TRANSLATION / VERTIMAS

What is not clear is not French: Reflections on syntax clarity and right-peripheral subject pronoun duplication

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Tai, kas neaišku, nėra prancūziška: Refleksijos apie sintaksės aiškumą ir asmeninio įvardžio dubliavimą sakinio pabaigoje

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Abstract

French is often celebrated for its clarity and precision – a legacy shaped by Cartesian rationalism and prescriptive language policies. However, the evolving forms of spoken French challenge this ideal of fixed linguistic norms. This study examines one such feature: the right-peripheral duplication of the subject pronoun *je* with its tonic counterpart *moi*, a recurrent but underexplored phenomenon in spoken French. The primary objective is to understand how this syntactic feature functions pragmatically and emotionally in real-life discourse. Using a corpus of movie dialogues, the analysis shows that duplication plays a role in managing conversational flow, expressing personal stance, and enabling self-repair. Through a multidisciplinary lens that draws from sociolinguistics, pragmatics, and applied linguistics, the study argues that such variation enriches the expressive potential of French and complicates the rigid divide between written norms and spoken practice. It also suggests that incorporating these features into language pedagogy can support a more inclusive, realistic understanding of French as a living language.

KEYWORDS: French language, linguistic norms, syntax variation, subject pronoun duplication, pragmatics.

Introduction

It is known that all languages, written or unwritten, obey rules. Syntax is one of the areas in which these rules operate. As far as the French language is concerned, researchers have shown how much modern French – namely the conservative normative variety taught in schools (written code) – differs from contemporary French – that is, an innovative vernacular learned at home, in any case, outside the school institution (oral code). Linguists like Rowlett (2009) have argued that the degree of innovation that has occurred in the vernacular is such that modern French is no longer *a coherent or psychologically real variety*, while for others, the variation found in contemporary French is explained by the fact

that its speakers move between *two grammars that differ from each other in very specific ways depending on socio-situational factors*.

If the above observation applies to many other languages, it is reasonable to assume that, since the 17th century – thanks in particular to Descartes – French has been regarded as the language of precision and clarity. These attributes are a byproduct of its notorious diplomatic status, as significant efforts were made to reduce ambiguity in the language and sustain French historical international prestige. Nonetheless, these characterizations pose challenges, including in the teaching and learning of French, regardless of its status as a first, second, or foreign language.

While in language classrooms the acquisition of the normative variety deeply related to social prestige continues to be taught as the unique model, the vibrant expansion of the French vernacular in everyday social practices – long regarded as a marginal linguistic phenomenon – have been systematically cataloged and examined for its communicative relevance and countless manifestations. Renewed academic interest in vernacular French has generated innovative approaches to its study, particularly through grammatical theories and interdisciplinary frameworks.

This study aims to enhance the understanding of syntactic variation and foster more inclusive, effective teaching methods, thereby encouraging greater appreciation for French variants. To bridge the gap between normative French syntax as a singular, coherent standard and its dynamic, interactive everyday use, the study draws on a personal classroom experience to examine a recurrent yet underexplored phenomenon in spoken French: right-peripheral subject pronoun duplication. This phenomenon involves the subject pronoun of the first singular person, *je* (I), being duplicated by its tonic form, *moi* (me), positioned to the right of the verb nucleus.

To address this, the first part revisits the construction of the profile of French as the "clearest language", using Rivarol's *Discours sur l'universalité de la langue française* (*Discourse on the Universality of the French Language*, 18th century) as a guiding framework. Rivarol's arguments are analyzed through the lens of key theoretical principles, including Descartes' Rationalism (17th century), Condillac's Sensualism (18th century), and the system of Enunciation developed in the 20th century. The latter, evolving from Austin's speech act theory (1962) to Culioli's work on enunciation (1990), shifts the focus to the speaker as central to communication. This theoretical exploration leads naturally to an investigation of the interplay between Norm and Use in the French language.

The second part of the study focuses on methodology, beginning with insights drawn from a personal classroom experience that illustrates key moments in the construction and social impact of the Norm. This concept, shaped by historical and sociolinguistic factors, has significantly contributed to the perception of French as the language of clarity. Following this, the study introduces and describes the selected corpus.

In the third part, the study analyzes utterances identified as instances of the specific type of dislocations under consideration, focusing on examples from the selected corpus. To deepen the interpretation of the functioning and pragmatic scope of these constructions, the analysis draws on Goffman's concept of *face* ([1959] 1973) and Berrendonner's notion of *self-repair* (2021).

