Modulation of prosody can thus be used to impart affective tone, introduce subtle shades of meaning, and vary emphasis in spoken language". In patients with disturbances in prosody secondary to right hemisphere lesions, such deficits as inability to distinguish stress patterns in compound words and inability to discriminate intonations and phonetic stress in sentences were found. It would thus appear that the timbre perception defect described by Mazzucchi et al was a particular form of dysprosody.

**Matters arising**

**Reference**


Mazzucchi replies:

We thank Dr Procopis for the comments on our paper A case of receptive amusia with prominent timbre perception defect. We would, however underline that prosody and timbre do not correspond unquestionably to different terms, as the definitions: prosody, as opposed to dysprosody, is related to a sequence of sounds in different sounds in which their intensity and rhythm vary; timbre depends on the harmonic content of the sound, that is the peculiar quality of overtones that allows recognition of an instrument or voice as being different from another. Therefore, in terms of **semeiological and descriptive terms**, prosody and timbre must be considered as two distinct concepts and both corresponding disorders may be present in the same patients. If you proceed from the semeiological level to the level of the underlying neural mechanisms, this distinction could be more doubtful. In any case, until now no data exist on the possible relationship between prosody and timbre, just as it is not clear, generally, whether there is a unitary mechanism of sound and musical cognition or, rather, a combination of abilities which are independent of each other.

**References**


**A case of receptive amusia with prominent timbre perception defect**

Sir: Mazzucchi et al describe a patient with a right temporal lesion and found that the patient had deficits in recognising the timbre of music and other sounds. These deficits are remarkably similar to disturbances in prosody which also occur with right hemisphere lesions. As Weintraub et al (Arch Neurol 1982;38:742–4) pointed out prosody "refers to the distribution of stress and melodic contour in speech.

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**Figures**

**Fig 1A** 1st CT scan showing an enhancing lesion in the right frontal area.

**Fig 1B** CT scan at 6 weeks showing marked regression of the lesion.