

## ON THE EXPRESSION OF DIMINUTIVITY IN SUSU\*

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### Abstract

The notion of diminutivity is mentioned only in passing in the major contemporary works devoted to describing Susu (e.g., Houis, 1963; Touré, 1994, 2004). It has yet to be given the careful attention that this topic has received in other Mande languages (e.g., Nikitina in press), though some uses of the word *díí* ‘child,’ from which the Susu diminutive is derived, are explored in work by Diané & Vydrine (2012) on the language’s kinship system. This paper has the modest goal of adding to what is currently known about Susu diminutivity by reporting on and considering the use of several morphemes, both affixal and free, that figure into the expression of diminutivity in the language. Key to our discussion will be the behavior of Susu’s suffixal diminutive marker *-dí*, which is cognate to similar morphemes found in other Mande languages; we also discuss additional ways in which diminutivity is encoded in the language. Lastly, we consider similarities and differences between the encoding of diminutivity in Susu and certain other Mande languages.

### 1. Introduction

Susu [iso:sus], also called Soso and Sosokhui, is a Mande language spoken by approximately one million people in Guinea and Sierra Leone. It is most closely related to Yalunka (Dialonké). There are three major, fairly contemporary works devoted to describing the grammatical structure of Susu. The most comprehensive of these is Houis (1963), but in addition, there is a dissertation by Touré (1994) and a pedagogical grammar derived from this dissertation published ten years later (Touré, 2004).<sup>1</sup> Other work on Susu includes studies of its tonal system (e.g., Grégoire, 1978; Green, Anderson, & Obeng, 2013), its kinship system (Diané & Vydrine, 2012), and its verbal prefixes (Shluinsky, 2014); Keita (1989) reports on tonal aspects of Dialonké, which may also be extensible in some ways to Susu.

In the aforementioned major descriptive works on Susu, the encoding of diminutivity is mentioned only briefly by the authors. Houis (1963: 97-99) describes the diminutive suffix *-dí* alongside five other “nominal derivatives of lexical origin,” with *-dí* being derived from the word *díí* meaning ‘child.’ Concerning the tonal behavior of this diminutive, Houis intimates that diminutive nouns derived by *-dí* (and affixes like it) behave like nominal compounds. While the tonal behavior of Susu nominal compounds has been elsewhere debated (cf. Grégoire, 1978, and more recently Green, Anderson & Obeng, 2013), the seven examples of nouns derived by *-dí* provided by Houis (1963: 99) and given here in (1) report a static High-Low (HL) falling tonal contour on this suffix. We find no other mention of the encoding of diminutivity in Houis (1963) beyond these examples.

- (1)
- |    |               |   |
|----|---------------|---|
| a. | bòrèbàlǎ́gédí | ‘the small calabash for skimming sauce’ |
| b. | bò.lòdí       | ‘the small bag’                         |
| c. | gbǎ́kédí      | ‘the small pirogue’                     |
| d. | gèmèdí        | ‘the small stone’                       |
| e. | kùlèdí        | ‘the small monkey’                      |

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\* We would like to thank the editor and anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments and suggestions on our manuscript. We also thank Ms. Adama Dabo for her patience and for sharing her language with us. Any remaining errors or shortcomings are solely our responsibility.

<sup>1</sup> In addition to these works, we are aware of a short grammatical outline compiled by Duport (1860-1869: 9-10), which briefly mentions the expression of diminutivity in Susu, stating that there are two diminutives *dí* (which refers to size) and *yore* (i.e., *yóré*, which refers to age). We assume that the former is the same diminutive suffix that we discuss further in this paper, while the latter is best considered an adjective.

- f. lé.médî 'the small girl'  
g. lélédî 'the small rib'

Touré (1994: 100) identifies **-di** as a diminutive that typically means 'small,' but also commonly connotes pejoration; he states that it is synchronically distinct from the noun **díí** 'child.' The examples that he provides are given in (2). As discussed below, the examples provided by Touré appear not to be representative of the typical, and more productive use of the diminutive to mean 'small,' but rather represent either lexicalized (2b, c, f) or pejorative uses (2a, d, e)

- (2) a. díídi 'some child'  
b. dímédí 'a child'  
c. gínédí 'girlfriend'  
d. kírídí 'little skin' or 'orphan'  
e. xámédí 'some man'  
f. xándédí 'little toilet enclosure'

A distinguishing characteristic of the diminutive, as indicated in Touré's data is that the diminutive is tonally underspecified, with its surface tonal realization dependent on the tone that immediately precedes it; i.e., it exhibits tonal polarity. In this way, it is said to be distinct from **díí** 'child,' which is lexically specified with a High (H) tone. The information provided in Touré (2004: 18) on **-di** is nearly verbatim to that provided in Touré (1994).

Diané & Vydrine (2012) discusses the role played by **díí** 'child' in Susu kinship terminology, including its use as the first or second element of nominal compounds, as in **mààmádíí** 'type of consanguineal relationship' (see Diané & Vydrine, 2012: 11 for details), **dííginé** 'girl,' and **dííxámé** 'boy'; the authors do not directly address its suffixal diminutive derivative.

Other compounds that we have encountered involving **díí** include **dííyórèè** 'baby' (child + young), **báridî** 'native' (to be born + child), and **tàádî** 'hamlet' (village + child).

Beyond these details, we are aware of no other discussion of the encoding of diminutivity in the literature on Susu. The modest goal of this paper, therefore, is to add to what has been reported on this subject thus far by offering further data that firstly confirm what has been reported on the affixal diminutive **-dí**, but also to move beyond this in discussing certain other alternative lexical means by which to encode diminutivity in Susu via words like **lánmàà** 'small,' **xúúri** 'little,' **siyà** 'few,' and **dóndóronî** 'some, a little,' including instances in which these words can(not) co-occur with **-dí**, and restrictions that we have begun to tease apart concerning their use in certain contexts.

The data that we present in this paper were collected over the period of approximately one year from a native speaker of Susu from Conakry, Guinea, who was completing her university schooling in the US. She is also a fluent speaker of Maninka, French, and English. Our data are presented in the Susu orthography, which although not necessarily standardized, is fairly well established. Tones are indicated on vowels, though they are not utilized in the language's orthography; as is customary, an acute accent represents a High (H) tone, while a grave accent represents a Low (L) tone. Sequences of High-Low are possible on a single vowel in Susu.

Because of the inherently difficult task of addressing judgments of pragmatic meaning, our data on the expression of Susu diminutivity was collected via a mixed methodology: i) direct elicitation was used to establish and confirm relevant vocabulary and its standard use; ii) subsequently, image-based tasks involving the comparison between objects were used to tease apart relationships between terms used to express diminution; and iii) finally, we engaged in more conversational data collection that aimed to establish scenarios and/or conditions in which one might use

or conversely be unable to use a particular diminutive morpheme, as opposed to others.

The remainder of this paper proceeds as follows. In Section 2, we provide background on the study of diminutive marking in the theoretical literature, and more specifically to characteristics of the affixal diminutive **-dí** in Susu, followed by a discussion of other means by which to express the notion of diminutivity in the language. Section 3 is devoted to discussing semantic and pragmatic aspects of the diminutive in Susu in relation to Jurafsky's (1996) *Structured Polysemy Model* of diminutivity. We close in Section 4 with a brief comparison of how the expression of diminutivity in Susu relates to similar work on four Southeastern Mande languages that is modeled in the same framework.

