Lecture Details

Words: Are there any?!

A central question of linguistic theory asks “What do you know when you know a language?” It seems that any answer to this question must feature words at its core as the basic units from which the rest of language emerges.

But what are words? How do I know I have one in front of me? We have a strong intuitive notion of what a word is, but, we might be suspicious; like most intuitive notions, does this notion get us into trouble when it comes to constructing a consistent and coherent theory?

In this lecture, Dr Husband will consider the status of words in linguistic theory and ask whether such a term plays any role in our understanding of an individual’s knowledge of language.

Dr E. Matthew Husband

Dr E. Matthew Husband is a psycholinguist interested in the syntax-semantics interface and language processing.

He obtained his Bachelor’s degrees in psychology and mathematics from Tennessee Technological University and a PhD in linguistics from Michigan State University.

He worked at the University of Michigan – Flint, Brown University, and Michigan State University before taking up the posts of University Lecturer in Psycholinguistics and Tutorial Fellow of St Hugh’s College in 2012, where he is a co-director of Oxford’s Language and Brain Laboratory.

Dr Husband’s research involves a variety of behavioural and neurological techniques to address the representation and processing of sentence meanings, with a particular focus on the implicit meanings that arise out of sentence composition.