

Suggested Topics for Theses – Winter Semester 2026/-27

Topics by Martin Brandt

1. The Revelation Effect in Non-Episodic Judgments

The revelation effect is typically found in episodic recognition tasks. In such tasks, the sequence of recognition test items is interrupted by a problem-solving task. Working on this problem-solving task influences performance on subsequent memory tasks. The aim of this thesis is to extend this finding to non-episodic tasks (e.g., brand evaluations). In particular, the study will examine to what extent emotional aspects of the problem-solving task influence preference judgments.

2. Output Interference in Episodic Memory

Global memory models postulate that all learning experiences influence the retrieval of information. Does this also apply to the test phase in recognition experiments? In other words, does retrieving information from memory change the probability of later retrievals? Existing findings suggest that this is the case, but the observed effects tend to be rather small. In this thesis, a new idea will be tested that may produce a stronger effect. To this end, a simple and short memory experiment is planned, which will require a relatively large sample.

Topics by Beatrice Kuhlmann

1. Implicit Stereotypes About IT and Aging

Recent surveys conducted by us show strong explicit negative age stereotypes regarding aging and the use of information technology. However, these stereotypes were less pronounced in an implicit IAT designed by our group. To examine whether this pattern holds more generally, additional variants of implicit IATs on age stereotypes in the IT domain, as well as other implicit measures, will be tested. An initial idea for domain-specific implicit age-stereotype measures on which this topic builds is provided by Kornadt et al. (2016; <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/0361073X.2016.1132899>).

Note: The article is accessible via the University of Mannheim network (logging in via VPN may be required).

2. Metamemory and Source Monitoring: Can People Distinguish Source Guessing from Source Memory?

Source attributions (e.g., reporting who told one a remembered piece of information) are often based on more or less systematic source guessing rather than actual source memory. It is currently unknown whether people can assess and predict their source guessing independently of their source memory. This issue will be examined in more detail in theses by collecting, in addition to a source memory prediction (Judgment of Source “How likely is it that you will later remember the source?”), a judgment of source guessing (Judgment of Guessing “How likely is it that you will later correctly guess which source it was, even though you can no longer remember it?”). The extent to which the source is easier or harder to guess will be systematically varied. An introduction to the measurement of source guessing versus source memory and factors influencing source guessing can be found in Bayen and Kuhlmann (2012; <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0749596X10000768>).

Note: The article is accessible via the University of Mannheim network (logging in via VPN may be required).

Topics with Joint Supervision by Désirée Schönung & Beatrice Kuhlmann

Source Memory and Metamemory

Participants learn words together with sources (e.g., speakers) and provide two estimates:

1. the probability of later remembering the word (Judgment of Learning, JOL), and
2. the probability of later remembering the source of the word.

The latter judgments are called Judgments of Source (JOS), and there has been relatively little research in this area. We are interested in whether participants can predict their source memory, and if so, how accurately. There are two specific research questions in this area that are well suited for theses.

1. Cue Use in Source Memory Monitoring

Participants use various cues to make their metamemory predictions (cue-utilization approach; Koriat, 1997). In the context of predicting item memory—Judgments of Learning (JOL; “How likely is it that you will later remember the word?”)—many cues and how people use them have already been extensively studied. This is not the case for Judgments of Source (JOS; “How likely is it that you will later remember the speaker of this word?”). In this thesis, we aim to investigate whether participants use a particular cue differently for the two types of judgments (JOL vs. JOS)—for example, using it only for JOLs but not JOSs, using it for both but to different degrees, or using it as a positive predictor for one judgment and a negative predictor for the other.

2. Effects of Cognitive Aging on Metamemory

In the area of metamemory predictions for item memory, research with older adults already exists. However, it remains unexplored whether older adults—who typically show deficits in source memory—distinguish between item memory and source memory in their predictions, can predict this deficit, and show relative accuracy in their predictions. Relative accuracy means that they can predict which source associated with an item they are more likely to remember (higher JOS) compared to others (lower JOS), and that these highly rated item–source combinations are indeed remembered more frequently than chance. For this thesis, we would recruit a sample of older adults and a sample of students and compare predictions and memory performance.

Topics by Nikoletta Symeonidou

1. Mood and Stereotype-Based Source Judgments

Some studies suggest that people in a positive mood (compared to a negative mood) rely more strongly on stereotypes and holistic (top-down driven) cognitive processes. However, this effect has rarely been investigated in the context of source judgments—that is, judgments about the origin or source of information. When attributing information to a source, people often rely on stereotypes, particularly when they can no longer remember the actual source precisely (e.g., “I must have gotten this cake recipe from my grandmother—she always likes baking cakes”). Whether mood can influence such stereotype-based source judgments has so far received little systematic research and could be examined in an experimental study.

2. Do Emotional Contexts Facilitate Retrieval?

A well-established finding in memory research is the so-called context reinstatement effect: Information can be retrieved more successfully when the context at retrieval matches the context during learning (Smith & Vela, 2001). Put simply, when the learning context is reinstated at retrieval, memory performance benefits. However, there have been few studies that additionally manipulate the emotionality of the context. This raises the question of to what extent the emotional significance

of the context enhances or weakens the reinstatement effect. Is context reinstatement equally beneficial for memory when emotional contexts are involved?