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**Morphological Productivity**

*Structural Constraints in English Derivation*


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This book deals with one of the central problems for theories of word-formation, the productivity of morphological processes. On the basis of a survey of a wide range of English derivational affixes it is proposed that the productivity and combinability of a given affix are primarily the result of its individual structural, i.e. phonological, morphological and semantic, properties and not due to more general mechanisms of the various kinds proposed, for example, by proponents of Lexical Phonology/Morphology.

This point is further developed in an in-depth structural analysis of the rival verbal affixes *-ize, -ate, -ify, en-, em-, be-, -en* and conversion. First, the productivity of these processes is assessed, using both text-based and dictionary-based measures (Cobuild corpus vs. *Oxford English Dictionary*). Implementing Optimality Theory and Jackendoff’s Lexical Conceptual Semantics, a large number of 20th century neologisms extracted from the *OED* are investigated with regard to their phonological, morphological and semantic characteristics. Bridging the gap between broad empirical coverage and significant theoretical insights, the analysis leads to new findings concerning both the structural properties of derived verbs in English and the role of these properties in restricting productivity. It is argued that the choice of a particular affix can be largely predicted on the basis of the affix's individual properties, without any additional machinery besides token-blocking and local analogy. On the theoretical level the proposed analysis presents evidence against the separation of meaning and form in derivational morphology and for a sign-based, output-oriented model instead.