

## Joselito and calentito: diminutive enigmas

*Joselito e calentito: enigmas  
do diminutivo*

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**Abstract:** Two exceptional diminutives exist that have received little attention in the relevant literature. *Joselito* is unusual because it takes the suffix *-lito*, which may come from the /l/ in *José Luís* since the two are the most frequent collocates. The early appearance of *Joselito*, along with the fact that most of the other words that take *-lito* were later borrowings into Spanish, suggests that *Joselito* was the first diminutive of its kind. It then served as an analog for the diminutives of subsequent borrowings that ended in stressed vowels (e.g. *cafelito*, *bebelito*). The diminutive variant *-tito* (e.g. *cafetito*, *sofatito*) is also discussed. *Calentito* stands out because it does not retain the diphthong of its base, *caliente*, as most diminutives do. Historically, diminutives did not have diphthongs prior to the 15<sup>th</sup> century when they adopted them. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century grammarians both prescribed and dispreferred monophthongal diminutives, but in usage most monophthongal forms were eliminated with *calentito* emerging as the most common exception. However, contemporary corpus data attest the sporadic existence of other diminutives without diphthongs such as *merendita* and *celito*.

**Keywords:** Spanish diminutive. *Calentito*. *Joselito*.

**Resumo:** Dois diminutivos excepcionais que têm recebido pouca atenção na literatura relevante. *Joselito* é incomum por usar o sufixo *-lito*, que pode ter surgido do /l/ em José Luís uma vez que essa é a associação mais corriqueira. A primeira aparição de *Joselito*, juntamente com o fato que a maioria das outras palavras que assumem o sufixo *-lito* terem sido mais tarde incorporadas ao espanhol, sugerem que *Joselito* foi o primeiro diminutivo do tipo. *Joselito* então serviu como um análogo para os diminutivos de incorporações futuras que terminavam em vogais tônicas (ex: *cafelito*, *bebelito*). A variação de diminutivo *-tito* (ex. *cafetito*, *sofatito*) também é discutida. *Calentito* se destaca, por não manter o ditongo de sua base, *caliente*, ao contrário da maioria dos diminutivos. Historicamente, diminutivos não tinham ditongos antes do século XV quando eles foram adotados. No começo do século XX gramáticos tanto definiram quanto descartaram diminutivos monotongos, mas na prática, a maioria das formas foi eliminada, deixando *calentito* como a exceção mais comum. Entretanto, o corpus contemporâneo atesta a existência esporádica de outros diminutivos sem ditongos, como *merendita* e *celito*.

**Palavras-chave:** Diminutivo em Espanhol. *Calentito*. *Joselito*.

## Introduction

Spanish diminutives have been a hotbed for discussion, especially in recent years. Much of the discussion has focused on the distribution of the allomorphs of *-ito/a*, and how they are distributed in different varieties of Spanish (e.g. Bradley and Smith 2011, Callebaut 2011, Castillo Valenzuela and Ortiz Ciscomani 2013, Fontanella 1962, Gaardner 1966, Horcajada 1988, Jaeggli 1980, Miranda 1999, Norrmann-Vigil 2012, Rojas 1977). Other research deals with how diminutive formation can be described in different theoretical frameworks (i.e. Ambadiang 1996, 1997, Bermúdez-Otero 2007, Bradley and Smith 2011, Castro 1998, Colina 2003, Crowhurst 1992, Eddington 2002, Elordieta and Carreiras 1996, Miranda 1999, Norrmann-Vigil 2012, Smith 2011, Stephenson 2004). Any attempt to categorize or systematize linguistic data ultimately encounters unusual instances that fail to fit into the general pattern. In the present paper, I will use two diminutive forms as a starting point for the ensuing discussion: *Joselito* and *calentito*. Rather than toss them aside as mere exceptions, I will show that they give insight into some interesting patterns that have escaped the attention of many researchers who have written on Spanish diminutives.

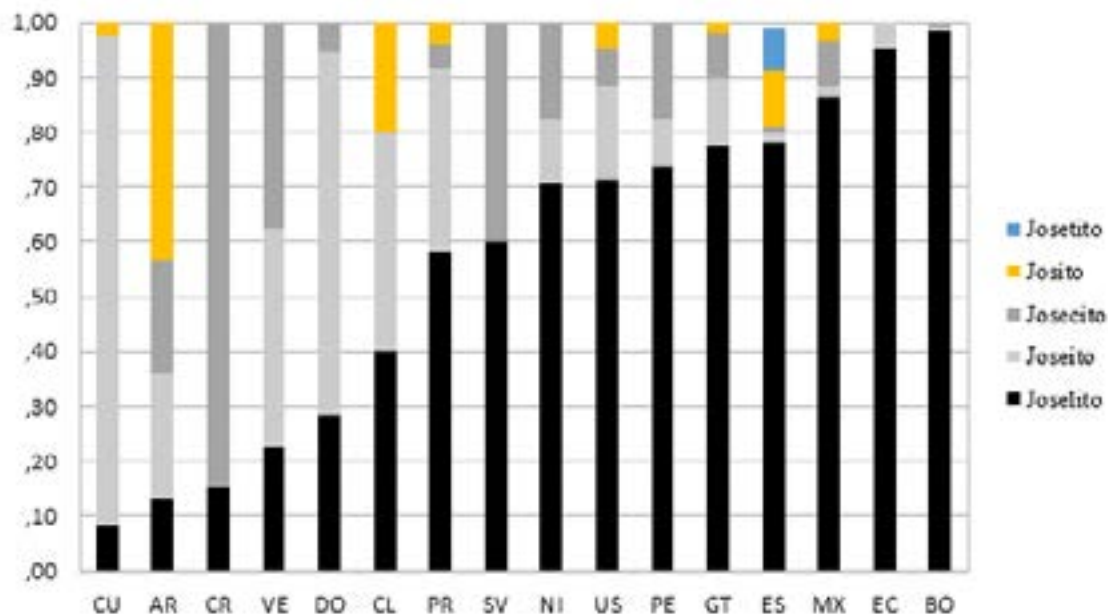
## *Joselito* ‘Joseph’

