WORKSHOP Morph2Read:
From morphological knowledge to reading comprehension in L1 and L2 learners

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Reading is a complex task that involves the integration of different processes and various forms of knowledge (Grabe & Stoller, 2019). While reading and comprehending a text might be effortless and automatic for experienced and proficient readers, the development of such a skill poses challenges for children with fragile linguistic profiles. This fragility often results from limited exposure to the language, a common situation for children with low socioeconomic status (SES) or those from disadvantaged backgrounds (e.g., Bellocchi & Bonifacci, 2023; Rassel, Facon & Casalis, 2021). This scenario frequently applies to children who primarily speak a minority language at home (Grabe & Yamashita, 2022). Difficulties in navigating written academic texts may, in the long run, have adverse effects on children's academic performance.

Morphological structure is a specialized property of human language often studied for its autonomy, idiosyncrasies, and its crucial role in the externalization of syntactic structures in both L1 and L2 speakers (e.g., Giraudo & Dal Maso, 2018; Voga et al., 2020). Scientific research has largely demonstrated the critical role of morphological knowledge for both word recognition in adults (e.g., Longtin & Meunier, 2005; Amenta & Crepaldi, 2012; Giraudo & Dal Maso, 2016) and reading efficiency (e.g., Beyersmann et al., 2015; Rastle, 2019; Levesque, Breadmore & Deacon, 2021; Fejzo, 2021). This polymorphic construct is actually one of the strongest correlates of reading achievement (e.g., Carlisle, 2000). Young readers with a high level of morphological knowledge analyze the meaning of morphologically complex words more effectively, leading to cascade benefits for reading comprehension (e.g., Levesque & Deacon, 2022). Morphological knowledge plays both direct and indirect roles in reading comprehension. Directly, morphological awareness involves recognizing and understanding the morphological structure of words, including prefixes, suffixes, and root words. This awareness enables readers to analyze and derive meaning from morphologically complex words, thereby enhancing their ability to comprehend text. Indirectly, morphological awareness contributes to the development of a rich mental lexicon (e.g., Piccinin & Dal Maso, 2023). By understanding and manipulating word parts, readers can expand their vocabulary and establish connections between related words. This expanded lexicon provides a foundation for better comprehension by facilitating the recognition and understanding of unfamiliar words encountered in text (e.g., Kieffer & Lesaux, 2012).

The aim of this interdisciplinary workshop (i.e., linguistics, psychology, informatics, didactics) is to investigate the role of morphological knowledge (specifically derivational morphology) in reading comprehension, with a specific focus on first and second languages. By bringing together researchers from different disciplines, we aim to examine reading comprehension from the perspective of a main hypothesis that posits morphological knowledge as central to the acquisition of a rich and structured mental lexicon, associated with high reading comprehension skills necessary for literacy development. Another objective of the workshop is to underscore the importance of considering language specificities (transparent vs. opaque orthographies), learner profiles (native vs. non-native), and school grades (from primary to secondary) when exploring the cognitive processes involved in reading acquisition. Finally, the present workshop aims to bridge the gap between psycholinguistic and linguistic theories by providing a reflective space on computational models that integrate both behavioral and linguistic data on morphology (e.g., Kodner, 2022 ; Levesque, Breadmore & Deacon, 2021 ; Baayen et al., 2020 ; Pirrelli et al., 2020).

Paper submissions are expected to address both theoretical and practical implications on the following themes:
- The impact of morphological awareness on reading and text comprehension in L1 and/or L2
- The integration of morphological knowledge into up-to-date models of reading and reading development
- Transfer phenomena of morphological knowledge from L1 to L2 that contribute to elucidating theories and models related to the functioning of the multilingual lexicon
- Evidence-based approaches in language teaching, facilitating a better understanding of how morphological awareness influences reading and comprehension
- Insights supporting effective strategies for language instruction and development

Keywords: Morphological awareness, reading comprehension, language acquisition, socioeconomic status (SES), experimental/pedagogical devices, theoretical and computational models.

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