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Empirical approaches to the dynamics of the lexicon – internet-based tools and research platforms at the Leibniz-Institute for the German Language

The Department of Lexical Studies at the Leibniz-Institut for the German Language has a special research focus on the variation and the dynamics of the lexicon of German. We study lexical borrowing, processes of neology and archaization, variation in lexical syntagmatics, and quantitative distribution patterns in the lexicon. Since our institute is also committed to making digital resources available to the scientific community (corpora, dictionaries, online grammars, research tools), many of our research endeavors are accompanied by digital developments. In pursuit of these goals, the Department of Lexical Studies has made available Internet dictionaries, lexical research platforms, and digital exploration tools.

The talk will show how these tools and platforms are being developed in the context of specific research projects. Since lexical changes and innovations are characterized by a comparatively high speed and by their susceptibility to influences from contact languages, many of our digital applications are designed with these features in mind.

After outlining the research orientation of our department, the talk will present four digital applications as examples and describe their development, their connection to our research, and their potential usefulness to other researchers: (i) a dictionary of neologisms and the process of their corpus-based determination, (ii) a tool for the monitoring of lexical changes in real-time corpora, (iii) an application resulting to gender-linguistic research visualizing lexical change in role nouns and job titles, and (iv) a research platform for exploring lexical borrowings from German into other languages.