The vast majority of Spanish words that take the *-ito/a* suffix apply one of its common allomorphs: *-ito/a*, *-cito/a*, *-ecito/a*. *Josecito* and *Josito* fall into this category, but *Joselito* is the exception because it either takes a different allomorph, *-lito*, or is based on a word with /l/ in the stem. In

this section I document the existence of this allomorph, then propose an origin for *Joselito* and suggest that it may have been the first word with this diminutive form, which then served as a model for other words that apply this diminutive allomorph.

As already mentioned, *José* has a number of diminutives: *Josecito*, *Josito*<sup>1</sup>, *Joselito*, *Joseíto*. According to the *The Corpus del Español-Web/Dialects*, the distribution of these variants in Spanish speaking countries may be summarized as in Table 1<sup>2</sup>. The first thing to notice is that *Joselito* is actually a very common form, common enough that the *Real Academia Española* (1911:33, 1931:25) notes its existence in some dialects. Some of these instances may not be diminutives of *José*, *per se*, but a lexicalized proper name. For example, the singer José Jiménez Fernández is known as *Joselito*, never *Josecito*. Overall, *Joselito* comprises 65% of the instances in the corpus, and dominates the other variants in 10 of the 16 countries listed in the graph.

Table 1. Proportion of diminutives of *José* by country<sup>3</sup>



AR Argentina, BO Bolivia, CL Chile, CO Colombia, CR Costa Rica, CU Cuba), DO Dominican Republic, EC Ecuador, ES Spain, GT Guatemala, HN Honduras, MX Mexico, NI Nicaragua, PA Panama, PE Peru, PR Puerto Rico, PY Paraguay, SV El Salvador, US United States, UY Uruguay, VE Venezuela

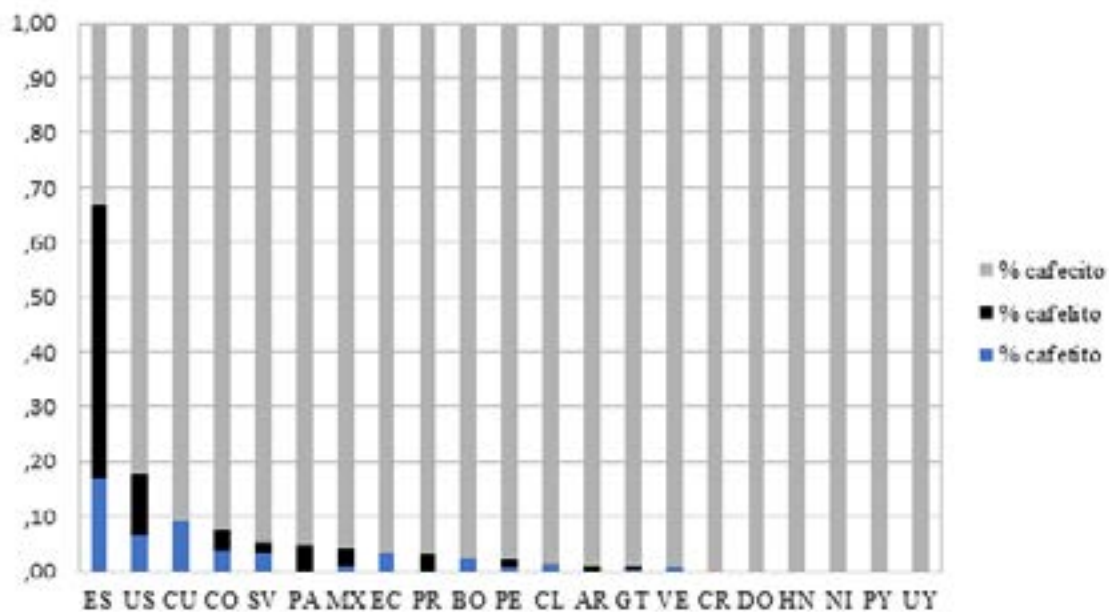
<sup>1</sup> *Josito* may be the diminutive of *Jóse* rather than *José*.

<sup>2</sup> Countries with fewer than 10 diminutives of *José* are not included in the table.

