Reduced parenthetical clauses in Romance languages – a pragmatic typology*

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Abstract

The article derives from a corpus study of *reduced parenthetical clauses* (RPCs) in contemporary spoken French, Italian, and Spanish (cf. Schneider, forthcoming) and proposes a typology based on pragmatic criteria. The parentheticals are first subdivided into three major groups: phatic, reporting, and mitigating RPCs. Subsequently, drawing on the contributions of Hare (1970) and Caffi (1999, 2001), the group of mitigating RPCs is subdivided in four groups: a) clauses mitigating the phrastic; b) clauses indicating the topic and mitigating the phrastic or the neustic; c) clauses directly mitigating the neustic; d) clauses indirectly mitigating the neustic. The taxonomy is shown to be corroborated by two independent phenomena: the positional mobility of RPCs and the occurrence of RPCs in interrogative sentences.

1 Introduction

As pointed out by Hoffmann (1998: 318), within the panorama of parenthetical constructions, the *reduced parenthetical clause*ⁱ (RPC) occupies a special position. Due to its various pragmatic functions and its high degree of syntactic complexity, a lot of names have been proposed for this construction, e.g., *parenthetical verb* (see Urmson 1952), *assertive predicate* (see Hooper 1975), *comment clause* (see Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech, & Svartvik 1985: 1112ff.), *disjunct sentence* (see Espinal 1991), *stance adverbial* (see Biber, Johansson, Leech, et al. 1999: 197, 864ff.), and *epistemic phrase* (see Kärkkäinen 2003). Each of these names captures a different pragmatic or syntactic property.

Although there is a considerable amount of literature on the subject in general and the above-mentioned publications provide a first introduction to it, there are only three monographs (see Cornulier 1973; Venier 1991; Andersen 1997) and a handful of articles (e.g., Bolinger 1968; Cornulier 1978; Borillo 1982; Blanche-Benveniste 1989; Andersen 1996; Hölker 2003) dedicated specifically to Romance RPCs. The present paper sums up some of the results of a corpus-based study of RPCs in contemporary spoken French, Italian, and Spanish (cf. Schneider, forthcoming). Its aim is to propose a typology of RPCs based on pragmatic considerations, with special focus on their function as mitigators, i.e., as devices reducing speaker commitment. The classification will be shown to be supported by at least two facts, namely position within the host clause and the illocution expressed by the host.

The paper is organized as follows: After a short characterization of RPCs, I will present the corpora the study is based on and the empirical procedure followed. The parentheticals selected from the corpus texts are then subdivided into three macro-groups: phatic, reporting, and mitigating RPCs. With the aid of the pragmatic framework outlined in Hare (1970) and Caffi (1999, 2001), the group of mitigating RPCs is classified in more detail and four subgroups are defined. At the end, the typology is shown to be supported by a syntactic and a pragmatic fact.

2 A brief characterization of reduced parenthetical clauses

In conversations, French speakers occasionally insert into their sentences expressions such as, e.g., those boldfaced in (1) - (3):

- (1) L1 [...] ça faisait partie de ces - *disons* données culturelles
[...]
that made part of these say-IMP.1PL data cultural
'That was part of these, let's say, cultural data'
- (2) C: [...] c'est plus libre maintenant, *je crois* (BEECH.16)
that is more free now I believe
'It's freer now, I believe'

- (3) FA 13 - [...] c'était euh *je me rappelle* / dans les années après guerre [...] (CREDIF.FA13.351)

that was HESITATION I myself remember in the years after war

'That was, I remember, in the years after the war'

The use of these expressions is, of course, not limited to French. Speakers of other Romance and non-Romance languages employ them, too. However, since the study presented here is based on corpora of spoken French, Italian, and Spanish, its examples and conclusions are restricted to these three languages.

The boldfaced expressions in (1) - (3) are neither the main clause nor a subordinate clause. They are inserted into or adjoined to the end of the sentence in a way similar to sentence adverbs. They are optional, i.e., they can be added or dropped without affecting the grammatical acceptability of the host. For example, (1) is perfectly acceptable without Fr. *disons* 'let's say':

- (4) Ça faisait partie de ces données culturelles.

Their position within the host is free. E.g., Fr. *disons* 'let's say' can occur in several different positions within (1):

- (5) *Disons* ça faisait partie de ces données culturelles.
- (6) Ça faisait partie *dison*s de ces données culturelles.
- (7) Ça faisait partie de ces données *dison*s culturelles.
- (8) Ça faisait partie de ces données culturelles *dison*s.

There is no overt syntactic link between them and the host, the only relation being adjacency.ⁱⁱ Nevertheless, the boldfaced expressions are pragmatically connected to the host, a conviction shared by virtually all studies on parentheticals since Urmson (1952). I call them *reduced* because the verb they contain lacks one of the arguments required by its valency.

3 The corpus analysis

In the study, I analyzed the 22 major corpora of spoken French, Italian, and Spanish comprising a total amount of 3,975,500 words and documenting spoken language of the last 30 years. With the exception of one French corpus, these collections are all publicly available, either in printed or in electronic form.ⁱⁱⁱ Table 1, in the appendix to this article, lists all corpora used, their abbreviations, year of publication, and total numbers of texts and words. For each language, the list comprises at least two large reference corpora that guarantee an acceptable variety in terms of the regional origin, social background, profession, sex, and the age of the speaker and in terms of

the speech situation, theme and register.

