

## **Directions and challenges in the study of prosody perception**

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Even though explored for decades, immensely complex phenomena of speech perception and understanding are still tempting areas of study. Among the components of spoken utterances, prosody seems to be a very peculiar one. Simultaneously belonging to speech and going beyond the boundaries of language, being itself compound and multidimensional, prosody determines or influences the form and meaning of utterances in a number of ways. Phoneticians have achieved impressive results in measuring potential correlates of prosody in speech signal. However, while the tools for the acoustic analysis are easily available and methodology is relatively established, the process of prosody perception, from its early sensory stages to the resulting mental representations, still poses an unquestionable scientific challenge.

The presentation is not intended to precisely define the frontiers of prosody perception studies but rather to show that they can hardly be drawn. Instead, selected (subjectively) prominent research questions and relevant examples of study will be discussed to illustrate the progress. What are the relations between the acoustic correlates and perceived prosodic features? How are components of prosody perceived in the absence of acoustic cues? How do music-blind people deal with prosody in language? How is prosody perception related to the perception of music? Should one expect any peculiar, level-specific phenomena in the perception of suprasegmentals? How to maintain the distinction between linguistic and non-linguistic prosody? How is emotional prosody perceived? What do we know about mental representations of prosody? Which components of human nervous system are responsible for prosodic processing?

In the conclusion, some tentative suggestions will be formulated regarding possible directions and methods of study, in which prosody will be viewed as a multidimensional and contextualised process.