

---

# Competition between whole-word and decomposed representations of complex words: evidence from prefixed words in English

---

Sharon Peperkamp

*Laboratoire de Sciences Cognitives et Psycholinguistique, Paris*

sharon.peperkamp@ens.fr

Morphologically complex words have both a whole-word and a decomposed representation. Evidence for coexisting representations is provided by the fact that the pronunciation of these words can vary in case they contain a target for a structure-sensitive phonological rule at an internal boundary. An example is provided by English words with the prefix *mis-* or *dis-*: given that voiceless stops are aspirated word-initially and unaspirated following /s/, stem-initial voiceless stops have variable aspiration.

Thus, the /t/ and /k/ in words like *mispronounce* and *discomfort*, respectively, can be either aspirated, i.e. treated as word-initial, or unaspirated, i.e. treated as word-internal. Frequency effects - e.g., aspiration is more likely if the stem exists as a free-standing word - suggest the existence of competing access routes during speech production. In this talk I will provide independent evidence for on-line competition in a speech production experiment with a structural priming paradigm.