SEMANTIC MOTIVATION

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Abstract*:This article discusses semantic motivation in English, examining how word meanings relate to their structure and usage. It distinguishes between motivated, non-motivated, and partially motivated words, highlighting the roles of metaphor, metonymy, and culture. Examples like foot of the mountain and keyboard illustrate key points. The article also notes how meanings can change over time through historical and social factors.*

Keywords: *semantic motivation, lexical meaning, metaphor, metonymy, motivated words, semantic transparency, word formation.*

Semantic motivation refers to the connection between the form of a word and its meaning within the conceptual framework of a language. When the lexical meaning of a word is clearly linked to its internal structure or metaphorical associations, it is considered semantically motivated. This motivation often emerges through figurative extensions such as metaphor (foot of the mountain) or metonymy (crown meaning "monarchy").

Unlike morphological motivation, which depends on visible morphemes, semantic motivation is rooted in associations and conceptual mappings. For instance, the word keyboard is semantically motivated because it refers to a board with keys — a structure whose function aligns with the word's literal components. Similarly, deadline originally referred to a literal line beyond which prisoners would be shot, but

its modern use to denote a time limit maintains a metaphorical connection to danger or consequence.

Semantically non-motivated words, on the other hand, have meanings that cannot be inferred from their form or usage context. For example, the word nice has undergone such a broad semantic shift over centuries that its current meaning is no longer traceable to its Latin root nescius (ignorant). These words require memorization and often reflect historical changes in usage.

Partially motivated words contain some transparent elements while others have become obscure. The word handbook is partially motivated: hand suggests something personal or accessible, and book is clear, but the combination may not immediately convey its meaning as a manual or guide.

The semantic motivation of words is influenced by cultural and social developments. For example, technological advances introduce new words that are semantically transparent at first (smartphone, cloud computing) but may become less clear over time as usage becomes more idiomatic.

From a synchronic perspective, we examine how contemporary speakers understand and relate word meaning to structure. A diachronic analysis reveals how words lose or gain semantic transparency, such as broadcast, which once meant "to scatter seeds" and now refers to media transmission.

In conclusion, semantic motivation is a critical aspect of linguistic understanding, revealing how human cognition, culture, and communication intertwine in the process of naming and meaning-making. Its study enhances our awareness of language dynamics and aids learners in acquiring vocabulary more effectively. It is an essential tool for linguists, educators, and learners alike, bridging the gap between language form and meaning.

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