The emotive meanings and functions of English 'diminutive' interjections in Twitter posts[1]

Dorota Lockyer

Interjections that are formally diminutives through the -ie/-y suffix (and plural -ies) have been mentioned briefly in passing but have not been previously studied, particularly as to their main pragmatic meanings and uses. On the basis of a corpus taken from the microblogging service Twitter, this study suggests the non-serious and emotive features of 'diminutive' interjections (DIs). The paper claims that DIs are not merely 'response cries', but serve as items employed by users on Twitter to convey various emotions and fulfil many functions depending on the context. It is argued that DIs can be considered forms of diminutives based on the notion that diminutives do not necessarily have to convey smallness (cf. Schneider 2003; Dressler and Merlini Barbaresi 2001) but rather the feature of 'non-seriousness', which could be labelled as metaphorical smallness.

Keywords*: interjections, social media, emotion, DIs, diminutive meaning, Twitter*

1. Introduction

Interjections that have the diminutive *–y/-ie* (or plural[2] *-ies*) suffix, such as *whoopsie*, *wowie* and *owie*, occur extremely rarely in most written sources. A brief survey of Google Books and online newspapers shows a striking lack of such forms; similarly, a corpus search of the *Corpus of Historical American English* (COHA; Davies 2010–) or the *Corpus of Contemporary American English* (COCA; Davies 2008-) on average brings up fewer than five hits per item. However, data from the microblogging service Twitter suggests that 'diminutive' forms of interjections (henceforth DIs) are used not as infrequently in written language as might have been previously thought, as is seen in the following examples in (1) from Twitter (www.twitter.com; emphasis in bold mine):

(1) a. Bosses love it when you show up a half hour late and just say "**whoopsie**." (accessed 28 April 2014[3])
b. **Wowee** I got so much more positive feedback on that iggy thing than I thought like I'm blown away haha (accessed 28 May).

In previous studies of diminutives and interjections, DIs have received little attention. Schneider (2003: 226-227) mentions *oh goodie* as a diminutive form of an interjection, but concentrates instead on an exhaustive study of synthetic diminutives formed from nouns. Merlini Barbaresi (2000: 324) mentions the *-ie* suffix as a class-changing feature and gives *good -> goody* as an example of the suffix creating a DI. DIs have also been mentioned briefly in other research, most often linking DIs to child speech (e.g.,Franck et al. 2010) and jazz jargon (see Hart 1932). Although considerably lower in frequency than their base interjections, the various forms of DIs raise questions regarding their meanings and functions in English tweets posted on Twitter.

In this paper, I focus on English DIs used on Twitter. I endeavor to show how DIs are used as linguistic devices to display emotion in various contexts. DIs often appear as internet slang and humorously or satirically, conveying both positive and negative connotations,

which may explain the reason for the exclusion of these features from newspapers and (semi-)formal or scripted speech. For this study, I have included *whoopsy, whoopsies, oopsy, oopsies, owie, ouchies* and *wowie* (along with orthographic variants) due to frequency. Some of the DIs I have excluded are, but are not limited to, *(oh) dearie (me), (oh) goodie* and *righty-ho*. The main question of this paper aims to fill the gap in the research of DIs by examining the functions and emotive meanings DIs in a corpus of tweets. How are they used on Twitter and what emotions do they display? I do not aim to compare DIs to their non-diminutive forms (NDIs) in this paper except when relevant; rather, I hope that the results may be used for future studies of the suffix and the comparison of DIs and NDIs.

The paper, thus, is divided as follows: following the introduction, I provide a background discussion of diminutives and interjections in general. In section 3, the paper discusses Twitter as a form of public conversation, which is followed by methodology in section 4. Section 5 presents quantitative results, while section 6 analyzes the data through a qualitative approach of specific DI meanings, particularly within their humorous, (semi-) serious and negative contexts. In section 7 I include some final considerations regarding DI-NDI forms. Section 8 ends the paper with concluding remarks.

2. What do we know about DIs?

DIs are formed from two main parts: the base interjection (e.g.,*wow, whoops*) and the diminutive suffix (e.g.,*-y/-ie*), which I take up in turn in 2.1, 2.2 and summarize in 2.3.

2.1 *Interjections*

Interjections have been defined in various ways (see Ameka 1992 and Gehweiler 2010 for more in-depth overviews); for example, Ameka (1992: 106) writes that "interjections are relatively conventionalised vocal gestures (or more generally, linguistic gestures) which express a speaker's mental state, action or attitude or reaction to a situation." The broadness and vagueness of this definition illustrates the ongoing difficulty in defining interjections. However, although some aspects of interjections are controversial (particularly the "definition of what constitutes an interjection and how they can be distinguished from other word classes" (Forster et al. 2012: 123), scholars generally agree that interjections are divided into two groups: 'primary' and 'secondary'. Primary interjections (e.g.,*oh*) are those which express emotions, generally lack denotative meaning but rather have pragmatic meaning (cf. Biber et al. 1999: 1082); they are also called 'response cries' (Goffman 1981: 136). Secondary interjections, on the other hand, often derive from syntagms (e.g.,*blimey* < *God blind me*) or full lexical items (e.g.,*jeez* < *Jesus*). The main differences between primary and secondary interjections can be placed "with respect to the following four properties: lexical opacity, lack of formal lexical integration (i.e. transparency), lack of meaning (motivationality) and lack of any concrete referential potential (motivation)" (Reber 2012: 25-26). The DIs discussed in this paper derive from interjections that are typically considered primary interjections, specifically *whoops, oops, wow, ouch* and *ow*.

The fact that interjections function as 'response cries' in some contexts but "have social meaning and express affective attitudes or reactions" (Aijmer 2004: 99) has caused some differing opinions regarding the functions of interjections. In literary written language, Taavitsainen (1998: 206) suggests that the "function of interjections is to enforce the emotive

loading" built by the author via emotive adjectives (e.g.,*happy*), verbs that express "subjective states of feeling" such as *love,* and so forth. As I will show later, tweeters also often build up the emotive loading of tweets through similar affective features. Goffman's observations also apply to many of the tweets under study; he considers interjections to function mainly as 'spill cries' (e.g.,*oops*) that show a loss of control, "threat startles such as 'eek', audible glee and surprise" (Aarsand and Aronssen 2009: 1557-1558). Goffman does not consider interjections to have social meaning but rather 'spill' from the speaker without much thought. I take the stance that the level of social meaning and affective attitudes expressed by interjections and the degree of interjections to which they function as 'response cries' depend primarily on the interplay of several contextual factors including non-verbal cues such as facial expressions and gestures, and also collocations, intensifiers, diminutives and other expressive features.

Interjections function to display emotion, and these emotions have differing connotations depending on the speaker. For example, Jovanović (2004: 22-23) lists twenty-one meanings, including anger (e.g.,*damn! zounds!*), annoyance (e.g.,*bother! ouch!*), approval (e.g.,*hurrah!*), contempt (e.g.,*bah! phooey!*), delight (e.g.,*goody! yippee!*), disgust (e.g.,*aargh! rot!*), enthusiasm (e.g.,*wahoo! zowie!*), fear (e.g.,*eeeek!*), pain (e.g.,*ow! ouch!*), surprise (e.g.,*wow! dear me!*) and wonder (e.g.,*wow!*). Each interjection can convey multiple meanings; for example, *wow* can express wonder and surprise (and arguably other emotions), while *ouch* can express pain or annoyance. They can be laced with sarcasm or sympathy; in sum, interjections "can be interpreted in various ways depending on the context, [making them] totally context-bound" (Taavitsainen 1998: 198).

