

<it, cit, ecit>: A New Approach to Diminutives in Spanish

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Overview. This paper claims that an allomorphic approach (e.g., Crowhurst 1992, Kenstowicz 2005) does not fully account for the Spanish diminutive (DIM) suffix realizations *-it*, *-sit*, and *-esit* (written as “it”, “cit”, and “ecit”) since there is intra-speaker variation. This paper instead proposes an epenthetic approach: *-it* is the input form, and the other two suffix realizations *-sit* and *-esit* are derived from the default by inserting [s] or [e]+[s] for morphological and phonological reasons.

Phenomenon & puzzle. The scope of this research is diminutives of consonant-final monosyllabic and polysyllabic noun stems in Spanish. In particular, monosyllabic stems end in a simplex consonant (e.g., *pan* ‘bread’) or a cluster (e.g., *madr* ‘mother’; the final [e] in *madr*e is not part of the noun stem but what is epenthesized because the stem is *mad*<*r*> in which <*r*> is extraprosodic (Crowhurst 1992)). Crowhurst (1992) claims that, *-sit* is the input form and [e] is epenthesized for monosyllabic stems (i.e., *-esit*), either simplex-consonant-final (1a) or cluster-final (1b), in order to satisfy the disyllabic foot template $\text{Foot}[\sigma\sigma]$ for monosyllabic stems. For polysyllabic stems, *-sit* appears after stem-final /n/ or /l/ (i.e., non-continuant consonants) (1c-d), whereas /s/ is deleted from the input *-sit* after stems that end in a continuant, which is required by the Obligatory Contour Principle (OCP; Leben 1973) (i.e., *[+cont][+cont]) (1e-f).

(1)	a. <i>pan</i>	* <i>panito</i>	* <i>pansito</i>	[pa.n-e]sito	‘bread-DIM’
	b. <i>madr</i>	* <i>madrita</i>	* <i>madrsita</i> ¹	[mad.r-e]sita	‘mother-DIM’
	c. <i>balkon</i>	* <i>balkonito</i>	<i>balkonsito</i>		‘balcony-DIM’
	d. <i>pintor</i>	* <i>pintorito</i>	<i>pintorsito</i>		‘painter-DIM’
	e. <i>relox</i>	<i>reloxito</i>	* <i>reloxsito</i>		‘watch-DIM’
	f. <i>koral</i>	<i>koralito</i>	* <i>koralsito</i>		‘yard-DIM’

Crowhurst’s analysis is complicated with two different phenomena: *-sit* is the input form, and [e] is epenthesized in some cases, whereas /s/ is deleted in other cases. In addition, despite some predictability, there are counterexamples or exceptions: *-sit* in particular is in free variation with *-esit* (2a), or only *-it* is grammatical (2b).

(2)	a. <i>flor</i>	* <i>florita</i>	<i>florsita</i>	<i>floresita</i>	‘flower-DIM’ (Harris 1994)
	b. <i>mugr</i>	<i>mugrita</i>	* <i>mugrsita</i>	* <i>mugresita</i>	‘dirt-DIM’ (Crowhurst 1992)

Experiments. Acceptability judgment tasks were conducted on Qualtrics to examine the distribution of the Spanish DIM suffix realizations *-it*, *-sit*, and *-esit* (Experiment 1 for monosyllabic stems and Experiment 2 for polysyllabic stems). For stimuli, 9 monosyllabic nouns (e.g., *pan*, *madr*) and 14 polysyllabic nouns (e.g., *balkon*, *koral*) were used. Twenty-six native speakers of Mexican Spanish were presented 69 written pairs of noun phrases (e.g., “el pan” ‘the bread’) and each of three potential diminutives (e.g., “el panito,” “el pancito,” “el panecito” ‘the bread-DIM’). Participants were asked to give an acceptability judgement score (range: 1-7) for each diminutive.

Results. Results support the previous analysis, and more crucially, provide new findings. **First, for monosyllabic stems (Figure 1),** Crowhurst’s claim about *-esit* for monosyllabic stems is supported: *-esit* was preferred to the other suffix forms (*-it* and *-sit*), whether the stem-final consonant(s) are simplex, as in [pa.n-e]sito (5.85), or complex, as in [mad.r-e]sita (6.22). Even though Crowhurst would predict the attachment of *-it* and *-sit* to monosyllabic stems to be

¹ **madrsita* is not explicitly mentioned in Crowhurst (1992) but can be easily predicted to be ungrammatical due to the phonotactics in Spanish. This is also the case of **mugrsita* in (2b).

ungrammatical, our findings show that one of them was consistently preferred to the other: for noun stems with a simplex final consonant, *-sit* was preferred to *-it* (e.g., *pansito* (4.37) > *panito* (2.05)), whereas for noun stems with complex final consonants, *-it* was preferred to *-sit* (e.g., *madrita* (3.56) > *madrsita* (1.29), see footnote 1).

