**Research Questions**

**Question 1:** Are corpus-based methods more supportive in vocabulary acquisition than other methods used in teaching foreign languages?

**Question 2:** Do the differences between historical languages and modern languages affect vocabulary acquisition? How?

**Question 3:** What implications do corpus-based methods have for the development of tasks?

**Question 4:** What does vocabulary competence mean? How can vocabulary competence be acquired and expanded?

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**Background: Instruction in Latin in German schools**

- Most important foreign language: almost 700,000 learners (ca. 7%) in 2015, but there is a huge decline in numbers after the textbook phase.
- Latin starts between the 5th and 11th grade, depending on school type; average span of learning Latin ca. 4 years.
- Latin is controversial; therefore, it has to justify its place in the canon of subjects. Key question: What does a student gain by learning Latin? (except some useless?) knowledge of a dead language?
- Some responses: knowledge about languages, literature, ancient history and European culture, transferrable skills like Translations-, Interpretations- and Textschreibungsübung.

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**Specific background: Vocabulary acquisition in Latin classes**

- A known problem is that students don’t learn their vocabulary well enough.
- The suggested solutions are: reducing the amount of vocabulary and/or focusing on learning techniques.
- Vocabulary is currently presented in word equations like ratio | onis, f. | Vertebrata, Rechnung. Method (maybe + Pw. rational).
- The core vocabulary is questionable because of its selection of words, the given (German) word meaning and the language.
- Even in textbooks, vocabulary work is inconsistent and exercises focus mostly on a low cognitive level (focus on repetition and forms).

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**Research focus: Vocabulary acquisition in a historical language**

- How many words do you need to learn to understand and/or translate a Latin text? (size)
- Which words should be learned to understand Latin literature in school? (selection)
- How should the (core) vocabulary be displayed, repeated and trained regarding the following considerations: What is a word? (word as a lexical entity, e.g. a 123-gram).
- How do humans store language information? (mental lexicon)
- How should vocabulary be taught? (model of vocabulary acquisition; methods)
- What are the implications of corpus-based vocabulary learning for exercises, tasks and tests? (context vs. word equations)
- What is specific about learning a historical language? (language acquisition)

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**Intervention study (Ovid): complex tasks**

**What you should know about the intervention study**

- Study design: parallel, intervention (test groups) with context-based vocabulary tasks (Ovid, Pennequin and Thalea) and introduction to vocabulary learning, posttest, subsequent vocabulary test.
- 61 Participants, 2 schools (Berlin, Latin 1st/2nd grade 5 groups: 2 x 10th grade (test control), 1 x 10th grade (test).
- Time period: October 2018 – January 2019, depending on the schools.

**Definition of less complex tasks**

Five out of ten tasks are considered to be too complex because they take up either an author-related element (Ovid: hexameter, hypotale) or some language-related elements well known to students (morphological congruency, lexicon entry, target language phrasing).

**Formal vocabulary knowledge tasks**

Proposition 1: In a historical language, pronunciation must be explicitly developed and consciously learned so that a word or a group of words can also be anchored in the mental lexicon via the phonological dimension of perception.

**Proposition 2:** In a historical language, a word with its morphological facets must be learned explicitly and reflection-based, because the aim of language acquisition is not language production in the historical language, but detailed test comprehension, which begins at the lemmat or possibly morpheme level. To this end, mastery of the metalanguage is indispensable in order, among other things, to support the rapid retrieval of a mental lexicon entry.

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**Intervention study (Ovid): less complex tasks**

**Research focus: Using Corpora for teaching**

- How do we work with a corpus (any collection of written or spoken texts)?
  - Association measures (significance vs. effect size)
  - Modeling distributional semantics as vector space
  - Retrieving text metadata from external sources (e.g. biographical information)
  - Dynamic linguistic analysis of texts (e.g. text complexity)
  - How do we use the advantages of corpora for language teaching (authenticity, context, frequency)?
  - Is it “equations versus collocations” or rather “equations and collocations”?
  - How do we find collocations in a test?
  - How do we break down the linguistic theory with regard to the use in a school context?

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**Functional vocabulary knowledge tasks**

Proposition 3: In a historical language, word concepts must be understood as comprehensively as possible and anchored in the mental lexicon. Besides, the meaning of a word or a group of words must be worked out in various contexts in order to finally enable an adequate interlingual representation (translation, mediation, paraphrase etc.).

Proposition 4: In a historical language, syntactic knowledge must be consciously used to structure linguistic information, since often only limited intuitive comprehension is possible due to the great spatial and temporal distance, the otherness of language structure and the receptively oriented acquisition of language.

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**Strategic vocabulary knowledge tasks**

Proposition 5: In a historical language like Latin, whose vocabulary has influenced Indo-European languages to varying degrees, the derivation of meanings must be systematically practiced and demanded in order not only to strengthen the networks in the mental lexicon, but also to expand the (rather small) learning vocabulary by a potential vocabulary.

**Proposition 6:** In a historical language, it is particularly important to learn strategies for understanding texts (topic comment, systematic use of the information provided, etc.), since the text is the only source of information.

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**First conclusions**

- The automation of retrieval processes from the mental lexicon, which is necessary for language acquisition, is merely not successful.
- task 5: hyperbolic task (Guidoform).
- The metacognition skills also required for language acquisition are only available to a small extent and are obviously further limited by a low level of language competence in the German (technical or standard) language. (P task 5: hyperbolic tasks which require explanations).
- The (corpus-based) lexicon acquisition theory on which the research design is based cannot be implemented in a meta-cognitive view of vocabulary tasks. The results of the additional tasks in pre-and post-tests suggest that the content must be addressed explicitly: none of the study participants was able to fully answer the comprehension questions on the overall context (e.g. end of the myth).

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**Further Questions**

- Variety of task types: Which task formats are indispensable for vocabulary acquisition and for what reasons?
- Metacognitive Elements: Can lexical problems be distinguished from content-related problems?
- How high is the dependency between the success of the (data-driven language learning) and the level of language competence?
- Should what be the grade of Latin classes in the 21st century?
- How can natural psycholinguistic acquisition processes be integrated into Latin classes in a varied and purposeful way?