2.2 *Diminutives and the -y/-ie suffix*

Diminutives also have been defined differently by various scholars, and examined across many languages (see, e.g.,Štekauer et al. 2013 for a typological survey). Some consider synthetic diminutives in English non-existent, very few in number or not diminutives at all, but rather hypocoristics (cf. Wierzbicka 2003) or 'playground' and slang words. For example, McCumber (2010: 126-127), following Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 1678), in her discussion of the slang suffix *-s,* mentions *onesies, favesies* and *for realsies.* The debate is too large to go into detail here (see Schneider 2003 for more about the status of English diminutives), but a reasonable definition is given by Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 1677), who define diminutives as "affixes which indicate small size and also, by extension, ones which (additionally or instead) mark the off-spring of animals, affection or informality, resemblance or imitation." Diminutives are not necessarily confined to suffixes, as analytic markers including *little* also form diminutives without affixes (cf. Schneider 2003).

Despite the preference of present-day English to form diminutives analytically, the *-ie/-y* suffix is quite common and has received scholarly attention. Bauer (1983: 244) claims that the *-ie/-y* diminutive suffix is productive and has produced diminutives perhaps hypocoristic or whimsical in nature, such as e.g.,*doggie, kitty, dolly*. Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 1677) claim that the *-ie/-y* suffix commonly occurs in pet names and children's language, where "the role of the suffix is to mark emotional attachment rather than small size." In this way, diminutives function in a similar way as interjections: they convey attitude that is highly dependent on the context and also the noun, and can express a range of emotions, ranging from affection (e.g.,'that's a cute little doggy') to contempt (e.g.,'isn't

your little wifie with you?'). Thus, the *-ie/-y* suffix is the main diminutive suffix used in forming diminutives with many emotive meanings.

Although diminutives have been established as items that convey various meanings, there are some differing opinions regarding the basic meanings of diminutives. In contrast to the cognitive linguistics view, particularly as expressed by Jurafsky (1996), that the meanings of diminutives are all derived from the semantic field of 'small' and are connected to children and women, Schneider (2013: 145) remarks that the main question is to discover, in context, which particular "meaning in the conceptual space is activated […] and relevant for its interpretation." In a similar vein, Dressler and Merlini Barbaresi (2001: 43-44) propose a "basic, common pragmatic feature [fictive] for both (specified as [non-serious] for diminutives)". They argue that although the English diminutive suffix *-y/-ie* has a child-centred focus in most contexts of use (e.g.,when used in addressing children, with features of endearment or familiarity), outside these speech situations the meaning of smallness does not apply. The diminutive meaning may signal contempt, as in example (2) given by Dressler and Merlini Barbaresi (2001: 47):

(2) I know a rough-ie when I see one. He is just one of those blokes who can't stay away from trouble.

Last, as McCumber (2010: 127) points out for the slang *-s* suffix, it is likely that diminutive suffixes do not necessarily "have a specific meaning but rather [they change] the register to [a] more casual or playful one," which can be reflected in the feature of non-seriousness. Non-seriousness with affective connotations seems to better explain examples such as those seen in (1).

2.3 *Summary*

To summarize the previous two subsections, interjections and diminutives are similar in the following ways:

- They express emotive meaning(s) ranging from positive (appreciative) to negative (depreciative).
- They are linguistic features that can express the mental state of a speaker, a speaker's attitude towards an action or referent, or a speaker's reaction to a situation.
- They are generally used in informal and casual speech and are commonly avoided in formal speech (perhaps with the exception of lexicalized diminutives including *droplet* and some primary interjections including *oh*).

The main differences lie in word-formation, use and prototypical function. While the prototypical or primitive function of diminutives is 'smallness' (Schneider 2003: 1), the prototypical "function of interjections is to express emotions" (Forster et al. 2012: 123). In particular, interjections are entire words and/or utterances (although not necessarily with lexical meaning), while diminutives essentially are suffixes that modify a noun, adjective or other part of speech. Therefore, the meaning of a diminutive is highly dependent on the base word and the context. In this way, interjections and diminutives are complementary. When interjections and the diminutive suffix are put together to form a DI, they form highly

emotive terms that are typically used in more casual contexts such as Twitter to display multiple emotive meanings.

3. Twitter

Founded in 2006, Twitter is a large data mine for innovative forms (cf. Diemer 2013: 22). Researchers have analyzed Twitter from various angles, such as emotion (see e.g.,Zappagivna 2011, González-Ibáñez et al. 2011), but to date they have not used it to analyze interjections or diminutives. Currently, Twitter rivals other social media sites including Facebook. Millions of tweets, some containing links and images, are posted per day on various subjects and topics. Typical users of Twitter (called 'tweeters') are individuals who post short updates about topics of interest and have 'followers' who are notified of new tweets. Tweeters can comment on, 'retweet' and 'favourite' other tweets. These tweets are usually written in informal language that is more similar to natural speech than other forms of written language. In this way, Twitter is "characterized by a strong sense of immediacy (similar to spoken discourse) and a conscious, but playful use of language with a strong interactional element" (Diemer 2013: 225). Also, since Twitter only allows 140 characters per tweet, the messages must be concise.

Unlike other forms of communication (e.g.,'real-life' talk or instant chat programs), there is no expectancy that one responds to another tweet or acknowledges it in any way (cf. Zappavigna 2011: 790). It is possible to reply to another's tweet by hitting the reply icon and/or using the character @ (e.g.,@username) and thereby engage in a 'conversation'. If the tweets are public, others may contribute to the conversation. Twitter conversation differs from real-life conversation in several ways, including by constraints on length and the time to think and write a reply (a reply could be made days later if one chose), and by the fact that the tweet is typed from either a mobile device[4] or other type of technology. By tweeting, the tweeter sends a message 'out there'; however, a reply maintains the illusion of a naturalistic conversation, particularly when tweeters are quickly responding to each other's tweets. In the Twitter data examined in this study, many of the tweets with DIs are single tweets without any responses, but several are a part of a conversation.

Additionally, tweeters may label their tweets with as many hashtags (#) as can fit in the character limit. Hashtags, defined by Zappavigna (2011: 792) as "typographic convention[s] used to mark the topic of a tweet," differ from tweets because while "a tweet is an instance of language use, […] a tag is language about language," which Zappavigna notes has an "affiliative function". For example, a tweet retrieved on 31 May included a link to a photo and the tweeter wrote: "work vestibule selfie #wow #rebellious #Wowee". Here, the tweeter added three hashtags, specifically #wow, #rebellious and #Wowee that marks the topic of the tweet (and the image as well). Sometimes, the hashtag is included in the content of the message (e.g.,the previous example could be changed to "work #vestibule selfie" or the like), which gives the hashtag two functions: as a topic marker and as a lexical item that is part of the tweet's main message. Therefore, I include hashtag instances in this study.

4. Data and methods

4.1 *The data*

The data used for this study is a corpus of tweets gathered through the online program Tweet Archivist. I set the program to archive all tweets containing a specific DI over a three- or four-day period twice in 2014 to create what I will refer to as 'Corpus 1' (retrieved in May/June) and 'Corpus 2' (retrieved in September/October). I chose this time period since three or four days should gather a well-rounded corpus from a number of tweeters who may not tweet every day. I chose to create the second corpus in order to validate and correlate the results from Corpus 1.

Tweet Archivist individually archives three selected words from Twitter (per subscription) over a certain period of time and provides some statistics. These include top words (the words most frequently counted by the program per archive), hashtags, images, languages, source of tweet, and user mentions. Because the Tweet Archivist program archived tweets where the username contained a DI but a DI was not used within the main message of the tweet, I manually deleted all of the tweets which contained DIs in usernames for what I term the 'cleaned corpus'. Some tweets were written mostly in a language other than English and these were deleted. I left the hashtag (e.g.,#oopsies) in the final count but deleted retweets.

