
Discourse status, lexical mention, and prosodic plasticity

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Recent studies on the prosodic reflexes of givenness show that the presence of pitch accents is not only influenced by the discourse status of the referents, but also by the presence of the exact lexical mention in the explicit common ground (Baumann & Riester 2013). These findings are crucial for our understanding of the Common Ground, since they indicate that the prosodic realization of an utterance does not only depend on the set of available propositions but also on the exact way these propositions were lexically realized.

This talk presents the results of a study on scripted speech production, examining the effects of DISCOURSE STATUS (given vs. new referent) and LEXICAL MENTION (given vs. new word). The obtained results in German and British English show that given referents are deaccented independently of LEXICAL MENTION, i.e., deaccenting is a necessary condition in order to establish a co-reference chain to the antecedent. Comparative data from French and Hungarian confirm that these languages rely on tonal events aligned with the edges of prosodic constituents instead of pitch accent contrasts (Féry 2013). Effects of LEXICAL MENTION on the prosodic boundaries are observed in these languages as well, but direct reflexes of DISCOURSE STATUS are not found in our data.

References: • Baumann, S. & Riester, A. (2013): Coreference, lexical givenness and prosody in German. *Lingua* 136, 16–37. • Féry, C. (2013): Focus as prosodic alignment. *NLLT* 31, 683-734.