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## Do you hear how BIG it is? Iconic Prosody in Child Directed Language Supports Language Acquisition

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#### **Abstract**

Child directed language has been characterized by exaggerated prosody which can serve multiple functions including highlighting properties of meaning via iconicity. Iconic prosody may help language acquisition by bringing properties of displaced or unknown referents to the language learner's "mind's eye" or facilitating the acquisition of abstract features such as "direction", or "speed". We investigate iconic prosody in semi-naturalistic caregiver-child interactions. 50 caregivers were asked to talk to their child (2-4 years) about a set of toys either known or unknown to the child, and either present or absent from the interaction. In a first analysis, we included instances of iconic prosody as subjectively coded. In a second analysis, we looked at acoustic modulations for a set of seed words. In both analyses, we found that caregivers made use of iconic prosody more when talking about unknown or displaced objects, pointing to a neglected role for prosody in word learning.