## 2. Grammatical aspects of Susu diminutivity

The encoding of diminutivity in Susu is accomplished in a variety of ways, but most productively via the addition of the diminutive suffix **-dí** to a noun or adjective. This suffix, as reported elsewhere (Houis, 1963; Touré, 1994, 2004) is derived yet synchronically distinct from the noun **díí** 'child.' As discussed specifically by Touré (1994, 2004), the diminutive's tonal behavior is a key factor that distinguishes it from its nominal counterpart. While we agree with Touré in principle on this point, our data tell a slightly different story than he has reported. As our data illustrate, we consider **-dí** to be underlyingly associated with a H tone; however, this tone may alternate to L under some conditions. The reason that we propose that the morpheme is lexically associated with a H tone (rather than being toneless) pertains to its ability to trigger the process known elsewhere in the Mande literature as *affaissement* (settling); this process involves the alternation of a /LH+H/ sequence to [LL+H] under certain conditions. This outcome in Susu can be seen in instances like /gìné + -dí/ → [gìnèdí], 'small woman,' where the lexically /LH/ noun meaning 'woman' alternates to [LL] when it is followed by the diminutive suffix. Such tonal alternations have been shown to be characteristic of Susu nominal tonology more broadly (see Green, et al., 2013). We find elsewhere, such as when the diminutive modifies a lexical adjective like **lánmàà** 'small,' however, that it is phonetically realized [-dí]; this can be seen, for example, in **bànxì lánmààdì** 'the very small house' wherein the suffix, once adjoined to the preceding adjective receives a L tone from the adjective via rightward spreading. Thus, the tonal realization of the diminutive for our Susu speaker is dependent on its environment, but in a way that is different than that earlier reported by Touré.

In this paper, we refer to **-dí** as a diminutive, reserving the alternative term *diminutive words* (DW) to refer to other lexical means by which diminutivity is expressed and encoded in Susu. Recent work by Nikitina (in press) on the use of diminutives in Southeastern Mande languages allows us a unique opportunity to situate the characteristics and behavior of the Susu diminutive alongside analogous morphemes found elsewhere in the language family. More specifically, Nikitina reports on diminutivity in four languages: Tura, the Eastern dialect of Dan, Mwan, and Wan. As we illustrate, despite the fact that Susu is a fairly distant cousin, being from the Susu-Southwestern branch of the Mande family (Vydrine, 2016), its diminutive behaves in some ways that are similar to its cousins, but also others that are different. Of course, diminutives have been reported and are otherwise known about in other Mande languages, but they tend not to be discussed in much detail. We view the availability of Nikitina's forthcoming paper as a unique opportunity to draw comparisons between our own work on Susu and that which she reports in detail for related languages and that appeals to the modeling of the diminutive in the same framework as we do here.

### 2.1 Expressions of diminutivity

Generally and cross-linguistically speaking, a diminutive is a morphological marker that encodes the notion of smallness; however, typological studies of diminutives

reveal a variety of additional semantic meanings encoded by diminutives that are derived from or related to the concept of smallness in some way (Jurafsky, 1996: 534). Concerning pragmatics, diminutives may also connote an evaluation or judgment based on the intention or perspective of a speaker (Kiefer, 2001: 276), and oftentimes, one such connotation includes pejoration. This is indeed the case in Susu, as mentioned in Touré (1994, 2004), and as discussed pertaining to our own data.

In terms of their realizations cross-linguistically, diminutives are sometimes affixes, while in other instances, they are realized through segmental and/or tonal alternations, or shifts in noun class membership (Jurafsky, 1996: 534). In Susu, and indeed in the other Mande languages reported in Nikitina (in press), the diminutive is affixal and derived from a given language's noun for 'child'; in the case of Susu, it is **díí** 'child.' Mande languages are not unique in this regard, however, as it has been widely reported that diminutives are similarly created across other West African languages (Creissels, 1999; Greenberg, 1959: 23; Heine & Leyew, 2008: 17). We illustrate later in this section that **-dí** is a productive means of encoding diminutivity in Susu, but in its capacity as a diminutive, the affix is fairly polysemous. We shall see that its function differs somewhat depending upon whether it is suffixed directly to a noun or otherwise to an adjective or determiner modifying some noun.

While Susu's morphology is largely isolating, the language employs a small number of suffixes that are involved in nominal derivation (Houis, 1963: 93-100), one of which is the diminutive **-dí**. As a suffix, the diminutive follows the noun that it modifies, and when it does so, it is consistently realized with a H tone, as illustrated in the examples in (3). Because of the propensity for the diminutive to connote pejoration, we gloss these examples as 'tiny,' reserving the term 'small' for the adjective **lánmàà**, which does not entail such a pejorative connotation. While the use of the diminutive is quite productive, there are some restrictions on its use that we detail below.

- |     |    |                  |              |
|-----|----|------------------|--------------|
| (3) | a. | <b>bàrèdí</b>    | 'tiny dog'   |
|     | b. | <b>gìnèdí</b>    | 'tiny woman' |
|     | c. | <b>bànxìdí</b>   | 'tiny house' |
|     | d. | <b>yèrèdí</b>    | 'tiny lamb'  |
|     | e. | <b>xùnséxèdí</b> | 'tiny hair'  |

The diminutive is productively used in instances like those given in (3), but there are also certain words containing the diminutive suffix that have become lexicalized to denote more specific meanings, such as **dímèdí** 'child, adolescent' and **xàràndí** 'student, apprentice,' as well as certain others presented above in (2). Our speaker translates **dímè** as 'youngster,' and **xàrán** is 'to study.'<sup>2</sup>

In addition to the diminutive **-dí**, diminutivity is alternatively and/or additionally lexically encoded in Susu by the modification of a noun by one of a select few adjectives and determiners that we collectively refer to as *diminutive words* (DW); these words, as a group, denote smallness in some way. The distributional and tonal properties of DWs render them distinct from the suffixal diminutive, including the fact that the diminutive **-dí** can (in some instances) be affixed to a DW. DWs are tonally distinct from the diminutive; they do not realize tonal alternations when they modify a noun, while the surface tone associated with the diminutive is realized differently, depending on the morpheme to which it is attached (i.e., directly to a noun or otherwise to a DW). The DWs that we have explored in Susu and discuss further below include **lánmàà**, **xúúrì**, **síyà**, and **dóndóróntì**. The first two DWs are adjectives glossed as 'small' and 'little,' respectively, in Touré (2004). The second two DWs are determiners (specifically, quantifiers) whose use is restricted to describing small amounts: **síyà** 'few' and **dóndóróntì** 'some, a little.' Other related

<sup>2</sup> Our speaker intimated to us that **gìnèdí** is a particularly negatively charged, pejorative term for a young woman that is sometimes rendered as a harsh insult.

terms that we mention here but do not analyze in further detail are **yòrè**, which denotes diminutive age and can be glossed as ‘young,’ and also **xúúrùn** ‘to be small’ and **dùnké** ‘to be short,’ both of which involve predication. We were unable to discern from our speaker whether or not **fòrí** ‘old, aged’ denotes diminutivity in Susu.

