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Exploring Ways to Intensify Verbs in Swedish

Competition between adjectives and neoclassical prefixes in different corpora

https://doi.org/10.1515/ejss-2025-2010

Abstract: This corpus-based study addresses evaluative morphology in Swedish. It focusses on constructions with four quantifying intensifying adjectives (*små-* 'small', *stor-* 'big', *halv-* 'half', and *hel-* 'whole') combined with a verbal base (e.g., *halvspringa* 'half-run'). The aim is to explore the evaluative meanings of these constructions in different genres and types of data (fiction, news, social media, dictionaries) as well as the potential competition with constructions involving neoclassical prefixes (e.g., *mini-*, *mega-*, *mikro-*, *semi-*) and with syntactic phrases including one of the adjectives as an adverbial plus a present participle. The study suggests that evaluative constructions with a verbal base are established and productive word-formation patterns in Swedish, preferably including native adjectives (as prefixoids), rather than neoclassical prefixes. In parallel, there are also syntactic means to express evaluation, whose use partly seems to vary depending on the adjectives involved.

Keywords: evaluative morphology; intensification; prefixation; competition; affixoids

1 Introduction

Evaluative morphology, defined as the "expression of evaluation by means of morphology" (Körtvélyessy 2015, 22), typically has diminutive and augmentative as core categories (Bauer 1997) and primarily serves a pragmatic function (Dressler and Merlini Barbaresi 1994). Grandi (2009) defines an evaluative construction by two

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criteria: semantically, it assigns a value to the concept of the base, differing from its 'standard', neutral value; and formally, it contains an explicit evaluative marker.

Swedish is often said to lack morphological means to express diminutives and augmentatives (e.g., Grandi 2011). In Štekauer et al. (2012), Swedish is not found among languages with evaluative morphology, but it is mentioned that *stor-* 'big' and *små-* 'small' have a prefix-like, evaluative function in some words (2012, 269). However, Grandi's (2009) two criteria do apply to several word-formation patterns in Swedish as evidenced by several studies on Swedish adjectives or nouns used as intensifying prefixoids (e.g., Sigurd 1983; Lundbladh 2002; Ascoop and Leuschner 2006; Norde and Van Goethem 2014, 2018; Battefeld et al. 2018). Furthermore, "prefixoids [having a status in between a prefix and a lexeme] tend to express evaluations" (Ascoop and Leuschner 2006, 249).

Most of these previous studies tend to deal with intensifying prefixoids of an informal and colloquial nature. For instance, Kotcheva (2016) lists *jätte-* 'giant' and *skit-* 'shit' as intensifying prefixoids but also *super-* and *ultra-* as intensifying neoclassical prefixes in her survey of Swedish word-formation. Such prefixoids and neoclassical prefixes are mainly used in combination with adjectives or nouns, rarely with verbs, although Ascoop and Leuschner (2006) mention that Swedish (unlike German) allows reinforcing prefixoids also to be combined with verbs. Their provided examples involve informal colloquialisms, such as "*asgarva* 'to laugh one's head off', *fethaja* 'to comprehend something very well', *hårdbanta* 'to diet radically', *megasupa* 'to get very pissed', *vrålplugga* 'to cram very hard"' (Ascoop and Leuschner 2006, 246). Norde and Van Goethem (2018) on Swedish *kanon* 'cannon' as an evaluative intensifying prefixoid, however, found no instances of a bound use of *kanon* with verbs.

The interest of the present study, then, lies in the pairing of verbs with four old and common adjectives in wide use, which, according to Sigurd (1983), belong to general intensifying prefixes of the quantifying type (although he admits that their prefix status is not always fully clear).[1] More precisely, this study revolves around morphological constructions containing one of the four native adjectives, namely *små-* 'small', *stor-* 'big', *halv-* 'half', and *hel-* 'whole', in combination with a verbal base. The study draws on data from three different genres of corpora (fiction, news, and social media) and two dictionaries. The verbal base is represented by present participles in the corpus data (as in *småsjungande* 'small-singing') and infinitives in the dictionary data (as in *halvle* 'half-smile').

1 Sigurd (1983) makes a distinction between 'general' intensifying prefixes, applicable to most adjectives, and 'special' intensifying prefixes, which only allow combination with one or a few specific adjectives.

The main aim of the study is to explore the extent to which these morphological constructions express evaluative meanings. A further aim is to investigate meaning-based competition (cf. Lieber 2012; Aronoff 2018; Bagasheva et al., eds. 2024) between different ways to express evaluation, as qualitatively measured by identifying verbs that reoccur in different constructions with similar meanings (e.g., *halvkoka* 'half-boil', *småkokande* 'small-boiling', *halvt kokande*, 'half boiling'). At the micro-level, we look at potential competition among morphological constructions either with the four native adjectives or with neoclassical prefixes expressing similar meanings, namely *mini-*, *mega-*, *mikro-*, *makro-*, *max-*, and *semi–*, combined with a verbal base (cf. Amiot and Dal 2007, who draw a semantic parallel between *micro-* as a prefix, as in *micro-organisme* 'very small organism', and diminutive suffixes like *-et*(*te*) in French, as in *clochette* 'small bell'). At the macro-level, we examine potential competition between morphological constructions containing one of the adjectives combined with a present participle and syntactic phrases including one of the adjectives in an adverbial function plus a present participle (i.e., bound or free uses of the adjectives). Within these aims, the status of the four adjectives, as compound constituents or prefixoids, is also discussed. Put in other words, the following research questions are addressed:

- To what extent do the morphological constructions, *små-/stor-/halv-/hel-*V(*-ande*) versus *mini-/mega-/mikro-/makro-/max-/semi-*V(*-ande*), express evaluative intensifying meanings in different types of data?
- To what extent do the evaluative morphological constructions compete?
- To what extent do the morphological constructions compete with syntactic constructions involving similar items?
- What is the morphological status of the adjectives in the evaluative patterns: compound constituents or prefixoids?

