**INTRODUCTION**

- Language users anticipate upcoming information when reading or listening to sentences (e.g. Van Petten & Luka, 2012).
- Listeners use prosodic information like contrastive pitch accent as a cue to help determine upcoming referents (Dahan et al., 2002; Sedivy et al., 1995).
- Many of these studies used a visual world paradigm in which a limited number of referents are provided in the visual context (Ito & Speer, 2008).

**RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

To what extent do native speakers of English use a contrastive pitch accent to restrict reference selection, or set of contrasting elements, in the absence of pre-specified referents in the visual context?

**METHODS**

**Participants**
- 19 UF students (13 females and 6 males) ages from 19 to 25
- Native speakers of English

**Materials**
- 40 sentences per condition (160 experimental items) and 120 fillers per participant (see “stimuli”)

**Procedure**
- Participants listened to a passage through headphones.
- 25% of trials followed by comprehension questions

**REFERENCES**


**CONTACT**

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**STIMULI**

**Context:**
Josephine and Gregory are always helpful. They offered us transportation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contrastive Pitch Accent</th>
<th>Types of Object</th>
<th>Examples of target sentences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Different</td>
<td>We took Josephine’s car but left Gregory’s bike in the garage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Different</td>
<td>We took Josephine’s car but left GREGORY’s bike in the garage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Same</td>
<td>We took Josephine’s bike but left Gregory’s bike in the garage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Same</td>
<td>We took Josephine’s bike but left GREGORY’s bike in the garage.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Contrastive pitch accent is infelicitous  

**RESULTS**

- Broad positivity between 200-500 ms for proper names with contrastive pitch accent (B, D) consistent with previous findings for focus marking (Bornkessel et al. 2003; Cowles et al., 2007)

**DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

Do native speakers of English use contrastive prosody to restrict reference selection?

- Semantic facilitation when felicitous intonation is presented (reduced N400 in D) and difficulty with an incorrect pitch accent (Sedivy et al., 1995; Ito & Speer, 2008)
- A prominent role of contrastive accent in restricting a set of potential referents, or contrast set, even when specific referents are not provided in the visual context
- We are currently testing native speakers of Mandarin to explore whether experience with similar contrastive pitch accent in L1 has an effect in use of English prosodic information