

## Given-New Attenuation Effects in Spoken Discourse: For the Speaker, or for the Addressee?

Alexia Galati & Susan E. Brennan  
Stony Brook University

In spontaneous speaking, new information tends to be expressed clearly, while given, predictable, or previously referred-to information tends to be attenuated. Current debate concerns whether this given/new effect is due to audience design (speakers adapting to addressees by taking their knowledge and needs into account), or is simply an automatic process by which speakers do what is easiest for themselves. In 20 groups of 3, one speaker retold the same Road Runner cartoon story twice to one addressee (so the second retelling was to an Old Addressee) and once to another (New Addressee), counterbalanced for hypermnesia (Addressee1/Addressee1/Addressee2 or Addressee1/Addressee2/Addressee1). We compared events realized, words, details, perspectives, and word lengths (for lexically identical expressions) for a given speaker across all 3 retellings. Stories retold to Old Addressees were attenuated compared to those retold to New Addressees. We conclude that the given/new effect is partner-specific, guided by the needs of addressees.