

On-line sentence comprehension adaptation when listening to foreign-accented speakers

Clara Martin, BCBL San Sebastián, Spain

Many years of research have provided significant knowledge on behavioral and electrophysiological responses to auditory sentence comprehension, in canonical speech perception. Given the increasing amount of communicative situations involving non-native speakers of a language, it is time to deeply explore and understand how listeners adapt sentence comprehension processes to non-canonical speech, such as foreign accented speech.

Here, we will review a series of behavioral and electrophysiological experiments aiming to define how language comprehension is modulated when a listener is facing a non-native speaker. We will present evidence of fine-grained on-line adaptation of sentence comprehension at the syntactic, semantic and pragmatic processing stages.

We will show how this research is relevant at the practical level, providing a better understanding on how native listeners manage to comprehend foreign speakers, and at the theoretical level, showing how sentence comprehension is recalibrated on-line depending on external cues such as the speaker's accent.