Overall, our study is mainly delimited to morphological means for expressing intensification as subsumed under evaluation (cf. Battefeld et al. 2018 who suggest a paradigmatic link between the evaluative and the intensifying use of adjectives).

A final note here, to make the data collection feasible, we restricted the verbal base to a present participle in the corpus searches (e.g., *storgråtande* 'big-crying'). Since present participles syntactically behave as adjectives, they could additionally be assumed to favour evaluation. In the dictionary data, however, the verb form is obviously the infinitive (e.g., *halvviska* 'half-whisper').

2 Theoretical Background

In this section, we first deal with intensification as a linguistic term. We then present some basic facts about the Swedish constructions under study and, finally, give a brief account of the theoretical framework.

2.1 Intensification as Expression of Degree

As Sapir points out, "[e]very quantifiable, whether existent (say *house*) or occurrent (say *run*) or quality of existent (say *red*) or quality of occurrent (say *gracefully*), is intrinsically gradable" (Sapir 1944, 94). Likewise, Kennedy and McNally (2005) emphasize that gradability applies not only to adjectives but also to other grammatical categories. Paradis (2008), similarly, argues that DEGREE is a pervasive phenomenon in language, possible to apply to most meanings in a motivated context.

Paradis (2008) divides DEGREE modifiers into two types: totality modifiers (either maximizers, e.g., *completely*, or approximators, e.g., *almost*), associated with a definite BOUNDARY, versus scalar modifiers (boosters, e.g., *very*, moderators, e.g., *quite*, or diminishers, e.g., *a little*), which are UNBOUNDED and situated on a SCALE (2008, 321). Still, since DEGREE modifiers determine the interpretation of the expressions they modify, they all permit a scalar reading of an otherwise nongradable meaning. A developmental path for DEGREE meanings would thus proceed "from a BOUNDED to an UNBOUNDED configuration" (Paradis 2008, 339).

Rainer (2015, 1340) holds intensification, as 'expression of degree', to be a linguistic universal, tending to be expressed analytically more often than via word-formation patterns in the languages of the world. As a linguistic term, then, intensification comprises "any kind of degree" (Rainer 2015, 1349) and "shades off imperceptibly into quantification, augmentation and diminution, qualification, and emphasis" (Rainer 2015, 1340). In addition, the pragmatic function of intensifiers makes them even harder to categorize (Rainer 2015, 1346–1347). Note however that Masini and Micheli (2020), on the contrary, highlight the importance of fleshing out intensification further by suggesting APPROXIMATION as one functional domain, encompassing such notions as attenuation, vagueness or deintensification.

Notwithstanding, in line with Paradis' (2008) classification of degree modifiers, and with intensification as expressing degree (Rainer 2015), the four native adjectives included in this study would be of two types: *hel-* 'whole' and *halv-* 'half' being totality modifiers, associated with a bounded scale, with *hel-* acting as a maximizer and *halv-* as an approximator; *stor-* 'big' and *små-* 'small' being scalar modifiers, associated with an unbounded scale, and with *stor-* acting as a booster and *små-* as a diminisher.

2.2 Basic Facts About the Swedish Word-formation Patterns in Focus

The constructions under investigation are briefly touched upon in reference grammars or handbooks on Swedish word-formation. *Små-*, *stor-*, and *halv-* are classified as adjectival compound constituents, combined with a verbal base in some of the listed examples provided by Söderbergh (1968, 12), Thorell (1984, 40–41), and Josefsson (2009, 101). Söderbergh (1968, 12, f.n. 3) claims, however, that their function is that of an adverb, and she lists *hel-* as an adverb constituent in adjectival compounds (1968, 11). Thorell (1984, 40–41), instead, classifies *hel-* as an augmentative prefix with the meaning *mycket* 'much', perhaps leaning on Teleman (1970, 44) who remarks the tendency of adjectives, that often occur as compound constituents, to receive simplified or altered meanings, thus making them similar to affixes, such as augmentative *hel-*. In Lundbladh (2002), *hel-*, *mega-*, and *stor-* are classified as productive evaluative or intensifying prefix-like constituents used in combination with adjectives or nouns.

Neoclassical prefixes are mentioned to varying degrees and without much specification. Söderbergh (1968, 47, 59) mentions *kvasi-* 'quasi-' and *pseudo-* as pejorative. Thorell (1984, 56–57) lists the most common neoclassical prefixes along with a meaning indication, such as *makro-* and *mega-* 'big' and *semi-* 'half', among which *mini-* 'little, smallest', *mikro-* 'little, small', and *max(i)-* 'big, biggest' are said to be productive, whereas Teleman (1970, 53) instead mentions *kvasi-*, *pseudo-*, and *mini-* as productive, and Kotcheva (2016, 2575), the intensifying *hyper-* and *super-* as productive.

As for present participles, their nature is a topic of contentious debate in Swedish grammar. Present participles are classified either as adjectives derived from verbs (Hultman 2003, 40, 79; Kotcheva 2016, 2573), as verb forms (Dahl 2003, 83; Thurén 2008) or, alternatively, as a word class of their own (Teleman et al. 1999, 582–583).