<sup>3</sup> Number of million words in the corpus by country and number of diminutives of *José*: 169.4, 53 Argentina, 39.3, 122 Bolivia, 66.2, 5 Chile, 166.4, 119 Colombia, 29.5, 13 Costa Rica, 63.2, 86 Cuba, 33.6, 127 Dominican Republic, 52.3, 41 Ecuador, 426.5, 345 Spain, 54.2, 49 Guatemala, 35.1, 1 Honduras, 245.9, 147 México, 32.3, 17 Nicaragua, 22.2, 3 Panama, 107.2, 95 Peru, 32.1, 24 Puerto Rico, 29.7, 7 Paraguay, 36.4, 10 El Salvador, 166.0, 105 USA, 38.7, 5 Uruguay, 98.1, 93 Venezuela.

The *-lito* allomorph is rarely mentioned in the literature on Spanish diminutives, which makes *Joselito* seem like the lone black sheep. However, *-lito* is not exclusive to *José*. *Cafelito* ‘coffee’ is another diminutive with this allomorph, which is found in varying degrees in the Spanish speaking world, but principally in Spain (Table 2)<sup>4</sup>. Unlike *Joselito*, which dominates other alternative diminutives in many countries, *cafelito* is a fairly uncommon form in Spanish. There are only 228 cases of *cafelito/s* in the previously cited corpus, in contrast to 1822 instances of *cafecito/s* which is the most frequent diminutive of *café*.

Table 2. Proportion of diminutives of *café* by country.



Given the existence of *Joselito* and *cafelito*, it appears that *-lito* attaches to words ending in tonic /e/. Are there cases where it applies to other words such as *bebé* ‘baby’, *comité* ‘committee’, *puré* ‘puree’, *bisté* ‘beef steak’, *bufé* ‘buffet’, *quinqué* ‘kerosene lamp’, *chalé* ‘chalet’? If that is true, what we are dealing with is an uncommon allomorph that only applies to a handful of words, most of which are not highly frequent themselves. This means that they are not likely to appear in a corpus, even one that contains two billion words. This is precisely what I found. However, there are about a trillion words of Spanish on the internet,<sup>5</sup> and searching it with Google, I uncovered a number of other words with

<sup>4</sup> Total number of diminutives by country: AR 165, BO 40, CL 67, CO 96, CR 93, DO 48, EC 87, ES 372, GT 177, HO 45, MX 228, NI 64, PA 21, PE 133, PR 33, PY 14, SV 56, US 178, UY 32, VE 166.

<sup>5</sup> You can estimate this by searching Google for any Spanish word and getting its frequency (A). Obtain the frequency of the same word in the *Corpus of Web-based Global Spanish* (B) then apply this formula:  $(A \times 2,000,000,000) / B$ .

-lito<sup>6</sup>. The examples here and elsewhere in the paper are cited as they appear, and no corrections have been made:

(1) a. *Bebelito*:

Domingo de relax con mi bebelito.

Muchisimas gracias el bebelito me roba mucho tiempo.

b. *Comitelito*:

Todos los que tengais dudas sobre esto o querais comprobarlo me gustaría que fuerais uno por uno de los miembros del comitelito.

Un comitelito presidido por Pineda...

c. *Purelito*:

Una vez hecho purelito rico, hay que verter el resultado sobre la primera mitad de los fideos.

Cenamos, cómo no, el consabido purelito de verduras y el pollo con aceitunas.

d. *Bistelito*:

Un bistelito fino que se le daba a los niños para que lo acabaran convirtiendo en una bola de carne que escupían a escondidas.

Con un filete de ternera (es decir un medio bisté o bistelito)...

e. *Bufelito*:

Y eso es otra la comida, bufelito para todos para tener donde elegir.

f. *Quinquelito*:

Precioso quinquelito en cristal de colores.

Viejo quinquelito con azas de madera procedente de londres color anbar.

g. *Chalelito*:

La había invitado a pasar unos días en un chalelito que tenía en una urbanización de aquella sierra.

It is unfortunate that the country of origin of the writers of these sentences is not readily available from these search results. I did, however, find one clue as to where diminutives of this sort may be more common. Fasla (1999) notes that they are frequent in certain areas of Peninsular Spanish. This concurs with the high frequency of *Joselito* and *cafelito* in Spain as discussed above. Fasla also indicates that

<sup>6</sup> Search performed on Oct. 12, 2015.

-*lito* not only applies to words ending in tonic /e/<sup>7</sup>, but any tonic vowel. Following this lead I found the following on the internet:

(2) a. *Sofalito* 'couch':

Y os digo sofalito porque en una de mis cafeterías preferidas hay un sofá en un rincón donde los rayos del sol y el olor a mar...

Una gozada, ya de relaxing en el sofalito, tener estas impresionantes vistas..

b. *Mamalita* 'mommy':

Mamalita, gracias por tu eterna sonrisa y tu cariño inmenso.

c. *Papalito* 'daddy':

Y además, exige a sus nietos que le llamen «Papalito».

El ocupaba un gran lugar en mi corazón te amo papalito.