It was also necessary to delete homophonous forms belonging to other parts of speech besides interjections: for example, *whoopsie, owie* and *oopsy* used as nouns (e.g.,'you made an oopsie' or 'you have an owie'), or *wowie* functioning as an adjective (e.g.,'a wowie, zowie novel'). The shortness of tweets caused difficulty in identifying the part of speech of the form in some cases. Furthermore, combinations such as 'maui wowie' (a type of drug) had to be removed since Tweet Archivist cannot distinguish between parts of speech or combinations. (I left combinations including 'wowie zowie' and 'whoopsy daisy' in the final count because although the DI was used in a combination, it still was an interjection.)

To protect tweeter identity, I removed all identifying features, particularly usernames and links to images. I inserted <image> where the original link was located and replaced the username with 'username1', 'username2', etc.

4.2 *Methodological considerations*

Schneider and Strubel-Burgdorf (2012: 30) provide seven principles for the analysis of diminutives, which I have attempted to follow throughout the course of this study. These generally come from a functional approach that utilizes empirical research, both qualitative and quantitative methods and examines each diminutive in context from corpora. I reproduce them below, but omit examples.

- Principle 1: The analysis should be empirical.
- Principle 2: Qualitative analysis should be combined with quantitative analysis.
- Principle 3: Quantitative analysis should be based on large electronic corpora.
- Principle 4: In qualitative analysis, diminutives should be examined in the context of the discourse unit they occur in.

- Principle 5: Sweeping generalizations are not helpful. As diminutives are subject to variation, differences across medium […] and situation should be taken into consideration. […]
- Principle 6: Each suffix merits an analysis in its own right.
- Principle 7: Each formation merits an analysis in its own right.

I deviate from these principles slightly to show the similarity of different formations (particularly orthographic variations) and attempt to provide some generalizations to link the DIs in this study together. And although I consider some quantitative results in section 5, the main focus of this study is to qualitatively suggest how the DIs are used in tweets and suggest their pragmatic functions from this larger corpus of data. Thus, for this study I use a descriptive functional framework with insights from semantics-pragmatics and discourse analysis; that is, I aim to study the connotations and functions of the DIs in context (the entire body of the tweet) and, when applicable, in a conversation. Because I interpret the data based on my observations, the DIs studied in this paper come from a second-order perspective. (Schneider and Strubel-Burgdorf 2012 observe that rating, perception and translation tasks performed by lay persons could be considered 'first-order morphology'; such a perspective would be supplemental for future studies.)

Since the interpretation of the data should not merely "rely on the analyst's intuitions concerning the presence/absence, the type, and degree of emotion […], we must look in the context (e.g.,in non-verbal gestures) or in the cotext for signals guaranteeing the presence of emotion" (Dressler and Merlini Barbaresi 2001: 29). My data does not come from spoken sources; thus, the 'gestures' that are examined in context include emoticons and other signals of humour or metaphorical smallness. An advantage of using tweets is the easy accessibility to a large number of examples, which are considerably more difficult to find in spoken discourse and other forms of written language. Also, I am not concerned with the cognitive processes or the inner mental state of the tweeter because that is a psychological issue that cannot be determined by examining purely linguistic data (Günthner 1997: 236), but examine the emotions and meanings displayed through the DIs. Last, an analysis of written (versus spoken) sources can be perceived as problematic due to a lack of 'naturalistic' markers such as hesitations and simultaneous speech; however, they are not directly relevant to the general study of diminutives or DIs (cf. Schneider and Strubel-Burgdorf 2012).

5. Quantitative results from Tweet Archivist

In this section, I provide a quantitative overview of the top words[5] provided for the DIs by Tweet Archivist in order to make suggestions about the general meanings of the DIs, but the results must be approached using a great deal of caution. I include them to show broad tendencies and to sketch a rough picture of frequent collocates and topic markers.

5.1 Whoopsie *and* oopsie

The top words for *oopsie*, *oopsy* and *oopsies* are presented in Table 1. The top words provided for the *oopsies* archive by Tweet Archivist suggest the emotive meaning of the suffix along with the core meaning of the base interjection; it shows the humorous

connotations by words such as 'lol' and 'haha', and also the fact that the DI is used in response to an accidental mistake or deliberate mistake treated as an accident.

OOPSIE ***Corpus 1:*** 2, 839 tweets	OOPSIE! (134), DAISY (92), LOL (91), I'M (81), JOINS (68), DIDN'T (67), GOT (66), FORGOT (65), IT'S (63), SORRY (59), HAHA (57), OH (56)
OOPSY ***Corpus 1:*** 3, 023 tweets	DAISY (1, 563), FALLS (93), STAGE (93), OOPSY! (75), LOL (42), SORRY (39), OH (32), HAHA (30), FORGOT (29), HAHAHA (28)
OOPSIES ***Corpus 1:*** 1, 817 tweets	I'M (90), OOPSIES! (69), LOL (69), OH (50), FORGOT (49), ACCIDENTALLY (37), IT'S (35), HAHA (35), DIDN'T (33), GOT (33), SORRY (29), REALLY (26), LOVE (22)

Table 1 *Top words for oopsie, oopsy and oopsies.*

In the cleaned September corpus (Corpus 2) of *oopsie* and *oopsy* combined (containing 1, 320 tweets), the top words from the Wordlist function are DAISY (147 hits), NOT (61), LOL (60), SORRY (60), LIKE (41), HAHA (40), OH (37), FORGOT (35), HAHAHA (27), BAD (25) and DON'T (25). ACCIDENTALLY had only 16 hits, along with NEVER and WRONG. LOVE received 18 hits. Likewise, the top words for *whoopsies* were WHOOPSIES! (56 hits), LOL (53), HAHA (26), DIDN'T (26), SORRY (25), FORGOT (25) and OH (24). The *whoopsie* archive also notes a high frequency of LOL. These top words reinforce the two features of this group of DIs: the humorous/non-serious feature and its function as a response to a mistake or accident. Thus, in the qualitative results in the following section, these DIs convey mostly humorous and playful meanings.

5.2 Ouchies *and* owie

The top words and emoticons provided by the Tweet Archivist program suggest a primary meaning of pain. For example, in Table 2, the cleaned *owie* archive yielded top words that directly relate to pain and display generally negative connotations.

Corpus 1 – Wordsmith Tools (537 tweets)	THAT (35), SO (34), LIKE (30), YOUR (30), HAVE (27), OW (26), PAIN (25), NOW (22), BACK (21), OUT (21), WAS (21), FOR (20), ALL (19), HURTS (19), HURT (17), UP (17), WHEN (17), NOT (16), LEGS (13), BAD (12), HEAD (12), ASS (11), HEADACHE (11), OH (11)

Table 2 *Top words for owie.*

Table 3 presents the results for the *ouchies* archive. The words that appear in two or all archives include BAD, MUCH, TODAY and FEEL; both Corpus 1 and Corpus 2 included the unhappy face :(.

