). Only Sardinian, which occupies a marginal position within the Italo-Romance area, did not participate in this process.[35] The transformation of the relational suffix *–īnus* in diminutive, successive and consequent to that of *–(i)ō, -(i)ōnis* in augmentative, took place more recently, when the Latin-speaking regions had already split up. In this period, Balkan Latin already functioned as an autonomous system with respect to Latin in use in Western and Central Europe: the absence of

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[33] Cf. also Wagner (1997 [1950]: 312), "-*ínus*, agg. serve in sardo, come in altre lingue, a formare aggettivi che designano la provenienza o una qualità, ma non ha funzione diminutiva".

[34] Cf. Tagliavini (1972[6]: 354).

[35] Also French has not developed augmentative suffixes, but the situation of French is too complicated to be addressed here.

diminutive results of *–īnus* in Rumanian therefore indicates that the semantic transformation of the suffix took place after the dissociation of Balkan Latin. The seeming anomalous configuration of Rumanian is no more than a consequence of its marginal position within the Latin-speaking area: it in fact took part only in the first phase of the process described above, before coming out, for historical reasons, from the area directly influenced by the Latin of Rome. So, in Rumanian the renewal of diminutives took place through the penetration of Slavic elements. Therefore, in conclusion, the diminutive value of the results of Latin. *–īnus* can be considered a distinctive feature of the varieties of Latin used, in the pre-Romance period, in the regions of the Iberian peninsula and in present-day Italy. In this picture, the absence of diminutives in *–n-* in Sardinian is therefore to be attributed to the lack of augmentatives: in brief, in Sardinian the essential condition for the renewal of the diminutives did not take place.[36]

7. Sardinian amongst the Mediterranean languages

The emergence of augmentative suffixes – which, as seen, has produced a wide restructuring in evaluative morphology – has characterised not only the birth of Romance languages, but also that of many other languages in Central and South-West Europe. More in detail, the process presented in § 6 involved also Modern Greek and many Slavonic languages (above all those belonging to the South sub-group). The starting point is more or less the same: as Latin, also Ancient Greek and Common Slavonic had at their disposal many diminutive suffixes, but no augmentative suffix.

So, in all these languages the rise of the augmentative suffixes represents an innovative change: a new semantic function is introduced and each language has to adopt a formal way of expression for it. On a cross-linguistic perspective, the genesis of augmentatives is slightly different from that of diminutives. While, as has already been seen, the origin of diminutives is always (or, at least, very often) conditioned by the same typological matrix (the semantic shift 'young X' > 'small X'), the emergence of augmentatives (which are less diffused than diminutives amongst World's languages) takes place following many evolutive paths: each of them is slightly different and seems peculiar of a specific area.

One of these evolutive paths characterises the Mediterranean region, even though it does not touch Sardinian. It concerns, very briefly, the transformation into augmentative of the suffixes *-(i)ō, -(i)ōnis* and *-ᾱς / –ίας* used in Latin and Ancient Greek to form masculine animate nouns designating human beings with a particular, often physical, characteristic or with the habit of performing an action in an exaggerated way.[37] This process developed above all in the 'low' literary genres (namely comedy, mime, satire, etc.) and had its starting point in the formation of *cognomina*, proper names of mask-characters and nicknames.Then, these forms spread to the standard varieties of the languages spoken in the regions directly influenced by Latin and Greek and, later, all over Christian Europe, thrust by the 'propulsive power' of the cultural *koiné* which Latin and Ancient Greek began developing during the Imperial age and which, until late Medieval times, strongly influenced the linguistic scene of the Mediterranean area and of Europe.[38] Onece again, Sardinia remained excluded from this process, confirming, also in this case, the conservative character of its language and the consequent scarce inclination towards welcoming mutations (above all innovations, obviously) coming from the external.[39]

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[36] It is interesting to note that recently the evaluative morphology of Romance languages (and of many other languages too) have undergone a new, deep reconstruction due to the affirmation of the evaluative prefixes *mini-, micro-, maxi-, mega(lo)-, macro-*. Sardinian has still not taken part in this process of renewal. Evaluative prefixes are in use in a few words such as *miniappartamentu* 'small flat' or *maxicuncursu* 'big examination', but these words are borrowings from Italian.

[37] E.g. Lat. *blăterāre* 'to chat' > *blăterō* 'chatterbox, someone who talks a lot' and A. Gr. a. καταφαγεῖν 'to eat, to dissipate' > καταφαγᾶς 'squanderer'.

[38] Cf. Banfi (1999: 23).

[39] However, according to Ramat (2003), this conclusion contrasts in a certain way with distribution – quite surprising – of other linguistic features that in recent studies on Mediterranean languages, would seem to configure as typical

Abbreviations

A (Adjective), A. Gr. (Ancient Greek), Art. (Article), Aug. (Augmentative), Blg. (Bulgarian), Cat. (Catalan), DIM (Diminutive), Fem. (Feminine), Fr. (French), Infv. (Infinitive), Intf. (Interfix), It. (Italian), Lat. (Latin), Masc. (Masculine), N (Nouns), Ntr. (Neuter), Port. (Portuguese), Rum. (Rumanian), Sp (Spanish), Srd. (Sardinian), V (Verb)

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Mediterranean: the presence of a prepositional object, adjectival and nominal iterative phrases, the deontic modal (cf. Ramat / Stolz (eds.) (2002). Well, these features are widely attested in Sardinian, with the only exception of augmentative suffixes. Ramat (2003: 31) states that "[p]er quanto riguarda il sardo, esso risulta saldamente ancorato alla realtà mediterranea, almeno relativamente ai fatti presi in esame [cioè i tre tratti linguistici appena citati], tranne quello riguardante gli accrescitivi/peggiorativi. La cosa non è del tutto ovvia, se si tiene conto della natura fortemente conservatrice di questa lingua e della posizione dell'isola, relativamente appartata dalle grandi correnti commerciali e culturali".

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