There is no easy automatic method by which an RPC can be identified without knowing its exact form, not even in the few POS-tagged spoken corpora available for French, Italian, and Spanish. Therefore a method was adopted that combined 'manual' with automatic research. For each language, I read a considerable number of texts selected from the 22 corpora (totaling approximately 1,350,000 words) and marked all parentheticals. For many parentheticals, at least two examples were found that satisfied the selection criteria below, for others I had to search all the electronic corpora to check if additional examples could be detected. I also ran queries on the electronic corpora if an RPC was found in one language and I suspected that a comparable one might exist in another.

In order to be selected from the corpus texts, an expression had to satisfy the following conditions:

1. The parenthetical is based on a finite verb.
2. Between the parenthetical and the host clause there is no overt syntactic link.
3. The parenthetical occurs at least once in medial and at least once in final position.
4. In medial position, the parenthetical at least once interrupts a close syntactic relationship (phrase or clause nucleus).
5. The host structure (sentence, clause, phrase) is structurally self-sufficient, i.e., it does not depend on the parenthetical.

6. The parenthetical's verb lacks one of the arguments required by its valency.
7. The missing argument can be semantically recovered from the host.

The conditions 1, 2, 5, 6, and 7 are present explicitly or implicitly in all contributions about RPCs since Urmson (1952), the conditions 3 and 4 have been introduced by myself and guarantee that a selected expression is capable of occupying several different positions within a host. Since each example had to fulfill all of these conditions, the order in which they are presented above has no significance.

At the end of the selection procedure, 1,939 RPCs (tokens) in the corpora were found to satisfy the criteria. These were assigned to 23 French, 25 Italian, and 33 Spanish forms (types), listed in table 2 in the appendix. As can be seen in table 1, the dimensions and the text types of the corpora are quite heterogeneous. Although they provide an empirical basis that is large enough for establishing the inventory of the RPCs, they cannot serve as a basis for retrieving reliable information about quantitative distributions. In order to assess the frequency of each form, I had to compile three comparable samples of systematically analyzed texts totaling approximately 250,000 words for each language. They are equal in terms of discourse situations (face to face or not face to face, free or regulated turn-taking), domains of use (educational and informative, business, institutional and public, or leisure), and degree of fragmentation (monologic or dialogic).

The percentages in table 2 are based on the three samples. Each

value indicates, separately for each language, the percentage of a form out of the total of occurrences of the listed forms. A percentage of 0 means that a form occurs only in texts that are not contained in the sample. Except in the imperative, French verbs require a pronominal or nominal subject, Italian and Spanish verbs do not. Those Italian and Spanish RPCs with an additional (facultative) noun or pronoun are listed with NP or PRON. The noun phrase or the pronoun may precede or follow the verb, e.g., It. *Il Corriere della Sera dice* 'The (newspaper) *Corriere della Sera* says' or *dice Calvino* 'says Calvino' and Sp. *yo pienso* or *pienso yo* 'I think'.

4 An initial classification

If we look at the RPCs in table 2 and take into account their deictic orientation, the mood of the verb and the sentence type (declarative, imperative, interrogative), we are able to recognize several pragmatic functions (cf. also Brown & Levinson 1978, 1987; Holmes 1984; Koch & Österreicher 1990: 51-72; Andersen 1996: 314, 1997: 147): Some RPCs downgrade speaker commitment, i.e., they are mitigating RPCs, while others function as phatic or as reporting devices; moreover, these discourse functions may be combined with others, e.g., illocutionary force indication, self-correction, and hesitation.

The analysis of the RPCs in table 2 also suggests that there are three

ways in which the downgrading of speaker commitment can be accomplished: by *alleviating* responsibility, by *removing* responsibility, and by *sharing* responsibility. The RPCs with verbs in the first person singular of the present indicative focus on the speaker. With respect to sentence types, they are all declaratives. With them the speaker directly reduces his or her burden of responsibility, that is, they are *responsibility alleviating devices*.

With the exception of the forms in the second person, most of the RPCs whose deictic centers lie outside the unmarked *ego*, *hic*, *nunc* center have the purpose of shifting the burden of responsibility away from the speaker, that is, they are *responsibility removing devices*. This is also true of the verbs in the first person singular of the conditional form (e.g., Fr. *je dirais* 'I'd say') because they make the truth of the utterance (and the responsibility of the speaker) dependent on implicit external circumstances (*If q, I'd say p*). Some clauses are based on verbs that are in the first person plural of the imperative (e.g., Fr. *disons* 'let's say'). They remove responsibility, since the statement is presented as if it had been requested or called for, and at the same time they explicitly include the addressee and thus divide the responsibility between speaker and addressee, i.e., they are also *responsibility sharing devices*.

The deictic centers of reporting RPCs also lie outside the unmarked *ego*, *hic*, *nunc* center (e.g., It. *ho detto* 'I said'). Reported statements do not reflect the judgment of the speaker and hence should be considered cases of *objective modality* (see Lyons 1977: 797ff.). They are actually outside the

realm of speaker commitment. That is why I prefer to treat reporting parentheticals as a separate group not connected to mitigation. I admit, however, that a strict demarcation of reported speech from evidentiality and from mitigation in general can be problematic.

The RPCs with verbs in the second person are directed towards the addressee. They may be either declaratives (e.g., Fr. *dites-vous* 'you say', *vous savez* 'you know'), imperatives (e.g., It. *figurati*, Sp. *fijate* 'imagine') or interrogatives (e.g., Fr. *voyez-vous* 'you see', Fr. *vous savez*^{iv} 'you know').^v The declaratives distribute responsibility to both speaker and addressee. The imperatives and interrogatives mostly have a phatic function, i.e., they are signals by which the speaker invites the addressee to co-operate and controls and maintains the effectiveness of communication (see Koch & Österreicher 1990: 57f.). They do not modify the speaker's responsibility.

