

## **The mediating role of prominence for the interpretation of discourse meaning**

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The empirical analysis of German speech data (including corpus annotation, production and perception experiments, and prominence rating tasks) suggests a correlation between both the information status (levels of givenness/newness) and the pragmatic importance (focus) of an expression and its degree of prosodic prominence in terms of accent types.

However, there is no one-to-one relation between information structure and prosodic prominence. Rather, the distribution of accent types and positions is probabilistic in nature and depends on the text type. Furthermore, the interpretation of prominence is not only based on the acoustic signal but also on structural expectations derived from both the discourse context and the within-utterance context.

A model is proposed which takes the default metrical structure of an utterance as a point of departure, which is then adjusted or reorganized (prosodically and/or syntactically) based on the information structure derived from the discourse context (plus speech acts, emotional states etc.). Crucially, the marking and/or interpretation of an intended meaning is mediated via relative prosodic prominence levels that are expressed by a set of phonetic cues (making up phonological categories) whose selection is to some extent dependent on speaker- and listener-specific strategies.