Corpus 1 (2, 221 tweets)	OUCHIES! (52 hits), :((34), I'M (31), TODAY (28), GOT (24), BAD (17), MUCH (16), SORE (15), HURT (15)
Corpus 1 – Wordsmith Tools (214 tweets)	JUST (30), THAT (34), LIKE (30), ME (28), SO (27), TODAY (24), BUT (23), NOT (19), NO (18), DAY (17), UP (17), BACK (16), BE (15), SORE (14), MUCH (14), BAD

	(13), HOPE (13), HURT (13), NOW (13), OUT (13), DON'T (11), HURTS (11), OFF (11), OVER (11), STILL (11), PAIN (10), CUT (9), FEELS (9), FINGER (8), HAHA (8), AGAIN (7), BURNT (7), FACE (7), HAND (7), FEET (7), HEAD (7), LOL (7), LOVE (7)
Corpus 2 (320 tweets)	*FTSE (22), DEMOTES (22), ARGENTINA (22), UNCLASSIFIED (22), FRONTIER (22), OUCHIES! (17), MARKETOUCHIES (14), :((12), NIGHT (11), I'M (10), TODAY (9), FEEL (8), OUCHIES!! (8)

Table 3 *Top words for ouchies.*

Altogether, these words immediately suggest a focus on pain and discontent (associated with the unhappy face). Likewise, the hashtags support my claim. In Corpus 1 (May 2014), some of the top hashtags were #butwortheverypenny (4 hits), #houserules (3), #blisters (3), #happybirthdaymrpresident (3) and #tobeanurse (3). In Corpus 2 (September 2014), the top hashtags also corresponded with pain: #takemymoney (5), #notetoself (2), #notonaschoolnight (1), #weights (1), #killerarms (1), #legsofjelly (1), #fitness (1), #pain (1), #ihatebugs (1), #ouchouchouch (1) and #determined (1). The words generally appear to have negative evaluations, especially due to the unhappy/sad face emoticon and the words 'bad', 'sore' and 'hurt'. From these top words and hashtags, we can expect the DI to convey little humor (particularly when in a single post and not a conversation) and more negative emotions along with its basic function of expressing pain. The hashtag with the most hits seems to indicate that the tweet is meant to convey some humorous and positive emotion. Of course, the level of non-seriousness seems to depend on context.

5.3 Wowee

Presented in Table 4, the top words for *wowee* show an intensifying and positive emotive function of the DI.

Corpus 1 (2, 221 tweets)	WOWEE! (269), OH (110), WOW (106), BOY (86), LOVE (81), I'M (77), BEST (72), THANK (62), IT'S (50), DAYS (47), EVER (46), REALLY (46), MUCH (44)
Corpus 1 – Wordsmith Tools (1, 774 tweets)	SO (198), JUST (105), LIKE (103), ME (103), WOW (100), OH (99), BOY (86), LOVE (60), UP (56), GOOD (54), MUCH (45), THANK (42), GREAT (40), DAY (38), TODAY (38), REALLY (37), ZOWEE (37), THANKS (34), WELL (31), MORE (27), CUTE (26), AMAZING (25), BIG (25)
Corpus 2 (990 tweets)	WOWEE! (110), BOY (84), OH (69), IT'S (60), WOW (38), I'M (36), MUCH (36), ZOWEE (29), LOVE (28), AFLHAWKSPOWER (28), SHOP (27), TESCO (26), AM (23), WOWEE!! (22)

Table 4 *Top words for wowee.*

The top words that all corpora have in common were OH, WOW, BOY, LOVE and MUCH. The words that appear in at least two are WOWEE!, and ZOWEE. The words BEST, EVER,

REALLY, GOOD, THANK/S, and GREAT also appear frequently. Thus, the results suggest that *wowee* seems to be associated with positive words (e.g., 'good' and 'love') and intensifiers (e.g.,'really'). Words with negative connotations, including 'awful', only occur twice, while 'hate' occurs seven times (compared with 60 hits for 'love').

The top hashtags refer to visual or other senses and pertain to subjects that typically elicit an emotional response. Some of these are #photo (32), #fineartamerica (30), #fineart (30), #1000daysof1d (25), #thanku (25), #manchester (21), #busty (21), #escort (21), #stateoforigin (18), #aflswanscats (18), #wow (15) and #thevoiceau (10). In Corpus 2, the top hashtags reflect current trends, with #aflhawkspower (29), #baekhyun (19), #chanyeol (19), #chanbaek (19), #tesco (13) and #photo (8). Despite the 5, 646 hits total for the orthographic variant *wowie,* there were several users with the term in their usernames, and the DI frequently appeared in the combination 'maui wowie'; therefore, it was not included in the quantitative analysis. In sum, an observation that we can make about *wowee* is that it appears to usually express to positive evaluation (e.g.,'love', 'best', 'wow') and emphasis/force through intensifiers (e.g.,'ever', 'really' and 'much').

6. Qualitative analysis of emotive uses of DIs on Twitter

This section turns to the emotion(s) displayed through DIs in tweets by their contextual meaning and/or function. I begin with the humorous emotive meanings of playfulness, affection, empathy/solidarity and move to exaggeration/force and (semi-) seriousness. I conclude the section with negative humor, including sarcasm/irony and negative attitude. These classifications follow the functions and meanings of interjections as discussed in 2.1 and also the main emotive meanings suggested by the quantitative results in section 5.

6.1 *Humorous, playful DIs*

The humorous DIs on Twitter are usually quite clearly indicated due to their close proximity to smiley faces, emoticons or other similar cotext. In the following examples, the happy face smileys and winks indicate the tweets' positive/humorous connotations.

(3) a. just got home and it seems like i didnt missed any updates today **wowie** ☺ (retrieved 28 May)
   b. **Wowie** :-) Loved catching up with the learning #tweepets from today's #indiahrchat @username many thanks for facilitating
   c. I look like I've been punched in the face somewhat because of sun burn… **whoopsy** xD (retrieved 9 June)
   d. Should be cleaning and doing laundry but I'm catching up with Matt and Kayleigh instead... **Oopsie** ;) (retrieved 23 May)
   e. @username **owie**! *playful pouting* (retrieved 3 June)

Examples (3a-b) suggest that *wowie* functions as a humorous, positive and slightly playful response in some contexts. This is illustrated in example (3a); here, the tweet displays appreciation that the tweeter did not miss any updates during her absence. Likewise, in example (3b), appreciation and enthusiasm are displayed for an event. The initial *wowie* followed by a smiley face enforce the emotional loading before the rest of the message. The

cotext, including emotive verb word 'loved', further indicates positive evaluation. Both examples are followed by a smiley face/emoticon, which suggests that the DI can be used overtly to display positive humorous connotations. Likewise, for the DI *owie* in (3e), the tweeter states through asterisks that her use of *owie* is accompanied by 'playful pouting', which shows a playful connotation of the DI.

In examples (3c-d), the DIs *whoopsy* and *oopsie* are employed as playful words to diminish the message of the preceding sentence. They portray a painful or embarrassing mistake, either accidental or deliberate, as a humorous event or outcome (e.g.,one's appearance after getting a sunburn in (3c)). Example (3d) differs from the first two examples as it does not necessarily refer to a mistake but illustrates the tweeter's abandonment of her task of cleaning and doing her laundry (illustrated by the initial 'should be'), to converse with friends instead. The tweet then ends with *oopsie* and a wink, which implies that the situation is the result of a humorous, yet deliberate, choice that may later have negative repercussions. In this way, both (3c-d) convey a playful attitude towards a choice or outcome that in typical situations would be evaluated negatively.

Likewise, in Twitter conversation, the DIs convey emotive meanings identified by the frequent collocate 'lol' or cotext with laughter illustrated by 'haha'. For example, in (4a) the two female tweeters discuss a final exam and end their conversation with the collocation 'lol whoopsies'. In (4b), the first tweeter initially tweets about car tire damage but the second tweeter finishes the conversation humorously with 'lol whoopsie'.

(4) a. Soooo tired, really not feeling this SAT
@username1 at wood?
@username2 Yeeeeep
@username1 I feel like death. It's too early for a final!!!! I'm just chilling in the parking lot lol
@username2 Why are you already there?! Lol I'm still in bed
@username1 I went to 7-11 faster than I thought. Lol **whoopsies**
(retrieved 7 June)

b. Fuckin hit the curb and popped my tire. Whoops! #horribledriver
@username1 Hope you weren't texting!
@username2 actually I wasn't. I've hit that curb many times but I guess it was just not feeling it today haha damnit
@username1 lol **whoopsie**
(retrieved 10 June)

The examples also demonstrate a) the changing of attitude as conversation progresses and b) emotive difference between *whoops* and *whoopsie*. By starting on a negative subject but ending on a more positive note, (4a-b) illustrate how conversation progresses from a negative attitude to a humorous and positive tone in the final tweet. In example (4b) particularly, this is illustrated through the use of NDI *whoops* in the opening and DI *whoopsie* in the closing tweet. It also serves to suggest that the suffixed DI *whoopsie* expresses a more playful and less serious tone than its NDI counterpart based on its placement and immediate context in conversation.

