

Paralinguistic aspects of human voice perception

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Voices carry speech but also a wealth of socially important information which listeners use, more or less consciously, to form “first impressions” about unfamiliar speakers. Human communication therefore involves more than “just” speech which influence our social interactions. The social information carried by voices that I am particularly interested in are vocal emotion, attractiveness and accents. The cerebral processes that underlie our understanding of these 'honest signals' of the human voice are virtually unexplored. This talk focuses on the cognitive and neural underpinnings of these paralinguistic cues. These recent neuroimaging studies suggest that different types of vocal cues are processed in partially dissociable neural pathways. Parallels with the perception of faces and future directions will be discussed.