A word to the wise...

According to recent evidence, there are lots of ways to recognize a familiar word. For the perceiver, the auditory impression of a word is rapidly recoded as a phoneme sequence in a fast and dedicated form of memory, and this phoneme sequence (for instance, ['ʧɪz'bʊɪʤə]) is usable as a kind of bait for fishing in lexical memory for a familiar word (in this example, the word that we spell cheeseburger) that matches. So, a phoneme sequence is one form of mediation of the contact between the unidentified spoken word and the listener's knowledge of words.

Of course, sometimes it is possible to recognize a word from the visual impression of the face of a talker saying it. In that instance, the visual motion pattern of the lips, jaw and tongue is probably recoded as a phoneme sequence, and the phoneme sequence is useable, again, as a kind of retrieval code for accessing lexical nodes.

Another form of visual access to words is available to the literate, specifically through an orthographic code. We have sketched the cognitive means by which reading works since the very beginning of the term, and in the terms of the present discussion the graphic constituents of each letter are perceived in combination as letter shapes in sequence. This sequence can be organized and recoded in a phonemic form ready for lexical access (as in the popular learn-to-read method, phonic); in some cases the sequence can be organized as a visual form, a kind of composite pictogram, and identified from its graphic shape alone.

The evidence that each form of perceptual experience constitutes a code for accessing the lexicon comes from studies of confusion. Specifically, two phonetically similar words can be taken for each other; two visually similar articulations performed by a talking face can be confused for each other; and, two orthographically similar words can be mistaken for each other.

Your assignment has two parts. First, you should derive several hypothetical instances in which words can be confused phonetically, orthographically or visually. Then, you should test your hypotheses with a friend or two as a subject of your study. Last, you should draw a conclusion about the ways in which a familiar word is recognized in speech or print.

The second part is a test of your conclusion against the text which appears on the accompanying page. Does your hypothesis stand, or does it fall, in the case of this text?

Bring your work with you to class on April 8.
ASTORIA OF LADLE RAT ROTten Hut

Wants pawn term, dare worsted ladle gull hoe lift wetter murder inner ladle cordage honor itch offer lodge dock florist. Disc ladle gull orphan worry ladle cluck wetter putty ladle rat hut, end fur disc raisin pimple cauldron Ladle Rat Rotten Hut. Wan moaning Rat Rotten Hut's murder colder inset: "Ladle Rat Rotten Hut, heresy ladle basking winsome burden barter and shirker cockles. Tick disc ladle basking tudor cordage offer groin murder hoe lifts honor udder site offer florist. Shaker lake, dun stopper laundry wrote, end yonder nor sorghum stenches dun stopper torque wet strainers."

"How-cake, murder," resplendent Ladle Rat Rotten Hut, end tickle ladle basking an stuttered oft. Honor wrote tudor cordage offer groin murder, Ladle Rat Rotten Hut mitten anomalous woof.

"Wail, wail, wail," set disc wicket woof, "evanescent Ladle Rat Rotten Hut! Wares or putty ladle gull goring wizard ladle basking?"


"O hoe! Heifer blessing woke," setter wicked woof, butter taught tomb shelf, "Oil tickle shirt court tudor cordage offer groin murder. Oil ketchup wetter letter, and den — O bore!"

Soda wicket woof tucker shirt court, end whinny retched a cordage offer groin murder, pcket inner widow an sore debtor pore oil worming worse lion inner bet. Inner flesh disc abdominal woof lipped honor betting adler rope. Zany pool dawn a groin murder's nut cup an gnat gun, any curdle dope inner bet.


Daze worry on forger nut gull's lest warts. Oil offer sodden throne offer carvers and sprinkling otter bed, disc curl and bloat Thursday woof ceased pore Ladle Rat Rotten Hut and garbled erupt.

Mural: Yonder nor sorghum stenches shut ladle jelled wren stopper torque wet strainers.