Second, for polysyllabic stems (Figure 2), *-esit* was overall least favored since the stems already satisfy the disyllabic foot template $\text{Foot}[\sigma\sigma]$, and thus there was no need for [e]-epenthesis, (e.g., [bal.kon]*esito* (1.78), [ko.ral]*esito* (2.47)). For stems that end in [-cont], *-sit* was preferred to a great extent to *-it* (e.g., *balkonsito* (6.23) > *balkonito* (1.97)). On the other hand, for stems that end in [+cont], the preference for *-sit* decreased (e.g., *koralsito* (4.50)) due to the OCP effect, which was comparable to *-it* (e.g., *korallito* (4.53)).

Analysis. This paper provides a unified account of all three Spanish DIM suffix realizations: *-it* is the default, and *-sit* and *-esit* are derived from the default via epenthesis: to be specific, morphophonological epenthesis of [s] or [e]+[s]. Overall, *-esit* was most preferable for monosyllabic stems, which supports Crowhurst’s claim for the disyllabic foot structure. The epenthesis of [e]+[s] (i.e., *-esit*) is required by $\text{Foot}[\sigma\sigma]$, the constraint that demands the disyllabic foot template ([pa.ne.si.to] > (“more harmonic than”) [pa.ni.to]) and ONSET ([pa.ne.si.to] > [pa.ne.ito]). Our results indicate that [s]-epenthesis (i.e., *-sit*) was preferred in order to mark a morpheme boundary (indicated as “|”) as long as it does not yield an unparsed consonant, which is required by PARSE-C (Kenstowicz 1994). For example, [pan.|s|-i.to] is relatively tolerable, whereas [mad.<r>|s|-i.ta] is not because /r/ cannot be parsed. While [mad.<r>si.ta] is rarely acceptable, [mad.ri.ta] was more acceptable, for which PARSE-C and DEP play a role. Regarding polysyllabic stems, $\text{Foot}[\sigma\sigma]$ is vacuously satisfied, which obviates the need for [e]-epenthesis (e.g., [bal.kon]*esito*, [ko.ral]*esito*). For continuant-final stems, the OCP-based markedness constraint *[+cont][+cont] penalizes [s]-epenthesis (i.e., *-sit*) (e.g., *koralsito*), at the expense of marking a morpheme boundary between the stem and the DIM suffix *-it*. This contrasts with non-continuant-final stems’ strong preference for [s]-epenthesis (i.e., *-sit*) (e.g., *balkonsito*) to no-[s]-epenthesis (i.e., *-it*) (e.g., *balkonito*). Regarding epenthetic qualities, I argue that both [e] and [s] are selected due to a language-specific frequency effect: [e] is the most frequent vowel and [s] is the most frequent consonant in Spanish (Guirao & García Jurado 1990). This paper contributes to a line of research on the typology of “morphological” epenthesis (contra “phonological” epenthesis). Additional evidence for morphological epenthesis is found cross-linguistically: Italian compounds (*diet|o|terapia* ‘diet therapy’; Repetti 2012), Korean suffixation (*pap-iraŋ* ~ *pap|s|-iraŋ* ‘rice and’; Kim 2018), and English DIM suffix realizations (*Bettie* ~ *Bet|s|ie* ‘Elizabeth-DIM’; Kim 2021).

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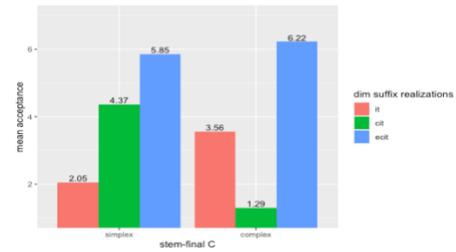


Figure 1. Mean acceptability for monosyllabic stems

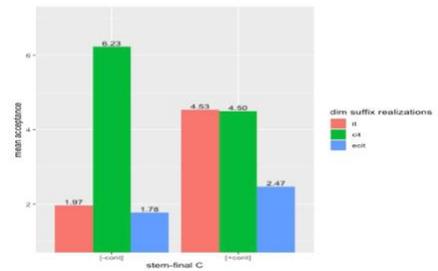


Figure 2. Mean acceptability for polysyllabic stems