

# A reflection on psycholinguistics through its questions about morphology and the mental lexicon

*Friday, June 23, 2017 9:05 AM (20 minutes)*

Psycholinguistics has tended to formulate its fundamental questions according to the pattern “What is the psychological implementation of a linguistic notion?”, such as “What is the content of the mental lexicon?” or “How is morphology organized in the brain?”. I will argue that questions like these presuppose the lexical and morphological modularity of traditional linguistics. By definition, answering these questions through experimental research or computational modeling will by definition result in answers that preserve the traditional linguistic modularity. This self-perpetuation is further strengthened by psycholinguistics’ pervasive use of linguistic resources, which again reflects the traditional linguistic notions and linguistic modularity. I will discuss why these objections should not be confounded with objections to modularity or computability. Finally, I will explore how computational and experimental research questions can be phrased in terms of psychologically-grounded notions of language and communication.

**Primary author:** KEULEERS, Emmanuel (Tilburg School of Humanities Department of Communication and Information Sciences)

**Presenter:** KEULEERS, Emmanuel (Tilburg School of Humanities Department of Communication and Information Sciences)

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