

Spoken structure I: Corpus-based Analysis of Italian Clitic Right Dislocation

This talk presents the results of a corpus-based analysis of Clitic Right Dislocation in Italian (CLRD). The analysis focuses on CLRD of the direct object in declarative and interrogative (yes-no) questions. After showing examples of the first attestations of CLRD constructions in 12th – 14th century Italian, we will review data on the geographic distribution of CLRD in present-day Italian (corpus LIP and corpus CLIPS).

A in depth analysis of the prosodic and informational properties of CLRD in dialogue shows significant differences between CLRD occurring in declarative vs interrogative utterances. In particular, interrogative CLRDs can introduce a discourse-new referent through the unmarked prosodic structure of a yes-no question. Based on the fact that the discourse-new referent is accessible for the speaker, but not necessarily for the hearer, we propose to analyze interrogative CLRD as a device to express “confirmation-seeking” questions.

The empirical exploration presented in this talk opens a number of issues concerning the information status of the discourse-new right dislocated phrase, the function of the clitic pronoun and the syntactic structure of declarative vs. interrogative CLRDs in Italian. These issues are addressed in the second talk from a theoretical perspective.

Spoken structure II: Object Clitics in Italian Right Dislocation: A Theoretical Analysis

The analysis of Clitic Right Dislocation (CLRD) in corpus CLIPS showed that interrogative CLRDs can introduce a discourse-new referent through the unmarked prosodic structure of a yes-no question. This talk addresses a number of issues opened by these findings from a theoretical perspective. In the spirit of the Cartographic Approach (Cinque 1999, Rizzi 1997), we hypothesize that there is a rule-based (or one-to-one) correspondence between discourse level, syntactic and prosodic properties. Based on this assumption, we first address the question whether interrogative and declarative CLRDs share the same syntactic structure. Building on the Low-Periphery hypothesis (Belletti 2001 and sub.), we propose that the right-dislocated phrase is in fact not peripheral but clause internal. This analysis is corroborated by the prosodic data from CLIPS. Subsequently, we address the question concerning the function of the object clitic in interrogative CLRD introducing an accessible referent. Building on Capone (2013, 2017), we analyze the clitic as a pragmatic marker of a speaker-hearer presupposition, hypothesizing that interrogative CLRDs represent a possible case of pragmatically motivated clitic doubling in Italian. We conclude showing that CLRDs can be seen as a part of larger system of syntactic and prosodic resources to express discourse-level function (topic and focus).

The general goal of the case study on CLRD is to show the advantages of a multi-faceted approach combining an empirical analysis of spontaneous dialogical speech, with a theoretical perspective focusing on linguistic structures.

References

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