
Speakers' expectations about upcoming discourse referents: Effects of pitch accents and focus particles

Nicole Gotzner
Leibniz-ZAS
gotzner@leibniz-zas.de

Katharina Spalek
Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin
katharina.spalek@hu-berlin.de

In the current study, we investigate how pitch accents (H*, L+H*) and focus particles (*only*, *also*) affect speakers' choices to mention referents in a contrast set in the upcoming discourse. Participants were presented with short discourses involving two referents and were asked to orally produce two sentences that continue the story. An analysis of speakers' continuations showed that participants were most likely to mention a contextual alternative in the condition with *only*, followed by the L+H* and H* conditions (see Figure 1). In the condition with *also*, in turn, participants mentioned both the focused/accented referent and the alternative or picked out these referents with a pronoun. Our findings indicate a strong influence of different information-structural devices on speakers' expectations and their choice of referential form.

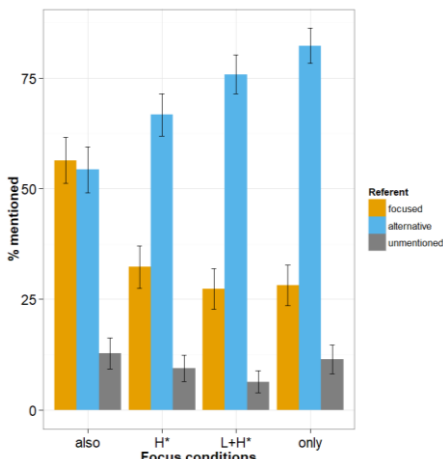


Figure 1: % referents mentioned