



LEXICAL ACCESS

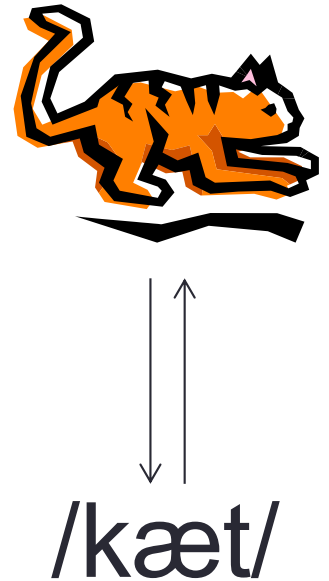
WHAT IS LEXICAL ACCESS?

A nine year old boy 3D-printed a cute cat.

- You understand this sentence not because you recognize it from prior experience, but because your brain has a generative procedure for putting these these words together into a complex meaning.
- But the words themselves you have to memorized. You have big dictionary of words in your head.
- The process by which your brain finds those word representations is **LEXICAL ACCESS**.
- Each memorized representation is a **LEXICAL ITEM**.
- The dictionary in your brain is the **MENTAL LEXICON**.

WHY DO WE MEMORIZE LEXICAL ITEMS?

- Because the relationship between the form and meaning of lexical items is arbitrary.
- There is nothing catty about the sound representation of “cat.”
- So to know that “cat” refers to furry creatures that meow, you just need to memorize that.
- But to know what “cute cat” means, you just need to memorize the meaning of “cute” and the meaning of “cat” and the rules of English grammar will take care of the rest.



black cat white cat
sad cat dead cat

Ok got it! The first word
specifies some property of
the thing the next word
refers to..



Furry turtle!



EXCEPTIONS TO THE ARBITRARINESS OF THE FORM-MEANING CONNECTION

- **Onomatopoeia Words:** Words that sound like their meaning: drip, bam, murmur
- Many lexical items in **sign languages** visually resemble their meanings, making the form-meaning connection less arbitrary in signed than in spoken languages.
 - Nevertheless, the relation between form and meaning is just as fixed/conventional in sign as it is in spoken languages.
 - Meaning, although there may be many ways to gesture GIVE, there is a fixed way to sign this in a given sign language.