The subdivision is, admittedly, approximative; it permits us, however, to isolate the RPCs with reporting or phatic function from those operating on the responsibility of the speaker, which constitute the main focus of this article.

5 Hare (1970) and Caffi (1999, 2001)

In order to understand how mitigators work, we need two further differentiations. Hare (1970) was the first to emphasize a distinction regarding the log-

ical structure of utterances that is extremely valuable for the understanding of statements. One of the few linguists to acknowledge its importance early on was Lyons (1977: 749ff.). According to Hare, who refines a binary distinction already introduced into philosophy by Frege (1891) and Russell & Whitehead (1910) and into linguistics by Bally (1932) (cf. *dictum* versus *modus*), there are three parts that contribute to the meaning of an utterance. The *phrastic* conveys the propositional content, that is, the part of an utterance common to corresponding assertive, interrogative, and directive utterances. This term is certainly preferable for focused questions which do not express complete propositions (see Levinson 1983: 242). The *tropic* classifies a sentence according to the speech act it is characteristically used to perform, that is, it indicates the illocutionary force of an utterance. Hare (1970) also calls it *mood sign*; in fact in many languages it is grammaticalized in the category of mood. The *neustic* is the sign of subscription to the speech act that is being performed and expresses the speaker's commitment to the factuality, desirability, etc. of the propositional content (cf. also Heger 1976: 277).

Hare's (1970) tropic and neustic represent two extremes of what is probably a continuum: on the one hand, the plain and simple indication of the type of speech act, on the other the variation of its strength in terms of the involvement and commitment of the speaker and hearer. As we will see, in reality, mitigators such as RPCs always contain elements of both: They indicate a certain tropic and mitigate the associated neustic. They do this,

however, to different extents, that is, according to their type, they represent different points on the aforementioned continuum.

The second distinction I apply has been proposed by Caffi (1999, 2001) for the function of mitigating devices in statements and in directives. In Caffi's framework, however, the pragmatic notion *mitigation* assumes a broad sense. Whereas for Fraser (1980), who introduced the notion into pragmatics, it only means the reduction of the unwelcome effects that a speech act may have on the addressee, for Caffi it covers all macro- and micro-strategies by which the speaker tries to avoid the risks arising from linguistic interaction. One of these risks may be, for example, that the speaker is held responsible for what s/he is stating.

According to the utterance component they focus on, mitigating devices can be grouped into three types. Extending Lakoff's (1972) felicitous botanic metaphor, Caffi (1999, 2001) calls them *bushes*, *hedges*, and *shields*. Bushes focus on the propositional content: They make less precise, less appropriate or minimize referring terms or predicates. Devices that function as bushes are diminutive suffixes (cf. Dressler & Merlini Barbaresi 1994) and expressions like English *a certain*, *a sort of* (cf. Aijmer 2002: 175-209), and also RPCs like Fr. *disons* 'let's say' in table 2. Bushes operate, in Hare's (1970) terms, on the phrastic.

Hedges focus on the illocutionary force indication (cf. It. *devo dire* 'I must say' in table 2) and / or on the speaker's commitment (cf. Fr. *je crois* 'I believe' in table 2). Caffi (1999: 893, 2001: 279ff., 311) mentions as exam-

ples hedged performatives (see Lakoff 1972: 213; Fraser 1975), modal sentence adverbs, and parentheticals. In Hare's (1970) terms, the illocutionary-centered hedges operate on the tropic and / or the neustic.

In shields, the mitigation operates in different ways, most typically by shifting one of the deictic components of the utterance (*ego*, *hic*, *nunc*). The deictic displacement may be produced by a lexicalized expression or by operations affecting syntax, as in passive transformations or in the shift from first person singular pronouns to other person pronouns. An *actantial* shield is based on the *ego* and is typically represented by utterances ascribed to a source other than the actual speaker (cf. Sp. *dicen* 'they say' in table 2) or with the author being deleted, as in impersonal or passive constructions. A *narrativization* shield involves the *nunc* and describes present events as if they had happened in the past (cf. It. *ho detto* 'I said' in table 2). Displacements involving another possible world (the 'as if') are *fictionalization* shields (cf. Fr. *mettons* 'suppose' in table 2), those created by hypothetical sentences are *eventualization* shields (cf. Fr. *je dirais* 'I'd say' in table 2).

Hare's (1970) and Caffi's (1999, 2001) distinctions partly overlap and partly focus on different aspects. Together, though, they provide a viable framework for the analysis of the function of mitigating RPCs.

6 Four groups of mitigating RPCs

Following the ideas of Hare (1970) and Caffi (1999, 2001), I propose to subdivide the mitigating RPCs I found in the spoken corpora into four major subgroups:

1. Clauses mitigating the phrastic
2. Clauses indicating the topic and mitigating the phrastic or the neustic
3. Clauses directly mitigating the neustic
4. Clauses indirectly mitigating the neustic

Note that the proposed classification of mitigating RPCs is partly inspired by Caffi (1999, 2001), but does not exactly correspond to it. For example, the *shield* function can be found in clauses mitigating the phrastic and in clauses indirectly mitigating the neustic. I also want to underline that the classification, although based on spoken corpora, should not be considered as being specific of spoken language. Although detailed corpus-based studies are lacking, it is probable that the proposed typology applies to written texts as well, the only difference being maybe that certain types of RPCs are more frequent in spoken than in written language.

6.1 *Mitigating the phrastic*

The first subgroup of RPCs consists of clauses operating on the phrastic of the host, i.e., on its propositional content. Its most prominent representatives are the imperative forms Fr. *disons*, It. *diciamo*, and Sp. *digamos* 'let's say'.

