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# Investigating the Distribution of Clefts in Written and Spoken German: The Role of Prosody

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In a previous corpus study, Tönnis et al. (2016) propose that clefts are found less frequently in spoken German because they are a device to mark focus intonation in written language, while spoken language usually marks focus with an A-accent. This study aims to filter out those clefts from Tönnis' et al. cleft sample that are preferred over their canonical version (compare (1) and (2)). This will be done using eye-tracking and acceptability judgment tasks.

- (1) Es ist Peter, der Maria liebt.  
*It is Peter wh<sub>NOM.SG</sub> Maria loves.*  
'It is Peter who loves Maria.'
- (2) Peter liebt Maria.  
*Peter loves Maria.*  
'Peter loves Maria.'

A follow-up experiment will test the following hypothesis: For all those clefts that are perceived better than their canonical counterpart in written text, focus intonation of the former pivot constituent should improve the acceptability of the canonical in spoken language. The experiment will collect acceptability judgments comparing spoken and written stimuli including the original clefts, their canonical version, and different intonation patterns for the spoken stimuli.

**References:** • DeVaugh-Geiss, J. P. et al. (2015): Contradicting (not-)at-issueness in exclusives and clefts: An empirical study. *Semantics and Linguistic Theory* 25, 373–393. • Szendrői, K. (1999): A Stress-driven Approach to the Syntax of Focus, *UCL Working Papers in Linguistics* 11, 545–573. • Tönnis, S. et al. (2016): Argument Asymmetry in German Cleft Sentences. In: *ESSLLI 2016 Proceedings*.