The conclusion argues that, far from posing a threat to the future of the French language, linguistic variation reflects its vitality. This variation challenges the myth of French as a fixed, unchanging, and inherently "perfect" language, revealing instead its adaptability and accessibility as essential features of its effectiveness.

Literature Background: On the Incorruptibility of French Syntax

Languages, whether written or not, obey rules, and syntax is one of the areas in which these rules operate. In his *Discours sur l'universalité de la langue française* (1784), Antoine de Rivarol asserts that what distinguishes [French] from ancient and modern languages is *the incorruptibility of its syntax, the order of which must always be directly and necessarily clear* (p. 71[1]). The French language, Rivarol explains, *first names the subject of speech, then the verb that is action, and finally the object of that action*. This order, the author continues, *so necessary to reasoning, is almost always contrary to*

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[1] Unless otherwise stated, all translations from French to English were carried out by Ruth de Oliveira.

sensations, which name first the object which strikes first. Rivarol then argues that *all peoples, abandoning the direct order, have resorted to more or less daring phrases* [...] *And inversion has prevailed on earth, because man is governed more imperiously by the passions than by reason.* The French, according to Rivarol, *by a unique privilege, remained, alone, faithful to the direct order. French syntax is incorruptible. This is the result of that admirable clarity, the eternal basis of the [French] language. Which is not clear, is not French* (p. 73). Rivarol states that at the end of the 18th century French prevailed over other languages, including English, which had the *audacity of languages of inversion and [therefore] of obscurity* (p. 67).

The principle of syntax's incorruptibility, rooted in the doctrine of the natural order proposed by Dionysius of Halicarnassus in the 1st century BCE, highlights the clarity of a direct linguistic structure: subject + verb + object (SVO). This ideal of natural order persisted through the centuries and found a fertile ground in the French language during the 17th century, when it was further reinforced by the intellectual influence of Cartesian rationalism (Descartes, 1594–1650).

It is noteworthy that Descartes' seminal work, *Discours de la méthode pour bien conduire sa raison, et chercher la vérité dans les sciences*, was first published anonymously in French in 1637 in Holland. This choice of language, rather than the traditional Latin, underscored Descartes' commitment to clarity and accessibility. Central to the Cartesian approach is the inseparable link between language and reason, a principle that profoundly influenced the development of French grammar and, more broadly, the field of linguistics. As Clément (2009) emphasizes, in Descartes' works :

> La clarté est certes un postulat, voire un idéal, que l'époque partage, et que Descartes ne fait peut-être que rendre plus visible, mieux pensable que ses contemporains ;mais la clarté dont l'auteur du Discours doit entretenir le monde des savants, des philosophes, de tous ceux, qu'ils appartiennent ou non à ce monde, qui ont le bon sens en partage, cette clarté est philosophique : l'idée de la science ne lui est pas étrangère, ni celle des corps, ni de la pensée, ni de l'âme, ni de Dieu même –elle touche à l'essentiel. Descartes ne se fait pas faute de théoriser la chose en même temps qu'il l'inaugure – ou quasi[2] (Clément, 2011, p. 21).

This perspective showcases a fundamental tension in Cartesian thought: the opposition between reason, seen as a manifestation of the divine and perfect, and the body, associated with imperfection and the *passions*. The deviation from the "natural order" in language – marked by syntactic inversions – was thus viewed not merely as a stylistic choice but as a reflection of a deeper departure from rational clarity and universal truth. This dichotomy reinforced the philosophical hierarchy privileging reason over imagination and passions, aligning linguistic purity with intellectual and moral perfection.

The implications of this rationalist framework extended beyond syntax to influence broader debates on the nature of language and thought. For Cartesian disciples, adherence to the "natural order" in language was not just a matter of grammatical correctness but a moral and intellectual imperative. This framework helped cement the connection between language, logic, and ethics, deeply shaping the prescriptive norms of French grammar during the 17th and 18th centuries.

This rigid interpretation of linguistic order also faced criticism, particularly from those who argued that imagination and passion played a vital role in human expression and creativity. While Cartesian dualism sought to isolate reason as the defining characteristic of human perfection, critics emphasized the complexity of human thought, where reason and emotion often intertwined, challenging the strict dichotomy.