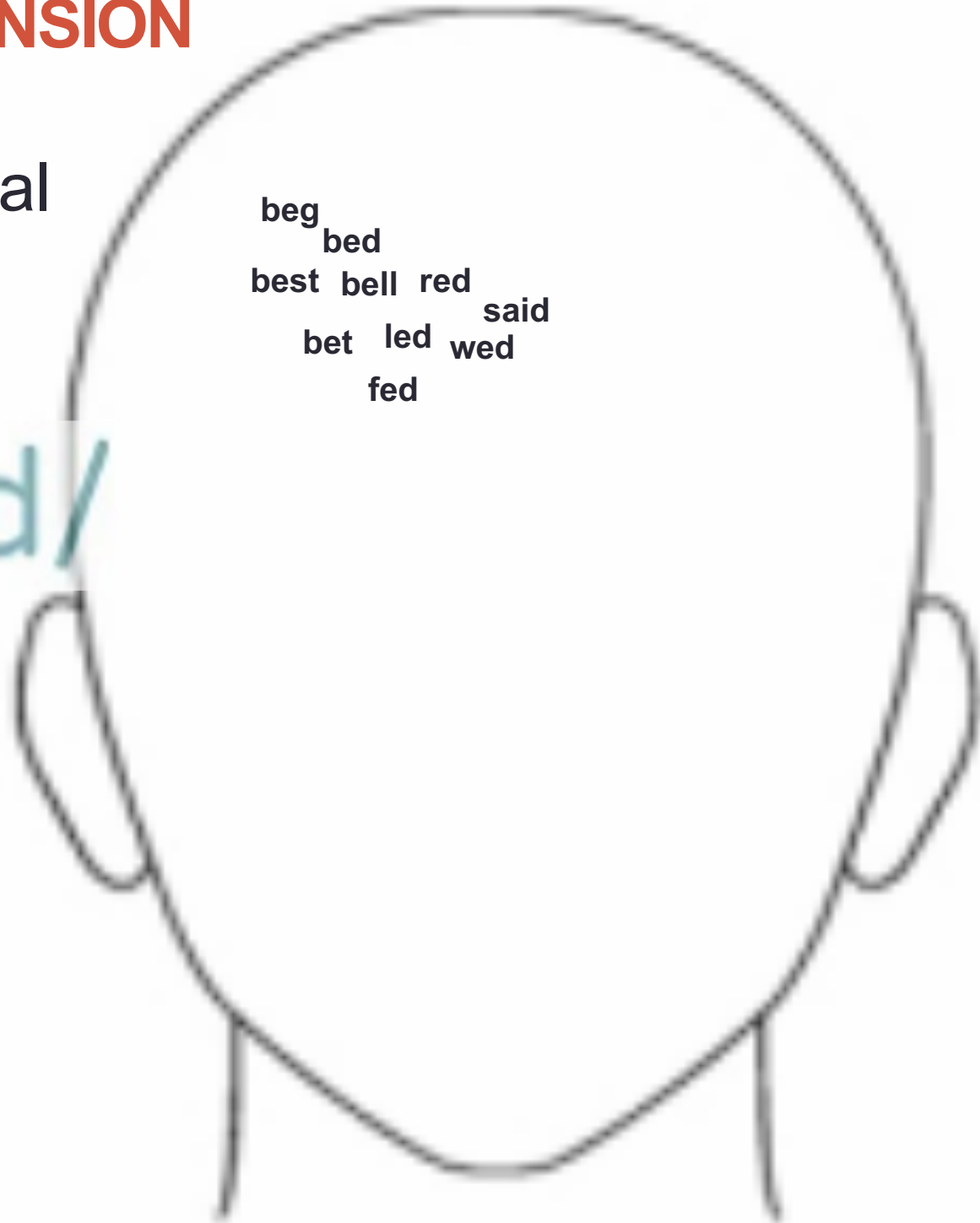
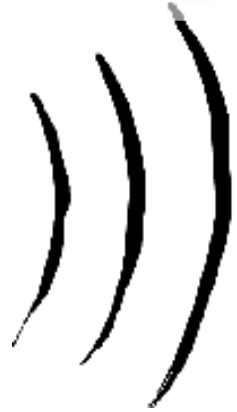
<https://www.lifeprint.com/asl101/pages-signs/g/give.htm>