The reason that *-lito* has not been discussed much in the literature on diminutives may be that it is not widely used. Additionally, it applies to nouns ending in a stressed vowel, and as a result does not have a large pool of potential words to attach to.

I would like to hypothesize that the creation of the *-lito* suffix may have been originated as a diminutive of *José*. One possibility is that *Joselito* is simply the diminutive of *Joselo* rather than *José*. Of course, *Joselo* may be derived from *José* itself or may come from *José Luís*. If *Joselito* emerged as a diminutive of *Joselo*, and then became more frequent than its base form, that would lead to a situation in which it became less closely associated to its base form (Hay 2003). As a result, it could have been reanalyzed as the diminutive of *José* rather than *Joselo* at a later stage. This reanalysis would further be aided by the fact that *José* is much more frequent than *Joselo*.

However, there are some difficulties with the idea that *Joselo* is the base form for *Joselito*. First of all, *Joselo* is a much less common name than *José*, while *Joselito* is extremely common in Spanish. The *Corpus del Español-Web/Dialects*<sup>8</sup> which is comprised of two billion words contains 31,501 instances of *José* and only 550 of *Joselo*. In addition, there are 949 instances of *Joselito* in the corpus, and it would be odd indeed for the diminutive of a proper name to have more instances than the unaffixed name it is derived from.

<sup>7</sup> There are even instances of it applying to words ending in atonic /e/ as well: *cochelito*.

<sup>8</sup> Available at: <http://www.corpusdelespanol.org>

An alternative explanation is also possible. The *Corpus del Español-Web/Dialects* indicates that the most common word following *José* is *Luís*. Given the frequent appearance of /l/ after *José*, *-lito* may have arisen as a variant of *-cito* (*Josecito*). An innovation such as this is not completely unexpected. *José* is a proper noun and hypocoristics, nicknames, *gentilicios* and diminutives of proper names tend to be very phonetically inventive in Spanish:

- (3) Araceli > Chela
- Armando > Nando
- Carmen > Camucha
- Federico > Kiko
- Gregorio > Goyo
- Isabel > Chabela
- Jesús > Chuy
- José > Pepe
- Pedro > Perico
- Dolores > Lolita, Lola
- Carlos > Carlitos
- Manuel > Manolito, Manolo
- Madrid > madrileño
- Granada > garnatís
- Jaén > gienense

Regardless of the origins of *-lito*, it also appears in other words ending in a stressed vowel. Among the most frequent Spanish words ending in a stressed vowel, we find *José*, *mamá*, *papá*, *bebé*, *café*, *comité*, *puré*, *sofá*, *chalé*, *bisté*, *bufé*, and *quiqué*. Of these, only *José* is a completely native Spanish word. *Mamá* and *papá* adopted word final stress due to French influence in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century (Corominas 1987: 376, 438). In like manner, *bebé*, *chalé*, *bufé*, and *quiqué* are also borrowings from French, while *café* was borrowed from Italian, and *bisté* from English<sup>9</sup>.

Judging by the two available historical corpora of Spanish, *Corpus del Español* (Davies 2002) and *Corpus Diacrónico del Español* (CORDE, Real Academia Española n.d.), *café* is first attested in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and *sofá* in the 18<sup>th</sup>, while the first occurrences of *comité*, *puré*, *chalé*, *bisté*, *bufé*, and *quiqué* are in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. As far as the diminutive forms of these words are concerned, only two are documented. *Joselito* appears, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and *cafelito* in the 20<sup>th</sup>.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. <http://dle.rae.es>

Given these data, I would like to suggest a possible scenario for the development of the *-lito* allomorph. *Joselito* was probably the first *-lito* diminutive. Phonetic change is known to apply to words of high frequency first, and *José* is the most frequent of the words that take *-lito*. In *Corpus del Español* it appears 11,088 times while *mamá*, *papá*, and *bebé* have 2275, 2676, and 298 instances respectively. Of course, in the spoken register *José* probably does not hold such a wide margin over *mamá*, *papá*, and *bebé*, but *bebé* and the finally stressed versions of *mamá* and *papá* have only coexisted with *José* since the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, before that *mamá* and *papá* had penultimate stress and *bebé* had not been adopted yet.

Another reason why *Joselito* is the most likely nucleus of change is that in comparison with other words that take this allomorph, *Joselito* is the most widely distributed (Table 1). That is, it has existed long enough to become spread throughout the Spanish speaking world. *Cafelito* is much less frequent, and *-lito* diminutives of the other words under consideration do not appear in the *Corpus of Web-based Global Spanish*, CORDE, or the *Corpus del español*.

The fact that *cafelito* is the second most frequent diminutive with *-lito* coincides with the historical data. *Café* had entered the language by the 17<sup>th</sup> century and is a good candidate to be analogically influenced by *José* > *Joselito*. *Sofá*, on the other hand, entered Spanish at a later date than *café* and ends in stress /a/ rather than /e/. What is more, In *Corpus del Español* there are 2697 instances of *café* in the 18<sup>th</sup> through 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, but only 540 of *sofá*.