Morphologically, present participles are built by the verb stem of a simple, derived or compounded verb, plus the suffix *-ande*, or less frequently *-ende*, if the stem ends on an accentuated vowel (Teleman et al. 1999, 613–614; Hultman 2003, 155), such as *om*[*fatt-ande*] 'encompassing' or *fram*[*kall-ande*] 'provoking'.[2] Present participles, in their turn, can be prefixed or compounded (as the constructions in this study), with the first constituent expressing different semantic roles, such as theme, result, location or grade/manner. Some of the compounded present participles are synthetic, that is, no corresponding, compounded verb exists, for example

2 In speech or informal written language, a form in *-s* can occur as a free predicative, or as a bound predicative, in a construction with the verb *komma* 'come' (e.g., *komma gildandes* 'come sliding-*s*') (Hultman 2003, 156, see also Lundquist 2008, 57, 202, 213).

hel[*omfattande*] 'whole-encompassing' (**helomfatta*) or *ångest*[*framkallande*] 'anxiety-provoking' (**ångestframkalla*) (Teleman et al. 1999, 616–617). In contrast to most adjectives in Swedish, which are marked for agreement, present participles are invariable.

Syntactically, present participles behave as adjectives. They can thus occur as bound or free complements (subject or object predicatives), attributes, and adverbials (Teleman et al. 1999, 617).

Semantically, present participles tend to carry an active meaning, similar to the verbs on which they are based (e.g., "*ett gråtande barn = ett barn som gråter*", Hultman 2003, 156, i.e., 'a crying child = a child who cries'), but sometimes their meaning has drifted, so to have a lexicalized adjectival doublet (e.g., *spännande* 'exciting', originally from *spänna* 'tighten, span'). Teleman et al. (1999, 583; see also Lundquist 2008, 57, 202) make a distinction between verbal and adjectival participles but remark that the distinction is gradual, and that it can be more or less apparent to different speakers.[3] Overall, present participle tend to be formed by verbs denoting unbounded (atelic) processes and have a generic meaning, similar to many adjectives (Teleman et al. 1999, 610–611). According to Thurén (2008, 172–173), who adopts a distributed morphology framework, participles in *-ande* are verbs showing both imperfective/progressive aspect (via the aspectual suffix) and argument structure (e.g., *Jag hörde Stina, sjungande nationalsången* 'I heard Stina, singing the national anthem', Thurén 2008, 175).

In this study, we opt for an analysis of present participles as infinite verb forms, which syntactically behave as adjectives do. Our main motivation for this view is that they are fully productive. Yet, as Haspelmath (2024) argues, from a constructional perspective of morphology, the distinction between inflection (present participles as verb forms) and derivation (present participles as verb-derived adjectives) might be a mere terminological invention. Haspelmath (2024) admits, however, that inflection and derivation are useful comparative concepts for describing linguistic information and thus need to be defined in a clear-cut way, instead of being said to lie on a continuum – in his view, participles would on semantic grounds belong to derivation. Nevertheless, and most importantly for our purpose, irrespective of whether present participles are inflected or derived, they do contain a base in the form of a verb, which permits evaluation.

3 According to Teleman et al. (1999, 610–613), verbal participles retain the (eventive) meaning and the argument structure of the verb, although internal arguments are often left out or expressed as adverbials via prepositional phrases. In contrast, adjectival participles are focused on a state or a property, often from the point of view of an external observer, left unexpressed. The latter rarely have agentive meaning and seldom refer to animate referents (e.g., *situationen är oroande* 'the situation is worrying' vs. *?situationen oroar* 'the situation worries').

2.3 Theoretical Framework

Our study situates within a lexeme-based approach to word-formation, compatible with construction morphology (Booij 2010). Hence, words and word-formation processes can be seen as constructions, associating form and meaning and accounted for by more or less abstract schemas, interconnected via inheritance. In this framework (cf. Battefeld et al. 2018; Masini and Audring 2019, 370), affixes are not independent entities but part of the words they belong to, as in an evaluative, prefixoid construction of for example *halvsjunga* 'half-sing' in (1a) (also matching with Grandi's 2009 two criteria for defining an evaluative construction). A compound analysis involving similar items is given in (1b).

(1) a. $< [<y>_{EV}\ [x]_{Vj}]_{Vi} \leftarrow [\textit{evaluating}\ SEM_j]_i > \rightarrow [\textit{half}[x]_{Vj}]_{Vi} \rightarrow [\textit{half}[\textit{sing}]_V]_V$
b. $[[y]_{Yk}[x]_{Xj}]_{Xi} \rightarrow [[\textit{half}]_A[\textit{sing}]_V]_V$

Seeing that the four Swedish adjectives in our study have been classified differently (as also illustrated in the example above), we find it motivated to penetrate a bit deeper into the classification of the first element, that is, as a prefixoid (Sigurd 1983; Lundbladh 2002) or as a compound constituent (Söderbergh 1968; Thorell 1984, Josefsson 2009). In this respect, Van Goethem (2010) advances five parameters of the grammaticalization process of compound constituents gradually shifting into affixoids: the phonological parameter (change of stress pattern); the morphological parameter (loss of grammatical inflection); the semantic parameter (semantic specialization into a new or more restricted meaning); and two distributional parameters, productivity (increase) and paradigmatic alternation (complementary distribution or competition between affixoids and existing affixes). Of these five parameters, the phonological and the morphological ones are of no use for the present study: whether the adjectives appear as compound constituents or prefixoids would not result in a stress pattern change, and loss of inflection would apply in both cases (similar to Dutch adjectives, cf. Van Goethem 2010). Hence, only the three latter parameters will be taken into consideration later on, when we return to the nature of the first constituent and the type of construction, as being either a derivative (1a) or a compound (1b).

