

Global Prosodic Parameters and Anaphora Resolution

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Abstract

In this talk we would like to present the results of an experiment on the relation between global prosodic parameters of an utterance and the interpretation of anaphoric pronouns. On the one hand, previous research shows that global prosodic features, such as pitch range and pause duration, reflect the intersentential structure of discourse. On the other hand, discourse structure is known to affect accessibility/salience of discourse referents, and hence their ability to serve as antecedents of anaphoric pronouns. If both claims are correct, global prosody should in turn affect the pronoun interpretation. Our experiment tests this hypothesis.

After presenting our findings and their theoretical implications, we would like to discuss another experiment (currently in preparation) that should investigate the dependence of discourse structure on the nuclear pitch accent placement (i.e. information structure).