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[2] "Clarity is certainly a postulate, even an ideal, which the era shares, and which Descartes perhaps only makes more visible, better thinkable than his contemporaries; but the clarity with which the author of the *Discourse* must speak to the world of scientists, philosophers, and all those, whether they belong to this world or not, who share common sense, this clarity is philosophical: the idea of science is not foreign to him, neither that of bodies, nor of thought, nor of the soul, nor of God himself – it touches on the essential. Descartes doesn't miss the chance to theorize about it as he introduces it—or nearly so."

However, strictly formalist models of the natural order, i.e. SVO, have dominated language studies, especially in traditional grammar, which adopts classificatory approaches for pedagogical purposes. In its traditional prescriptive normative model, French is a language ideally *purified* of all social and historical interference, a language defined in classical generative grammar by the competence of the *ideal speaker-listener* (cf. Chomsky's Standard Theory, 1957–1965).

It is worth noting that – from this point on – it is *pure and definitive abstraction* [of linguistic variation], which ends up *obscuring the reality of languages as systems that their daily use dynamically inscribes* (Hagège, 1985, p. 267). Thus, as Hagège observes, the axiom of a parallelism between grammar and logic is fraught with "harmful consequences for the elucidation of linguistic phenomena, as well as for logic itself" (p. 189).

In reaction to the doctrine of direct order, Condillac and his followers developed a philosophy of Sensualism, asserting that thought is merely transformed sensation. In *L'Essai sur l'origine des connaissances humaines* (1746), Condillac argued that the arrangement of words – such as the placement of adjectives relative to nouns – reflects the speaker's subjective impressions. For instance, one might say *grand arbre* (big tree) or *arbre grand* (tree big) depending on the degree to which the sense of "grandeur" impresses the speaker. Thus, Condillac concluded that word order, whether in Latin, French, or other languages, can be considered equally "natural", as it mirrors the variability of human perception. Later, in *Traité des sensations* (*Treatise on Sensations*, 1754), Condillac advanced this theory by challenging Locke's empiricism as expressed in *Essay on Human Understanding* (1690). While Locke denied the existence of innate ideas, Condillac (as cited in Hagège, 1985, p. 213) went further, rejecting the notion of innate mental faculties altogether. For Condillac, the mind itself is shaped entirely by sensory experiences, reinforcing his belief that language reflects the dynamic interplay between sensation and thought.

Sensualism explores the relationships between sensations, ideas, judgments, and language, placing the speaker at the center of its framework. From this perspective, it anticipates what will later be recognized as the theory of Enunciation, which examines the production of utterances, the intentions behind them, and the events that constitute their creation.

Theories of Enunciation, first developed in the U.S. by Austin (1962) and Searle (1969) and in France by Benveniste (1966[3]), Ducrot (1980), and Culioli (1990), emphasize the communicative intentions that drive speech, such as convincing, questioning, influencing, or moving an audience. They also highlight the speaker's control over the construction of their utterances at multiple levels, including lexical, syntactic, and argumentative dimensions. Furthermore, these theories focus on the speaker's choices, whether rhetorical, enunciative, syntactic, semantic, or lexical, as well as the predicative relations that underpin the syntactic organization unique to each language. Another important aspect is the organization of semantic information within the utterance, which determines the informational importance of its various components.

These approaches extend beyond the utterance itself by examining how grammatical categories shape word order and, in turn, what this order reveals about the enunciator. Enunciative theories have thus deepened our understanding of the interplay between linguistic structure, speaker intentions, and the expression of meaning.

Nonetheless, recognizing the specificity of syntactic rules does not mean granting complete autonomy to syntax. On the contrary, syntax operates within a structured system where even the "oscillations" of speech, according to Hagège (1985), are governed by underlying order rather than anarchy. To sum up, variation (Gadet 2020, among others) is not a binary movement between free will and obligation but rather a dynamic interplay of two inseparable components. This nuanced perspective challenges overly rigid or anarchic interpretations of syntactic and normative variation, emphasizing a balance that reflects both stability and fluidity in language.

In the section below, the presentation of the selected corpus is preceded by an overview of the main characteristics of the French Norm, as it is traditionally understood and taught.

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[3] For example, in chapter twenty-one, "On Subjectivity in Language" (first published in a psychology journal in 1958), Benveniste discusses acts that are inseparable from speech, such as *je jure* ("I swear"). Although the term *performative* does not appear in this chapter, such acts are considered performative utterances in pragmatics.