COMPREHENSION

phonological
neighbors

beg
bed
best bell red
bet led wed
fed

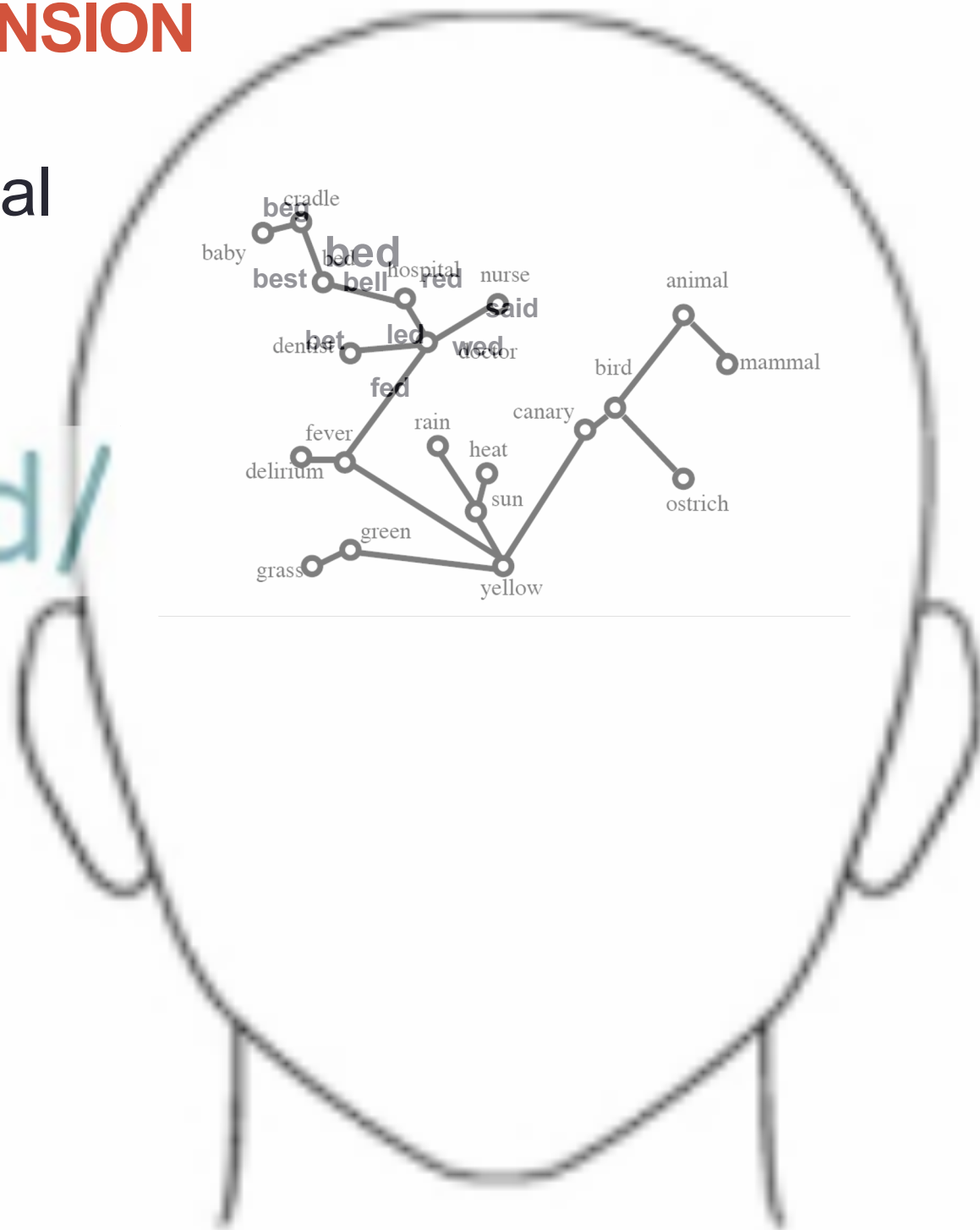
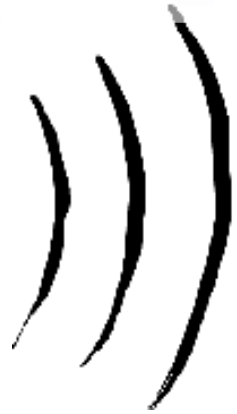
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COMPREHENSION