The rarity of *-lito* diminutives of *mamá*, *papá*, *bebé*, *comité*, *puré*, *sofá*, *chalé*, *bisté*, *bufé*, and *quinqué* may be explained this way. While *José* existed alongside the finally stressed versions of *mamá* and *papá* from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, these words do not share the same word-final tonic vowel, which may have retarded the analogical application of a *-lito* diminutive to these words. The same is true of *sofá* which entered the language later. However, *bebé* and *café* both share stressed /e/ with *José*, but since *café* was adopted into Spanish before *bebé*, *cafelito* is more advanced than *bebelito* which appears on the scene much later. By the 19<sup>th</sup> century when *comité*, *puré*, *chalé*, *bisté*, and *bufé* were adopted into the language, they had two analogs that they could be influenced by: *José* > *Joselito* and *café* > *cafelito*. Their relatively recent addition into Spanish may be the reason they only occasionally take the *-lito* allomorph. Their lower frequency could be another (*José* 11,088, *café* 2697, *comité* 1585,



*puré* 46, *chalé(t)* 123, *bisté(c)* 24, *bufé(t)* 5). It is interesting to note that one occasionally encounters unstressed /e/ final words with *-lito* such as *coche* > *cochelito*. This suggests that this suffix is expanding to apply to a wider variety of words. Perhaps this represents a new analogy with the colloquial *Jóse*.

One question that remains is whether there was any phonetic motivation for the new allomorph, a function that *-ito/a*, *-cito/a*, *-ecito/a* could not serve. One idea is that the /l/ in *-lito* is needed to break up the hiatus between the word-final vowel of the base word and the initial vowel of the suffix (Fernández 1978). However, this argument is not very convincing. The /s, ə/ in the allomorph *-cito/a* serves that role quite well already, and hiatus is tolerated in a few diminutives such as *papaíto* and *cafeíto*.

### Josetito

To this point I have argued that the *-lito* allomorph of the diminutive suffix *-ito* has too often been overlooked. However, an even less frequent, and as a result, even less discussed allomorph is *-tito* as in *Josetito* and *cafetito*. Just like *-lito* it appears in base words ending in a stressed vowel. *Josetito* does not appear in CORDE or the *Corpus del Español*, but *cafetito* is found in both corpora in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Martínez Amador (1985: 232) noticed it and formulated a rule of diminutive formation that makes an epenthesis on a [t] or [l] in words such as *Joselito*, *cafelito*, *cafetito*. If you refer back to Table 1 you will see that the only country that appears to use *Josetito* is Spain. *Cafetito* is a quite infrequent variant (Table 2), and occurs principally in Spain also. However, a search on the internet reveals a number of other words ending in *-tito/a*.<sup>10</sup>

(4) a. Bebetito:

Habia una vez una bebetita que le conocio a un bebetito y le dijo al bebe: -Bebetito me das un besito...

Mi bebetito se llama Matias ♥ tiene 21+5 comencé a sentir una burbujita como a la semana 15...

b. Comitetito:

Señores si el grandioso comitetito delos areneros no va a gastar en traer discomovil y orquestas sino que en

<sup>10</sup> Search carried out on Oct. 13, 2015 via Google. Country of origin is not available.

unas pinches luces de disco...

c. Chaletito:

Chaletito con teja todo en una planta distribuido en terraza...

Los tres cerditos y su nuevo chaletito.

d. Sofatito:

Echa de menos ver una buena peli en el sofatito con unas palomitas y con alguien especial.

Estamos leyendo el periodico en el sofatito.

e. Papatito:

Te amo mucho papatito.

Papatito, a quien guardábamos inmenso respeto, era particularmente serio aunque muy cariñoso. Lo recuerdo sentado en su sillón...

f. Mamatita:

Recordando a Mamatita, Mamabuela, Tio Jorge, Eladio Cueva, Maria Mora

Con mis niñas preciosas solo falto la mamatita.

g. Tabutito 'taboo':

En cualquier caso, ese tabutito marginal me parece más llevadero que nuestros fundamentales tabutazos.

There are two things that make *-tito* look like a very recent innovation. First, it isn't attested until the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Second, it is not widespread across the Spanish speaking world. *Cafetito* is attested in the corpora, while *Josetito* is not. Additionally *cafetito* is found in more countries than *Josetito* (Tables 1 and 2) which makes me suspect it may have been the source of the innovation. If the source of the /l/ in *Joselito* was *Luís*, what caused the /t/ in *cafetito*? The corpora show a number of words attested in the 19<sup>th</sup> century with /t/ following *café*: *cafetero* 'coffee, adj.' *cafetera* 'coffee maker,' *cafetal* 'coffee tree grove,' *cafeto* 'coffee tree,' and *cafetín*<sup>11</sup> 'coffee, dim.' Perhaps this is the source of the /t/ in *-tito*.

What I have tried to establish in this section is that *-lito* and *-tito* are allomorphs of the diminutive suffix *-ito*, that have not received much attention in the literature on diminutives. This is principally due to the fact that their application is limited to a small set of Spanish words ending in stressed vowels. In addition, in most varieties of

<sup>11</sup> This is formed with the suffix *-tín* (e.g. *poquitín*, *festín*, *chupetín*).