### 2.1.1 Restrictions on modifying nouns

Despite its high productivity, we find that there are some pragmatic restrictions on the use of the diminutive as the sole indicator of diminutivity for human body parts. That is, for our speaker, no matter the body part referent, the use of **-dí** is unacceptable, despite the fact that it is otherwise judged to be grammatical. This may stem from the pejorative connotation that its use implies. This is shown in (4a-b), where the superscript question mark is used to represent marginal acceptability. The alternative proposed by our speaker to express diminutivity of a body part is via the adjective **xúúri** ‘little,’ as in (4c). While the use of **-dí** appears to be only marginally acceptable on its own in these instances, it can instead be readily used alongside **xúúri** in the description of a body part, though its function in such instances appears to be that of an adjectival intensifier, as in (4d).<sup>3</sup> A similar outcome arises in describing non-count nouns like **xùnséxè** ‘hair,’ though in such instances, the quantifier **síyà** ‘few’ is employed. That is, **síyà** can be used to modify a body part noun (4e), while **-dí** cannot be used alone; the latter, however, can be used when it instead functions as an intensifier of the quantifier (4f).

- (4)
- |    |                              |                   |
|----|------------------------------|-------------------|
| a. | <sup>?</sup> <b>túli dí</b>  | ‘small ear’       |
| b. | <sup>?</sup> <b>xúnyì dí</b> | ‘small head’      |
| c. | <b>túli xúúri</b>            | ‘little ear’      |
| d. | <b>túli xúúrði</b>           | ‘very little ear’ |
| e. | <b>xùnséxè síyà</b>          | ‘few hairs’       |
| f. | <b>xùnséxè síyàdi</b>        | ‘very few hairs’  |

Other considerations emerge when expressing diminutivity of nouns that are sometimes used as mass nouns and other times as count nouns. This can be demonstrated with the nouns **mààlé** ‘uncooked rice’ and **káábé** ‘corn.’ In such instances, when these nouns are modified by the diminutive **-dí**, the diminutive can function both to express the diminutivity of an individuated entity referred to by such a noun and of some amount/portion of the same noun when it has a mass referent. This results in a potentially ambiguous meaning, as in (5a) and (6a). Other adjectival DWs are used only to individuate the noun, as in (5b-c) and (6b-c). It is also possible for the diminutive to occur alongside an adjectival DW like **xúúri** in (5d) and (6d), as it did in (4d). In these instances, the function is again to intensify the adjective; however, such a construct can entail either a count or mass noun interpretation.

- (5)
- |    |                     |   |
|----|---------------------|---|
| a. | <b>mààlèdí</b>      | ‘tiny grain of uncooked rice’ or<br>‘tiny portion of uncooked rice’ |
| b. | <b>mààlè xúúri</b>  | ‘little piece of uncooked rice’                                     |
| c. | <b>mààlè lánmàà</b> | ‘small piece of uncooked rice’                                      |

<sup>3</sup> In Susu, high vowels tend to delete after a glide and before another syllable. These word-final ‘weak’ vowels analogously delete in several West African languages, for example, in Kwa and Kru languages (Leben, 1999). In our data, we find that this occurs between **xúúri** ‘little’ and the diminutive **-dí**, as shown below in (a); however, it does not occur between a noun and another adjective, as in (b). This indicates that the process is bounded by the word, rather than occurring across a word boundary. Throughout the paper, we use the syncopated form.

|                       |   |                                      |                  |
|-----------------------|---|--------------------------------------|------------------|
| a. /bàré xúúri + -dí/ | → | <b>bàré xúúrði</b>                   | ‘very small dog’ |
| b. /kèri bèlèbélè/    | → | <b>kèri bèlèbélè</b> (*kér bèlèbélè) | ‘big hoe’        |

- d. **mààlè xúúrdì** ‘very tiny grain of uncooked rice’ or  
‘very tiny portion of uncooked rice’
- (6) a. **káábédí** ‘tiny piece of corn’ or  
‘tiny portion of corn’
- b. **káábé xúúri** ‘little piece of corn’
- c. **káábé lánmàà** ‘small piece of corn’
- d. **káábé xúúrdì** ‘very tiny piece of corn’ or  
‘very tiny portion of corn’

When a quantifier DW modifies nouns like those in (5) and (6), the denotation refers to a portion or amount of the noun, as in (7a, b, d, e). The addition of the diminutive to these examples, once again, encodes an intensification of the amount indicated by the quantifier (7c, f). We discuss this intensification use further below.

- (7) a. **mààlè dóndóróntì** ‘little bit of uncooked rice’
- b. **mààlè síyà** ‘small portion of uncooked rice’
- c. **mààlè síyàdì** ‘very tiny portion of uncooked rice’
- d. **káábé dóndóróntì** ‘little bit of corn’
- e. **káábé síyà** ‘few pieces of corn’
- f. **káábé síyàdì** ‘very few pieces of corn’

The diminutive suffix, adjectival DWs, and quantifier DWs can all be used to refer to diminutive amounts when they occur with a noun whose only interpretation is as a mass noun. This can be seen in (8) for the Susu noun **bàndé** ‘cooked rice,’ which cannot be individuated. Thus, (8a, d, g) cannot be interpreted as referring to an individual grain of cooked rice, as was the case in analogous examples in (7) that refer to uncooked rice.

- (8) a. **bàndédí** ‘tiny portion of cooked rice’
- b. **bàndè lámà** ‘small portion of cooked rice’
- c. **bàndè xúúri** ‘little portion of cooked rice’
- d. **bàndè xúúrdì** ‘very little portion of cooked rice’
- e. **bàndè dóndóróntì** ‘little bit of cooked rice’
- f. **bàndè síyà** ‘few pieces of cooked rice’
- g. **bàndè síyàdì** ‘very few pieces of rice’

### 2.1.2. Other co-occurrence restrictions

Thus far in Section 2, we have shown instances in which the diminutive **-dí** can modify a noun as the sole indicator of diminutivity. We have also shown other instances in which an adjectival or quantifier DW is used as an analogous means to encode diminutivity in the absence of the diminutive suffix itself. Finally, as we introduced just above, there are instances in which the diminutive can co-occur with another DW, and in doing so, it functions to intensify the meaning conveyed by the DW. In this section, we concern ourselves with additional details pertaining to the co-occurrence of the diminutive with adjectival and quantifier DWs.

We have shown above, as well as here in (9) that the diminutive **-dí** can co-occur with the adjectival DWs **xúúri** ‘little’ and **lámà** ‘small,’ as well as with the quantifier DW **síyà** ‘few,’ yet we have found that it cannot co-occur with the quantifier **dóndóróntì** ‘a little, some,’ as attempted in (10).

- (9)
- |    |                       |                     |
|----|-----------------------|---------------------|
| a. | <b>bàrè xúurí</b>     | ‘little dog’        |
| b. | <b>bàrè xúurdi</b>    | ‘very little dog’   |
| c. | <b>bàrè lánmààdi</b>  | ‘very small dog’    |
| d. | <b>bànxì xúurí</b>    | ‘little house’      |
| e. | <b>bànxì xúurdi</b>   | ‘very little house’ |
| f. | <b>bànxì lánmààdi</b> | ‘very small house’  |
| g. | <b>xùnséxè síyà</b>   | ‘few hairs’         |
| h. | <b>xùnséxè síyàdi</b> | ‘very few hairs’    |
- (10) \***bàndè dónóróntidi** ‘a little bit of cooked rice’

In (9), and related examples above, we show that from the standpoint of morphosyntax, the diminutive marker **-dí** must always appear phrase-finally. When the serial order of **-dí** and a DW is reversed, as attempted in (11), the resulting phrase is ungrammatical. These outcomes illustrate that the diminutive appears to have scope only over the constituent to which it attaches, and not over the entire phrase.

