

The implicatures of stress distribution in Danish utterances

- on semantic and pragmatic prominence

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It has long been known that the distribution of stress in Danish— as well as in other languages – is of great importance to the meaning of the utterance at the semantic as well as the pragmatic level.

At the semantic level, extensive work on unit accentuation in Danish has shown how the stress patterns in syntactic phrases are used to convey lexico-grammatical meaning.

At the pragmatic level, several studies have also shown that the distribution of stress - among other signals - serves as instructions of text pragmatic nature, e.g. to identify the pragmatic focus of the utterance. However, no one has shown how this is achieved considering that there is no acoustic distinction between semantic and pragmatic stress distribution.

In this article, I show how Levinson's theory of generalized conversational implicature (GCI) proves to be useful in order to shed light on the systematic nature of pragmatic stress distribution.