3 Method and Data

The study is mainly based on corpus data from three different text genres: fiction, news, and social media (restricted to Bloggmix), available at www.spraakbanken.se, but also on data collected from two Swedish dictionaries: SAOL (2015, contemporary)

and SAOB (1898–2021, historical), available online at www.svenska.se. The main reason for choosing to include both corpus and dictionary data is to provide evidence for our claim that verbs prefixed by or compounded with one of the four native adjectives constitute entrenched morphological patterns in Swedish. From the point of view of at least two parameters of productivity (see Corbin 1987; Bauer 2001), the patterns are regular and available for forming new words, and they are or have been exploited to form a rather large number of new words, as evidenced by the instantiations of the patterns listed in the dictionaries and those attested in the corpora.

In the corpora, we searched for complex words including one of the four native adjectives (*små, stor, halv, hel*) or one of the neoclassical prefixes (*mini-, mega-, mikro-, makro-, max-, semi-*) in combination with a present participle. In addition, we searched for syntactic phrases with one of the four adjectives in neuter form and with an adverbial function (*små-tt* 'small-AGR.N', *stor-t* 'big-AGR.N', *halv-t* 'half-AGR.N', *hel-t* 'whole-AGR.N')[4] followed by a present participle.[5] We had several reasons for limiting the search to present participles. First and foremost, we wanted to collect constructions with a verbal base, but we also wanted to have a manageable data size without too much noise (which a search for all potential verb forms would have resulted in). Moreover, as the corpus search tool system is slow and not sophisticated enough, a restricted number of simple queries facilitates the data collection considerably.

All attestations in the corpus data were first controlled manually for exclusion of false positives, such as those including a (lexicalized) base which has no corresponding verb (e.g., *halvmedvetande* 'half-conscious(ness)', *storfrämmande* 'big-strangers', i.e., distinguished guests), uninterpretable misspellings, compounded first elements (e.g., *småfiskätande* '[small-fish]-eating', i.e. eating small fishes, not fish-eating a little, *maxätande* 'max-eating', not eating maximally but eating at Max, a Swedish fast food chain), and lexicalizations. Lexicalized forms include, amongst others, nominalized present participles with uter gender, nominalizations with neuter gender, formed by a homonymous derivational suffix *-ande/-ende* (see e.g., Teleman et al. 1999, 620; Holmer 2022), and present participles with a pronoun-like or prepositional function (e.g., *beträffande* 'regarding') (see Teleman et al. 1999,

4 Kotcheva (2016, 2572) separates adjectives in neuter form (e.g., *halv-t*.AGR.N) from adverbs being derived from adjectives through the suffix *-t* (e.g., $halv_{A}$-t_{ADV}). We opt for the alternative option (see also Hultman 2003, 88, 169), namely that neuter adjectives can function as adverbials (thus, there are not two different *-t* endings, one inflectional and one derivational).

5 More precisely, we use the extended search platform and queried for word beginning with each of the native adjectives/neoclassical prefixes and word ending with *-ande/-ende* or for phrases consisting of one of the adjectives in their neuter form followed by a word ending with *-ande/-ende* in 26 February to 5 March 2024.

621–622). In the second step, when exploring the evaluative meanings of the different patterns, we excluded all instances where the adjectives or prefixes had a literal (quantifying) meaning, with no evaluation involved (e.g., *halvbetalande* 'half-paying', i.e., for a pupil paying half the tuition fee, or *mikroskopera* 'microscop(iz)e' in its medical sense; see the analysis section below for more details and examples).

However, bear in mind that the data are not flawless and may still contain noise, in particular regarding the syntactic phrases. One difficulty consists in separating the syntactic phrases with adjectives in an adverbial function from those with adjectives showing neuter agreement when preceding a nominalization with neuter gender, as shown in (2).

(2) *stort leende* vs. *ett stort leende*
'much smiling' vs. 'a big smile'

Another difficulty, impossible to overcome without looking up every attestation in context, is to establish whether the adjective takes scope over the participle or, instead, occurs in a noun phrase (3).

(3) *stort flåsande* vs. *ett stort, flåsande monster*
'much puffing/breathing' vs. 'a huge, puffing monster'

From the dictionaries, we collected all words beginning with one of the four adjectives or one of the corresponding neoclassical prefixes in combination with a verb, predominantly listed in infinitive form, although a few words with present participles occur as entries in SAOB.

Frequency data from the corpus searches and the dictionaries are presented in Table 1. They show that types with *små-* plus a present participle predominate in all

Table 1: Constructions with fixed slots combined with V-*ande*/V in fiction, news, and social media corpora as well as in two dictionaries (n = type (token) *hapax*).

