

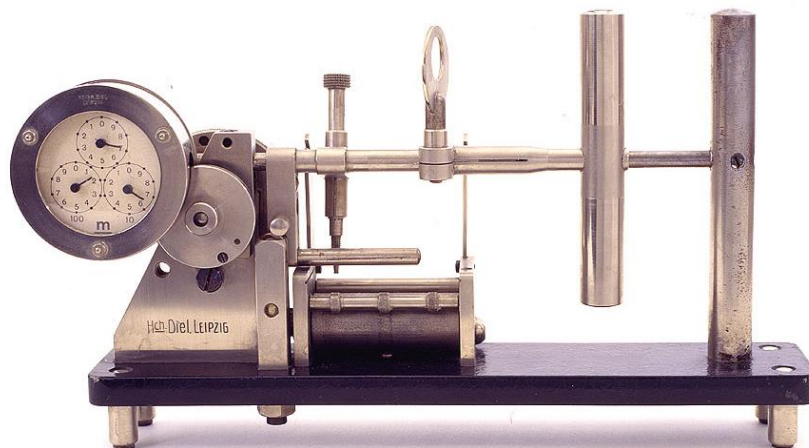
XXV NAUČNI SKUP

# EMPIRIJSKA ISTRAŽIVANJA U PSIHOLOGIJI

29 – 31. MART 2019.

FILOZOFSKI FAKULTET, UNIVERZITET U BEOGRADU

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INSTITUT ZA PSIHOLOGIJU  
LABORATORIJA ZA EKSPERIMENTALNU PSIHOLOGIJU  
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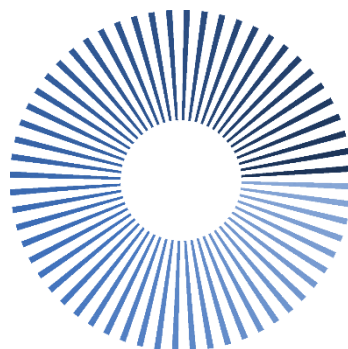
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LABORATORIJA ZA EKSPERIMENTALNU PSIHOLOGIJU FILOZOFSKI FAKULTET,  
UNIVERZITET U BEOGRADU

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**Programski odbor:**

Orlando M. Lourenço, Kai Ruggeri, Claus-Christian Carbon, Agostini Tiziano, Milica Vukelić, Ivana Stepanović Ilić, Dejan Todorović, Sunčica Zdravković, Iris Žeželj, Zoran Pavlović, Zvonimir Galić, Kirsten E. Bevelander, Dušica Filipović Đurđević, Slobodan Marković, Jérémy Lemoine, Dragica Pavlović Babić, Ksenija Krstić, Jasmina Kodžopeljić, Dražen Domijan, Ljiljana Lazarević, Oliver Tošković, Pavle Valerjev, Denis Bratko, Petar Čolović, Janko Međedović, Anja Wertag, Dragana Stanojević, Maja Savić, Nataša Simić, Maša Popović, Marina Videnović, Goran Opačić, Aleksandar Kostić, Nenad Havelka, Kaja Damnjanović (predsednica)

**Organizacioni odbor:**

Ljiljana Lazarević, Slobodan Marković, Olga Marković Rosić, Ivana Stepanović Ilić, Predrag Nedimović, Ksenija Mišić, Oliver Tošković, Marko Živanović, Kaja Damnjanović

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Lektura i prelom: Ksenija Mišić

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THE EFFECT OF SEMANTIC RELATEDNESS OF AMBIGUOUS WORDS IN THE  
FREE RECALL TASK

**Milica Manojlović**

Department of Psychology, Faculty of Philosophy, University of  
Belgrade | *milicamanojlovic84@gmail.com*

**Ksenija Mišić**

Laboratory for Experimental Psychology, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade

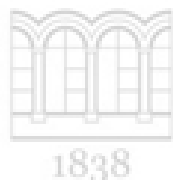
In this study we focused on semantic ambiguity, namely, the difference between homonyms (multiple unrelated meanings) and polysemous words (multiple related senses). Previous research on processing effects of ambiguity found that polysemous words were processed faster, whereas homonymous were slower compared to unambiguous words (Rodd, Gaskell, & Marslen-Wilson, 2002). However, to the best of our knowledge, the ambiguity effect has never been researched in memory tasks. This study aimed to explore whether relatedness of meanings would have an effect on recall. Having in mind that the effects observed in processing tasks have a tendency to reverse in memory tasks, we predicted the similar reversal in our study. Such is the case with word frequency which facilitates word recognition, but makes the recall of the word harder (Lohnas & Kahana, 2013; Taft, 1979). Additionally, findings on the word processing facilitation by that word's associates (Mayes, Montaldi & Migo, 2007) agree with our ambiguity effect reversal hypothesis. We therefore predicted that homonyms would show the highest recall, followed by unambiguous and ultimately polysemous words.

We constructed a list containing 20 polysemes, 20 homonyms, and 20 unambiguous words that were randomly ordered. Four unambiguous fillers were presented at the beginning and the end of the list to control for the serial order effects. The list was presented to 30 participants in a free recall task. They were told that we are testing reading comprehension and that the task was to read the words carefully. The dependent variables were the percentage of a word recall (by-participant analysis) and the percentage of word group recall (by-stimuli). Two analyses were conducted using by-participant (F1) and by-item (F2) ANOVA. Homonyms were recalled the most, followed by unambiguous words, with polysemes being recalled the least ( $F1(2, 58) = 52.640, p < .001, \eta^2 = .645$ ;  $F2(2, 57) = 6.268, p < .003, \eta^2 = .180$ ).

These results are congruent with our hypothesis, and point to the fact that ambiguity affects recall and that the meaning/sense relatedness plays a significant role in the process. When explaining these findings we must also consider temporal dynamics in semantics (Armstrong, 2012). Prolonged processing time allows all meanings of homonyms to achieve maximal activation of word representations, but also their associates during the time of the stimulus presentation, while simultaneously, the same effect decreases for polysemous words.

**Keywords:** ambiguity, polysemy, homonymy, memory, associates

*SPONZORI SKUPA:*



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