Spanish words to which *-lito* may apply are formed with the *-cito* allomorph rather than *-lito* or *-tito*, the only exception being *Joselito* which is fairly widespread. I suggest that *Joselito* may have been the first word to which the new allomorph *-lito* was applied followed by *cafelito* (and possibly *bebelito*, *mamalito*, and *papalito*, although they are not attested early on due to their use in more familiar registers that the corpora do not include). These words served as analogs for the diminutive forms of other words with stressed final vowels that made their appearance in the language principally in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, such as *sofalito* and *quinquelito*. Of course, further investigation is needed to establish this more concretely.

### **Calentito ‘hot’**

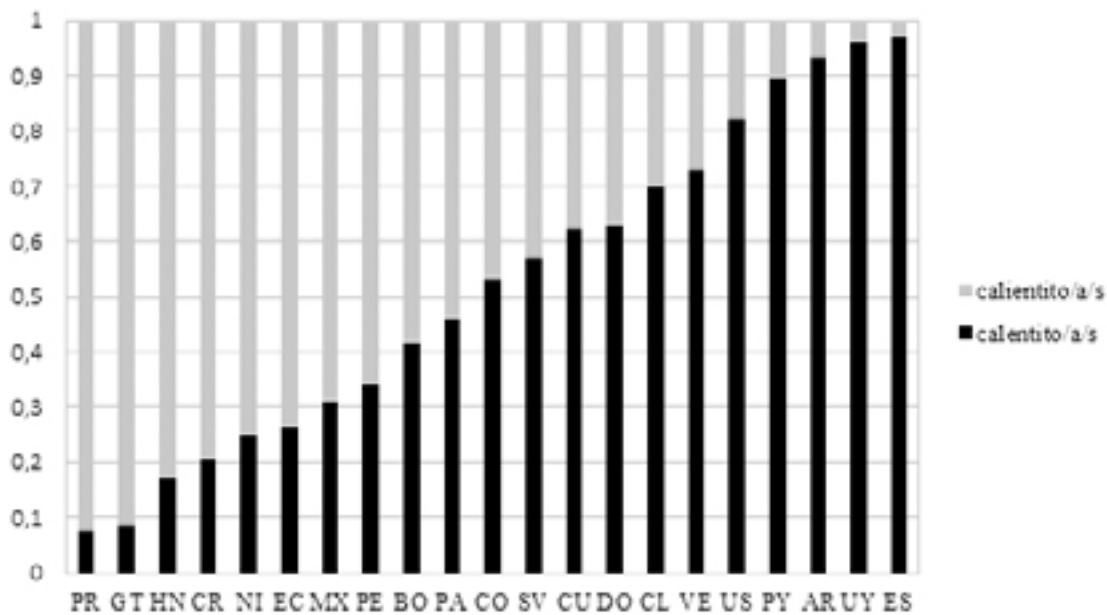
In Spanish, the diphthongs [ie] and [we] often alternate with [e] and [o] when the base word is suffixed: *diente/dentista*, *huérfano/orfanato*. The fact that this creates an alternation between a stressed and an unstressed diphthong, in contrast to the expected historical alternation between stressed diphthongs and unstressed mid-vowels, can be ascribed to analogy (Bermúdez-Otero 2013). However, diminutives with *-ito/a* retain the diphthongs (e.g. *pueblito/pueblocito*, *dientito/dientecito*). In a corpus search of 50.8 million words, Eddington (2002) encountered 120 diminutives that are based on words with the diphthongs [je] and [we] in the stem. Of these, only two turn the diphthong into a monophthong and go against the general trend: *independentita* and *calentito/a/s*. The first of these, *independentita* is most likely not a diminutive, but the combination of *independiente* + *-ita*, where the *-ita* indicates country of origin or ‘follower of’ as in *Israelita* ‘ancient Israelite’, *Vietnamita* ‘Vietnamese’, *Jesuita* ‘Jesuit’. Accordingly an *independentita* is one who believes in gaining political independence. This leaves *calentito* as the sole odd man out, although it is important to note that *calientito/a/s* was also attested in the cited corpus.

In the case of *Joselito* which I discussed in the previous sections, I forged an explanation for the unusual allomorph it contains. As far as the unusual lack of diphthong in *calentito* is concerned, I am admittedly perplexed. However, an important starting point in answering this question is examining its usage and placing it into its historical perspective. An important observation is found in the *Corpus of Web-based Global Spanish*. It contains 2608 instances of the odd *calentito/a/s*

and 1049 of the more expected *calientito/a/s*. The distribution of these two variants by country appears in Table 3. In 11 of the 21 countries *calentito/a/s* is actually the most frequent diminutive which indicates that, although it is unusual in respect to its lack of diphthong, it is by no means uncommon.