phonological
neighbors

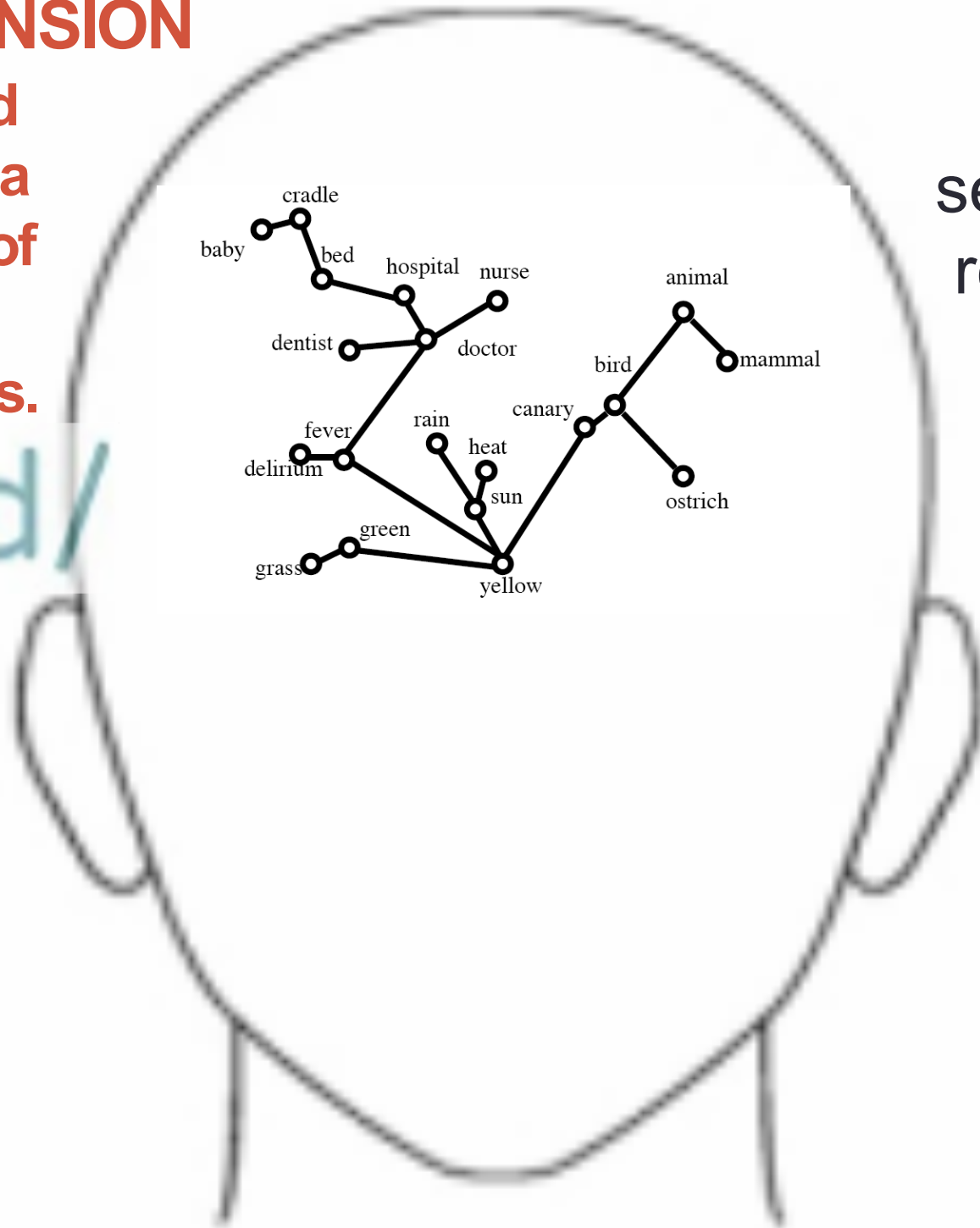
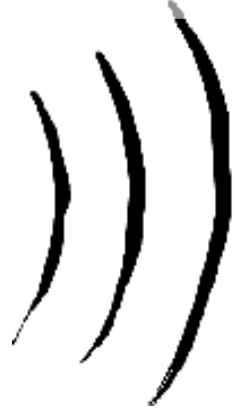
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COMPREHENSION

