INTRODUCTION
In an auditory speeded-acceptability judgement task we investigated the prosodic influence on negation in replacives (Drubig 1994), in particular, the scope of the negation in relation with matching and mismatching accent structures in German sentences.

QUESTION: How does the interaction of prosody and scope influence the processing of replacives?

MATERIALS (capitals indicate accentuation)
(a) Philipp will nicht dem FREUND den Stift geben, sondern dem LEHRER. Philipp does not want to give the pen to the friend but to the teacher.
(b) Philipp will nicht dem FREUND den Stift geben, sondern den BLOCK. Philipp does not want to give the pen to the friend but the pad.
(c) Philipp will dem FREUND nicht den Stift geben, sondern dem LEHRER. Philipp does not want to give the pen to the friend but to the teacher.
(d) Philipp will dem FREUND nicht den Stift geben, sondern den BLOCK. Philipp does not want to give the pen to the friend but to the teacher.

PREDICTIONS
1. Lower acceptability and longer reaction times when there is a mismatch between prosodic cues and semantic structure (condition (b))
2. The scope and position of the negator affects acceptability and forces longer reaction times ((a) and (b) compared to (c) and (d))

RESULTS
• Subjects = 18
• 5 sentences per condition

SUMMARY
⇒ the well formed condition (a) regarding prosodic cues and semantic contrast showed high acceptability scores and the fastest reaction times
⇒ in the mismatch condition (b) we found the lowest acceptability scores and a longer reaction time compared to (a)
⇒ when the element adjacent to negation is not accented the acceptability scores increased ((c) and (d) compared to the mismatch condition (b))
⇒ longer reaction times in (d) compared to (b) imply that the adjacency of nicht 'not' can be used to reanalyze the structure and weaken the influence of prosodic cues
⇒ our data support earlier results on prosodic processing (e.g. Steinhauer et al. 1999) and highlights the interaction between prosodic and semantic structure in which prosodic information trigger a reanalysis process (c)

REFERENCES

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