# The interaction of expressivity and register:
# the case of German demonstrative pronouns

**Stefan Hinterwimmer**
*Universität Hamburg*
stefan.hinterwimmer@uni-hamburg.de

This paper argues for a unified account of two properties setting German demonstrative pronouns of the *die*/*der*/*das*-variety (henceforth: *D-pronouns*) apart from demonstrative pronouns of the *diese*/*dieser*/*dieses*-variety (henceforth: *diese*-pronouns). First, *diese*-pronouns are strongly preferred in the formal register, while D-pronouns are in principle acceptable in the formal as well as the informal register but are more common in the informal register (Patil et al. 2020). Second, while *diese*-pronouns can never pick up referents that are maximally prominent in terms of topicality, subjecthood and proto-agentivity, D-pronouns can pick up such referents if the sentences containing them make the speaker or narrator prominent as perspective-taker via the presence of expressive or evaluative content (Patil et al. 2023). In Patil et al. (2023), the second property is accounted for as follows: Both D-pronouns and *diese*-pronouns avoid maximally prominent referents as antecedents, but the scales with respect to which prominence is determined differ. For D-pronouns, they include perspectively prominent speakers or narrators as the most highly ranked elements, while for *diese*-pronouns the latter are not included, and topical referents are accordingly the most highly ranked elements.

In this paper, I propose a unified account of the two properties on which the two types of pronouns are not sensitive to different scales. Rather, I assume that *diese*-pronouns have come to acquire a social meaning via an indexical chain that conveys a speaker persona (cf. Eckert 2008, Beltrama 2018, Burnett 2019) characterized by the properties of precision, neutrality and objectivity, which are characteristic features of the formal register. Since such a persona is incompatible with the speaker's or narrator's perspective becoming prominent via the presence of expressive content, the constellation in which the speaker or narrator becomes more prominent than the respective topic can never arise for a sentence in which a *diese*-pronoun is used felicitously. D-pronouns, in contrast, do not inherently convey a specific social meaning.

**References.** Beltrama, A. (2018). Precision and speaker qualities. The social meaning of pragmatic detail. *Linguistics Vanguard* 20180003 • Burnett, H. (2019). Signalling games, sociolinguistic variation and the construction of style. *Linguistics and Philosophy* 42(5), 419-450. • Eckert, P. (2008). Variation and the indexical field. *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 12(4), 453-476. • Patil, U., P. Bosch & S. Hinterwimmer (2020). Constraints on German *diese* demonstratives: language formality and subject-avoidance. *Glossa: a journal of general linguistics* 5(1): 14, 1-22. • Patil, U., S. Hinterwimmer & P. B. Schumacher (2023). Effect of evaluative expressions on two types of demonstrative pronouns in German. *Glossa: a journal of general linguistics* 8(1), 1-29.