

# **Prosodic variation in referring expressions: the overlap between message-based and processing-based explanations**

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Referring expressions vary in their acoustic prominence, where speakers tend to use acoustically prominent pronunciations for reference to discourse-new information, but often use acoustically reduced forms to refer to given or predictable information. This kind of prosodic variance can be explained in two ways: 1) a message-based account, or 2) a processing-based account. The traditional approach is that prosodic forms are selected on the basis of the meaning or pragmatics of the speaker's message. Here I focus on pragmatic specialization, where certain linguistic forms (e.g., accented/prominent vs. unaccented/reduced) are specialized for particular discourse statuses (e.g., Ariel, 1990; Gundel et al., 1993; Halliday 1967). A part of this approach assumes that speakers choose referential forms on the basis of the comprehension needs of their addressee (Lindblom, 1990). By contrast, a processing approach observes that prosodic variation may result from constraints on the production processing system, such that the facilitation of production processing supports the use of reduced forms (Balota et al., 1987; Bell et al., 2009; Kahn and Arnold, 2011).

I argue that both processing and message-based accounts need to be considered, as well as the relationship between them, because both discourse status and consideration of the addressee have systematic effects on processing facilitation, which may mediate some effects traditionally assumed to be message-driven.