They affect the appropriateness or precision of a referring term or a predicate in their scope. In (1), which I repeat here as example (9), Fr. *disons* 'let's say' indicates that the expression in its scope, i.e., *données culturelles* 'cultural data', is not deemed completely appropriate by the speaker:

- (9) L1 [...] ça faisait partie de ces - *disons* données culturelles
[...] (CHOIX.19.111)
that made part of these say-IMP.1PL data cultural
'That was part of these, let's say, cultural data'

The speaker presents a referring expression as if it were a proposal that is not wholly satisfying neither to him- or herself nor to the interlocutor and as if it could be improved. This is the reason why the speaker often corrects or reformulates such an expression by a more appropriate one that follows immediately afterwards. This can be seen in the following Spanish example, where *adaptadas* 'adapted' is corrected by *remozadas* 'refreshed':

- (10) Inf. - [...] cuando se trata de obras clásicas, pero adaptadas
digamos, remozadas. [...] (HCM.6.102)
when 3SG.REFL treats about pieces classic but adapted say-
IMP.1PL refreshed
'When we have to do with classic but adapted, let's say, re-
freshed pieces'

These RPCs are primarily bushes, but indirectly also hedges (see Hölker 2003: 150), because the speaker, by using a referring expression that is explicitly inappropriate, reduces his or her commitment. Furthermore, they include the addressee and expand the deictic center of the utterance (accidental shield), i.e., they divide the responsibility between the speaker and the addressee. Fr. *disons* 'let's say' may also serve to indicate that the expression in its scope is intended as a hypothesis or an example. The same is true of Sp. *digamos* 'let's say' (see Hölker 2003: 138 for an Italian example of this use):

- (11) Inf. - [...] una persona, *digamos* más, más o menos culta ¿eh?, entonces ... V ... que le guste el arte de la lectura, entonces va a, por ejemplo, una traducción de "Archipiélago Gulag" y ve que es muy mala [...] (HCM.17.296)

a person say-IMP.1PL more more or less educated Q well
who him.OBL pleases the art of the reading well goes to for
example a translation of "Gulag Archipelago" and sees that is
very bad

A, let's say, more or less educated person, well, who likes
reading, well, he sees, for example, a translation of the "Gu
lag Archipelago" and sees that it is very bad

Fr. *disons* 'let's say' and its Italian and Spanish equivalents may thus act as a phrastic *exemplification markers* (cf. Bazzanella 1994: 163). As we will see in section 6, this function may also be fulfilled by another RPC.

The scope of Fr. *disons* 'let's say' and its Italian and Spanish equivalents is not always limited to the adjacent word or phrase. In the, admittedly rare, French example below, the parenthetical refers to an entire clause:

(12) HA16 - je laisse couler pour l'instant quoi *disons*.

(CREDIF.HA16.26)

I let flow-INF for the moment what say-IMP.1PL

'I let it go on for the moment, let's say'

In the text, HA16 repeatedly underlines that it is too early to care about his children's educational career, e.g., by saying *On se posera des questions plus tard* 'We'll wonder about this later'. Hence, the whole clause *Je laisse couler pour l'instant* 'I let it go on for the moment' is marked as an approximative formulation of what the speaker wants to say.

6.2 *Indicating the tropic and mitigating the phrastic or the neustic*

The second subgroup consists of clauses indicating the tropic (illocution) and operating on the phrastic (propositional content) or on the neustic (speaker commitment). Very rarely, though, these are plain performatives, as

in (13), a Spanish example, where *digo yo* 'I say' characterizes the utterance as representative or assertive speech act and, at the same time, reduces the speaker's commitment:

- (13) <H2> [...] cirujano de ovejas o cirujano de ... de mujeres.
 Porque si ha mata<(d)>o a una mujer será cirujano de muje-
 res, *digo yo* . (COREC.PENT007D)
 surgeon for sheep or surgeon for for women because if has
 killed to a woman be.FUT.3SG surgeon for women say I
 'Surgeon for sheep or surgeon for women. Because if he has
 killed a woman he must be a surgeon for women, I say'

In most cases, the RPCs of this group are *hedged performatives* (see Lakoff 1972: 213; Fraser 1975), that is, verbs whose performative meaning is hidden by a modal verb or an additional suffix. In (14), a French example, *je veux dire* 'I mean' intervenes on the phrastic level by marking the term *sur le plan oculaire* 'regarding your eyes' as explanation or specification:

- (14) Ä: [...] c'est le seul problème que vous avez, sur le plan ocu-
 laire, *je veux dire* (HOELK.I.6.267)
 that is the only problem that you have on the plan ocular I
 want say.INF

'That's the only problem you have, regarding your eyes, I mean'

6.3 *Directly mitigating the neustic*

RPCs with belief verbs directly operate on the neustic, that is, on the speaker's commitment to the truth of the proposition, and directly alleviate the speaker's burden of responsibility. Since they are limited to assertive tropics, they imply that the utterance is a statement.

The corpus analysis shows that the clauses used for this purpose constitute a relatively closed set of stereotyped forms derived from a few verbs. Fr. *croire* 'believe' (see example 2) and its Italian and Spanish equivalents are the basic verbs in this domain, while forms deriving from Fr. *penser*, It. *pensare*, and especially Sp. *pensar* 'think', are less common. Two other important belief verbs that have parenthetically used forms are Fr. *supposer* and Sp. *suponer* 'suppose' as well as Fr. *imaginer*, It. *immaginare* and Sp. *imaginar* 'imagine'. These are the classical parenthetical verbs, whose existence was first underlined by Urmson (1952). In the Italian and French corpora, one may also find some rare example of parenthetical *spero* and *j'espère* 'I hope':

- (15) D: [...] # la cosa_ su cui voglio intervenire su questo *spero*
 primo intervento è questo concetto di democrazia # [...]
 (CLIP.RC3)
 the thing on which want intervene.INF on this hope.1SG first
 intervention is this concept of democracy
 'The issue I'd like to address in this, I hope, first talk is this
 concept of democracy'

The last two RPCs are somewhat special insofar as they combine an evaluative with a belief meaning.

