The ordering of syntax-prosody-interpretation mapping rules

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Sentence stress on the object is compatible with a broad focus reading in German, in both canonical verb-final structures and derived object-initial V2 clauses. This parallel can be modeled by assuming that mapping rules determining the relation between syntax, prosody, and interpretation can apply to traces/deleted copies (as suggested by Selkirk 1995 for English and by Korth 2014 for German). The use of object-initial sentences is restricted, however: the subject needs to be discourse-given, as shown in (2).

(1)  What’s happening?
    Ich denke, dass [Peter {\textcolor{red}{\textbf{ein}} Buch liest}]_{\text{foc}}.
    I think that Peter a book reads
    ‘I think that Peter is reading a book.’

(2)  a. Why is the teacher surprised? — #Ein Buch liest [Peter]_{\text{new}}.
    b. Why is Peter’s teacher surprised? — Ein Buch liest [Peter]_{\text{given}}.

I will present evidence for the patterns in (1)-(2) stemming from acceptability rating experiments as well as related data for contrastive topic (CTs). The data suggest that for the purpose of the mapping between prosody and the focus/CT, access to the full syntactic structure including previous stages of the derivation is necessary. The mapping between prosody and givenness, on the other hand, seems to interact with the arguably ‘late’ process of postnuclear compression, which does not affect the metrical structure but merely the phonetic realization of pitch accents (cf. Kügler & Féry 2016). Taken together, these considerations point towards an architecture of grammar with ‘early’ and ‘late’ interface mapping rules (preceding/following the transformation to a phonetic signal).

focus / CT mapping    \rightarrow    postnuclear    \rightarrow    givenness mapping
(accessing traces)     compression                 (surface-oriented)