

Veranstalter:	Prof. Dr. Thomas Berg
Thema:	Racing and Competition [AA-V2a/b, ENG-11, AA-M1, AA-M3, AA-M9, AA-M10, AA-W]
Art der Veranstaltung:	Seminar II
Veranstaltungsnummer:	53-518
Zeit:	2st., Do 16-18
Raum:	Phil 1250
Beginn:	5. April 2012

Course description:

It is customary to liken the mental lexicon to a library. In this view, accessing a target word would seem to be similar to locating a certain book and taking it off the shelf. This metaphor suggests that although there may be some search here and there, our hand reaches only for one book. It will be seen in this course that this view is fundamentally wrong and that the mental lexicon is organized quite unlike a library. In particular, lexical access involves the activation of a great many items even though only one is eventually selected. Lexical access is thus best conceived of as a race in which many candidates are simultaneously active. On the face of it, this search procedure looks highly uneconomical. We will therefore face the challenge of understanding why racing is beneficial and perhaps even necessary. What is more, racing is also competitive. According to one somewhat controversial claim, the horses running the course inhibit one another in order to gain an advantage for themselves.

The major objective of this course is to show how these principles of lexical access affect the structure and use of language in all its manifestations. Whatever we produce or comprehend is shaped by competitive mechanisms. This inevitably leads to variation, both within one and the same speaker and across different speakers. Thus, competition holds the key to understanding language variation. Moreover, it provides insights into language change. These manifold consequences of racing and competition will be at the heart of this course.

There is no single introductory textbook on competition but MacWhinney's Competition Model may serve as a good starting point for getting prepared.

MacWhinney, Brian: "The Competition Model." In: Brian MacWhinney (ed.): *Mechanisms of language acquisition* (pp. 249-308). Hillsdale, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Course requirements:

- Regular attendance
- Oral report
- Term paper

Sprechstunde während der Vorlesungszeit:	Mi und Do 18-19 Uhr (mit Anmeldung), Phil 101
Sprechstunden während der vorlesungsfreien Zeit:	29.2., 21.3., 16-18 Uhr (mit Anmeldung), Phil 101