With ups and downs
Verbal diminutives in Dutch and Afrikaans

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1. Introduction

2. The data

3. Towards an analysis of high and low intensity
2 verbal diminutive suffixes in Germanic: -el and -er
- These suffixes indicate that an event is iterative or attenuative.

Consider these Dutch examples:

(1) hupp-el-en ‘to skip’ (repeatedly)
(2) stuit-er-en ‘to bounce’ (repeatedly)
(3) krabb-el-en ‘to scratch lightly’
(4) dobb-er-en ‘to float while rocking lightly’
Our study:

- focuses on both -el and -er morphemes
- acknowledges that these morphemes can be iterative or attenuative
- investigates the fact that these morphemes can indicate both a lower intensity and a higher intensity
- extends to Afrikaans
Previous studies on verbal diminutives:

- Weidhaas & Schmid (2015)
- Audring, Booij & Jackendoff (2017)
Weidhaas & Schmid (2015)

- *eln* verbal diminutives in German
  - Semantics:
    - iterativity
    - low intensity
    - small pieces
  - Pragmatics:
    - contempt
    - trivialization
    - affection
Introduction

Audring, Booij, & Jackendoff (2017)

- -el verbal diminutives in Dutch
- Features of verbal diminutives
  - attenuative
  - iterative
  - onomatopoeic
Audring, Booij, & Jackendoff (2017)

▶ Three of their main findings:
  ▶ the derivational pattern is unproductive
  ▶ non-lexical roots are highly prevalent
  ▶ structural ambiguities due to homophonous suffixes
1. Introduction

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The data

- Native speaker annotation of an extensive collection of verbal diminutives.
- Data extracted from *De Dikke Van Dale* for Dutch and the *Woordeboek van die Afrikaanse Taal* for Afrikaans.
The data: annotation

Annotation categories

▶ Semantic
  ▶ Iteration (YES/NO)

(5) *Hupp-el-en* ‘to skip’

(6) *Zwend-el-en* ‘to scam/fraud’
The data: annotation

Annotation categories

- Semantic
  - Low intensity (i.e. attenuation, YES/NO)
  - High intensity (YES/NO)

(7) *Babb-el-en* ‘to babble/chat’

(8) *Buff-el-en* ‘to sweat one’s guts out’

(9) *Knev-el-en* ‘to bind’
The data: annotation

Annotation categories

- Pragmatic
  - Endearment (YES/POSSIBLE/NO)
  - Pejorative (YES/POSSIBLE/NO)

(10) *Bomm-el-en* ‘to buzz (of a bumblebee)’
(11) *Baz-el-en* ‘to twaddle’
(12) *Kruim-el-en* ‘to crumble’
The data: annotation

Annotation categories

- Morphological: base-type
  - Type I: verbal base
  - Type II: nominal base
  - Type III: non-lexical root as base
  - Type IV: verbal/nominal base

(13) *Hink-el-en* ‘to hop’ – *hinken* ‘to limp’

(14) *Klung-el-en* ‘to skimp’ – *klungel* - ‘duffer’

(15) *Rons-el-en* ‘to recruit’

(16) *Prikk-el-en* ‘to stimulate’ – *prikken* ‘to prick’ – *prikkel* ‘stimulant’
The data: results (semantic)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>DU -el</th>
<th>DU -er</th>
<th>AF -el</th>
<th>AF -er</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total number of verbs</td>
<td>299</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iterative</td>
<td>80,6%</td>
<td>86,2%</td>
<td>84,6%</td>
<td>88,7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not iterative</td>
<td>19,4%</td>
<td>13,8%</td>
<td>15,4%</td>
<td>11,3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High intensity</td>
<td>56,9%</td>
<td>41,3%</td>
<td>56,2%</td>
<td>43,4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low intensity</td>
<td>17,7%</td>
<td>50,5%</td>
<td>20,8%</td>
<td>52,8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>25,4%</td>
<td>8,2%</td>
<td>23,0%</td>
<td>3,8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table: Iterativity and intensity

- Comparable results for both languages
- Large majority of verbs is iterative
- \( Er \)- verbs are more often of low intensity than \( el \)- verbs
The data: results (pragmatic)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>AF -el</th>
<th>AF -er</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total number of verbs</td>
<td>299</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Endearing</td>
<td>7,0%</td>
<td>1,8%</td>
<td>4,6%</td>
<td>3,8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possibly endearing</td>
<td>27,1%</td>
<td>29,6%</td>
<td>21,5%</td>
<td>1,9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not endearing</td>
<td>65,9%</td>
<td>68,6%</td>
<td>74,9%</td>
<td>94,3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pejorative</td>
<td>24,7%</td>
<td>11,9%</td>
<td>13,1%</td>
<td>17,0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possibly pejorative</td>
<td>27,1%</td>
<td>27,5%</td>
<td>40,0%</td>
<td>30,2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not pejorative</td>
<td>48,2%</td>
<td>60,6%</td>
<td>46,9%</td>
<td>52,8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table: Endearing and pejorative readings

- Like nominal diminutives (Jurafsky 1996), verbal diminutives can have expressive meaning
- In Afrikaans, a pejorative meaning is more likely than endearment
The data: results (morphological)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>DU -el</th>
<th>DU -er</th>
<th>AF -el</th>
<th>AF -er</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total number of verbs</td>
<td>299</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type I</td>
<td>17,1%</td>
<td>21,1%</td>
<td>15,4%</td>
<td>22,6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type II</td>
<td>17,1%</td>
<td>4,6%</td>
<td>26,2%</td>
<td>20,7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type III</td>
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<td>63,3%</td>
<td>53,1%</td>
<td>49,1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type VI</td>
<td>24,7%</td>
<td>11,0%</td>
<td>3,3%</td>
<td>7,6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table: Morphological base type

- Unlike in German (Weidhaas & Schmid 2015), type III is the most frequent base type for verbal diminutives in Dutch and Afrikaans.
- Do these morphemes still have suffixal status, or have they become integrated in the lexical entries of verbal diminutives?
1. Introduction

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3. Towards an analysis of high and low intensity
Towards an analysis of high and low intensity

Proposal in a nutshell

- The *er-* morpheme is a differential amount marker (cf. Kennedy & Levin 2008; Morzycki 2007)
- It marks only a difference, rather than the orientation of the intensity
- This is analogous to the comparative use of *er-*, which functions as a differential amount marker, its direction (up or down) depending on the adjective to which it is attached

(17) Mary is 5 centimeters taller than Bill.
(18) Bill is 5 centimeters shorter than Mary.
Towards an analysis of high and low intensity

Proposal in a nutshell

▶ There is cross-Germanic diachronic evidence that the *el*-suffix was used as a differential amount marker (e.g. Old and Middle English *lytel/litel* and *micel/muchel*)

▶ The fact that this use is no longer present in modern Dutch and Afrikaans, accounts for the fact that high intensity is much less frequent in *el*- verbs compared to *er*- verbs
533-578.
Weidhaas, T. and Schmid, H.-J. 2015. Diminutive verbs in German. Semantic analysis and