- (11)
- |    |                         |                   |
|----|-------------------------|-------------------|
| a. | * <b>bàrè dí xúurí</b>  | ‘tiny little dog’ |
| b. | * <b>bàrè dí lánmàà</b> | ‘tiny small dog’  |

The attempted, yet ungrammatical phrases in (12) show that two DWs cannot co-occur within the same NP. We saw in (9) and (10), however, that **-dí** can occur alongside most other DWs. Additionally, we find no instances in which the diminutive can occur twice within one phrase, as attempted in (13), nor do we find grammatical examples in which the diminutive can follow two DWs in sequence (14a) or intervene between two DWs (14b).

- (12)
- |    |                             |                         |
|----|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| a. | * <b>sílíí xúurí lánmàà</b> | ‘small little elephant’ |
| b. | * <b>sílíí lánmàà xúurí</b> | ‘little small elephant’ |
- (13)
- |    |                             |
|----|-----------------------------|
| a. | * <b>sílíí dí dí</b>        |
| b. | * <b>sílíí lánmàà dì dì</b> |
- (14)
- |    |                                |
|----|--------------------------------|
| a. | * <b>sílíí xúurí lánmàà dì</b> |
| b. | * <b>sílíí xúurí dì lánmàà</b> |

We find that additional restrictions arise in some pragmatic contexts that affect the realization of **-dí** with certain modifying DWs with which it can typically co-occur. Recall from (9) that the diminutive can usually join both the adjectival DWs **lánmàà** and **xúurí**; however, there are discursive contexts in which **lánmàà** ‘small’ rather than **xúurí** ‘little’ must appear with **-dí**. While we have not had the opportunity to tease apart the finer details of these restrictions, our speaker offered the following scenario:

If someone were buying kola nuts in a market, and the nuts available were of a variety of sizes, the customer could specify that they would like a kola nut smaller than another small kola nut by using the phrase **kóólá lánmàà dì** ‘very small kola nut.’ In this instance, however, it would not be appropriate for the speaker to say **kóólá xúurí dì**, which our speaker considers not only unacceptable, but also ungrammatical.

In addition to these expressions of diminutivity, we have provided some examples in which a DW, either adjectival or a quantifier, modifies a noun and in doing so denotes diminutivity. While we have shown that there are restrictions on the co-occurrence of

two DWs in the same phrase, as well as similar restrictions in some instances on the co-occurrence of a particular DW and the diminutive itself, it is possible for DWs to occur alongside other modifiers. We have found that it is generally the case, however, that a given adjective DW will appear closer to the head noun of a phrase than other attributive adjectives, as in example (15). However, as we show in (26), a quantifier DW will follow other adjectives in sequence.

- (15)      **yí xòsè lánmàà fányì**  
             this pig small nice  
             ‘this nice small pig’

Another restriction that we uncovered is that the use of the quantifier DW **dóndóróntì** ‘a little bit, some’ is more restricted than **síyà** ‘few.’ That is, the former appears not to be able to modify particular count nouns, as shown in (16); recall from a comparison of (7d), (8e), and (10) that **dóndóróntì** is even restricted in the mass nouns that it can modify. In those instances where **dóndóróntì** is ungrammatical, **síyà** is used instead, as in (17). The examples in (17) have a plural reading, but the nouns do not require inflection for plurality. Plural inflection on nouns does not render forms like those in (16) grammatical.

- (16)      a.    **\*dòxòsèè dóndóróntì**      ‘some chairs’  
             b.    **\*bùkì dóndóróntì**        ‘some books’  
             c.    **\*bàrè dóndóróntì**        ‘some dogs’

- (17)      a.    **dòxòsèè síyà**                ‘few chairs’  
             b.    **bùkì síyà**                    ‘few books’  
             c.    **bàrè síyà**                    ‘few dogs’

Having introduced the distribution of the Susu diminutive on its own, as well as alongside select DWs of different types, we turn in the next section to discussing in more detail the semantic and pragmatic senses that are conveyed primarily by the diminutive. However, we will also draw comparisons to senses encoded by DWs in some instances.

### 3. Semantic and pragmatic senses of the Susu diminutive

In this section, we describe semantic and pragmatic uses of the Susu diminutive that span beyond its basic denotation ‘small.’ In doing so, we begin to construct a model of the Susu diminutive that is based on the *Structured Polysemy Model* (henceforth, SPM: Jurafsky, 1996). The SPM was designed to model the polysemous behavior of diminutives and utilizes a *Radial Category Network* (Lakoff, 1987); such networks provide a means by which to visually represent meanings, extensions of meanings, and their inter-relatedness, from both synchronic and diachronic perspectives. By presenting the uses of the Susu diminutive in this way, we aim to model the array of meanings that it displays and how these meanings relate to one another. While our focus is on the diminutive itself, we make analogical reference to DWs for the sake of comparison in some instances. We do not include DWs in our representation of the SPM, but rather, we invoke them because they also exhibit polysemy that is similar to the diminutive in some contexts. Because the goal of an SPM-style analysis is to present the diminutive from a cross-linguistic perspective, we later discuss the ways in which the Susu diminutive does or does not conform to the behavior of diminutives in other Southeastern Mande languages, as reported in Nikitina (in press).

#### 3.1. Senses of the diminutive

The diminutive **-dí** has several senses, the most basic of which simply indicates small physical size of some object. Beyond these basic uses, however, we find that there are



several other senses associated with the diminutive. These include: pejoration, small-type-of, affection, intimacy, approximation of the condition of an object, and intensification of an adjective. In each of these instances, **-dí** assumes the same phonological form. We believe that it is worthwhile to note that despite the preponderance of instances in West African languages wherein the diminutive can be associated with a sense related to age, whether old or young, and/or to femaleness, we have not found instances in Susu where this is overtly applicable.

These various senses are associated with the diminutive, and not with other DWs. Interestingly, however, DWs **síyà** and **dóndóróntí** can also be used in certain contexts to show approximation; we briefly discuss this below. Note that the two other DWs that we have discussed, namely **xúúrì** and **lánmàà**, do not appear to be polysemous, at least synchronically;<sup>4</sup> thus, we do not discuss them below. Rather, we discuss each of the senses of the diminutive in turn in the sections below.

### 3.1.1 Small size

The basic sense of the Susu diminutive is associated with small size, whether this means that an object is indeed physically small, or otherwise deemed small in respect to some perceived standard or exemplar. According to our speaker's judgment, it is possible to employ the diminutive to comment on physical size compared to some exemplar without necessarily invoking or implying pejoration. The examples that we provided in (3), and repeat here in (18) for convenience, are representative of this basic use.

- |      |    |                  |                    |
|------|----|------------------|--------------------|
| (18) | a. | <b>bàrèdí</b>    | 'tiny dog'         |
|      | b. | <b>gìnèdí</b>    | 'tiny woman'       |
|      | c. | <b>bànxìdí</b>   | 'tiny house'       |
|      | d. | <b>yèrèèdí</b>   | 'tiny rabbit'      |
|      | e. | <b>xùnséxèdí</b> | 'tiny hair'        |
|      | f. | <b>sílíídí</b>   | 'tiny elephant'    |
|      | g. | <b>ségèdí</b>    | 'tiny sparrowhawk' |

### 3.1.2 Small-type-of

We find brief mention in Duport (1860-1869) of what appears to be a closely related sense related to a small 'type' of some object, such as a small species or kind of some animal. In the few examples of the diminutive reported by Duport, a distinction is made between 'small X' and 'small kind/type of X.' This leads us to believe that the intention may have been to refer to a particular species, rather than simply a small type or version of some noun. We have not independently collected examples of this slightly different sense of the diminutive, but we nonetheless include them in an attempt to be more comprehensive. We have adapted Duport's examples in (19), where the words are glossed specifically as 'small kind of X,' rather than simply 'small.'

