

In language acquisition, infants face the challenge of segmenting the continuous speech input into words and phrases. As proposed by the prosodic bootstrapping account, prosodic information (i.e., so-called speech melody) provides a jump-start for infants' speech segmentation.

Our research investigates this role of prosody in word learning by means of event-related brain potentials. In my talk, I will first outline a series of experiments investigating when during development word segmentation is established, with prosodic information as promoting speech cue. Second, I will show that prosodic information not only aids word segmentation, but also supports infants' mapping of these words to visual referents, the objects and events in the surrounding world.