Historically, *calentito/a/s* appears in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the *Corpus del español*, and in CORDE there are a few instances from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. (Instances of the diphthong-containing diminutive *calientito/a/s* are attested in both corpora from the 19<sup>th</sup> century as well.) *Calentito* is not found in the first edition of the *Diccionario de la lengua castellana* (DRAE, Real Academia Española 1780), but makes its first appearance in the 1939 edition with the definition ‘recent’ (e.g. *Aquí va, calentito, recién copiado de el sitio web de Greenpeace Argentina* ‘Here is goes, hot off the press, just copied from the Greenpeace Argentina web site’)<sup>12</sup>.

Table 3. Proportion of diminutives of caliente by country.



Although the lack of diphthong in *calentito* seems to be the sole exception in contemporary usage, historically it was accompanied by others. The 1780 DRAE contains *ceguecito* ‘blind’ and *corpecito* ‘body’. The 1852 edition of the DRAE contains *vejecito* ‘old’, *corpecito*, and *ceguecito*. The 1939 version contains *vejecito*, *portecita* ‘door’, *ternecito* ‘tender’, *fontecita* ‘fountain’, *ceguecito*, *merendita* ‘lunch’, and of course *calentito*. If we push back in time, and broaden the search of the corpora

<sup>12</sup> I was not able to consult the 1925 edition.

to include some of the more antiquated diminutive suffixes such as *-zuelo*, *-c/zillo* we find that the early instances of diminutives from the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries had no diphthongs: *ternezuello*, *fonteziella*, *portezuela*, *vejezuela*, *terrezuela*, *pedrezuella*. In the late 15<sup>th</sup> century *-ito* and *-ico* became popular (Urrutia and Álvarez 1988:127), and what we observe in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries is the emerging of diminutives with diphthongs and their coexistence with the older non-diphthongized variants: *pedrezuela/piedrezuela*, *piedrezica/pedrecica*, *terrecilla/tierrecilla*, *portecilla/puertecilla*, *vejecito/viejecito*.

By the 19<sup>th</sup> century the diphthongized forms had mostly overtaken their monophthong rivals. However, the alternation in diminutives between forms with diphthongs and those with monophthongs was noticed in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. For example, Selva (1914, p. 27) observed that the diminutives with diphthongs were becoming more common and ousting the forms without diphthongs which he considered more correct (e.g. *merendita*, *calentito*). In an earlier work, Selva (1906, p. 265–269) condemned *calientito* and *merendita* and prescribed *calentito* and *merendita* in their place. However, with respect to words with [je] and [we] in the stem he also prescribed many others with diphthongs such as *cieguecito*, *nuevecito*, *hierbecita* ‘herb’, *puestecito* ‘post’, and *piedrecita* ‘stone’. This suggests that it was not the appearance of a diphthong or monophthong in a word that was being judged. Instead, the judgment was on a word-by-word basis; certain diminutives were considered correct with diphthongs while others were not.

In 1919 Janer (2013/1919, p. 69) prescribed diminutives such as *ceguecito* without diphthongs while at the same time recognizing that diminutives with diphthongs are admitted by the *Real Academia Española*. A few decades later Fernández (1942, p. 55–6) noted that, in usage, sometimes the diphthong is maintained in the stem, and sometimes it is not. He cites alternations such as *calentito/calientito* and *corpecito/cuerpecito*, *vejecito/viejecito*, but refers to the DRAE to demonstrate that *calentito* is preferred over *calientito*. More recent works make no mention of diminutives with monophthongs (Martínez Amador, 1985, p. 233, *Real Academia Española*, 2010, p. 167).

At this point it would be tempting to conclude that diminutives with diphthongs simply prevailed over their monophthong counterparts, which would mean that *calentito* is the sole survivor of its kind. However, diminutive usage on the internet suggests otherwise. The following

examples demonstrate that monophthong diminutives are still alive<sup>13</sup>.

(5) a. Vejito

Tengo un equipo vejito, que anda medio medio.

Hospitales de Villarrica, Vunco y Toltén también recibieron la visita del Vejito Pascuero.

b. Movimentito ‘*movement*’

Era cuestion de tiempo y su movimentito pejiano disfrazado tambien ya caduco...

Agarrando cuidadosamente y quitandola,obviamente le salio mal,dio un movimentito en falso y la esfinge lo ataco...

c. Gobernito ‘*government*’

El decretito del gobernito...

Con nostalgia se recuerda como antes a este gobernito de Hugo Cabezas los estudiantes utilizaban las plazas públicas...

d. Sentimentito ‘*feeling*’

El sentimentito es mutuito...

Se te escapo un sentimentito anti EU...

e. Invernito ‘*winter*’

Allá en España llega veranito pero en Chile llega invernito.

Vaya invernito que llevamos...

f. Recentito ‘*recent*’

Poco voy a decir del disco pues esta recentito.

Me lo estudio por la mañana para tenerlo recentito...

g. Neblita ‘*fog*’

Posee la habilidad de hacer una neblita toxica...

Salgo para la ruta desde la granjita con una neblita muy densa que no me deja ver mas de 10 metros...

h. Desertito ‘*desert*’

Ay ay mi desierto, desertito con sus colores tan bonitos...

Hemos atravesado otro desertito, pero seguimos siendo fans del Death Valley.

i. Festita ‘*party*’

Besos mas tardecita mami me lleva a tu festita...

