

Dr. Eva Smolka
Faculty of Applied Linguistics
University of Konstanz
Konstanz, Germany

***Can you wash off the hogwash? –
Behavioral and EEG evidence on the effects of (native) language
structure on lexical memory***

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Psychologicum, Liebiggasse 5, 1010 Vienna**

Humans possess the ability of coining meaning in an almost unlimited number of possible ways. However, this combinatorial ability with respect to coining complex words remains an unsettled issue, since the meaning of word combinations ranges from transparent, as in *underwork*, to rather opaque and non-compositional, as in *understand*. Psycholinguistic and neurolinguistic research are therefore puzzled by the following questions: How are the meanings of word combinations like *verstehen* ('understand') and *Standpunkt* ('standpoint') stored and processed—as a whole or via the single constituents? Do we therefore access the meaning of *stehen* in the course of processing *verstehen*? Does the specific language experience of a native speaker affect how complex words are stored and processed in lexical memory?

This talk will present a series of behavioral and electrophysiological priming experiments, examining different degrees of combinatorial complexity by using different types of meaning units: stems like *steh* and *stand* in verb inflections such as *stehen* ('stand') and *gestanden* ('stood'), in verb derivations such as *anstehen* ('stand in line') and *verstehen* ('understand'), and in compounds such as *Standpunkt* ('standpoint'). Overall, the findings indicate that complex words in German are processed by making reference to the representation of their stem, indicating that lexical memory structures in German differ from those in other Indo-European languages. These findings are relevant to a key debate about general versus language specific aspects of cognition.