	Fiction 24,551,703 tokens	**News 848,127,532 tokens**	**Social media 615,658,549 tokens**	**SAOB**	**SAOL**
små-V-*ande*/V	34 (294) *21*	126 (670) *69*	145 (568) *88*	152	43
stor-V-*ande*/V	10 (38) *5*	65 (2,453) *31*	34 (423) *11*	62	13
halv-V-*ande*/V	30 (171) *13*	45 (384) *24*	82 (475) *45*	43	12
hel-V-*ande*/V	1 (64) *0*	7 (4,047) *1*	22 (1,685) *14*	6	2
mega-V-*ande*/V	–	5 (10) *3*	20 (27) *16*	–	–
mini-V-*ande*/V	–	3 (3) *3*	11 (22) *7*	–	–
makro-V-*ande*/V	–	–	2 (2) *2*	–	–
mikro-V-*ande*/V	–	4 (11) *3*	6 (242) *4*	1	3
semi-V-*ande*/V	–	1 (1) *1*	2 (34) *2*	–	–
max- V-*ande*/V	–	2 (4) *1*	–	–	–

data sets, followed by types with *halv-* or *stor-*. Types with *hel-* are the least frequent in all data sets, but one of them (*heltäckande* 'whole-covering') is represented by many tokens (4,027 of 4,047 tokens in the news data, including five misspelled variants). We also see that types with neoclassical prefixes are scarcely attested in the dictionary data, and that, overall, they are less frequently attested compared to types with native adjectives, although some of them, *mega-* and *mini-* in particular, occur in the social media data to some extent.

Moreover, although the fiction data contain the smallest number of attested types for each of the native adjectives, the relative frequency of attested tokens for *små-* and *halv-* is higher compared to the news and social media data since the latter corpora contain more tokens, whereas the opposite seems to be the case for *stor-* and *hel-*. Also note that there are many hapaxes (i.e., occurring once in a given corpus) for some of the patterns in the corpus data sets, which may be taken as a further indice of the productivity of the patterns in question (cf. Baayen and Lieber 1991 on the number of hapax legomena as a measure of productivity). In addition, the dictionary data contain a rather high number of types for some of the patterns, thus indicating that these patterns are established and have been productive over a long period of time (cf. Corbin 1987; Bauer 2001 on morphological productivity).

There are some hyphenated forms only in the news and social media data. Since derived and compounded words in Swedish do not contain hyphens, no such forms were attested in the fiction and dictionary data (which have undergone thorough editorial processing). Nearly all the hyphenated forms are hapaxes, and also doublets of correct forms without hyphens (thus classified as belonging to the same type in our data analysis). Counter to expectations, we did not find any clear differences between the native adjectives and the neoclassical prefixes on this point (we would have expected the latter to occur with hyphens more often in the less controlled corpus data).

4 Analysis

In what follows, we present our analysis of the data. We first look at some characteristics of the verbal base. Thereafter, we account for the evaluative meanings of the different constructions. We then move on to potential competition in the data. Finally, we discuss Van Goethem's (2010) parameters of grammaticalization of compound constituents into affixoids in relation to the constructions with the four adjectives. Throughout the analysis, the sociolinguistic parameter (i.e., differences between text genres) is taken into consideration.

4.1 The Verbal Base

We start with some words about the verbs taking part in the different patterns.[6] Intransitive verbs with animate/human referents predominate in the data. They tend to refer to activities expressing human movements or motions (4a-b), behavior or manner (4c-d), and sound-making (4e-f).

(4) a. *halvspringande*
'half-running'
b. *småhoppande*
'small-jumping'
c. *storleende*
'big-smiling'
d. *storskojande*
'big-joking'
e. *smågläfsande*
'small-yapping'
f. *halvkurrande*
'half-rumbling/purring'

Inanimate referents often refer to natural forces, such as water (5a), fire (5b), or weather phenomena (5c). Verbs that are specified for internal arguments, such as *cover*, *win*, or *sell* (something) often leave the internal arguments unexpressed in the construction types (6) (cf. Teleman et al. 1999, 610–613).

(5) a. *halvkokande*
'half-boiling'
b. *småglödande*
'small-glowing'
c. *småsnöande*
'small-snowing'

(6) *storsäljande författare*
'big-selling author' (of novels)

Regarding the morphological complexity of the verbal base, there seem to be differences between the text genres. In the fiction data, the verbal base is exclusively simple and of Germanic origin. In the dictionary data, there are a few complex verb bases (7a-b), whereas the news and social media data contain more complex bases,

6 We have not investigated the verbal bases for Aktionsart or lexical aspect (cf. Vendler 1957), which could be a way to find further semantic distinctions between the construction types, particularly those including native adjectives.

such as compounded verb bases (7c), several bases of Romance origin (7d-e), and some borrowings from English (7f) (this spreading to include verbal bases of different kinds and origins may thus be taken as evidence of the patterns being entrenched and synchronically productive).

(7) a. *halvgenomlysande*
'halv-through-shining'
'transcluent'
b. *småförarga*
'small-annoy'
c. *halvångestframkallande*
'half-anxiety-provoking'
d. *storgestikulerande*
'big-gesticulating'
e. *halvdiskriminerande*
'half-discriminating'
f. *stortwittrande*
'big-twittering'

Among the neoclassical prefixes, *mega-* is the most frequently attested one as for type, although only occurring in the news and social media data. The types with *mega-* include several compounded bases and sometimes contain hyphens (8a-b).

(8) a. *mega-el-konsumerande*
'mega-electricity-consuming'
b. *megaärekränkande*
'mega-defaming'

4.2 Evaluative Meanings of the Different Patterns

We now turn to our attempt to analyze the data as for whether the different constructions express evaluative meanings. According to our analysis, shown in Table 2, they do not behave the same on this point.

As regards the four native adjectives, *hel-* has most often a non-evaluative meaning, which is not the case with *halv-*, *små-*, and *stor-*. Two examples of non-evaluative meanings for *hel-* are given in (9a-b), where the one in (9a) is, as previously mentioned, the most frequently occurring type as per tokens in our data.