- |      |    |                 |                       |
|------|----|-----------------|-----------------------|
| (19) | a. | <b>yèxèèdí</b>  | 'small kind of sheep' |
|      | b. | <b>yéxéé dí</b> | 'small kind of fish'  |

### 3.1.3. Pejoration and unimportant, indistinct

The diminutive **-dí** may be used pejoratively for the purpose of contempt, teasing, or light derision. According to our speaker, it is used to poke fun at some person or object for being small, as in (20a), and it can occur alongside another DW in order to

<sup>4</sup> In our data, **lánmàà** does not exhibit variation in meaning. However, there is some evidence that its meaning may vary diachronically. The word appears to have cognates in related languages, for example in Soninke [iso:snk], where the word for 'child' is **lemna** (**-lemina**). While this may suggest a diachronic semantic relationship between the current meaning of **lánmàà** and its historical origin, the word does not exhibit synchronic variation in meaning in contemporary Susu. We set aside inquiry into this historical relationship for future research.

intensify the diminutive quality expressed by the DW itself, as in (20b); other examples of its use as an intensifier are in (27).

- (20) a. **gìnèdí** ‘tiny woman’  
 b. **gìnè xúúrdì** ‘very tiny woman’

In eliciting scenarios from our speaker pertaining to the pejorative sense of the diminutive, we were presented with the following:

If one were to be given an amount of cooked rice, and the amount was smaller than expected, one might use the phrase **bàndè síyàdì** ‘very tiny amount of cooked rice,’ which would be used to exaggerate the small size of the amount, and would in turn be viewed as a complaint.

As we mentioned previously, there are some restrictions on acceptability of **-dí** concerning parts of the human body (though its use would be grammatical). To use an example from Touré (1994: 100), it is pejorative or derisive to use the diminutive with a body part, as in **kirídí** ‘little skin.’ In such instances, rather than use **-dí** pejoratively, our speaker deems it more acceptable to use a verb phrase. As shown in (21), **xúúrùn** ‘to be small’ is used,<sup>5</sup> which is the verb to which the adjectival DW **xúúrì** ‘small’ is most closely related.<sup>6</sup>

- (21) **à túlì xúúrùn**  
 3SG ear be.small  
 ‘His ear is small.’<sup>6</sup>

### 3.1.4. Affection and intimacy

There are other senses of the diminutive associated with the expression of affection and intimacy. Here, we discuss and present these two senses together as we consider their meanings to be closely related to one another; we would argue that the representation of Jurafsky’s (1996) SPM supports this choice, as these senses are similarly derived by *inference* from the notion ‘child,’ and these extensions are pragmatic, rather than semantic, in nature.

Examples (22) and (23) each contain a single instance of **-dí**, and in both instances the diminutive generally expresses affection for the head noun of the phrase in which it is used. It is prudent to notice in (22) that the diminutive is attached to the adjective within the noun phrase, and thus only has scope over that adjective. While use of the diminutive in (22) appears simply to express affection, its use in (23) conveys an additional expression of intimacy. Despite these differences, we translate both uses as ‘dear’ upon consulting with our speaker.

- (22) **ń má bàrè sírá-dí nán yí kì.**  
 1SG 1SG.POSS dog close-DIM be this DEIC  
 ‘This is my dear dog.’

<sup>5</sup> In Susu, the word **díí** ‘child’ from which the diminutive is derived is also used on its own in a pejorative or derisive way, as in the following example in which a group of men are taunting another to join them or come along: **díí fáá bè** literally: ‘child, come here.’

<sup>6</sup> Example (21) illustrates inalienable possession, which is indicated by the simple juxtaposition of the possessor and possessum. Instances of alienable possession differ in the insertion of a possessive marker between the two; see, for example, (22) and (23).

- (23) **ń má gìnèdí bára fúrá; Álá xá à lábéè.**  
 1SG 1SG.POSS wife-DIM AUX be.sick God OP 3SG make.small  
 ‘My dear wife is sick; may God help her recover.’

### 3.1.5. Approximation

The diminutive is also used in Susu in an approximative sense. This type of approximation is found in instances where the diminutive modifies an adjective or noun that is deemed to be only similar, but not entirely representative of what is judged to be its prototypical denotation. In the examples in (24), we gloss this sense with the word ‘somewhat.’

- (24) a. **bùlùdí** ‘somewhat blue’  
 b. **fótédí** ‘somewhat white’  
 c. **séwédí** ‘somewhat happy’  
 d. **fányìdì** ‘somewhat good/kind’

While our data only contain forms in which the diminutive is used with an adjective, Touré (1994: 100) provides examples of the diminutive attaching to nouns yielding an approximative sense, which are reproduced here in (25). In order to illustrate this meaning, we can invoke its appearance in English, as in ‘He is just some old guy’ or ‘Any old car will work,’ as well as in the French phrase *n’importe quel(le)*.

- (25) a. **díídì** ‘some child’  
 b. **xáméđì** ‘some man’

Since **-dí** is used with a noun in these cases, the forms refer to an object or person that is considered a non-prototypical member of a category. Interestingly, Touré (1994) describes these forms as being pejorative. Provided this is the case, the forms in (25), then, may additionally refer to an object or person that is unimportant, indistinct, and/or marginal. The semantic connection between the approximative and pejorative senses will be considered in Sections 3.2.2 and 3.2.3.

In addition to a sense of approximation conveyed by the diminutive suffix, a similar notion can be achieved via the two quantitative DWs when they modify another adjective, as in the examples in (26).

- (26) a. **bàrè súnỳì sỳà** ‘a somewhat sad dog’  
 b. **bàrè tágányí sỳà** ‘a somewhat tired dog’  
 c. **à súnỳì sỳà.** ‘He is somewhat sad.’  
 d. **à súnỳì dóndóróntì.** ‘He is a bit sad.’  
 e. **ń tágányí sỳà.** ‘I am somewhat tired.’  
 f. **ń tágányí dóndóróntì.** ‘I am a bit tired.’

### 3.1.6. Intensification

In several instances above, we pointed out examples in which the addition of the diminutive to an adjectival or quantifier DW has the fairly unexpected function of intensifying the DW. We consider this to be unexpected given that this sense does not seem to appear in other reports of diminution in Mande languages. The use of the diminutive for intensification, as suggested in Jurafsky (1996: 550), is to fulfill one of two specific functions. Cross-linguistically, this sense seems restricted to intensifying adjectives that already denote ‘smallness’ or to relate a deictic to a specific point in space (e.g., ‘just over there,’ in English). The data that we have collected, which we compile here in (27) for convenience, partially follow this pattern described by Jurafsky. Each instance of the diminutive affix added to a DW expresses an intensification of the small size of an object, which we translate as ‘rather,’ or ‘very.’ This sense does not occur when using **-dí** with other types of adjectives. Interestingly, there are no instances in our data of the use of the diminutive with a specific deictic sense.

