

## **Making sense of social sounds: The neuropragmatics of prosody**

**PD Dr. Daniela Sammler** (Max-Planck-Institut für Empirische Ästhetik, Frankfurt am Main)

During verbal communication, humans regularly decode not only *what* is said but also *why*. Pragmatic theory posits that it is particularly the *why* – the communicative intention (illocution) of speakers – that drives the recipient's reactions (Grice, 1957). Intonational phonologists (Bolinger, 1986) and developmental psychologists (Malloch & Trevarthen, 2009) have long been aware of the importance of prosody for communicating social-relational (illocutionary) meaning. How the brain extracts meaning from voice tone remains, however, poorly understood. Here, I will integrate previous neurofunctional accounts of language with evidence from behavioural, neuroimaging, brain stimulation and cross-cultural studies to reveal the complex neurocognitive architecture of prosody perception in speech. I will show (i) sensorimotor contributions to prosody perception, (ii) the relevance of social cognition for the extraction of meaning from prosody, and (iii) cross-cultural communication of prosodic meaning. Taken together, this research proposes the interaction of several complementary mechanisms during prosody perception and offers a fresh look on the neural basis of interpersonal communication and mutual understanding.