

An exploration of the acoustic and facial visual cues to word order across languages and speech styles, and their role in speech segmentation in adult monolinguals and bilinguals

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A wide range of visual cues is available in face-to-face interactions, and both adults and infants make use of this information — visual speech as well as co-verbal facial gestures — in speech perception. However, the potential influence of visual information on particular aspects of the auditory speech signal remains unexplored. In this talk, I will present an ongoing project that investigates whether co-verbal visual cues might, as an aid for auditory prosody, help us segment speech into phrases and potentially acquire word order. To that end, I will first present the results of a production study showing that the input contains visual facial gestures that signal phrasal boundaries, across languages (English, Japanese) and speech styles (infant- and adult-directed speech). I will then present the results of a perceptual study with monolinguals and bilinguals, showing that adults can indeed use this visual information to segment unknown artificial languages.