|      |    |                         |                      |
|------|----|-------------------------|----------------------|
| (27) | a. | <b>à súnỳì sỳàdì.</b>   | ‘He is rather sad.’  |
|      | b. | <b>ń tágányí sỳàdì.</b> | ‘I am rather tired.’ |
|      | c. | <b>gìně xúúrdì</b>      | ‘very tiny woman’    |
|      | d. | <b>bàrè xúúrdì</b>      | ‘very little dog’    |
|      | e. | <b>bàrè lánmààdì</b>    | ‘very small dog’     |
|      | f. | <b>bànxì xúúrdì</b>     | ‘little house’       |
|      | g. | <b>bànxì xúúrdì</b>     | ‘very little house’  |
|      | h. | <b>bànxì lánmààdì</b>   | ‘very small house’   |
|      | i. | <b>xùnséxè sỳà</b>      | ‘few hairs’          |
|      | j. | <b>xùnséxè sỳàdì</b>    | ‘very few hairs’     |
|      | k. | <b>túlí xúúrdì</b>      | ‘very little ear’    |

### 3.2. The semantic and pragmatic structure of the diminutive

To better understand the semantic and pragmatic uses of the Susu diminutive, their relationship to one another, and to view how these uses correspond to those found in other languages, we have made reference to the semantic and pragmatic categories proposed in the *Structured Polysemy Model* of diminutives (Jurafsky, 1996) The exception to this is the use of the diminutive as an intensifier, as discussed in Section 3.1.6. As a derivative of *Radial Category Theory* (Lakoff, 1987), the SPM represents conceptual domains connected by various relationships (e.g., metaphor, metonymy, inference, etc.) While the precise relationships observed are language-specific, Jurafsky’s model proposes an overarching, universal structure of semantic and pragmatic meanings that are associated with diminutives more broadly. A strength of Jurafsky’s SPM of the diminutive is that it provides a way to visualize both synchronic and diachronic aspects of the meanings of diminutives. In this way, it aims to express possible senses of a diminutive and to provide an understanding of how diminutives may come to take on a specific meaning through particular semantic changes.

Figure 1 represents Jurafsky’s universal SPM for the semantics and pragmatics of the diminutive. In the model, possible senses of diminution utilized by natural languages are represented by individual nodes. Linkages between nodes correspond to some relationship that results from one of four proposed mechanisms of semantic change; these are labeled on the association lines linking one meaning to another. These are: Generalization/Bleaching (**G**), Inference (**I**), Metaphor (**M**), and Lambda-abstraction (**L**). The last of these is a mechanism proposed by Jurafsky (1996: 544), which derives “quantificational and second-order meanings from propositional ones.” Nodes located above the horizontal line are attributed to the domain of semantics, while those below the line are attributed to the realm of pragmatics.

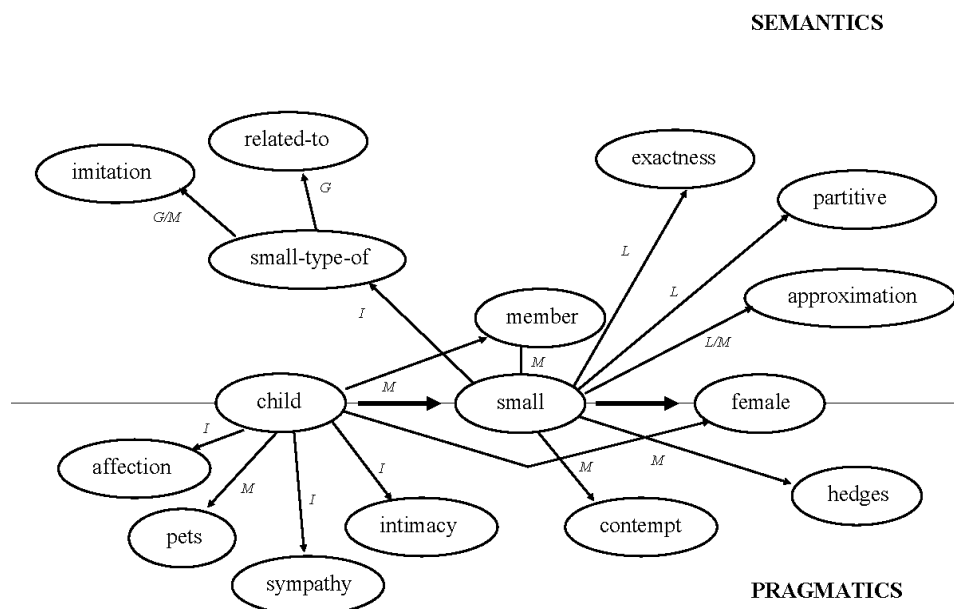


Figure 1. Jurafsky's universal structure for the semantics of the diminutive (1996: 542).

The SPM proposes unidirectionality of semantic change and presents a historical picture of polysemous words acting as “an archaeology of meaning,” in which a word's associated meanings are represented and accounted for diachronically (Jurafsky, 1996: 536). Some have argued that Jurafsky's model is too strong because meanings can be “reorganized in ways that obscure historical relationships” (Traugott & Dasher, 2003: 43); however, we find that it is a useful descriptive tool that, at the very least, captures the semantic/pragmatic patterns that we observe in Susu. Thus, rather than arguing for the theoretical validity of the model, we invoke it to facilitate our description of the Susu diminutive. With this in mind, we offer Figure 2, which represents the semantic and pragmatic structures that we find associated with the Susu diminutive. Our data, as presented above, reveal three mechanisms by which new meanings of the Susu diminutive have been derived from ‘child’: Inference (*I*), Metaphor (*M*), and Lambda-abstraction (*L*). These mechanisms account for the various senses of the diminutive, some of which are related to semantics and others to pragmatics. Note that we have added a node for *intensification*, as motivated by our examples in Section 3.1.6. Such a node is absent from Jurafsky's model in Figure 1; however, we discuss in Section 3.2.3 our reasons for slightly adapting his model as we have in Figure 2.

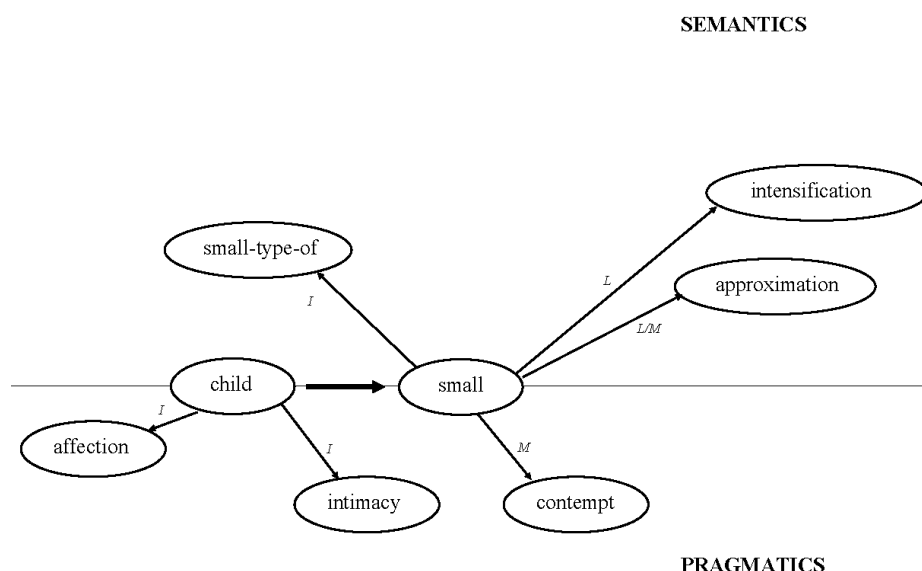


Figure 2. The semantic and pragmatic structure of diminutive **-dĩ** based on the SPM

