Hierarchy of prediction errors for auditory events in human temporal and frontal cortex.

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Abstract:
Predictive coding theories posit that neural networks learn statistical regularities in the environment for comparison with actual outcomes, signaling a prediction error (PE) when sensory deviation occurs. PE studies in audition have capitalized on low-frequency event-related potentials (LF-ERPs), such as the mismatch negativity. However, local cortical activity is well-indexed by higher-frequency bands [high-band (H?): 80-150 Hz]. We compared patterns of human H? and LF-ERPs in deviance detection using electrocorticographic recordings from subdural electrodes over frontal and temporal cortices. Patients listened to trains of task-irrelevant tones in two conditions differing in the predictability of a deviation from repetitive background stimuli (fully predictable vs. unpredictable deviants). We found deviance-related responses in both frequency bands over lateral temporal and inferior frontal cortex, with an earlier latency for H? than for LF-ERPs. Critically, frontal H? activity but not LF-ERPs discriminated between fully predictable and unpredictable changes, with frontal cortex sensitive to unpredictable events. The results highlight the role of frontal cortex and H? activity in deviance detection and PE generation.

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