

## **Initial contact with and acquisition of grammatical tone**

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We investigate what happens in learners' brains during initial contact with grammatical tone and in the early acquisition stages. To this end, we are presently conducting an EEG experiment, where we record participants' neural activity while they learn pseudowords with grammatically meaningful tone and vowel contrasts. Controlling for possible native language (L1) influences, we compare L1 speakers of Swedish, where tone is used for lexical distinction and is associated with the morphological structure of words, and L1 speakers of non-tonal dialects of German, where pitch is used for intonation only.

We will investigate how fast the acquisition of grammatical tone proceeds and what sequences of neural changes occur in the process. Close attention will be paid to when or whether the neural changes known from lexical tone learning occur. In this context it will be interesting to see if there are any discernable differences between the bases of grammatical and lexical tone. This will give new insights into the neural networks involved in linguistic tone processing and language acquisition in general.