Besides using a belief verb, the speaker may employ another device in order to directly mitigate the neustic component and alleviate his or her burden of responsibility: The speaker admits that he or she does not know, as in the following French example with *je sais pas* 'I don't know':^{vi}

- (16) A: [...] Vous devez avoir, *je sais pas*, un petit problème local
 [...] (HOELK.4.2.214)
 you must have.INF I know not a small problem local
 'You must have, I don't know, a small local problem'

6.4 Indirectly mitigating the neustic

Finally, there is a subgroup of clauses indirectly mitigating the speaker's

commitment. It comprises evidential clauses and forms of Fr. *savoir*, It. *sapere*, and Sp. *saber* 'know' that attribute knowledge to the addressee or to everybody.

The evidential parentheticals derive from verbs expressing sensory perception (e.g., Fr. *voir* 'see') or the obtaining of knowledge (e.g., Fr. *je me rappelle* 'I remember') and from verbs expressing the semblance or appearance of a state of affairs (e.g., Fr. *sembler* 'seem'). Those in the first person singular of the present indicative ease the speaker's responsibility. The other forms can be subsumed under Caffi's (1999: 896, 2001: 315) *actantial* shields, insofar as they are based on the deictic *ego* and either divide responsibility between speaker and addressee or remove it entirely from the speaker. They specify the evidence the truth of the asserted proposition relies on. Since they do not directly refer to the speaker's belief or absence of knowledge but to the evidential circumstances of his or her statement, they indirectly mitigate the neustic. A Spanish example of dividing the responsibility between a speaker (who affirms) and an addressee (who sees) can be seen in (17):

(17) I: [...] para mí los tíos, *ya ves*, son todos amigos míos [...]

(HUSNP.9.212)

for me the guys now see-2SG are all friends my

'For me the guys, you see, are all my friends'

The speaker may also attribute to the addressee a certain knowledge, as in the following Spanish utterance:

- (18) <H1> [...] a mí me tocó una mesa ... una mesa de ... de cajón grande. Grandita como [...] Y luego, *sabes*, me tocó ... (CO-REC.CCON021B)
- to me.TOP.OBJ me.OBJ touches a table a table of of drawer big big-DIM as and then know.2SG me.OBJ touches
- 'I had to take a table, a table with with a big drawer, quite big as and then, you know, I had to take'

H1 repeats a preceding utterance almost literally, hence H1 can count on the shared knowledge and use the declarative *sabes* 'you know' to refer to it. We should not forget, though, that *sabes* may also be an interrogative parenthetical with phatic function, inviting the addressee to co-operate and controlling the effectiveness of communication (for Spanish ¿*sabes*? cf., e.g., Briz Gómez 1998: 224ff.). In that case, it does not modify the speaker's responsibility. By saying that the addressee also knows, the speaker shares responsibility for what he or she is stating. Instead of referring to his or her belief or absence of knowledge, the speaker refers to external circumstances that might corroborate the statement. As in the case of evidential parentheticals, this is a way to indirectly mitigate the neustic.

7 **RPCs operating on more than one utterance component**

As in all typologies, there are cases that do not fit neatly into the subgroups I defined following Hare (1970) and Caffi (1999, 2001). It has already been pointed out that plain and hedged performatives operate on two utterance components at the same time. But similar RPCs may also alternate between two components. In the following Italian example, the hedged performative *direi* 'I'd say' directly reduces the commitment of the speaker, while in the French example immediately afterwards, *je dirais* 'I'd say' marks an expression as not completely satisfying:

- (19) AA [...] Si può buttar via *direi* (PIXI.BOF.130)
3SG.REFL can throw-INF away say-COND.1SG
'You can throw it away, I'd say'
- (20) L1 [...] - la plupart du temps ils n'arrivent pas à faire le lien
entre l'enseignement euh - *je dirais* théorique [...] (CRFP.-
LYO-PRO001)
the most of.DET time they not arrive not to make-INF the
connection between the teaching HESITATION I say-
COND.1SG theoretical
'Most of the time, they can't make the connection between
the, I'd say, theoretical teaching'

In the Italian example (19), the RPC acts on the neustic. In medial position, as in (20), the RPC tends to assume a function limited to the phrastic.

Another typical RPC alternating between two utterance components is It. *non so* 'I don't know', which can either directly mitigate the neustic, like *je sais pas* 'I don't know' in the French example (16), or act as a phrastic *exemplification marker*, as in the following utterance:

- (21) A: [...] supponete *non so* il presidente della camera dei deputati_ eh assegna il progetto di legge a una commissione [...]

(CLIP.FD2)

suppose-IMP.2PL not know.1SG the president of-DET chamber of-DET deputies HESITATION assigns the project of law to a commission

'Suppose, I don't know, the president of the chamber of deputies assigns the bill to a commission'

8 Position inside the host and sentence type of the host

A taxonomy is useful if it leads to a more profound appreciation of the studied phenomena. I am convinced that the proposed classification may contribute to a better understanding of some facts. I would like to mention two

of them, a syntactic one and a pragmatic one.

