

**DIFFERENTIAL MEANING**

***Khaydarova Nigora***

*Scientific supervisor, Andijan state institute of foreign languages*

***Goyibberdiev Sardor***

*Student, Department of Theory and Practice of the Russian Language, group of 304*

*Andijan state institute of foreign languages*

*E-mail: [sardorgoipov44@gmail.com](mailto:sardorgoipov44@gmail.com)*

***Abstract:*** *This article explores the concept of differential meaning in morphology, a semantic component that distinguishes words containing identical morphemes. Unlike denotational meaning, which refers to the direct referential content of a morpheme, differential meaning serves to differentiate words within the same morphological family. The study examines examples such as \*bookshelf\* vs. \*bookcase\* and \*notebook\* vs. \*copybook\*, where one morpheme carries the distinguishing semantic feature. Additionally, the article discusses cases where morphemes lack denotational meaning (e.g., \*cran-\* in \*cranberry\*) and function purely differentially. The analysis extends to bound morphemes in words like \*receive\*, \*deceive\*, and \*perceive\*, arguing that their prefixes may possess only differential meaning in a synchronic perspective. The findings highlight the importance of differential meaning in linguistic analysis and word formation.*

***Keywords:*** *differential meaning, morphology, morphemes, denotational meaning, semantic differentiation, word formation, linguistic analysis*

The concept of differential meaning represents a fundamental yet often overlooked aspect of morphological analysis in linguistics. This semantic phenomenon operates at the morphemic level, serving as a distinguishing feature that differentiates lexemes sharing common morphological components. Unlike denotational meaning that establishes direct referential connections between linguistic signs and



extralinguistic reality, differential meaning functions relationally within the lexical system, creating necessary distinctions between otherwise similar word forms.

In compound words and derived lexemes, differential meaning manifests through specific morphemic components that establish semantic contrasts. The analysis of English compounds like "bookshelf" versus "bookcase" reveals how the second constituent morpheme ("-shelf" versus "-case") carries the differential load, while the shared "book-" element maintains the common semantic ground. Similarly, in "notebook" versus "copybook," the differential function shifts to the initial morpheme, demonstrating the positional variability of this semantic phenomenon. Importantly, differential meaning frequently coexists with denotational meaning, creating a complex interplay of semantic functions within a single morpheme.

The examination of cranberry morphemes presents particularly compelling evidence for the existence of purely differential meaning. Elements like "cran-" in "cranberry" or "huckle-" in "huckleberry" lack independent denotational content yet perform the crucial function of lexical differentiation within semantic fields. These bound morphemes, while semantically opaque, create necessary distinctions in the berry nomenclature, separating "cranberries" from "strawberries," "raspberries," and other members of this lexical set. This phenomenon challenges traditional notions of morphemic meaningfulness and expands our understanding of semantic relationships in word formation.

The analysis extends to Latinate vocabulary in English, where prefixes in words like "receive," "perceive," and "deceive" may have lost their original denotational meanings while retaining differential functions. Synchronically, these prefixes serve primarily to distinguish between otherwise similar verbal forms, suggesting a historical shift from denotational to differential meaning. This evolutionary pattern highlights the dynamic nature of morphemic semantics and the potential for functional reanalysis over time.

Differential meaning plays a crucial role in maintaining lexical precision and preventing semantic overlap within language systems. Its operation can be observed across various word formation processes, including compounding, derivation, and even



certain types of inflection. The phenomenon demonstrates how languages develop internal mechanisms for lexical differentiation that go beyond simple referential meaning, creating sophisticated systems of semantic relationships and contrasts.

The study of differential meaning has significant implications for morphological theory and lexicology. It provides insights into the organizational principles of lexical systems, the nature of semantic relationships between words, and the functional specialization of morphemes. Future research directions might explore cross-linguistic manifestations of differential meaning, its acquisition in first and second language learning, and its neurological correlates in language processing. Such investigations could further illuminate this important but understudied aspect of linguistic semantics.

### **REFERENCES**

1. Aronoff, M. (1994). *Morphology by Itself: Stems and Inflectional Classes*. MIT Press.
2. Bauer, L. (2003). *Introducing Linguistic Morphology*. Georgetown University Press.
3. Matthews, P.H. (1991). *Morphology*. Cambridge University Press.
4. Plag, I. (2003). *Word-Formation in English*. Cambridge University Press.
5. Spencer, A. & Zwicky, A.M. (eds.) (1998). *The Handbook of Morphology*. Blackwell.