As Figure 2 illustrates, the meaning of the Susu diminutive **-dĩ** ‘small’ is semantically related to and derived from the word **dĩĩ** ‘child.’ This notion is proposed by Jurafsky (1996: 543) to be a unidirectional tendency; diminutives arise from semantic or pragmatic links with children. The semantic extensions associated with the Susu diminutive are the same in number as the pragmatic notions associated with its use. The absence in Susu of the other semantic and pragmatic extensions proposed in Jurafsky’s SPM might be due to a variety of factors. It may simply be that this is because the language utilizes other means by which to express these categories (e.g., the DWs that we have discussed above), leaving speakers with no need to employ the diminutive. One particular sense of the diminutive that is absent from Susu is that related to young age; diminutives in certain other Mande languages like Tura (Nikitina, in press) are associated with the expression of young age, but in Susu, this is instead expressed by the adjectives **yòrè** or **súnyì**, both of which denote ‘young.’ On the other hand, the use of the diminutive for intensification is found in Susu but otherwise absent from the languages reported by Nikitina. We view such divergences to be open topics for future research. With this in mind, we next turn to a discussion of each of the three mechanisms of semantic change that we find to be involved in the derivation of new meanings of the Susu diminutive.

### 3.2.1. Inference

This type of semantic change, also known as context-induced reinterpretation, occurs when “a morpheme acquires a new meaning that had been [or more appropriately created through] an inference or implicature of its old meaning” (Jurafsky, 1996: 551), a notion stemming from Grice (1975). This new meaning is ultimately conventionalized in that it has become part of regular usage. The mechanism of inference accounts for three of the pragmatic notions of diminution in Susu, two of these come from ‘child,’ and one from ‘small.’ In Susu, these include affection and intimacy, as well as the small-type-of sense. These senses, according to Jurafsky (1996), result from the inference of an addressee/reader (a term borrowed from Traugott & Dasher, 2002) that, since a person may feel affection for children, the person may similarly feel affection for other objects that are similar to children, and in this case, their diminutive size. This same line of reasoning can be applied to the notion of intimacy.

As discussed previously in Section 3.1.2, Duport (1860-1869) reports two examples that appear to support the appearance of this sense, since he specifically

makes a distinction between ‘small X’ and ‘small kind/type of X.’ This same distinction is explicitly described by Jurafsky (1996), noting that this sense is not just about a difference in size between objects of a category, but that this use of the diminutive is used to refer to a concept other than just ‘small.’ While the concept to which it refers can vary across languages, it seems that Duport’s examples likely refer to a certain species, which is similar to what Nikitina has reported in other Mande languages like Mwan.

### 3.2.2. Metaphor

In Susu, the metaphorical derivation of both semantic and pragmatic senses for the diminutive seems to be limited. As mentioned earlier, the sense denoting ‘small’ is metaphorically derived from the word for ‘child;’ a metaphorical extension that is the basis for any use of the word ‘child’ for the diminutive, as suggested by Jurafsky (1996). Additionally, there are two other senses that make use of metaphor: ‘contempt’ and ‘approximation.’

In our analysis, the category ‘contempt’ encompasses the sense of pejoration found in the examples in (20). The use of this meaning of the diminutive in Susu sometimes expresses contempt or dislike, but other times, the use of the diminutive simply intends to poke fun at an object’s small size. The fact that this pragmatic use of **-dí** exists in Susu suggests to us that speakers may not value objects (or portions for mass nouns) that are small in size. Thus, we suggest that this pejorative sense of **-dí** is derived via the metaphor SIZE IS VALUE.<sup>7</sup>

In order to describe the metaphorical associations found with the use of the approximative sense, Jurafsky (1996: 548) utilizes the metaphor CATEGORY CENTRALITY IS SIZE. This metaphor associates the members of a category that a speech community considers marginal with the sense of ‘smallness.’<sup>8</sup> Thus, non-prototypical members of a category are associated with being small.

These two metaphors also work together to produce the examples in (21), in which the approximative sense of **-dí** can be used in a pejorative manner. In other words, when the approximative sense of **-dí** has scope over a noun, the meaning may be to express the marginal status of the object or person.

The mechanism of metaphor does not operate in isolation to produce the approximative sense. Rather, this sense is created through the additional mechanism of lambda-abstraction, which we turn to next.

### 3.2.3. Lambda-abstraction

There are two senses of **-dí** derived through lambda-abstraction: approximation and intensification. Jurafsky (1996) suggests that these two senses are derived through LAMBDA-ABSTRACTION-SPECIFICATION, which pertains to a semantic shift in the meaning of the diminutive from ‘small’ to ‘approximate’ or ‘intensification’ (among other senses not found in our Susu data). More specifically, lambda-abstraction is the process by which a first order predicate becomes an argument to the second order predicate with the generic label ‘lambda.’ Thus, the use of the diminutive to modify an object is a first order predicate represented by ‘small(*x*)’, where the variable *x* can be any object. In order to understand why these senses are derived from ‘small,’ we quote Jurafsky (1996: 555) directly: “For the diminutive, this process takes the original concept ‘small(*x*),’ which has the meaning ‘smaller than the prototypical exemplar *x* on the scale of size’, and lambda-abstracting it to ‘lambda(*y*) (smaller than the prototypical exemplar *x* on the scale *y*).” Approximation, argues Jurafsky, is a second-order predicate because it modifies predicates rather than objects. Thus, in an

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<sup>7</sup> Appah and Amfo (2011: 98) suggest this metaphor is a part of the diminutive semantic structure of Akan associated with gender and age. The metaphor in their analysis functions along with another metaphor: WOMEN ARE CHILDREN/SMALL THINGS.

<sup>8</sup> The metaphor, in general, also draws an association between prototypical members and largeness. We did not encounter these forms in Susu.

instantiation of lambda-abstraction, as represented by the examples in (24-25), ‘approx(p(x))’ takes a predicate like ‘white(x)’ and evaluates it on a scale *y*, here, a scale of color. The meaning of such a form is that the object indexed by *x* is ‘a little white’ or ‘somewhat white.’ Note that while Susu makes use of lambda-abstraction to create approximative constructions in a semantic sense, it does not extend this construction to a pragmatic sense, which would lead to the exhibition of pragmatic hedges in the language, of which we have found no evidence.

As discussed earlier, speakers can also use **-dí** to give a sense of intensifying another DW, and, importantly, that this sense can only be created when **-dí** is used to modify a DW. Jurafsky does not include this sense in his model specifically, perhaps because the use of **-dí** cannot be generalized to non-DWs. However, he does take care to note that lambda-abstraction cannot be the whole semantics of these predicates, but that a metaphorical shift in domains also cannot solely account for any general sense of intensification or approximation; each sense derived through lambda-abstraction would have to invoke a separate metaphor. Instead, the various senses derived through lambda-abstraction are in complementary distribution. In Susu, these two senses are mutually exclusive between the meanings for **-dí** when it occurs with another DW, and when it occurs with another gradable adjective; in the former, one finds intensification, and in the latter, approximation. The meaning that is derived depends on the type of argument to the predicate.