(9) a. *heltäckande*
whole-covering
'comprehensive, or entirely covering something'

Table 2: Evaluative meanings of the attested construction types in fiction, news, and social media corpora as well as in two dictionaries (n = type).

	Fiction		News		Social media		SAOB		SAOL	
	type	+eval	type	+eval	type	+eval	type	+eval	type	+eval
små-	34	34	126	124	145	145	152	146	43	42
stor-	10	10	65	64	34	30	62	54	13	13
halv-	30	30	45	45	82	82	43	37	12	11
hel-	1	0	7	2	22	5	6	0	2	0
mega-	–	–	5	5	20	20	–	–	–	–
mini-	–	–	3	3	11	11	–	–	–	–
makro-	–	–	–	–	2	0	–	–	–	–
mikro-	–	–	4	0	6	0	1	0	3	0
semi-	–	–	1	0	2	1	–	–	–	–
max-	–	–	2	0	–	–	–	–	–	–

b. *helöppnande*
whole-opening
'something that permits to be fully opened'

There are also a few non-evaluative meanings for *halv-*, *små-*, and *stor-*, where it is not the verbal process per se that is being evaluated, as in (10a-c).

(10) a. *halvsula*
half-sole
'relative to shoes, to sole them with a half sole'
b. *små/storfallande*
small/big-falling
'relative to harvest of fruits, in particular apples or pears, whether the harvested fruits come off small or big'
c. *små/storblommande*
small/big-flowering
'flowering with small/big flowers', i.e., not flowering a little or a lot

Turning instead to the four adjectives with evaluative meanings, we find many different examples involving *halv-*, *små-*, and *stor-*, and also a few with *hel-* (11a-d).

(11) a. *halvfrustrerande*
'half-frustrating'
b. *småmumlande*
small-murmuring
'murmuring a little'

c. *storslösande*
big-squandering
'squandering a lot'
d. *helfascinerande*
whole-fascinating
'wholly fascinating'

In addition, some of these items have acquired specialized, lexicalized evaluative meanings (12a-b), which sometimes also cooccur along with the "literal" evaluative meaning (12c-d).

(12) a. *småätande, småsupande*
small-eating, small-boozing/drinking
'having the (bad) habit to eat (small things)/drink (small amounts) of alcohol too often'
b. *småpratande*
small-talking
'polite, trivial and social chit-chatting'
c. *småtutande*
small-tooting
(i) 'drinking small amounts of alcohol' vs.
(ii) 'tooting a little, with a toot or the car horn'
d. *småhackande*
small-hacking/chopping
(i) 'picking on/nagging someone, repeatedly or to a lesser degree',
(ii) 'glitching a little, relative to computers or technical devices' vs.
(iii) 'chopping into smaller pieces'

If we look at the neoclassical prefixes, which are, as said, more scarcely represented in the data, they seem to behave a bit differently when it comes to evaluative meanings. *Mega-* and *mini-* are represented by most attested types in the data, all of them being evaluative (13a-b). *Mikro-* and *makro-* appear in fewer and non-evaluative types (13c-d). *Semi-* occurs in few types, only one is evaluative (13e) and, in fact, competing with *halv-* in this example. *Max-* is not attested in an evaluative construction.

(13) a. *megainspirerande*
'mega-inspiring'
b. *miniannonserande*
'mini-advertising'
c. *mikroexfolierande*
'micro-peeling'

d. *makrofotande*
‘taking macro-photos’
e. *semi-bloggande*
‘semi-blogging’

In sum, among the neoclassical prefixes, only *mini-* and *mega-* show some productivity in evaluative constructions with verbal bases.

4.3 Competing Constructions

We now turn to the possible competition in our data, such as among the native adjectives as well as between the native adjectives and the neoclassical prefixes, which is summed up in an interim conclusion, before turning to competition between morphological constructions and syntactic phrases.

We begin by looking at competition involving the constructions with the four adjectives. According to Dressler and Merlini Barbaresi (1994), the pragmatic function of evaluative morphology is evidenced by the fact that complex words with a pragmatic function do not block one another. In this respect, we see that our dictionary data from SAOB contain many examples, where synonyms involving other evaluative constituents are given in the meaning explanations. For example, the meaning of *stor-* is often explained by the use of other intensifying modifiers (14a-b). We also find competition between *halv-* and *små-*, with *små-* given as a synonym of *halv-* (14c-d). In addition, we find meaning explanations where the verb base instead has been replaced by a synonym verb (14e-f).

(14) a. *storvärka*
‘big-ache’
According to SAOB: *sprängvärka* ‘blast-ache’
b. *stortjuta*
‘big-yowl’
According to SAOB: *galltjuta* ‘shrill-yowl’, *gallskrika*, ‘shrill-scream’, *storgråta* ‘big-cry’
c. *halvskratta*
‘half-laugh’
According to SAOB: *småskratta* ‘small-laugh’
d. *halvspringa*
‘half-run’
According to SAOB: *småspringa* ‘small-run’

e. *halvsjuda*
'half-simmer'
According to SAOB: *halvkoka* 'half-boil'
f. *småsnacka*
'small-talk'
According to SAOB: *småprata* 'small-talk'

Moreover, in the meaning explanations of constructions with *halv-*, we find paraphrases with *nästan* 'almost' and *till hälften* 'to the half' or *mitt emellan* 'in between', thus indicating an approximative value of *halv-* (15a-d) (cf. Masini and Micheli 2020). Besides, note also the indication of a progressive meaning of the complex verb in (15d), given the construction with a posture verb plus an infinitive (*sitta och* V 'sit and V').

