

Preface

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Reduced Parenthetical Clauses as Mitigators: A corpus study of spoken French, Italian and Spanish

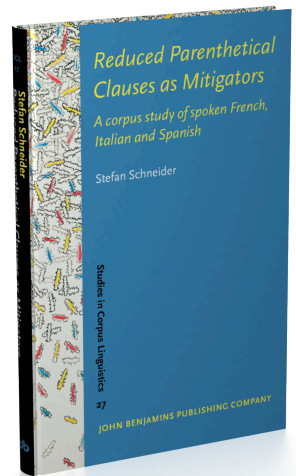
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PREFACE

Parenthesis and the various types of parenthetical expressions have attracted constant but never intense attention. Now and then they are touched on in articles, while rarely constituting the main subject of books. The present monograph is one of the few specifically dedicated to parenthetical verbs or, as I prefer to call them, *reduced parenthetical clauses* (RPCs) in three Romance languages, namely French, Italian, and Spanish.

If asked to declare my linguistic affiliation or to define the approach from which these clauses are examined, I would have some difficulty in giving a short answer. One of the reasons is that in this book I tried to proceed as independently as possible from specific and isolated linguistic traditions and their particular terminologies. It is up to the reader to determine whether this attempt has been successful. Another reason is that in the present monograph RPCs are described from several perspectives and at several analytic levels: pragmatic, semantic, syntactic, and even prosodic ones. Each of these perspectives implies a host of methods and linguistic traditions, none of which offers, in my opinion, a satisfactory framework embracing all levels mentioned.

With this preliminary remark, I do not mean to suggest that it is impossible to note the influence of one or more linguistic traditions. In fact, it will be clear to every reader that this study draws extensively on the methodology of contemporary corpus linguistics. It is based on 22 corpora of spoken French, Italian, and Spanish comprising a total amount of 3,975,500 words that document spoken language of the last 30 years. On the other hand, the pragmatic analysis, i. e. the most dominant part of the study, owes much to the framework first sketched out by Urmson (1952) and Hare (1970), and recently further developed by Caffi (1999, 2001). While the semantic and syntactic parts are more eclectic and are not underpinned by a specific linguistic model, the final considerations on the prosodic aspects of parenthetical clauses are partly influenced by theories outlined in Morel & Danon-Boileau (1998) and in Campione (2001a, 2001b).

Writing a book is both a solitary and a social exercise. After long and lonely early morning hours in my office at the *Institut für Romanistik*, I had the luck to meet Gudrun Held, Martin Hummel, Bettina Kluge, Hugo Kubarth, Klaus Lichem, and Muriel Warga; patient colleagues who, during coffee breaks, were willing to discuss aspects of my work or who were generous enough to read drafts of the text, even during their summer vacations. I also had the privilege of presenting two early versions to the colleagues of the *Grazer Linguistisches Kolloquium*. My work has profited considerably from the suggestions and ideas that came up during these informal gatherings.

This study would have been impossible if I had not had the opportunity to carry out parts of it at the *Facultad de Filología* of the *Universidad de Sevilla* and at the *Département de Linguistique Française* of the *Université de Provence*. I want to thank the *Karl-Franzens-Universität Graz* and the *Hugo Schuchardt'sche Malvinenstiftung* for the financial funding and Catalina Fuentes Rodríguez, Claire Blanche-Benveniste, Sandrine Caddéo, José Deulofeu, Frédéric Sabio, and André Valli for establishing the necessary contacts, their warm reception, the corpora they made available to me and the interest they showed for parenthetical expressions. I also want to thank the members of the *Équipe de recherche DELIC (Description linguistique informatisée sur corpus)* in Aix-en-Provence, above all Estelle Campione and Jean Véronis, for admitting me to their regular meetings as well as for their valuable suggestions regarding the prosody of parentheticals.

Upon completion, the entire manuscript or parts of it have been read by a number of friends, colleagues, and reviewers. Among them I would like to mention Claudia Caffi, Emanuela Cresti, Bruce Fraser, Klaus Hölker, Thomas Krefeld, Guido Mensching, Michele Loporcaro, and Ulrich Wandruszka, who all provided helpful comments. The book has been improved considerably by their care. Since I have not always followed their advice, if faults and infelicities remain, they are certainly my own. I am also grateful to Elena Tognini Bonelli for her support during the publication of the book.

As the reader will undoubtedly note, this book has not been written by a native speaker of English. Several persons have given me advice that, hopefully, helped to improve the grammatical consistency and the style of the text. I am especially grateful to Georg Marko and Ursula Lindenberg for their accurate corrections.