

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

Daniel Ebner

Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin

daniel.ebner@hu-berlin.de

Keywords: corpus-based study, derivation, evaluative morphology, Finnish

This study discusses the derivational suffix *-hkO*¹ in Finnish, based on data drawn from the Finnish Web 2014 (fiTenTen14) corpus at Sketch Engine (Kilgarrieff 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 (Kilgarrieff 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?

¹ 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.

References

- Baayen, Harald. 2009. Corpus linguistics in morphology: Morphological productivity. In Lüdeling, Anke & Merja Kytö (ed.) *Corpus linguistics: An international handbook*. Berlin/New York: De Gruyter, 900–919.
- Kilgariff, Adam, Vít Baisa, Jan Bušta, Miloš Jakubíček, Vojtěch Kovář, Jan Michelfeit, Pavel Rychlý & Vít Suchomel. 2014. The Sketch Engine: ten years on. *Lexicography* 1, 7–36.
- Masini, Francesca, Muriel Norde & Kristel van Goethem. 2023. Approximation in morphology: A state of the art. *Zeitschrift für Wortbildung/Journal of Word Formation* 7(1), 1–26.
- VISK = Hakulinen, Auli, Maria Vilkuna, Riitta Korhonen, Vesa Koivisto, Tarja Riitta Heinonen & Irja Alho. 2004. *Iso suomen kielioppi*. Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura. Verkkoversio (online version), 1.11.2008. <http://scripta.kotus.fi/visk> URN:ISBN:978-952-5446-35-7