(15) a. *halvgråta*
'half-cry"
According to SAOB: *nästan gråta* 'almost cry'
b. *halvkoka*
'half-boil'
According to SAOB: *koka till hälften* 'boil to (the) half'
c. *halvslockna*
'half-go/burn out'
According to SAOB: *till hälften eller nästan slockna* 'to half or almost go out'
d. *halvsova*
'half-sleep'
According to SAOB: *midt*[7] *emellan sömn och vaka, icke vara fullt vaken (sitta och halvsova)* 'in between sleep and awake, not be fully awake (sit and half-sleep)'

Moving on, we cannot claim to have found much competition between the native adjectives, on the one hand, and the neoclassical prefixes, on the other. In our opinion, constructions with native adjectives constitute the entrenched patterns for expressing evaluative meanings of verbs, preferably including verbs of Germanic origin but also spreading to involve those of Romance origin (cf. Söderbergh 1968, 41, f.n. 2 who remarks that neoclassical affixes rarely penetrate the Germanic derivational system in Swedish, but if so, prefixes more often do than suffixes). For instance, *stor-* and *små-* versus *mega-* and *mini-* could rather be said to be in complementary distribution, seeing that *mega-* is more intensifying/boosting than

7 Old spelling of *mitt* 'midst', given in SAOB.

stor-, and *mini-* is more diminishing than *små-*. With increase of use, *semi-* could, however, become a competitor of *half-*, considering that they express similar meanings. Independent support for these assumptions is given by some attestations in the news and social media data, where native and neoclassical prefixes are combined (16a-c).[8]

(16) a. *megastorsäljande, megabästsäljande*
'mega-big-selling' 'mega-best-selling'
b. *mini-halvleende*
'mini-half-smiling'
c. *semi-små-leende*
'semi-small-smiling'

To arrive at an interim conclusion, let us first give a short account of Masini and Micheli (2020) who identify five closely related values conveyed by Italian *simil-*expressions, namely FAKENESS (e.g., *similpelle* 'fake leather'), IMITATION (e.g., *similvita* 'virtual life'), RESEMBLANCE (e.g., *simil-Amazon* 'Amazon-style'), VAGUENESS (e.g., *simil marrone* 'sort of brown'), and KIN-CATEGORIZATION (e.g., *simil-influenzale* 'para-influenzal'). They (2020) conclude that the polysemy of *simil-* gives rise to a continuum with some of the values being more on the categorizing lexeme creation side, such as KIN-CATEGORIZATION, whereas others belong to the approximating evaluation side, such as VAGUENESS. While the constructions in our data lend themselves to be analyzed according to a similar kind of model, the present study suggests that the border between constructions with *halv-* as an approximator and those with *små-* as a diminisher is fuzzy. Therefore, we rather tend to agree with Rainer (2015, 1341) who notes that with adjectival bases – or present participles with their adjectival function – the border between diminutive versus approximative/attenuative patterns as well as between augmentative and intensive patterns often becomes blurred. Furthermore, although *hel-* and *halv-* are totality modifiers, positioned on a bounded scale, and *stor-* and *små-* are scalar and open-ended, our data indicate that all four modifiers associate with an unbounded scale when occurring in evaluative constructions, in line with Paradis' (2008) view.

As for the competition between the morphological constructions and syntactic phrases, we find some competition in the dictionary data from SAOB, considering that the meaning explanations sometimes include syntactic paraphrases of the morphological constructions (17a-b) (cf. also 15a-d).

8 The examples in (16b-c) were not attested in Bloggmix but in Flashback and Familjeliv, two other of the four corpora included in the social media corpora at Språkbanken. Still, we choose to report them here as additional examples of this phenomenon.

(17) a. *halvslöa*
'half-laze'
According to SAOB: *smått slöa* 'small-AGR.N/ADV laze'
b. *halvdrömma*
'half-dream'
According to SAOB: *halvt drömma* 'half-AGR.N/ADV dream'

If we now turn to the corpus data, shown in Table 3, they suggest that there are differences among the morphological patterns in relation to their correspondences to syntactic phrases. For *små-*, there are actually fewer attestations of syntactic phrases with *smått*, both per type and token. In contrast, for *halv-* and *stor-*, there are more syntactic than morphological constructions as per types but less syntactic phrases as per tokens (except for *stort-* in the fiction data). For *hel-*, however, there is an advantage for syntactic phrases over word-formation both for types and tokens (despite the fact that, *heltäckande*, the type with most tokens in our corpus-data, is a morphological construction).

Although our corpus data are not flawless (cf. the method and data section), we can still conclude that also the syntactic phrases are apt at expressing evaluative meaning and thus constitute competing options, especially for *hel-*, much more often occurring in syntactic phrases than in morphological constructions (18a-c).

(18) a. *lite halv-t* *frustrer-ande* *att bara vänta*
little half-AGR.N/ADV frustrate-PTCP.PRS to only wait.INF
'a little half frustrating to just wait'
b. *hel-t* *underhåll-ande* *i alla fall*
whole-AGR.N/ADV entertain-PTCP.PRS in all case.(PL)
'wholly entertaining any way'

Table 3: Morphological constructions versus syntactic phrases in fiction, news, and social media (n = type (token)).

