

The mental lexicon

This seminar will be looking at words in the mind, the “mental lexicon”. This “human word-store” must be a well-organized structure rather than a random heap of words, because we can understand and produce words so fast. An educated adult speaker of English, for instance, can understand at least 50.000 words, and native speakers can recognize a word of their language in about 200 milliseconds (see Aitchison 2012). But how are words organized in the mental lexicon? Is it an alphabetical list as we know it from the concept of a dictionary? Which information does a lexical entry in the human mind contain – sound structure and meaning or also syntactic information? Do we store monomorphemic words (such as happy) only or does the mental lexicon also contain complex words (e.g. unhappy or happiness)? How do we access the mental lexicon? How do we create new words? This seminar will attempt to provide (non-exhaustive) answers to these questions. In the second part of this seminar, students will have the opportunity conduct their own research project in small groups and present the results to class. This project will serve as a basis for a term paper, for those students who are taking the class for “Prüfungsleistung”.

Please note that **this seminar does not take place weekly**. We will meet on campus on four days throughout the semester.

Term plan

- DAY 1 (April 13) Introduction to the mental lexicon, research methods
- DAY 2 (April 27) Discussion of studies on different questions regarding the mental lexicon, introduction to data analysis, preparing student projects
- DAY 3 (May 11) Work on student projects
- (ZOOM meetings for consultation regarding projects)
- DAY 4 (June 26) Project presentations
- (ZOOM meeting on how to write a term paper)

An email with detailed instructions (how to prepare for the first session, where to find materials, ...) will be sent out in the first week of the semester.

Requirements Studienleistung: Active participation in class and in-group activities, small scale empirical research project & presentation

Requirements Prüfungsleistung: Term paper based on research project (plus participation in Zoom meeting on term papers)