In Schneider (forthcoming), I analyze the position of RPCs inside their hosts. For each RPC, the occurrences inside the host nucleus (verb+arguments) and the occurrences in the host periphery (adjuncts) is added up separately. The sum of intra-nuclear occurrences is then related to the sum of extra-nuclear ones. Dividing the former by the latter, one obtains a numerical value that I call *interruption value*. For example, 27 intra-nuclear to 25 extra-nuclear occurrences of Fr. *disons* 'let's say' give us an interruption value of 1.08, whereas 15 intra-nuclear to 41 extra-nuclear occurrences of Fr. *je crois* 'I believe' result in an interruption value of 0.36. This, admittedly purely quantitative, measurement gives a first overview of the positional mobility of an RPC and of its 'interruptive force', that is, of its capability to penetrate into the host structure. The analysis of these values shows that RPCs with phatic function, that is, RPCs that are not used as mitigators, occur predominately in the periphery of the host and have a low interruption value. Usually, they do not penetrate into the host nucleus. The RPCs that directly mitigate the neustic have higher interruption values, some of the RPCs operating on the phrastic have the highest interruption values. The latter frequently occur even inside noun phrases of the nucleus. Therefore, the pragmatics based taxonomy of RPCs outlined in sections 4-6 is, at least partially, paralleled by a grouping based on the positional mobility.

The second phenomenon explainable in terms of the proposed classification concerns the sentence types of the hosts in which RPCs occur. Since

Urmson (1952), there has been the tacit assumption that mitigating RPCs are restricted to declaratives, that is, to sentences by which we make statements, because only in statements is the commitment of the speaker at stake. However, in the course of the analysis, I found several cases of RPCs occurring in other sentence types, mostly in interrogatives, as in the following Italian and Spanish examples:

- (22) M2: [...] quindi lei è nato ad Alcamo / e / &mhm / può dire
dove ha trascorso / *diciamo* / la [/] la sua giovinezza / la sua
vita [!] / fin a [/] / poco tempo fa // (CIP.ITRG.364)
so you are born in Alcamo and HESITATION can say-INF
where has spent say-IMP.1PL the the your youth the your life
until to few time ago
'So, you were born in Alcamo and can you tell us were you
passed, let's say, your youth, your life until recently'
- (23) - ¿Encuentras mucha inquietud, *digamos*, de tipo social, de
tipo humano? (HUSNC.C3H1.288)
find-2SG much unrest say-IMP.1PL of type social of type hu-
man
'Do you find much unrest, let's say, in social matters, in hu-
man matters?'

As I explained, It. *diciamo* and Sp. *digamos* 'let's say' are RPCs that

operate on the phrastic, that is, on single elements of the host proposition. Interrogative sentences, as (22) and (23) above, have a phrastic but not a neustic component. In other words, questions contain a propositional content, whose referring expressions may be deemed more or less appropriate by the speaker, but they do not comprise a commitment regarding the factuality of the propositional content. Hence, the fact that It. *diciamo* and Sp. *digamos* 'let's say' occur also in interrogative sentences is perfectly in line with our assumptions about their pragmatic scope.

9 Summary

This paper, based on a corpus study of RPCs in contemporary spoken French, Italian, and Spanish (cf. Schneider, forthcoming), aims to propose a typology of RPCs based on pragmatic criteria. After a short characterization of RPCs, I described the corpora and the empirical procedure followed. 22 major corpora of spoken French, Italian, and Spanish were analyzed. The parentheticals selected from the corpora are then subdivided into three major groups: phatic, reporting, and mitigating RPCs. With the aid of the pragmatic framework outlined in Hare (1970) and Caffi (1999, 2001), the group of mitigating RPCs is classified in more detail and four subgroups are defined: 1. Clauses mitigating the phrastic; 2. Clauses indicating the tropic and mitigating the phrastic or the neustic; 3. Clauses directly mitigating the

neustic; 4. Clauses indirectly mitigating the neustic. Some cases of RPCs that should be assigned to more than one subgroup are then discussed. At the end, the pragmatics based taxonomy of RPCs outlined in sections 4-6 is shown to be supported by two facts: a grouping based on the positional mobility of RPCs and the occurrence of clauses mitigating the phrastic in interrogative sentences.

Corpora

BEECH = Beeching corpus

(<<http://www.uwe.ac.uk/facults/les/staff/kb/CORPUS.pdf>>).

BER = Bertoli Sand corpus (Bertoli Sand, Cristina [2002]: *Negation raising im Italienischen: eine korpusbasierte pragmatische Untersuchung*. In Claus D. Pusch & Raible, Wolfgang [eds.]: *Romance corpus linguistics. Corpora and spoken language* (pp. 333-348 and attached CD). Tübingen: Gunter Narr).

BRA = Brandi corpus (Brandi, Luciana [1987]: *L'insegnante in classe: interazione verbale*. In *Incontri del Centro di studi di grammatica italiana. Gli italiani parlati. Sondaggi sopra la lingua di oggi*. Firenze, Palazzo Strozzi, 29 marzo - 31 maggio 1985 [pp. 157-195]. Firenze: Accademia della Crusca).

CAF = Caffi corpus (Caffi, Claudia [2001]: *La mitigazione. Un approccio pragmatico alla comunicazione nei contesti terapeutici*. Münster: LIT).

CHOIX = Choix de textes de français parlé (Blanche-Benveniste, Claire, Rouget, Christine, & Sabio, Frédéric [eds.] [2002]: *Choix de textes de français parlé. 36 extraits*. Paris: Honoré Champion).

CIP = Corpus di italiano parlato (Cresti, Emanuela [ed.] [2000]: *Corpus di italiano parlato. Vol. 2: Campioni*. Firenze: L'Accademia della Crusca).

CLIP = Corpus del lessico di frequenza dell'italiano parlato (De Mauro, Tullio, Mancini, Federico, Vedovelli, Massimo, & Voghera, Miriam [1993]: *Lessico di frequenza dell'italiano parlato*. Milano: Etas Libri) or (<<http://languageserver.uni-graz.at/badip>>).

