# Handout 4

Aitchison 2012, pp. 3-50

**1 Why do we assume that our mental lexicon is highly structured?**

**2 What are common problems when trying to estimate how many words a person knows?**

**3 How fast is retrieval? What does it mean when…**
- … we can utter 6 syllables per second?
- … identify a word in 200ms?
- … identify a non-word in 500ms?

**4 What is the functional relationship between storage and retrieval?**

**5 How can you disprove the assumption that our mental lexicon is organised alphabetically? Could it be organised according to meaning, too?**

**6 In how far do mental and book lexicons differ in the following ways?**
- order
- phonetics
- syntax
- semantics
- topicality
- linking
- frequency

**7 In what way would the following entries differ in the mental and book dictionary?**
- *to paint*
- *older/ elder*
- *coney*

**8 Discuss frequent and / or funny slips you produced yourself as a child, perhaps as a result of misheard conversations, lyrics, or ads.**

**9 How can we use the following clues to explore the human mental lexicon?**
- retrieval & slips of the tongue
- linguistic theory & electronic databases (corpora)
- speech disorders & brain scans
- psycholinguistic experiments

**10 What do the following groups of words from a word-search exemplify?**
- MONACO – Piedmont, Albania, Montevideo, Colico
- SALACIOUS – salient, prurient

**11 Comment on the slip of the tongue in the following cartoon.**

**12 Comment on the slip of the tongue in the following cartoon.**

**13 Categorise and discuss the following slips of the tongue.**

- *pater-killer / par cark*
- *it is difficult to use **capital** punishment in schools*
- David Cameron, 2012: *We are raising more money for the **rich**.*
- *I don't have much sympathy with rich-looking **burglars**.*
- *I don't **expose** anybody will eat that.*
- *My **tummach** feels funny.*

**14 Discuss the following potential disadvantages related to slips of the tongue as language data.**

- inaccurate logging
- unrepresentative sample
- categorisation problem
- cumbersome

**15 What can researchers learn from speech data from aphasics and why are those data sometimes problematic?**

**16 What do word-association tests, especially priming and TOT experiments tell us?**

**17 What could you learn from the following frequent word associations to the word *red* as supplied by US-American speakers in the 1970s?**

- *white*
- *blue*
- *black*
- *green*
- *colour*
- *blood*
- *communist*
- *yellow*

**18 In how far are metaphors helpful when exploring the human mind and in how far is the London Tube map a good "model"?**

**19 What is so special about the computer metaphor?**

**20 How can research on the mental lexicon exploit aphasics? Consider data such as:**

- PG: says *knee* for *elbow*, *hair* for *comb*
- NN: says *rugabize* for *TV*
- NN: sys *reticulating* for *knitting*
- Some aphasics are lost for words
- Some aphasics are lost for grammar

**21 Discuss scope and limits of the following psycholinguistic experiments and imaging techniques.**

- *lexical decision tasks (priming)*
- *phoneme monitoring*
- *ERP*
- *PET*
- *fMRI*

**22 What evidence did the study by Jaeger et al 1996 produce (p.47)?**

**23 What are the two famous "language" areas in the human brain and what do they do?**

**24 How could you define what a word is?**

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Videos on funny slips of the tongue
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EmeBxpEXVJk