6.2 *Affection*

It has been argued that base interjections "request or provoke empathy [and] as manifestations of empathy they contribute once again to the emotional harmony essential to cooperative conversations" (Günthner 1997: 241). Although Günthner chooses the term 'empathy', the statement is particularly pertinent to the display of affection in example (5), and also to subsection 6.3. In example (5), the DI *whoopsie* is one linguistic device used to re-establish the two tweeters' emotional harmony that is jeopardized throughout the conversation.

(5) Tessa can tweet a pic of my head in a garbage and me gagging but I can't of her doing the duck face kk
@username1 hahaha maybe you shouldn't drink too much next time
@username2 I'm never drinking with u again, there
@username1 wtf I got puke on my hands for putting your hair up for you don't even go there
@username2 aw **whoopsie** love u!!!
(retrieved 9 June)

The DI *whoopsie* conveys affection which functions as a self-repair of the tweeter's preceding negative comment. The connotations of the DI are emphasized by the words directly preceding and following *whoopsie*, specifically 'aw' and 'love'. Although the tweeters do not include emoticons, the conversation and the last tweeter's turn indicates familiarity and playfulness and serves to re-establish the tweeters' mutual positive feelings towards each other.

6.3 *Solidarity/empathy*

As we have seen, DIs can be considered to mitigate a problem's potential seriousness, and also establish an emotionally cooperative conversation. Similarly, DIs can convey a strong sense of empathy and solidarity between tweeters, particularly through the DI *ouchies*. In example (6), the two tweeters discuss their injuries and growing old, particularly shown through the cotext of several hashtags, namely #gettingold, #mywholebodyhurts, #oldstatus and #getbetter. The DI *ouchies* functions mainly as a marker of empathy towards the other's injuries. This meaning is made evident through the message following the DI and the use of the hashtag #getbetter. Specifically, the tweeter follows the initial *ouchies* with a comment on how she 'hates' plantar fasciitis and then proceeds to negatively comment on the condition and her own similar problems, which establishes an emotional connection between the two tweeters.

(6) Two injuries in the past week… Im not a spring chicken anymore according to my doc. #gettingold #mywholebodyhurts
@username1 nooooo!!!! What injuries???
@username2 plantar fasciitis. My doc fixed that this week and now my lower back.
@username1 **ouchies**. I hate plantar fasciitis. Mine pops ups a lot during season. #oldstatus #getbetter
@username2 right. Sucks getting old! ☹ haha

@username1 how do the pros do it?? Lol
(retrieved 6 June)

The DIs are used to show sympathy and shared pain in other conversations, as is shown in examples (7a-b).

(7) a. My lobster red back tells me I might have caught the sun today…maybe suncream would have been appropriate! ☀
@username1 **whoopsie** #ouch
@username2 haha yeah, not the smartest move! Worst part is it was a strappy dress, so now I have criss-cross marks across my back lmao :P
@username1 oh dear!
(retrieved 6 June)

b. I like cleaning up cause I always find cool things
@username1 girl he accepted ig hhhhhhhhhhhhhhh
@username2 did he follow backkkkkkkkkkk?
@username1 idk I don't have phone or anything rn so cant check but probs not
@username2 **ouchies** :*(
(retrieved 6 June)

In example (7a) the topic marker #ouch follows *whoopsie* to signal that *whoopsie* is a comment on the previously-mentioned sunburn; similarly, in (7b), a crying face follows *ouchies* to display emotional involvement. Although the DIs in both examples comment on the initial tweeter's problem, the levels of emotion and non-seriousness differ. Example (7a) displays a relatively humorous, sympathetic message that is continued in the following tweet that contains emotive gestures including 'haha yeah' and the playful smiley face :P. In example (7b), the crying face signals empathy and sadness in the final tweet. Thus, the DIs display a certain amount of empathy; specifically, 'gestures' such as crying/playful emoticons increase emotive loading.

6.4 *Exaggeration, force*

Extensive exaggeration/force most often appears with *wowie* and, less frequently, *owie*. Many examples involve combinations of DIs (e.g.,'owie wowie'), lengthening through repetition of sound (e.g.,'owwwie'), exclamation marks (e.g.,'!!!wowie!!!'), capitalization (e.g.,'WOWIE') or combinations with the base interjections or other interjections (e.g.,'wowie wow wow'). These features emphasize the emotion conveyed by the base interjection; they also lower the register (e.g.,compare 'owwwie wowie' with 'ow wow'). Several examples of these visual effects, excluding 'oopsy daisy' and such lexicalized phrases, are shown in examples (8a-f).

(8) a. Canoeing definitely makes your booty sore. **Owwwie wowie**. Plus sunburn. I'm in great shape. (retrieved 27 May)
b. forgot how amazing 5sos are live **wowie** wow wow
c. abby and phoebe are amazing wow **wowie** amazing graze
d. @username !!!!!!!!!!!!**wowie**!!!!!!!!!!!!

e. **OWIE OWIE** OH OH I WISH WE WERE OLDER~ (retrieved 6 June)
f. @username is literally so sweet **wowie** wow people who hate on you are mega assholes and don't realize how amazing you truly are

The examples demonstrate how DIs are repeated or other forms of intensification added to increase the emotive meaning, particularly in 'owie owie' or 'wowie wow wow'. In example (8a), the DI *owie* is lengthened with the repetition of 'w' to display an intensification of the (emotive) pain caused by canoeing and sunburn. The addition of the repeated interjection *oh* in example (8e) adds emotional force to the tweeter's wish to be older. Furthermore, one other prominent feature of these examples are collocations of the DIs: phrases such as 'so sweet' with the intensifier 'so' add to the force of the tweet's message; 'how amazing' adds to the display of amazement. Thus, we can observe that the tweets convey emotions with more force than is expressed by the DI alone.

Several, albeit rare, examples use capital letters on the suffix to exaggerate DI meaning, as shown in (9a-c).

(9) a. *surprised face emoji* **wowEE**!!!! (retrieved 24 May)
b. @username1 @username2 he is so attractive **wowEE** im going to take this as a compliment
c. @username heart eyes **woWIE** (retrieved 28 May)

As will be discussed regarding semi-serious DIs in subsection 6.5, none of the examples in (8) and (9) add additional emotive meanings such as teasing or playfulness to the respective tweet. Rather, the meaning of the base interjection and the non-serious feature of the suffix are combined with repetition to intensify the emotive loading. Furthermore, the examples are generally positive (expressing surprise and amazement as in (8b)), which correlates with the striking lack of DIs in tweets in 6.7 that display strong negative attitude.

6.5 *(Semi-) serious*

In some examples, the DI seems to express little humor or playfulness but is rather used seriously or semi-seriously. The DIs in these tweets differ sharply from the positive humorous DIs in preceding subsections due to a lack of smiley faces and cotext such as 'haha' and 'lol'.

In example (10a-g), the DIs come from the base interjection that expresses pain, particularly *ow*.

