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Early ERP negativities in spoken-word recognition

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When we listen to speech, lexical candidates compete for recognition within 200 milliseconds of the onset of a word. However, the neuroelectric correlates of this process have not been widely studied. In a recent electroencephalographic study on word recognition in English (Söderström & Cutler, under review), we replicated results from Swedish, where an early event-related potential starting at 150 milliseconds from word onset has been suggested to reflect the probabilistically driven activation of possible word forms and early lexical match, as well as the pre-activation of linguistic material based on phonological cues. These findings have implications for models of spoken-word recognition and – more generally – linguistic predictions, providing promising testing grounds for lexical processing in less-studied languages.