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Oscillatory clinical linguistics

Efficient strategies aimed to improve the deficits and to reinforce the strengths of people with language disorders demand good diagnosing tools. Only if disorders are correctly diagnosed, future difficulties during development can be properly anticipated. Nonetheless, at present typologies of disorders fail to categorize and characterize patients unambiguously. For typologies based on symptomatic criteria, one important problem is the comorbidity and the variability commonly observed in patients. For etiological classifications (or when etiological factors are also considered), one widespread problem is that one and the same molecular dysfunction can result in pretty variable clinical profiles. In this talk, I will argue in favour of a classification of language disorders based on abnormal patterns of brain oscillations during language processing. Because brain rhythms are intermediate-level biological components of language, in between molecular factors (at the bottom) and language features (at the surface), they are expected to provide more biologically motivated and more theoretically grounded accounts of disorders, and particularly, robust endophenotypes that can be used as reliable hallmarks for achieving earlier and more accurate diagnoses.