C-ORAL-ROM = Integrated reference corpora for spoken Romance languages (Cresti, Emanuela & Moneglia, Massimo [eds.] [2005]: *C-ORAL-ROM. Integrated reference corpora for spoken Romance languages*. Amsterdam - Philadelphia: Benjamins).

COREC = Corpus oral de referencia del español contemporáneo (<<http://www.lllf.uam.es/~fmarcos/informes/corpus/corpusix.html>>).

CREDIF = Corpus du Centre de recherche et d'étude pour la diffusion du français (Martins-Baltar, Michel, Cintrat, Iva, James, Colette, Mochet, Marie-Anne, & O'Neil, Charmian [eds.] [1989]: *Transcriptions d'entretiens*. Paris: Didier-Érudition).

CRE = Cresti corpus (Cresti, Emanuela [1987]: L'articolazione dell'informazione nel parlato. In *Incontri del Centro di studi di grammatica italiana. Gli italiani parlati. Sondaggi sopra la lingua di oggi*. Firenze, Palazzo Strozzi, 29 marzo - 31 maggio 1985 [pp. 27-90]. Firenze: Accademia della Crusca).

CRFP = Corpus de référence du français parlé (not published).

ESCH = Eschmann corpus (Eschmann, Jürgen [1984]: *Texte aus dem "français parlé"*. Tübingen: Gunter Narr).

HCM = El habla de la ciudad de Madrid (Esgueva, Manuel & Cantarero, Margarita [eds.] [1981]: *El habla de la ciudad de Madrid. Materiales para su estudio*. Madrid: Consejo superior de investigaciones científicas - Instituto Miguel de Cervantes).

HOELK = Hölker corpus (Hölker, Klaus [1988]: *Zur Analyse von Markern. Korrektur- und Schlußmarker des Französischen*. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner).

HUSNC = El habla urbana de Sevilla. Nivel culto (Pineda, Miguel Á. de [ed.] [1983]: *Sociolingüística andaluza 2. Encuestas del habla urbana de Sevilla. Nivel culto*. Sevilla: Secretariado de Publicaciones de la Universidad de Sevilla).

HUSNM = El habla urbana de Sevilla. Nivel medio (Ollero Toribio, Manuel & Pineda Pérez, Miguel Ángel [eds.] [1992]: *Sociolingüística andaluza 6. Encuestas del habla urbana de Sevilla. Nivel medio*. Sevilla: Secretariado de publicaciones de la Universidad de Sevilla).

HUSNP = El habla urbana de Sevilla. Nivel popular (Ropero, Miguel [ed.] [1987]: *Sociolingüística andaluza 4. Encuestas del habla urbana de Sevilla. Nivel popular*. Sevilla: Servicio de Publicaciones de la Universidad de Sevilla).

LUD = Ludwig corpus (Ludwig, Ralph [1988]: *Korpus: Texte des gesprochenen Französisch*. Tübingen: Gunter Narr).

PIXI = Pixi corpora (Gavioli, Laura and Gillian Mansfield [eds.] [1990]: *The Pixi corpora. Bookshop encounters in English and Italian*. Bologna: CLUEB).

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Appendix

Corpora French	Abbreviation	Publication	Texts	Words
Eschmann	ESCH	1984	9	24,000
Hölker	HOELK	1988	31	35,000
Ludwig	LUD	1988	11	22,000
Transcriptions d'entretiens	CREDIF	1989	25	213,000
Beeching	BEECH	2002	95	155,000
Choix de textes de français parlé	CHOIX	2002	36	66,700
Corpus de référence du français parlé	CRFP	not published	132	440,000
French part of C-ORAL-ROM	COR-FR	2005	206	300,000
Total French			545	1,255,700
Italian				
Brandi	BRA	1987	4	5,800
Cresti	CRE	1987	1	2,700
Pixi corpora	PIXI	1990	229	22,000
Corpus del lessico di frequenza dell'italiano parlato	CLIP	1993	469	490,000
Corpus di italiano parlato	CIP	2000	49	58,300
Caffi	CAF	2001	3	13,500
Bertoli Sand	BER	2002	3	19,500
Italian part of C-ORAL-ROM	COR-IT	2005	204	300,000
Total Italian			962	911,800
Spanish				
El habla de la ciudad de Madrid	HCM	1981	24	141,000
Encuestas del habla urbana de Sevilla. Nivel culto	HUSNC	1983	24	67,000
Encuestas del habla urbana de Sevilla. Nivel popular	HUSNP	1987	24	100,000
Encuestas del habla urbana de Sevilla. Nivel medio	HUSNM	1992	24	100,000
Corpus oral de referencia del español contemporáneo	COREC	1992	498	1,100,000
Spanish part of C-ORAL-ROM	COR-ES	2005	169	
Total Spanish			763	1,808,000
Total French, Italian, and Spanish			2,270	3,975,500

