Implicit Prosody: Silent and Aloud Reading

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What is the role of the inner voice during silent reading? To investigate this question, this project focuses on the comparative functions of explicit and implicit prosody.

Prosody refers to auditory characteristics of language at the suprasegmental level. These characteristics give the word contextual meaning. For example, whether a word or phrase is a statement or a question depends on prosody. Explicit prosody, therefore, is a clear component of how people read aloud.¹

This project investigates the role of implicit prosody — prosodic characteristics of the inner voice — in silent reading by comparing measures of participants’ reading both aloud and silently. Past research has indicated that implicit prosody has an impact on sentence processing during silent reading. For example, Breen & Clifton (2011) found that representations of words during silent reading are affected by metrical information.²

In the current study, recordings of each participant reading aloud were compared to eye-tracking measures of each participant reading silently. In addition, participants completed standardized measures including the Autism Quotient (a non-diagnostic tool), the Varieties of Inner Speech Questionnaire, the Rapid Automatized Naming task, the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test and the Digit Span task, which have been found to affect reading ability.³ In taking these measures, the current study aims to investigate whether these effects are present in both out-loud and silent reading. In this presentation, I will discuss the results of analysis of these standardized measures.

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