Hoy nos vamos a la festita de Juan.

<sup>13</sup> Search of the internet using Google, Nov. 10. 2015.

- j. Celito Lindo '*beautiful sky*'  
El clásico Celito Lindo cantado en el rival de Chivas...  
Bailando al ritmo de la música que fue desde un México lindo, pasando por el Celito Lindo y una mezcla de música jarocho . . .
- k. Despertito '*awake*'  
Pero ahora que estoy bien despertito y he tomado mi cafe...  
Estoy muy despertito a pesar de ser las 3:40 am . . .
- l. Ceguecito  
Ya no más, ceguecito hermano . . .  
Ceguecita y desamparada yo he visto a la madre mía mi corazón se moría cuando vi con la penita que una limosna ella pedía.
- m. Merendita  
Aquí encontraras receticas para hacerle merenditas para los chiquitines de la casa.  
Recomiendo llevar merendita, una lonchera y se amarra en el centro del kayak para tener energías a la vuelta.
- n. Netito '*grandchild*'  
Para mi son mis netitos tan querido por ellos doy mi vida y tambien ellos me dan mucha fuerza.  
Besos abuelito, se bueno con tus netitos.
- o. Novecito  
Smokon de color negro novecito sin estrenar.  
Vendo este ZTE open de movistar novecito de todo en su caja y acesorios.
- p. Portecita  
Abrió portecita y logro ver a través de ella un hermoso jardín.  
Ala perra le hemos echo una portecita, en la puerta de aluminio que da al jardín . . .
- q. Fortecito '*strong*'  
No soy gordo soy fortecito.  
Después de un desayuno fortecito . . .
- r. Esforcito '*effort*'  
Otro esforcito más y llegas al 5.  
Hacete un "esforcito" y metele al lapiz como pa recalentar la mina. . .

## s. Almorcito 'lunch'

Despues nos fuimos a comer un almorcito . . .

Compartiendo un almorcito, con mi esposa y mi beba.

While most words with diphthongs in the base word maintain the diphthong in the diminutive form, *calentito* is unusual because it does not. *Calentito* stands out, not because it is the only word of its kind, but because it is arguably the most frequent diminutive to not retain the diphthong of the base word. In one way it is not surprising to find monophthong diminutives. Spanish morphology is replete with morphological relationships in which the diphthong of the base word is turned into a monophthong in the derived form: *puerta* > *portero* 'doorman', *prefiere* 'he prefers' > *preferir* 'to prefer', *desierto* > *desértico* 'desert-like', *diente* 'tooth' > *dentado* 'big toothed', *bueno* 'good' > *bondad* 'goodness'. At the same time many derived words maintain the diphthong of the base: *hueso* 'bone' > *huesoso* 'bony', *pueblacho* 'ugly town', *nuevísimo* 'very new', *fiestero* 'party goer'. What is more, there are a handful of words where both outcomes are possible: *huérfano* 'orphan' > *orfandad*, *huerfanidad* 'orphanhood', *mueble* 'piece of furniture' > *moblaje*, *mueblaje* 'set of furniture'. Given this state-of-affairs it not totally unexpected that some variation exists in the diminutives, and occasional exceptional monophthong form, such as those cited above, to be observed. What is unusual about *calentito*, on the other hand, is that it is the most frequent variant. Is there some motivating factor or is it fortuitous? I hope this discussion set the stage for further research into this issue.

### Conclusions

In the present paper I have investigated two diminutives in Spanish that appear to be exceptional. *Joselito* is unusual because it takes *-lito* rather than *-ito* or *-cito*. However, upon further inspection we see that *-lito* can be thought of as an allomorph of *-ito* that appears on words ending in a stressed vowel. Diminutives with *-lito* are found in historical and contemporary corpora. I hypothesize that *-lito* was first attached to *José*. From there, it spread to a near neighbor: *café*. As other borrowings with stressed final vowels entered the language, *-lito* became a new diminutive suffix, along with *-cito*, that could be applied to those new words as well. The allomorph *-tito* also applies to words



ending in tonic vowels. It is not as common as *-lito*, nor as widespread in the Spanish-speaking world, and appears to be used principally in Peninsular Spanish.

*Calentito* is unexpected due to the fact that it does not carry the diphthong over from *caliente*, which is what generally happens when a base word is turned into a diminutive. Historically, *calentito* is attested along with a number of other monophthong diminutives. In earlier stages of the language there was a great deal of variation between diminutives such as *vejecito* and *viejecito*. *Calentito* seems to be a holdout from a different time period. However, at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century some grammarians prescribed *calentito* and condemned *calientito*. Their preference for monophthong diminutives only applies to certain words, not to every diminutive based on a word containing a diphthong. Although the lack of diphthong in *Calentito* makes it unusual, it is not alone. In contemporary Spanish usage one can occasionally find *celito*, *festita*, *novecito* and *merendita* alongside *cielito*, *fiestita*, *nuevecito*, and *meriendita*, although the variants with monophthongs are much less common. As linguists have found, sometimes the most interesting aspects of a language are found by investigating the unusual rather than the commonplace linguistic forms.

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