Table 1: The analyzed corpora

French		Italian		Spanish	
Forms	%	Forms	%	Forms	%
<i>tu vois</i> 'you see'	19.8	<i>diciamo</i> 'let's say'	41.0	<i>digamos</i> 'let's say'	22.0
<i>je veux dire</i> 'I mean'	11.4	<i>dico</i> 'I say'	7.5	<i> digo</i> 'I say'	17.1
<i>vous savez</i> 'you know'	11.4	<i>credo</i> 'I believe'	6.4	<i>sabes</i> 'you know'	17.1
<i>je crois</i> 'I believe'	10.2	<i>dice</i> 's/he says'	6.2	<i>dice</i> 's/he says'	6.1
<i>tu sais</i> 'you know'	9.3	<i>voglio dire</i> 'I mean'	5.8	<i>creo PRON</i> 'I believe'	5.7
<i>je sais pas</i> 'I don't know'	7.2	<i>non so</i> 'I don't know'	5.2	<i>no sé</i> 'I don't know'	4.5
<i>disons</i> 'let's say'	6.3	<i>sai</i> 'you know'	3.6	<i>me parece</i> 'it seems to me'	3.7
<i>voyez-vous</i> 'you see'	5.7	<i>direi</i> 'I'd say'	3.4	<i>quiero decir</i> 'I mean'	3.3
<i>je dirais</i> 'I'd say'	4.5	<i>mi sembra</i> 'it seems to me'	2.4	<i>creo</i> 'I believe'	2.9
<i>je pense</i> 'I think'	3.9	<i>devo dire</i> 'I must say'	2.1	<i>ya te digo</i> 'now I say to you'	2.9
<i>j'imagine</i> 'I imagine'	1.5	<i>penso</i> 'I think'	1.9	<i>ya digo</i> 'now I say'	2.4
<i>mettons</i> 'suppose'	1.5	<i>sa</i> 's/he knows'	1.9	<i>digo PRON</i> 'I say'	2.0
<i>je trouve</i> 'I find'	1.5	<i>spero</i> 'I hope'	1.9	<i>diríamos</i> 'we'd say'	1.6
<i>je sais plus</i> 'I don't know any more'	1.2	<i>dice NP</i> 'NP says'	1.7	<i>me imagino</i> 'I imagine'	1.6
<i>je suppose</i> 'I suppose'	1.2	<i>vedi</i> 'you see'	1.5	<i>supongo</i> 'I suppose'	1.2
<i>paraît-il</i> 'it seems'	0.9	<i>ho detto</i> 'I said'	1.1	<i>diría</i> 'I'd say'	0.8
<i>on va dire</i> 'we'll say'	0.6	<i>figurati</i> 'imagine'	1.1	<i>insisto</i> 'I insist'	0.8
<i>j'espère</i> 'I hope'	0.6	<i>mi pare</i> 'it seems to me'	1.1	<i>me parece a mí</i> 'it seems to me'	0.8
<i>dites-vous</i> 'you say'	0.3	<i>penso PRON</i> 'I think'	0.9	<i>diría PRON</i> 'I'd say'	0.4
<i>il faut dire</i> 'I must say'	0.3	<i>poni</i> 'suppose'	0.9	<i>ha dicho</i> 's/he said'	0.4
<i>on dirait</i> 'I'd say'	0.3	<i>mi sa</i> 'it seems to me'	0.9	<i>me han dicho</i> 'they said to me'	0.4
<i>je me rappelle</i> 'I remember'	0.3	<i>volevo dire</i> 'I wanted to say'	0.6	<i>podríamos decir</i> 'we could say'	0.4
<i>me semble-t-il</i> 'it seems to me'	0.0	<i>vede</i> 'you see'	0.4	<i>fijate</i> 'imagine'	0.4
		<i>immagino</i> 'I imagine'	0.2	<i>parece</i> 'it seems'	0.4
		<i>sembra</i> 'it seems'	0.2	<i>pienso PRON</i> 'I think'	0.4
				<i>repito</i> 'I repeat'	0.4
				<i>me acuerdo</i> 'I remember'	0.0
				<i>decía NP</i> 'NP said'	0.0
				<i>dicen</i> 'they say'	0.0
				<i>ha dicho NP</i> 'NP said'	0.0
				<i>imagino</i> 'I imagine'	0.0
				<i>imagínate</i> 'imagine'	0.0
				<i>ya ves</i> 'now you see'	0.0

Table 2: French, Italian, and Spanish RPCs

*This is an expanded and revised version of a paper presented at the *Workshop on Parenthetical Constructions* organized by Nicole Dehé and Yordanka Kavalova within the *28th Annual Conference of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Sprachwissenschaft* at the University of Bielefeld on February 22-24, 2006. I am grateful to two anonymous reviewers for their comments on earlier drafts of the paper. I am also grateful to Georg Marko for his accurate stylistic corrections.

ⁱFollowing an established German tradition, Hoffmann (1998: 318) himself calls this construction *Schaltsatz*.

ⁱⁱ As Ackema & Neeleman (2004: 99) conclude, "a parenthetical cannot affect the syntax of the host clause, but grammatical requirements imposed by material in the parenthetical can be satisfied by elements in the host clause". In other words, the host can be 'visible' for the parenthetical but not vice versa. In the case of RPCs discussed in this paper, this implies that one of the valency requirements of the parenthetical verb is satisfied by the entire host clause (cf. also Hoffmann 1998: 318).

ⁱⁱⁱ Cf. the end of the paper for publication data.

^{iv} In those corpora with punctuation marks, imperative RPCs are transcribed with or without exclamation marks, depending on the type of the host sentence. Interrogative RPCs are transcribed mostly with question marks. In table 2 the verbs are without punctuation. This means that according to the actual prosodic patterns, some of them, e.g., Fr. *vous savez*, actually consist of two forms, a declarative and an interrogative.

^v For the time being, my interpretation of declarative, imperative, and interrogative RPCs relies mainly on their explicit meaning. It could be possible, however, that the explicit meaning is altered by prosody. Further research might throw light on the interplay between the prosody of RPCs and their meaning.

^{vi} *Je ne sais pas* 'I don't know' is practically absent in the French corpora. Interestingly, the only occurrences I encountered are contained in the interviewer's (Kate Beeching herself) questions of BEECH.