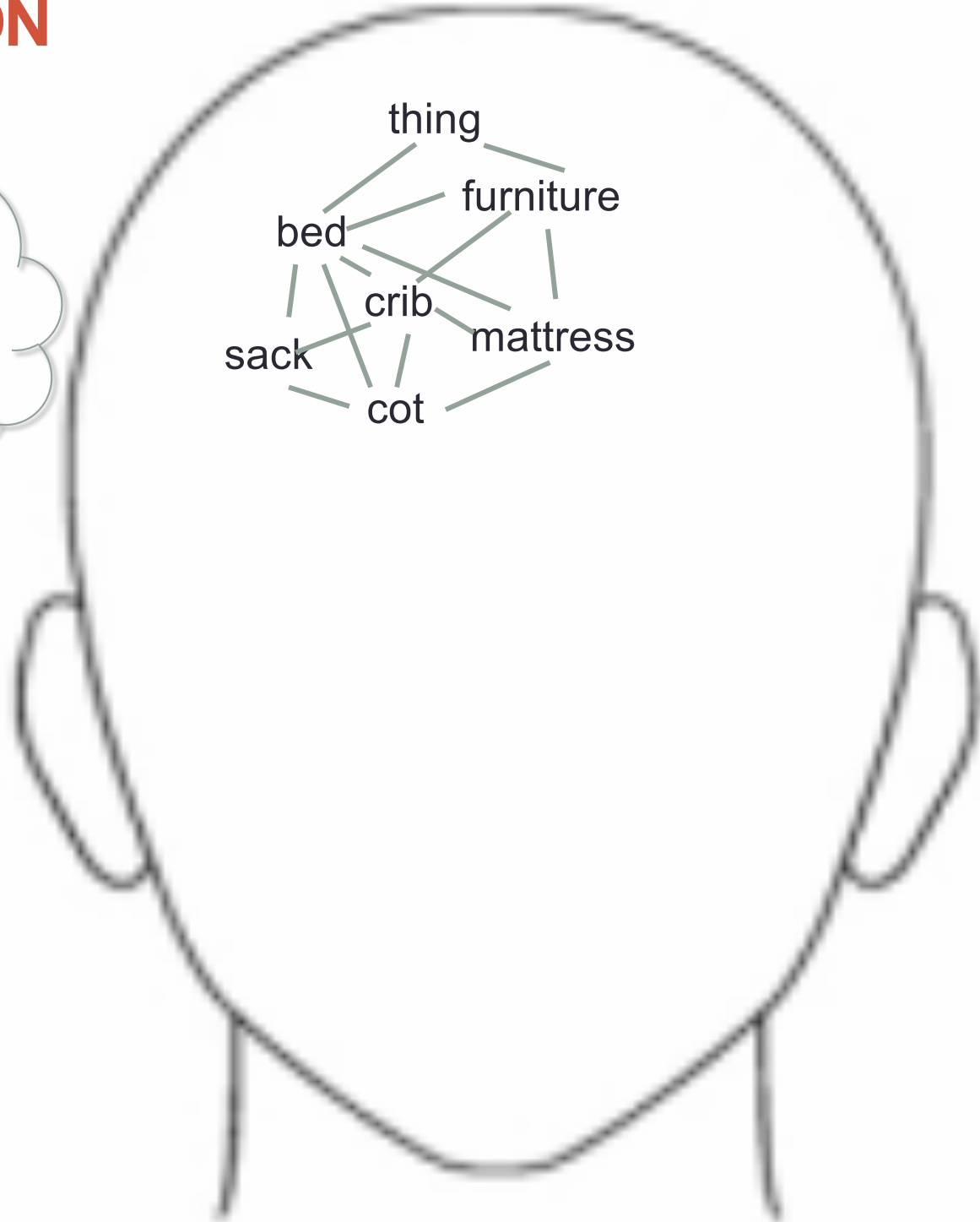
Each perceived form activates a large network of lexical representations.

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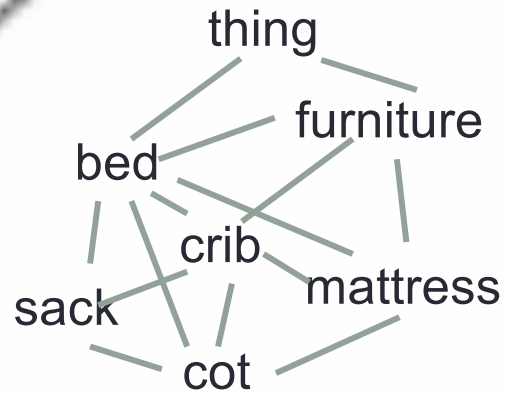


semantic
relatives

PRODUCTION



PRODUCTION



Need to select a specific lexical representation to express the meaning we have in mind.

CLASSIC TASKS FOR THE STUDY OF LEXICAL ACCESS

- **COMPREHENSION: Lexical Decision**

- Real word or not?

DOG

YIVE

KEND

LOVE

- **PRODUCTION: Picture Naming**

- Name the object in the picture



1) **Vary the properties of the stimuli themselves**

- frequency
- abstract/concrete
- number of similar words

2) **Vary the context of the stimulus**

- Priming studies