Methodology: French Language Clarity and Syntax Dislocations

The perception of French as a language of precision and clarity has been shaped by language policies rooted in sociolinguistic principles. These principles are reflected in two key aspects of the concept of Norm: its stability and its arbitrariness.

The stability of Norms, including the French Norm, is rooted in its institutional foundation, with dedicated bodies working to uphold and transmit it across generations. These institutions, driven by the primary objective of ensuring mutual comprehension among speakers, play a central role in maintaining linguistic cohesion. From this perspective, linguistic Norms guide human behavior and promote the functioning of social groups, serving as practical tools for effective communication. The *raison d'être* of this system is, therefore, inherently social (Changeux & Ricoeur, 1998, p. 245).

However, the stability of the Norm is also maintained through linguistic policies that promote its prescriptions via grammar textbooks, dictionaries, and treatises on grammar correction. These tools, authoritarian in nature, derive their authority from subtle distinctions of taste that have been elevated to the status of social judgment (Bourdieu, 1979). This reveals the inherent arbitrariness of the norm.

Le Bon Usage[4], according to the most commonly advanced definitions, reflects an attachment to etymology (particularly Greco-Latin roots), an affiliation with classical Latin, the legitimacy of prescribers (primarily esteemed authors), and an adherence to a so-called sense of linguistic beauty. As Bourdieu (1979) explains, these distinctions represent deliberate choices made in opposition to those associated with other social classes. Consequently, the concept of *Bon Usage* functions as a marker of distinction, serving to distance its adherents from ordinary speakers by aligning with the linguistic practices of the economic, social, and cultural elite. Distinctions in language, including aesthetic judgments, are inherently discriminatory and often lead to manifestations of glottophobia. As Blanchet (2021) explains, the term "glottophobia" was *modeled after concepts like xenophobia, homophobia, and judophobia to situate it within a sociopolitical framework that emphasizes the rejection of people, not merely languages or linguistic varieties* (p. 156). Understanding the above foundational concepts is essential to analyzing the ways in which syntax dislocations deviate from normative French word order, both syntactically and pragmatically. Specifically, this includes examining whether existing topic-based descriptions sufficiently capture the nuances of these deviations, identifying the key prosodic features that distinguish left and right dislocations. Eventually, approaches to dislocations benefit the French teaching and learning.

As announced, attempting to bring a contribution to it, I rely on one of our classroom experiences[5]. This activity involved analyzing dialogues from the French movie *96 Heures* (2014), directed by Frédéric Schoendoerffer. The film features[6] Gérard Lanvin as Gabriel Carré, a police commissioner taken hostage by Victor Kancel, a vengeful criminal played by Niels Arestrup. Kancel orchestrates his prison escape with the help of a network of accomplices, including Abdel Koudri (Slimane Dazi), a corrupt policeman, and two henchmen, Sacha (Jochen Hägele) and Joseph (Pierre Kiwitt). Additional characters include Marion Reynaud, a policewoman and close friend of Captain Carré, played by Sylvie Testud, and Francis Castella, Kancel's lawyer, portrayed by Cyril Lecomte.

The plot revolves around a tense confrontation between Victor and Gabriel over a 96-hour period, during which personal revelations and moral dilemmas emerge. The selected dialogues were chosen for their realistic depiction of conversational interactions, which provide valuable insights into spoken French. In this regard, as defined by sociolinguistics, social interaction is here understood as the reciprocal influence between

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[4] As a prescriptive French grammar book, *Le Bon Usage* is widely regarded as a reference for proper and formal usage of French. It was first published in 1936 by Belgian grammarian Maurice Grevisse, and it has since gone through numerous editions and updates. As a normative guide, it aims to define what constitutes "correct" French in writing and speech, especially in formal contexts. Some linguists criticize *Le Bon Usage* for being overly prescriptive, favoring rigid norms over reflecting real-world language evolution and regional varieties.

[5] This experience was offered to graduate level students enrolled in a Linguistic Improvement module.

[6] Only the names of the characters featured in the selected corpus are mentioned here. The full cast list can be found by consulting the film on YouTube: https://youtu.be/eJKZi6k4FD8?si=bHW6no88pJsk7PgF 20 April 2025.

individuals or groups within a social system. Verbal interactions elicit responses from interlocutors that, in turn, affect the initiator of the interaction. Unlike the functionalist approach, which prioritizes quantitative analysis based on surveys and polls, the interactionist approach focuses on direct, personal observations conducted in the field or, in this present case, through the study of oral corpora. This approach examines how individuals interact with others and their environment, as well as their underlying motivations. Such observations position the speaker at the center of the analysis.