(10) a. Someone make this headache go away! **Owie**. (retrieved 3 June)
b. My butthole hurts sooooo bad. **Owie** mama!
c. **Owie**! *screams in pain
d. My legs and butt hate me :(**owie**
e. **Owie**!!!!! Stupid people rushing me to straighten my hair makes me burn myself!! #StillStinging #thumb
f. I didn't know that getting your belly button pierced made your tummy have a heartbeat **owie**
g. {Shakes my head against @username's shoulder, giving muffled sniffles} **Owie**.

The tweets show that the DI can convey a relatively minor yet painful experience; some of the top words for *owie* were PAIN and HURT/S. It is likely that none of the examples in (10) are immediately life-threatening. Rather, they refer to a persistent and ongoing pain such as a headache or stinging thumb. These irritating and persistent forms of pain connect to emotions and results in language that makes the tweet sound forceful, particularly through the addition of exclamation marks. For example, the persistent pain is shown through the hashtag #StillStinging in (10e) and wanting the pain to 'go away' in (10a). Based on previous observations of DIs, it seems improbable that none of these are an attempt at some humor, sarcasm or some form of playful language. However, if the emotion expressed in these examples likely relate to such emotions including frustration and self-pity. In (10d), for example, the tweeter adds an unhappy face before the DI, indicating sadness/pity; likewise, in (10b) the display of pain is emphasized through an extension of the intensifier 'so'. Example (10e) displays frustration through multiple exclamation marks and the negative evaluation of people as 'stupid'. In sum, the overall contexts that produce these DIs in single tweets seem to involve a longer-standing yet relatively lesser-degree of pain that causes self-pity (though not the whiny kind). What we see is the use of *owie* instead of *ow* to minimize the degree of pain yet maximize the degree of emotion (e.g.,frustration, self-pity, etc.).

In Twitter conversation, the DI *owie* appears most often in contexts where it is used to empathize with another (as in 12). In relatively rare instances *owie* appears as an initial reaction to pain. For example, in (11), the tweeters create an imaginative narrative where a tweeter uses the DI upon falling. The highly emotive context established by several emotive gestures (e.g.,*kisses you*) causes the pain conveyed by *owie* seem minimal in comparison to the emotive content. Specifically, the *owie* downgrades the seriousness of the fall and resulting injury, yet brings attention to the fall and potential emotional pain. This causes increases the emotion of the conversation because the other tweeter 'hurries to' ask, twice, whether the tweeter suffered any pain or injury. In example (12), the function is somewhat different, as the tweeter uses *owie* in response to hearing about the other tweeter's pain.

(11) @username1 *kisses you * lets hurry baby
@username2 Nae, I need my skittles and I can't find them…
@username1 *looks around for the skittles*
[…]
@username2 *slips and falls on the floor* **Owie**.. *sees the skittles* Skittles!
@username1 baby *hurries to you * are you okay
@username2 I found the skittles~
@username1 I can see tags but are you hurt ?
@username2 ani, just my pride.. *looks at you* But a kiss would make it better
@username1 *kisses your lips*
(retrieved 29 September)

(12) My liver is a virgin.
@username1 *sings that Madonna song*
@username2 Today I'm regretting the heinous way I abused said liver
@username1 Ouch. You working today?
@username2 Yes unfortunately
@username1 **Owie**. Hope you're drinking lots of water.
@username2 Trying to. :(

(retrieved 25 September)

In example (12), the NDI *ouch* displays a degree of emotion and is the first interjection used; the DI *owie* appears in the tweeter's next turn. This follows example (4b), which also begins with an NDI, while the DI appears near the end of the conversation where we can expect greater emotional involvement. Since the tweeter writes *owie* in response to learning of the other's pain and work schedule, the function of this *owie* could also be expressed as a marker of solidarity and empathy (as discussed in 6.3). Generally, however, both *owie* and *ouchies* either mainly express an individual's pain (tweeted by the person in pain) or to empathize with another's pain (tweeted to the person in pain). Unlike example (12), in example (13) the tweeter uses *ouchies* to convey the discomfort caused by a hangover; however, I found this usage very rare in my data.

(13) Immensely hungover for my flight to morocco. **Ouchies**. Here we go series 2 @username morocco trip!

The DIs from other interjections, particularly *whoopsy* and *oopsy,* can also convey a semi-seriousness about the situation; that is, they are not overtly playful or humorous but rather seem to include regret and embarrassment. In all the examples in (14) the mistake mentioned appears accidental; for example, tweets include the phrases 'without thinking', 'lost control' and 'gone a bit overboard'. In (14a), the tweeter admits to potentially hurting another's feelings and ends the tweet with *oopsie* to suggest recognition of the mistake and some regret; there is no wink to signal playfulness or sarcasm. A similar situation occurs in (14b), where the tweet shows the realization of a relatively minor mistake, and an unintentional spending spree that affected the tweeter is conveyed in (14c). In example (14a), the tweet also receives additional diminutivity through the analytic marker 'a bit'.

(14) a. I said some ignorant shit without thinking to a tranny today and I think I hurt her feelings, **oopsie** (retrieved 31 May)
b. Hit a swimmer today when I lost control of my whistle whilst spinning it #**Oopsie**
c. Gone a bit overboard the past few days buying baby stuff, **oopsy** (retrieved 2 June)

In examples (15a-b), the additional force of the base interjection is attributed to surprise at how well a party turned out (15a) and being named a Gryffindor in example (15b).

(15) a. corpse party was good. really good. **wowie**. i'm surprised by how good it was. (retrieved 27 May)
b. @username1 has officially named me a Gryffindor. **Wowie**. I'm honored, but I'll have to buy new gear.

6.6 *Sarcasm and irony*

Many tweeters consciously break maxims of politeness to produce a negative pragmatic effect. Examples (16a-d) appear to convey negative humor due to discontent with the idea, action or circumstance described, thus making the use of *wowee* somewhat sarcastic. Unless the tweeter explicitly tags the tweet as sarcastic, it can be difficult to differentiate between sarcasm and negative attitude (see 6.7). Only in (16d) the tweeter uses the hashtag #sarcasm

to confirm that the tweet displays a sarcastic attitude about the temperature predicted by the weather forecast.

(16) a. **wowee** love negative feelngs at 4 am (retrieved 27 May)
b. **wowie**, look at all the rain we didn't get
c. **Wowee** I love panic attacks
d. **Wowie**... cool front coming thru on Saturday night. All the way down to...83. <s> #sarcasm (retrieved 3 October)

Despite the examples given in this subsection (and one-word tweets that did not provide cotext for analysis), I could not find many obvious displays of sarcasm, particularly in conversations. In most cases, the DIs express positive humor. It may be argued that most DIs have a potential for some hidden or subtle sarcasm that cannot be easily detected, if at all. In some cases, only the conversing tweeters may have the common knowledge to detect the humor.

6.7 *Negative attitude*

Few tweets contained DIs that emphasize generally negative attitudes and emotions. Unlike the sarcastic/ironic instances, where the context seems to show some underlying humorous attitude, the tweet in example (17) seems to overtly demonstrate this negative attitude. Here, the tweet shows a female who appears to be entirely upset and frustrated because she cannot take a 'flippin' nap. The negative attitude is increased by the overall tone of her language. Example (17) conveys the least amount of (positive) humor that I find in my corpus.

(17) wats a girl gotta do to take a flippin nap around here. **wowie** (retrieved 27 May)

Fewer examples of these 'negative attitude' tweets appeared than in tweets with sarcasm and irony, which suggests an overarching humorous (positive) meaning of DIs. Arguably, tweets with overwhelmingly negative displays of emotion (e.g.,rage) would use expletives and coarse language rather than DIs.

7. Final considerations

7.1 *DI-NDI pairs*

The analysis in section 6 attempted to show the functions and emotive meanings of the DIs with little comparison with their relative NDI forms.[6] In this sub-section, I aim to present some examples of how the NDI differs from the DI by comparing two tweets that are as identical as possible, one with the DI form and the other with the NDI form. I do not attempt a detailed analysis, but rather leave this for future study. However, an analysis of NDI-DI pairs in context, taken from Twitter searches conducted on 6 and 7 October, can show some emotive distinction between the DI and the NDI.