Jurafsky suggests, “if the diminutive was marking a general intensifying process, there is no reason why it should apply only to ‘white’ and not other colors” (550). Indeed, the lack of generalizing this sense led to its exclusion from Jurafsky’s chart (see Figure 1), though we have added it to our own for Susu (see Figure 2). Perhaps the reason that the intensification sense is not generalized is due to the iterative nature of the application of lambda-abstraction in these cases. We propose that the iteration of the diminutive lambda-abstraction function necessarily contributes to a sense of intensification. When the diminutive affix has scope over another word with a similar meaning, the semantics can only go in one direction. Thus, when the ‘small’ function is applied to an adjective meaning ‘small,’ it denotes that the object is only small relative to the variable ‘small’ on the scale of ‘smallness.’

Since the meanings of these two senses are somewhat contradictory to one another, it is interesting to note that Susu makes use of both. Upon exploring the data related to these two senses in Jurafsky (1996), it would appear that few languages express both meanings. He presents one example each from Dominican Spanish and Hungarian (549-550). Typologically, however, we do not know how many languages, in fact, make use of both of these senses.

### 3.3 Other considerations

The formation of kinship terms containing the noun **díí** ‘child’ deserves additional comment. As we introduced above, and as demonstrated in Diané & Vydrine (2012), **díí** figures into the creation of Susu kinship terms as the first member or second member of a nominal compound. The former is seen in **díígíné** ‘girl,’ and **dííxámè** ‘boy,’ which one might instead render as ‘girl child’ and ‘boy child,’ respectively. Another word, **dííyóréè** ‘baby,’ could similarly be rendered ‘young child.’ The latter, however, is found in words like **mààmàdíí** which refers to a type of consanguineal relationship, but according to our speaker can be used for a variety of relationships, including ‘grandchild,’ ‘younger sibling-in-law,’ ‘son’s wife,’ or ‘significant other.’ The term **sòxòdíí** denotes ‘nephew,’ and is derived from **sòxò** ‘maternal uncle.’

The latter terms are of interest to us, as they appear to retain the segmental characteristics of ‘child’ but rather denote the younger person in some more specific relationship between two family members. What is curious is that the same strategy appears not to be used more broadly, as terms like **\*ténèdíí** or **\*sòxòmààmàdíí**, which one might expect to refer to a ‘niece’ (cf. **ténèn** ‘paternal aunt’) or the ‘grandchild of an uncle,’ respectively, are unattested and otherwise unacceptable to our speaker. Thus, these terms appear to be lexicalized, but this situation leads us to wonder if



historically, the word for child was used in a sense to make a distinction between two members of a family in an avuncular relationship, at least in the sense that one is elder to the other, but has since largely fallen out of use. It may be that the diminutive **-dí** could at some earlier time have been used in a similar way, similar to what has occurred in other languages (Jurafsky 1996: 571). This sense is not represented in our model of Susu, though Jurafsky's model does predict that this sense is a possible.

#### **4. Comparison to Southeastern Mande and concluding remarks**

The data that we have presented in sections above for Susu, while not extensive, has illustrated a number of fairly distinct ways in which the language's affixal diminutive **-dí** is employed. These include the encoding of small size, small type, affection, intimacy, pejoration, approximation, and intensification. In comparing our findings for Susu alongside what Nikitina (in press) reports for four Southeastern (SE) Mande languages, we are able to highlight both several similarities and several differences between them. Of course, one should bear in mind that even among the four languages that Nikitina reports, the general use of and senses of the diminutive employed in one of the four languages diverges considerably from the other three.

Beginning with similarities between Susu and the languages reported by Nikitina, generally speaking, we find that the senses of small size and small type (assuming our interpretation of Duport is correct) are most clearly shared among all the surveyed languages. This is perhaps not surprising given that smallness is the clearest extension of the use of the diminutive source 'child,' and small type, specifically, is arguably a clear semantic extension from 'small' by inference. The use of the diminutive to encode pejoration is indeed shared among the languages considered, but both our and Touré's descriptions suggest that its use in this way in Susu appears to far surpass that reported by Nikitina in SE Mande. As Nikitina notes, however, the infrequency with which instances of pejoration by diminution are present in her data may be due to "the restricted scope of available data."

Turning to differences between Susu and SE Mande, we find three senses of the diminutive that are attested in SE Mande but that do not appear in Susu. The first of these pertains to senses of the diminutive related to age (whether young or old), which appear to be fairly common in SE Mande, as gleaned from Nikitina's analysis. Such uses, however, are absent from Susu. As we commented briefly above, this may be due to the fact that Susu continues to utilize various adjectives to encode meanings associated with age; indeed, as we first mentioned in footnote 1, Duport (1860-1869) even pointed out a distinction between the marking of diminutivity related to size vs. age in Susu in this much earlier work. Along these same lines, Susu also does not present clear cases of the diminutive that relate to 'category' or 'recently acquired' membership like those reported for Tura and Dan by Nikitina. As Nikitina intimates, these uses in SE Mande are highly lexicalized, so it is more difficult to pin down reasons for their absence in Susu. Lastly, Nikitina reports the diminutive used for the purposes of quantification of various types in SE Mande; as we have shown above, such quantification is otherwise expressed in Susu by certain quantifier DWs. This fact may therefore take this sense out of the purview of the diminutive, though we have shown that the diminutive can be used as an intensifier that modifies a quantifier DW in some instances.

We can next turn to the use of the diminutive to express approximation, which appears to be fairly productive in Susu. It is not entirely clear to us when comparing our own findings to those reported by Nikitina whether approximation is indeed attributable to SE Mande diminutives. Based on the examples provided by Nikitina, our interpretation of approximation might in some ways align itself with her categorization of 'low intensity: weak adjectival force'; as the author notes, however, this use is relatively infrequent, so additional research would be necessary in order to be able to elucidate this further.

Finally, regarding intensification, we have discussed briefly that while this sense appears to be connected to the use of the Susu diminutive, its use is somewhat

restricted, and it is not included in Jurafsky's proposed SPM of diminutives. We have offered some thoughts on why this might be so, but we consider this to be an open question to pursue in the future. We note, however, that Nikitina does not report the use of diminutives as intensifiers in her survey of SE Mande languages.

What we have done in this paper is to expand, albeit in a modest way, our understanding of the Susu diminutive, including its distribution and the various senses that it has come to encode in the synchronic language. We have presented examples of instances in which the diminutive occurs on its own, as well as alongside another adjectival or quantifier DW. We have also shown, for the sake of comparison, how use of the diminutive compares to the sole use of other DWs. With this information in mind, we have framed the various sense of the Susu diminutive that we have uncovered in light of Jurafsky's SPM, in order to better visualize attested semantic and pragmatic meanings of Susu's affixal diminutive **-dí** alongside other potential senses that diminutives have been shown to encode in other languages. Having established these facts in Susu, we then turned to a brief comparison of the Susu diminutive to what has recently been reported for some of the language's more distant cousins by Nikitina, as analyzed in the same theoretical framework. In doing so, we have enumerated various ways in which use of the diminutive in Susu and SE Mande languages converge with one another, as well as ways in which use of the diminutive in the former vs. the latter differ. In addition, we discuss a potential adaptation of the SPM stemming from the fact that the diminutive is commonly used in Susu as an intensifier of certain adjectives and quantifiers. It is our hope that this survey of the Susu diminutive lays the groundwork for further inquiry into the encoding of diminutivity in other Mande languages so as to arrive at a clearer picture as to how these languages relate to one another in this regard.

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Journal of West African Languages

Volume 45.1 (2018)

Vydrine, V. (2016). Toward a Proto-Mande reconstruction and an etymological dictionary. *Faits de Langues*, 47, 109-123.