Based on the transcription of the film's dialogues, syntactic dislocations emerge as a notable phenomenon among the key syntactic features employed by the characters. The selected corpus comprises 8 excerpts containing a total of 11 instances of subject pronoun duplication, where *je* is duplicated with *moi*, with the latter positioned at the periphery of the verbal nucleus.

Analysis and Discussion

Examining Subject Pronoun Duplication: Linguistic and Pragmatic functions

As a general introduction, dislocations are syntactic constructions characterized by a core sentence and a detached constituent positioned outside the main clause, either on the left (left dislocation: LD) or on the right (right dislocation: RD). Recent research, such as Garassino (2024), defines dislocations as constructions where the clause contains a resumptive element that is co-referential with the detached constituent.

Regarding right-peripherical subject pronoun duplication (RpspD), as observed within different frameworks, serves several linguistic and pragmatic functions (de Oliveira 2020, 2021). These include ensuring syntactic co-hesion, maintaining discourse continuity, and emphasizing specific constituents for pragmatic purposes, such as topicalization or contrast. For instance, in the sentence *Moi je n'aime pas la mer / Je n'aime pas la mer moi* ([Me] I don't like the sea / I don't like the sea [me]) the detached constituent (*Moi* / Me) is linked to the resump-tive pronoun (*Je* /I) within the clause, illustrating the mechanism of co-reference (de Oliveira 2020, 2021). This separation between the extra-clausal element and the sentence has led to the classification of dislocations as non-canonical or marked syntactic structures. In other words, dislocations are considered as a syntax error.

However, left and right dislocations are usually analyzed as topic-marking structures in which the referent of the detached element has the function of topic. Specific types of topics appear to preferentially occur in either left or right dislocation. For example, LpspD often conveys topic shifts and contrastive topics (*Moi je n'aime pas la mer*) while RpssD often conveys continuous (or familiar) topics (*Je n'aime pas la mer moi*). Nonetheless, cor-pus-based research related to spontaneous interactions unveiled more nuanced situations for comprehending their broad functioning.

Regarding key prosodic features involving dislocations, as left/right-peripherical subject pronoun duplication, Detges (2018) posits that the prosodic weakening of *moi* in left-dislocated positions is influenced by its chain frequency – the predictability of elements that follow it. For example, the erosion of *moi* becomes pronounced when it precedes the clitic *je*, particularly in expressions of opinion, such as *moi je trouve que...* ([Me] I think that...). This finding underscores the grammaticalization of *moi*, wherein its prosodic and semantic properties evolve to serve discourse-structuring functions in spoken French.

As for my research, I observe that in cases of RpspD, *moi* integrates prosodically with the preceding element (for example, *je trouve ça bien moi / I think this good [me]*). In other words, there is no perceptible pause be-tween the final element of the canonical sentence and *moi*. Essentially, rather than exhibiting prosodic weak-ening or strengthening, *moi* redirects attention to the initial element, *je*, thereby creating conversational effects that underscore its essential pragmatic role in structuring and interpreting discourse.

With regard to pragmatic features of subject pronoun duplication, research such as that of Cecchetto (1999/2002) suggests that, unlike the LD, RD does not have labels:

> The pragmatic features of [RD] and [LD] are similar, though not identical: roughly speaking, the right dislocated element in RD is associated with familiar information, as it is the left dislocated element in LD. While the literature on LD is quite large

[…], the discussion on RD is more limited (incidentally, this is also shown by the fact that no well-established label exists for the right dislocation construction) (Cecchetto, 1999, p. 40).

I concur with Cecchetto's viewpoint, particularly regarding the absence of a well-established label for RD. This absence stems from its intrinsic relationship with the speaker's emotions and intentions. This context-dependent and interpretively variable nature of RD challenges attempts to categorize it within rigid linguistic frameworks, highlighting its dynamic role in mediating discourse.

On the basis of collected data (for instance, TV shows, movies, series, documentaries, various reports, everyday conversations, etc.), I argue here that RpspDs frequently occur in exclamatory statements or those with an axiological content. Following, amongst others, the perspective of Nølke (1998), I propose viewing this device as a marker of a particular emotional investment by the speaker in the content they are expressing. However, this expressive value is likely an indirect effect of *ethos* – an improvised repair or excessive redundancy can be interpreted *as symptoms of emotion* (Berrendonner, 2021).

