

## Quite *-hkO* – a corpus analysis of the Finnish derivational suffix *-hkO*

Daniel Ebner

Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin  
daniel.ebner@hu-berlin.de

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This study discusses the derivational suffix *-hkO*<sup>1</sup> in Finnish, based on data drawn from the Finnish Web 2014 (fiTenTen14) corpus at Sketch Engine (Kilgarriff et al. 2014).

According to VISK, the online version of *Iso Suomen Kielioppi* (the ‘Great Finnish Grammar’), the suffix *-hkO* forms adjectival moderative derivations (“moderatiivijohdoksia”), i.e. adjectives that show a degree modification of the semantic content of the derivational base – more precisely, degree diminution (VISK §294). However, other evaluative (and in particular, approximative) values, such as e.g. disproximation and prototypicality, may also factor in the semantic and pragmatic interpretation (for a non-exhaustive overview of values considered approximative, cf. Masini et al. 2023).

Example (1) shows the use of *pienehkö* ‘quite small’ (< *pieni* ‘small’), referring to a town that is – at least in the speaker’s/writer’s opinion – not considered to be a prototypical example of a small town, but can nevertheless be categorised as such.

- (1) *Asun pienehköllä paikkakunnalla, jossa väesto ikääntyy koko ajan.* [fiTenTen14]  
‘I live in **quite a small** town, where the population gets older all the time.’

*-hkO*-derivations thus present a synthetic way of expressing evaluative concepts that may, however, also be expressed analytically, using adverbs such as e.g. *varsin*, *aika* or *melko*, all of which can be translated as ‘quite’ or ‘pretty’ in English (see example (2)).

- (2) *Luxemburg on varsin pieni maa [...].* [fiTenTen14]  
‘Luxemburg is **quite a small** country [...].’

Interestingly, combinations of a free adverbial degree modifier together with a *-hkO*-derivation can be found in the corpus (see example (3), where both the adverb *varsin* and the derivational suffix *-hkO* are used simultaneously).

- (3) *Kooltaan pizza on varsin pienehkö, mikä osaltaan selittyy ehkä hinnalla.* [fiTenTen14]  
‘Sizewise the pizza is **quite small**, which can perhaps in part be explained by the prize.’

Using a randomised sample of 500 relevant hits of adjectives using the *-hkO*-suffix, drawn from the fiTenTen14 corpus at Sketchengine (Kilgarriff et al. 2014), I address the following questions:

- How productive is the *-hkO*-construction in terms of Type Token Ratio and Potential Productivity (Baayen 2004)?
- Which adjectives (or adjective groups) are attracted to the *-hkO*-construction?
- Can the evaluativeness of the *-hkO*-construction be regularly reinforced by the use of free adverbial degree modifiers?

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<sup>1</sup> The upper case letter is used to represent the two allomorphic variants *-hko* and *-hkö*, the distribution of which is governed by Finnish vowel harmony.

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