While the distinction of the DI-NDI in some tweets are less obvious, some tweets show a slightly more striking emotive difference. I would argue that the difference in meaning is generally relatively subtle. For example, the emotive connotations of *owie* are emphasized in a tweet (18a) from 3 October by repetition, and also the given context of

dental work. When compared with the second tweet with *ow* (and also the emotive word 'whimper'), we can see that while both convey pain, only *owie* conveys an emotional state of mind that might not be entirely serious. The second pair, both of which address the issue of a broken toe, also draw the same conclusion. The suffix on an interjection mainly expressing pain adds an additional emotive loading to the tweet; this loading is absent from the NDI.

(18) a. **Owie**. Whimper. **Owie**. (Dental work.) (posted 3 October)
b. **Ow**. My ear is throbbing. *whimper* (posted 15 September)

(19) a. 99% sure that I have just broken my little toe. **Ouchies** :((posted 30 September)
b. I think I may have broken or badly sprained my toe... **Ouch** :/ (posted 3 October)

In tweets where the DI conveys positive humor and non-seriousness, the NDI, *oops* and *whoops*, comes across as less emotive, such as in examples (20) and (21).

(20) a. haha I was so confused as to why I was seeing all these ads in my timeline. **Oopsie**! Had the adblocker off. #fixed :) (posted 2 October)
b. @username **Oops** sorry, forgot that the block made me unfollow you. I fixed it. Haha

(21) a. Cut my bangs a lil too short haha **whoopsie** (posted 28 September)
b. Cut my bangs reaaaal short. **Whoops**. #helloeyebrows (posted 30 September)

The NDI *oops* causes the mistake sound more serious and removes the diminishing, non-seriousness and potentially 'cute' connotations conveyed by the suffix in *oopsie*. Instead, humor in the NDI tweet, if conveyed, comes across as dry (e.g.,the collocation 'Whoops. #helloeyebrows' in response to cutting bangs to a very short length). In (20), the smiley face and use of 'haha', and in (21), the use of 'lil' and 'haha' all contribute to the humorous effect of the tweet that signals that the reader is not supposed to take the tweet seriously. Even though the NDI tweets that I chose also used 'haha' and conveys a similar message, the NDI lacks the playful or 'cute' and humorous connotations of the DI. As a consequence, the DI softens or 'diminishes' the mistake. The *wowie-wow* pair creates a similar dichotomy: removal of the suffix also removes the underlying humorous/playful attitude, such as sarcasm in examples (22) and (24) and positive emotion in (23).

(22) a. **wowie**, look at all the rain we didn't get (posted 26 May)
b. oh **wow** look at all of that snow we didn't get (posted 26 March)

(23) a. **Wowie** thanks for all the love on me and @username's tune!! We just wanted to make something different and fun and give it away <3 (posted 21 May)
b. @username **Wow**! Thanks for the love! This is something great to wake up to! I'm making another batch today! (posted 4 October)

(24) a. **Wowee** I love panic attacks (retrieved May 27)
b. **wow** I love panic attacks (posted 10 October)

Although I have presented these pairs to show merely a rough picture of how the DIs may differ from NDIs, these DI-NDI pairs in context suggest more directly that because of the suffix, the DIs convey additional, and perhaps with different 'flavor', emotive connotations in

a tweet than the NDI. Thus, although inconclusive due to lack of data, we can make the suggestion that DIs can be considered forms of diminutives, based on the notion that diminutives do not necessarily have to convey smallness (cf. Schneider 2003, 2013; Dressler and Merlini Barbaresi 2001) but other features primarily including 'non-seriousness' (see Schneider 2013 for the conceptual space of diminutive meanings).

8. Concluding remarks

This paper has presented and discussed tweets in regard to the contextual use, meanings and functions of diminutive forms of interjections, termed 'DIs', in present-day English. The results strongly suggest a common meaning of DIs (though not necessarily exclusive to DIs) as 'non-serious' (or 'fictive', based on Dressler and Merlini Barbaresi 2001). A number of different meanings and functions for the DIs were found, along with varying levels of emotive connotations. The DIs were shown to convey positive humour including playfulness and affection, negative humour including sarcasm/irony, and semi-serious connotations. Based on top words and hashtags, the quantitative results seemed to suggest that DIs were more likely used in a positive, humorous context or semi-serious rather than an overtly negative context. Furthermore, the examples suggest that tweeters include DIs consciously in order to create a sense of solidarity (e.g.,prefacing a tweet with *ouchies*), exaggeration (e.g.,through exclamation marks) and generally much play through visual effects such as emoticons and images. Yet, because the medium was written language and the contexts were somewhat ambiguous, it was not always possible to identify what precise function(s) or emotion(s) the DI displayed. Thus, this paper has not exhaustively discussed all of the potential meanings of the DIs, but focused on the most common. The results were supported by the top words and hashtags provided by the Tweet Archivist program and supplemented by the Wordlist feature on *Wordsmith Tools 6*.

The major advantage of using Twitter for a corpus-based study stems from the type of language that appears there and the sheer frequency of DIs in comparison with other forms of written or spoken language. Thus, it seems necessary to state that it would be useful to examine the phenomenon in regards to sociolinguistic variables in a variational pragmatics approach. For example, the addressee of the DIs could be accounted for. One potential question in this respect could be: Is gender an issue? Who uses DIs more, and are DIs addressed at women more than men? Are they used between friends? Despite the numerous language-in-action examples found on Twitter, the micro-blogging service has several disadvantages in regards to socio-cultural context: although it is usually possible to identify the gender of a tweeter, and occasionally be able to guess (from the profile picture and tweets) the age group to which the tweeter belongs, to the best of my knowledge, the relationship between addresser-addressee are nearly impossible to ascertain. If these issues could be resolved, such a study could provide a more comprehensive description of DIs.

Notes

[1] This research was supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Council of Canada (SSHRC). I am grateful to Laurel Brinton for her comments on an earlier version of this paper. I also thank the two reviewers for their suggestions. Naturally, all remaining errors are my own.

[2] This suffix is not necessarily the plural of the diminutive suffix, but rather two suffixes: *-ie/-y* and a (slang) *-s* suffix (cf. Huddleston and Pullum 2002:1678). As Zappavigna (2012: 127) mentions, the "definitions of slang are often circular and imprecise" without any wholly accepted model. Typically, slang can be viewed as informal language that is "innovative, playful, metaphorical and short-lived [and] *below the level of stylistically neutral language*" (original emphasis, Stenström et al. 2002: 67, qtd. in Zappavigna 127). It follows that slang suffixes are "becoming popular for creating informal, slang versions of common words and phrases" (McCumber 2010: 124), such as *fabs* < *fabulous*. I will leave an in-depth analysis of this potential diminutive-slang suffix for future study.

[3] This study took place in 2014; thus, I will leave out the year in future examples.

[4] Users using mobile devices can make some difficulties when using tweets as data. Zappavigna (2012: 19) identifies several such features, particularly "non-standard orthography" (e.g.,using '!' for 'I' as in G!RL), "omitted punctuation", "abridged posts", and "spelling errors since posts are generated using mobile devices on-the-fly." Using part of speech (POS) taggers in future studies might reduce these problems.

[5] According to Tweet Archivist, 'top words' refer to the most frequent words found in the archive occurring in conjunction with the specific DI. They correlate with the most frequent words calculated by *Wordsmith Tools* Wordlist feature. I omit top words that are irrelevant to the study, including pronouns, conjunctions, and most prepositions. Typically, in the Wordlist feature of *Wordsmith Tools*, the top words of all the DIs are I, THE, TO, MY, A, AND, YOU and ME (though not necessarily in this order).

