

## **Prosody and the brain I: Sentence comprehension and reference**

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9 September, 9:00-10:30

The role of prosody in on-line language comprehension can be difficult to measure using traditional experimental methods, because there is no clear overt sign of comprehension while it unfolds. Using electro-encephalography (EEG) is one of the ways to overcome this problem, since its excellent temporal resolution allows insight into listeners' online understanding of spoken language. After a brief introduction to EEG and a common way of analyzing this signal, event-related potentials (ERPs), I will discuss a number of studies that used EEG to get an insight into the role of prosody in two different domains of language comprehension. First, I will go into ERP research showing that prosody, mostly prosodic phrasing, is important in sentence comprehension and in some cases even appears to override syntax. I will explain how this research made use of different ERP components, some that are general to language ERP research (e.g., N400, P600) and some that appear to be specific to prosodic processing (e.g., the Closure Positive Shift, CPS). Second, I will describe some ERP research pertaining to the role of prosody in referential communication.