MORPHOLOGICAL MOTIVATION

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Absract*: This article explores the concept of morphological motivation in the English language, examining the criteria for motivated, non-motivated, and partially motivated words. The study highlights the relationship between morphemic structure and meaning, emphasizing the role of derivational and compound word formation. Additionally, it discusses the degrees of motivation and the impact of historical changes on word structure. Examples such as *singer*, *cranberry*, and *finger-ring* illustrate key principles, while a comparative analysis of synchronic and diachronic perspectives provides deeper insight into morphological motivation.*

Keywords: *morphological motivation, motivated words, non-motivated words, partial motivation, morphemic structure, synchronic analysis, diachronic analysis.*

Morphological motivation is a fundamental concept in linguistics that examines the relationship between the structure of a word and its meaning. When the meaning of a word can be directly understood from its constituent morphemes and their arrangement, the word is considered morphologically motivated. In contrast, words with no apparent connection between their form and meaning are classified as non-motivated. This phenomenon plays a crucial role in understanding word formation, semantic transparency, and language evolution.

Non-motivated words typically consist of a single morpheme, making their meanings arbitrary and conventional. Examples include simple lexical items such as

sing, *eat*, *ring*, and *doll*. These words lack internal structure that could provide clues to their meaning, rendering them opaque to morphological analysis. On the other hand, motivated words are usually derived or compound formations where the combined meaning of morphemes contributes to the overall sense of the word. For instance, *singer* derives its meaning from the verb *sing* and the agentive suffix *-er*, clearly indicating "one who sings." Similarly, compound words like *finger-ring* (a ring worn on a finger) and *readable* (capable of being read) exhibit a transparent relationship between their structural components and their meanings.

The arrangement of morphemes within a word also plays a significant role in morphological motivation. Even when words share identical morphemes, their order can alter meaning. A notable example is the contrast between *finger-ring* and *ring-finger*: the former refers to an object, while the latter specifies a particular finger. Likewise, the prefix *re-* in *rewrite* implies repetition, whereas the suffix *-er* in *writer* denotes an agent performing an action. These examples highlight how morphemic patterns influence semantic interpretation.

Morphological motivation is not an absolute feature but exists along a continuum. Some words are fully motivated, with each morpheme contributing clearly to the overall meaning. For example, *endless* transparently combines *end* (termination) and *-less* (without), resulting in the meaning "without end." However, other words exhibit partial motivation, where only some morphemes retain identifiable meanings. The word *cranberry* illustrates this: while *-berry* is meaningful, the morpheme *cran-* lacks independent semantic value in contemporary English.

Historical changes further complicate morphological motivation. Over time, words that were once fully motivated may lose their transparency due to phonetic shifts, semantic drift, or the obsolescence of certain morphemes. Place names such as *Essex* (originally *East-Saxon*) and *Norfolk* (from *North-Folk*) are now perceived as unanalyzable units by most speakers, despite their etymological origins. Conversely, newer formations like *Newtowns* remain transparent, demonstrating how language evolution affects morphological motivation.

The study of morphological motivation can be approached from both synchronic and diachronic perspectives. A synchronic analysis focuses on the current state of the language, categorizing words like *singer* as motivated and *matter* as non-motivated. In contrast, a diachronic approach traces historical developments, revealing how words like *Sutton* (from *South-Town*) have lost their original motivation over time. Understanding these dynamics enriches linguistic analysis and provides insights into the cognitive processes underlying word formation and comprehension.

In conclusion, morphological motivation is a dynamic and multifaceted aspect of English word formation. It underscores the interplay between structure and meaning, while also reflecting the historical evolution of the language. By examining motivated, non-motivated, and partially motivated words, linguists gain valuable perspectives on lexical development, semantic transparency, and the ever-changing nature of human communication.

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