
Appositive interpretation of relative clauses – Is prosody the cue?

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Relative clauses (RCs) in their appositive (1a) but not in their restrictive reading (1b) convey secondary, non-at-issue (NAI) information.

- (1) a. Robbi adores Frege, who (as you may know) wrote *Über Sinn und Bedeutung*.
b. Robbi adores the man who wrote *Über Sinn und Bedeutung*.

In languages like German, where both types of RCs are introduced by the same form of relative pronoun, the *comma intonation*, i.e. a non-integrated prosodic contour of the RC (Emonds 1976), is predicted to be crucial in detecting an appositive reading (Potts 2005). However, studies on the prosodic realization of RCs in German indicate that non-integrated prosody may not constitute a reliable cue for NAI interpretations (Birkner 2008, Schubö et al. 2015, Trabandt 2016). Furthermore, the role of other cues suggested in the literature, e.g. type of head noun, has not been investigated experimentally. In two experiments we investigated the influence of prosody and head noun type (definite DP vs. bare plural) as potential cues for NAI interpretations of structurally ambiguous RCs in 32 German-speaking adults. The results demonstrate that prosody is not a sufficient cue to trigger appositive (NAI) interpretations of ambiguous RCs. Instead, the type of head noun crucially influences the readiness to derive appositive interpretations along with prosody.

References: • Birkner, K. (2008). *Relativ(satz)konstruktionen im gesprochenen Deutsch*. Berlin: de Gruyter. • Emonds, J. (1976). *A transformational approach to English syntax*. New York: Academic Press. • Potts, C. (2005). *The logic of conventional implicatures*. Oxford: OUP. • Schubö, F., Roth, A., Haase, V., & Féry, C. (2015). Experimental investigations on the prosodic realization of restrictive and appositive relative clauses in German. *Lingua* 154. 65-86 • Trabandt, C. (2016). *On the acquisition of restrictive and appositive relative clauses*. PhD dissertation, University of Frankfurt.