While the complexity of conceptualizing emotions in relation to linguistic expression consists of a challenge (de Oliveira, 2020, 2021), the observation of these devices [cf. the selected corpus] paves the way for hypotheses about the nature of the emotions – or *passions* in the Cartesian sense (infra) – that they evoke.

As far as the RpspD is concerned, I would attribute to this device a pragmatic-discursive function of *self-repair*, which contradicts the *myth of French, the clearest language*. In other words, by employing the RpspD, the speaker aims, in principle, *to repair a possible error of mutual understanding* (Berrendonner, 2021). In the proposed analysis, the movement of emotion promoted by this device is associated with the semantic field of *drama*, which leads the approach to Goffman's work, notably *La Presentation de soi* (1973). Based on this foundation, it is fair to consider the RpspD as a strategic resource used *to save face*, in the sense of *getting out of unfavorable interactive situations or apprehended as such*.

To illustrate the above, this first extract reproduces a dialogue[7] between Carré and Marion, his protegee, who is about taking the competitive exam to become a police commissioner. For Marion to succeed it, Carré asks her questions susceptible to be asked by the oral examiners, as what is the depth of La Seine under the Pont-Neuf.

Extract 1

Marion (00:01:01) :   C'est quoi cette question ? *J'ai pas la réponse moi.*
                        What's this question ? I don't have the answer [me].

Carré (00:01:03) :   C'est une question qu'on peut te poser à l'oral, c'est tout.
                        It's just a question they might ask in an interview, that's all.

Marion (00:01:06) :   Mais y a que des questions comme ça ?
                        Are there only questions like that?

Carré (00:01:08) :   Y a des questions comme ça. Y a pas que ça, mais y a des questions comme ça.
                        There are questions like that. Not only those, but there are questions like that.

Marion (00:01:11) :   Bah, je dis quoi moi ?
                        So, what do I say, me?

Carré (00 :01 :12) :   Tu réponds ce que tu veux, L'important c'est la déstabilisation, d'accord ?
                        You say whatever you want. What's important is [to create] destabilization, okay?

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[7] Despite the interest sparked by other elements of these dialogues – such as the simplification of negation, ungrammatical liaisons, and informal contractions, among other typical features of spoken French – this article will focus exclusively on RpspD due to space constraints.

The phenomenon of RppsD, as seen in Marion's utterances (*J'ai pas la réponse moi* and *Bah, je dis quoi moi?*), serves as a strategic resource to manage [real/perceived as real] face-threatening acts in interaction. Rather than simple redundancy, the duplication functions as a nuanced communicative tool, reflecting emotional and cognitive states in the face of perceived conversational challenges.

In *Je n'ai pas la réponse moi*, Marion uses the pronoun *moi* not merely to reiterate her identity as the subject but to distance herself from the premise of the question. This utterance suggests a sense of disapproval or skepticism about the relevance of the query. The addition of *moi* amplifies her emotional response, implicitly communicating: *Why should I know this?* or *How am I supposed to know?* This rhetorical distancing underscores the perceived absurdity of the situation rather than genuine ignorance. The emotional undertone – frustration tinged with disbelief – is conveyed through the informal tone.

The second instance, *Bah, je dis quoi moi?*, builds on this rhetorical strategy. Here, the construction deviates markedly from more formal alternatives (*Que dois-je dire ?* or *Qu'est-ce que je suis censée dire?*), opting instead for an emotionally charged phrasing. The duplication *je / moi* signals a heightened state of personal involvement, emphasizing the speaker's immediate sense of surprise and/or confusion. The choice of informal syntax (*Bah, je dis quoi moi?*) reflects spontaneity and a lack of preparation, further emphasizing Marion's perception of the situation as unreasonable. However, Marion's reaction is not indicative of incompetence, true exasperation or an inability to process the question. Instead, it reflects a momentary strategy to navigate an unfavourable interaction. Her apparent flustered state serves as a temporary face-saving mechanism that redirects attention from her knowledge gap to the unreasonable nature of the question itself. This interpretation aligns with later developments in the narrative, where Marion ultimately demonstrates competence by succeeding in the exam.