[6] A reviewer suggested contacting tweeters and asking them why they used the DI instead of the NDI. While such data triangulation would be beneficial to the study of DIs, it is currently not feasible on Twitter. For example, it is not possible to send a direct message (DM) to another tweeter's inbox unless they are a follower, it is not considered polite to spam random tweeters, and the character limit of tweets provides insufficient space for comprehensive or detailed questions or replies. However, I tweeted the question, 'Is there a particular reason you chose to use *wowee* (instead of *wow*)?' to approximately 30 tweeters who used *wowee*. I received two replies, namely 'no u' and 'Nope. No particular reason. I just like saying it'. In addition to the extremely low return rate, the tweeters are unlikely to know in linguistic terms why they used the DI; or, they would invent a reason, which would produce additional unusable data. Thus, I have chosen to briefly compare NDI-DI tweets instead.

References

AARSAND, Pail Andre, ARONSSON, Karin. 2009. Response cries and other gaming moves – building intersubjectivity in gaming. *Journal of pragmatics*, 2009, vol. 41, no. 8, pp. 1557-1575.

AIJMER, Karin. 2004. Interjections in a contrastive perspective. In WEIGAND, Edda (ed.). *Emotion in dialogic interaction.* Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2004, 103-124.

AMEKA, Felix. 1992. Interjections: the universal yet neglected part of speech. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 1992, no. 18, pp. 102-114.

BAUER, Laurie. 1983. *English word-formation.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.

BIBER, Douglas, JOHANSSON, Stig, LEECH, Geoffrey, CONRAD, Susan, FINEGAN, Edward. 1999. *Longman grammar of spoken and written English.* Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 1999.

DAVIES, Mark. 2010-. The corpus of historical American English (400+ million words, 1810-2009). Available online at: <http://corpus.byu.edu/coha/>

DAVIES, Mark. 2008-. The corpus of contemporary American English: 425 million words, 1990-present. Available online at <http://corpus.byu.edu/coca/>.

DIEMER, Stefan. 2013. The return of the prefix? New verb-particle combinations in blogs. In HASSELGÅRD, Hilde, EBELING, Jarle, EBELING, Signe Oksefjell. *Corpus perspectives on patterns of lexis.* Philadelphia/Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2012, pp. 23-244.

GÜNTHNER, Martina. 1997. French interjections and their use in discourse. In NIEMEIER, Susanne, DIRVEN, René. *The language of emotions: conceptualization, expression, and theoretical foundation.* Philadelphia/Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1997, pp. 33-276.

DRESSLER, Wolfgang U., MERLINI BARBARESI, Lavinia. 2001. Morphopragmatics of diminutives and augmentatives: on the priority of pragmatics over semantics. In KENESEI, István, HARNISH, Robert M. (eds.) *Perspectives on semantics, pragmatics, and discourse: a Festschrift for Ferenc Kiefer*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2001, pp. 43-58.

FORSTER, Iris, BORGWALDT, Susanne R., NEEF, Martin. 2012. Form follows function: interjections and onomatopoetica in comics. *Writing systems research,* 2012, vol. 4, no. 2, pp. 122-139.

FRANCK, L., NOBLE, G, LIOSSI, Christina. 2010. From tears to words: the development of language to express pain in young children with everyday minor illnesses and injuries. *Child: care, health and development,* 2010, vol. 36, no. 4, pp. 524-533.

GEHWEILER, Elke. 2010. Interjections and expletives. In JUCKER, Andreas H., TAAVITSAINEN, Irma (eds.). *Historical Pragmatics.* Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2010, pp. 315-350.

GOFFMAN, Erving. 1981. *Forms of talk*. (University of Pennsylvania Publications in Conduct and Communication.) Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981.

GONZÁLEZ-IBÁÑEZ, Roberto, MURESAN, Smaranda, WACHOLDER, Nina. 2011. Identifying sarcasm in Twitter: a closer look. *Proceedings of the 49th annual meeting of the association for computational linguistics: human language technologies: short papers,* 2011, vol. 2. Association for computational linguistics.

HART, James D. 1932. Jazz Jargon. *American Speech,* 1932, vol. 7, no. 4, pp. 241-254.

HUDDLESTON, Rodney, PULLUM, Geoffrey K. 2002. *The Cambridge grammar of English*. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2002.

JOVANOVIĆ, Vladimir Ž. 2004. The form, position and meanings of interjections in English. *Linguistics and Literature,* 2004, vol. 3, no. 1, pp. 17-28.

JURAFSKY, Daniel. 1996. Universal tendencies in the semantics of the diminutive. *Language,* 1996, vol. 73, no. 3, pp. 533-578.

MCCUMBER, Vanessa. 2010. -s: the latest slang suffix, for reals. *Working papers of the linguistics circle of the University of Victoria*, 2010, vol. 20, pp. 124-130. Available at < http://journals.uvic.ca/index.php/WPLC/article/view/5676>.

MERLINI BARBARESI, Lavinia. 2000. The pragmatics of the 'diminutive' -y/ie suffix in English. In SCHANER-WOLLES, Chris, RENNISON, John, NEUBARTH, Friedrich (eds.), *Naturally!: linguistic studies in honour of Wolfgang Ulrich Dressler presented on the occasion of his 60th birthday*, Torino: Rosenberg & Sellier, 2000, pp. 315-326.

REBER, Elisabeth. 2012. *Affectivity in interaction*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2012.

SCHNEIDER, Klaus P. 2003. *Diminutives in English*. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 2003.

SCHNEIDER, Klaus P. 2013. The truth about diminutives, and how we can find it: Some theoretical and methodological considerations. *SKASE Journal of Theoretical Linguistics*, 2013, vol. 10, no. 1, pp. 137-151. Available at: < http://www.skase.sk/Volumes/JTL22/pdf_doc/08.pdf>

SCHNEIDER, Klaus P, STRUBEL-BURGDORF, Susanne. 2012. Diminutive -let in English. *SKASE Journal of Theoretical Linguistics*, 2012, vol. 9, no. 1, pp. 15-32. Available at: <http://www.skase.sk/Volumes/JTL20/pdf_doc/2.pdf>.

ŠTEKAUER, Pavol, VALERA Salvador, KÖRTVÉLYESSY, Livia. 2012. *Word-formation in the world's languages: a typological survey*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

STENSTRÖM, Anna-Brita, ANDERSEN, Gisle, HASUND, Ingrid Kristine. 2002. *Trends in teenage talk: Corpus compilation, analysis and findings*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing, 2002.

TAAVITSAINEN, Irma. 1998. Emphatic language and romantic prose: changing functions of interjections in a sociocultural perspective. *European Journal of English studies*, 1998, vol. 2, no. 2, pp. 195-214.

WIERZBICKA, Anna. 2003. *Cross-cultural pragmatics: the semantics of human interaction*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2003.

ZAPPAVIGNA, Michele. 2012. *Discourse of Twitter and social media: how we use language to create affiliation on the web*. London/New York: Bloomsbury, 2012.

ZAPPAVIGNA, Michele. 2011. Ambient affiliation: a linguistic perspective on Twitter. *New media & society*, 2011, vol. 13, no. 5, pp. 788-806.

Dorota Lockyer
The Department of English
University of British Columbia
397 - 1873 East Mall
Vancouver, BC V6T 1Z1
dlockyer@alumni.ubc.ca

In SKASE Journal of Theoretical Linguistics [online]. 2014, vol. 11, no.2 [cit. 2014-12-15]. Available on web page <http://www.skase.sk/Volumes/JTL26/pdf_doc/04.pdf>. ISSN 1336-782X.