

Humans use mostly consonants to ID words

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A recent study indicates humans use mostly consonant sounds to identify words within the flow of speech.

The study by researchers at the International School for Advanced Studies in Trieste, Italy, indicates speech elicits a series of representations, such as syllables, vowels, or consonants, which our brains identify as such from the very early onset of language acquisition.

The researchers said consonants serve mainly to distinguish among words, whereas vowels tend to carry grammatical information.

"Other scientists conjectured it could be possible to learn a language simply using the incredible statistical capacities of the brain," said Luca Bonatti, one of the researchers. "Instead, in our work, we studied which computational limits language imposes to this system for statistical calculus."

The theory works only within linguistic systems. Living organisms, such as non-human primates, who do not have language, seem to ignore consonants completely because they cannot consider them as having linguistic import and treat them as simple noise, thereby disregarding them entirely, Bonatti said.

The research appears in the June issue of *Psychological Science*, a journal of the American Psychological Society.

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