	Fiction	News	Social media
små-V-*ande*	34 (294)	126 (670)	145 (568)
smått-V-*ande*	10 (11)	117 (375)	140 (552)
stor-V-*ande*	10 (38)	65 (2,453)	34 (423)
stort-V-*ande*	23 (44)	149 (247)	104 (179)
halv-V-*ande*	30 (171)	45 (384)	82 (475)
halvt-V-*ande*	62 (114)	52 (96)	83 (263)
hel-V-*ande*	1 (64)	7 (4,047)	22 (1,685)
helt-V-*ande*	42 (116)	293 (8,663)	272 (1,610)

c. helt stråååålande, helt liiidande, helt kanonfungerande
'wholly amaaaazing', 'wholly suffffering', 'wholly canon-functioning'

(19) a. *Jag ligg-er i säng-en små-tt halv-dö-ende.*
I lie-PRS in bed-DEF small-AGR.N/ADV half-die-PTCP.PRS
'I am lying in bed a little half-dying.'

b. *Flicka-n svara-de halv-t småleende.*
Girl-DEF reply-PRT half-AGR.N/ADV small-smile.PTCP.PRS
'The girl replied quasi smiling a little.'

To sum up, except for the adjective *hel-*, which is much more prone to be used as a free adverbial to intensify verbs, the data do not provide evidence for any blocking effects between morphological and syntactic constructions. Blocking effects would, according to Aronoff (e.g., 2018), be a consequence of competition, which would, in the course of time, give rise to different distributional patterns. Rather, our data align more with Lieber's (2012, 2115–2116) suggestion that affixes that cover similar semantics (such as evaluative constructions can do) can result in mismatches between form and meaning, so that one affix pairs with several meanings or several affixes occupy the same semantic space.

4.4 Compound Constituents or Affixoids?

Before concluding this study, we come back to Van Goethem's (2010) parameters of grammaticalization regarding the gradual transition of compound constituents into affixoids, namely semantic specialization, productivity, and paradigmatic alternation, which have relevance for the constructions under study.

Concerning the semantic specialization parameter, being a strong motivation for grammaticalization, the adjectives in their bound or free uses and combined with verbs predominantly express evaluative meanings (albeit to a lesser degree for *hel-*). In this sense, they could be argued to have a function similar to that of diminutive and augmentative constructions in other languages. For the adjectives *små-* and *stor-* with their scalar and open-ended meaning (cf. Paradis 2008), the semantic specialization may be said to turn from size to intensification – considering also that verb events are not easily quantified for size. For *halv-* and *hel-*, as quantifying concepts and expressions of degree on a closed scale, it is even easier to argue for a shift in meaning from a literal quantifying meaning to a more approximative or intensifying one when combining with verbs (cf. Rainer 2015; Masini and Micheli 2020).

The productivity parameter gives the strongest support for claiming that the adjectives are transitioning into prefixoids in their bound uses, given that they,

except perhaps for *hel-*, occur in a non-neglectable number of both established and novel forms in our data.

If we turn to the paradigmatic alternation parameter, there is arguably some competition between *små-* and *halv-* in their evaluative meanings, as well as between *stor-* and other native intensifying modifiers (cf. 14a-b). In addition, *hel-* and *halv-* both belong to an additional second paradigm, next to the evaluative one, in which the adjectives keep their literal, quantifying meaning (e.g., half-paying). For *hel-*, this second paradigm seems to be more productive. However, we found little competition between the adjectives and the neoclassical prefixes. Compared to *halv-*, *semi-* is much less frequently attested in the data. Likewise, evaluative constructions with *små-* and *stor-* do not seem to compete with those with *mini-* and *mega-*, seeing that they express different degrees of intensification. Paradigmatic alternation between the adjectives and neoclassical prefixes is thus not entirely ruled out (and could eventually become more productive). Still, the native options could be argued to be much stronger entrenched, to the detriment of neoclassical prefixes, at least when it comes to being combined with verbs.

To sum up, all three parameters for the grammaticalization cline from compound constituents onto true affixes are fulfilled to some or a high extent, so to speak in favor of the adjectives in their bound uses, at least *små-*, *stor-*, and *halv-*, to be classified as prefixoids.

5 Concluding Remarks

This study suggests that evaluative, intensifying constructions with a verbal base are established and productive word-formation patterns in Swedish. Although Swedish does not have productive verb suffixation to express evaluation as many other languages have, there are indeed morphological alternatives to be used instead, preferably with native adjectives in the form of prefixoids, rather than with neoclassical prefixes.

In addition to the productive morphological means with quantifying intensifying adjectives for expressing evaluation of verbs in Swedish, there are also syntactic means to express evaluation of verbs – sometimes competing with the morphological means, sometimes co-occurring with the latter. The alternation between morphology and syntax seems to vary depending on text genre but also on the adjectives involved (e.g., *hel* showing a clear preference for syntax, which thus suggests that there is a division of labor between morphology and syntax). Other factors that probably also come into play, although not investigated in this study, are the semantics of the verb and the extent to which it allows intensification, but also individual preferences for particular types of constructions.

Obviously, this study has only touched upon a limited domain of evaluative morphology in a specific language. One important area for future research would be to explore, in much more details, the semantic/pragmatic meaning differences potentially displayed by different evaluative constructions, and for example also whether speakers perceive such meaning nuances as well as to what extent the preference for (particular) intensifiers is speaker dependent.

Abbreviations

ADV	adverbial
AGR	agreement
INF	infinitive
N	neuter
PL	plural
PRS	present
PRT	preterite
PTCP	participle

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