The constructions discussed so far illustrate how French right-peripheral pronoun duplication serves as a powerful linguistic tool to express interpersonal attitudes and manage conversational dynamics. This phenomenon can also be observed in the following contexts, where Carré advises her friend Marion on how to approach her exam preparation:

Extract 2

Marion (00:01:22) : Si on me pose cette question, exactement celle-là, la hauteur de la Seine, je réponds quoi ?

If someone asks me this question, exactly this one, about the height of the Seine, what do I say?

Carré (00:01:27) : Je sais pas moi, tu lui demandes sous quel arche, si c'est en hiver, en été, il faut reprendre la main.

I don't know, you ask them under which arch, if it's winter, summer—you take back control.

Marion (00:01:32) : OK, d'accord, j'ai compris.

OK, got it, I understand.

[...]

Carré (00 :02:30) : Donc, ce soir, tu oublies tout, tu laisses infuser, tu te mets un film, de la musique, j'en sais rien moi. Et puis, t'y crois, quoi. T'es maligne, tu vas y arriver.

So, tonight, you forget everything, let it simmer, watch a movie, listen to some music, I don't know. And then, believe in it, OK? You're smart, you're going to nail it.

As a personal friend and close confidant, Carré's use of RppsD (*Extract 1 : je ne sais pas moi; Extract 2 : j'en sais rien moi*) does not signal irritability or frustration but rather reflects a supportive stance. These utterances seem to

highlight moments of humility, as if to acknowledge his own limitations in providing specific advice while ultimately encouraging Marion to trust her abilities. In other words, the second RppsD, *j'en sais rien moi / I [really] don't know,* serves to soften the advice by downplaying Carré's authority or expertise (e.g. Extract 1: *tu lui demandes sous quel arche, si c'est en hiver, en été, il faut reprendre la main*; Extract 2 : *tu oublies tout, tu laisses infuser, tu te mets un film, de la musique. Extract 1: You ask him under which arch, whether it's winter or summer, you need to take control again. Extract 2: You forget everything, let it steep, put on a movie or some music*). It signals a conversational shift where Carré reassures Marion by emphasizing that while she may not have all the answers, she is capable of finding her way through her intelligence and resilience. This creates an inclusive and motivational tone, aligning with Carré's role as a friend offering emotional support rather than strict instructions.

The effects produced by RpspD in the second set of dialogues differs from the above exchanges. It first concerns Victor Kancel, a criminal who kidnaps Carré, the police commissioner responsible for his downfall. As a man consumed by this obsession, Kancel is determined to uncover the name of the informant, sparing no effort. The following extract depicts the beginning of his 96-hour interrogation.

Extract 3

Carré (00:18:17) : Allez, annonce, annonce, qu'on aille vite.
Come on, say it, say it, so we can get this over with quickly.

Kancel (00:18:19) : Pourquoi tu veux que ça aille vite ? *J'ai tout mon temps moi*, Monsieur le Commissaire. *J'ai 96 heures moi*. Le temps que ça s'affole un peu chez tes amis…
Why do you want it to go quickly? I have all the time in the world, Commissioner. I have 96 hours. [That's] how long it will take for your friends to panic a little…

Having failed to obtain a satisfactory response from Carré, Kancel resumes the interrogation.

Extract 4

Kancel (00:19:42) : Mais tu vas me donner ce que je te demande, Carré. Et ça sera pas le nom d'un mort. Parce que celui qui m'a balancé, je veux le buter moi personnellement. Ça fait trois ans que j'attends. Tu vas pas me gâcher le plaisir, quand même.
But you're going to give me what I'm asking for, Carré. And it won't be the name of a dead man. Because the one who ratted me out, I want to kill him myself, personally. I've been waiting three years for this. You're not going to take away that pleasure from me, are you?

In this context, Kancel's RpspD conveys both his dominance over Carré (*j'ai tout mon temps moi / j'ai 96 heures moi – I've got all the time in the world / I've got 96 hours*) and his unrelenting determination (*je veux le buter moi – I want to kill him myself*). By adding "personnellement / personally", he removes any ambiguity, making it clear that the informant's death will come directly at his hands.

Although Kancel's position is already explicit, the use of RpspD amplifies his statements, adding an extra layer clarification. This redundancy functions as if to say, *In case you didn't get it … .* These types of utterances act as a form of "ultimatum", heightening the psychological pressure in the exchange, as one can also observe in the next extract, where two of Kancel's accomplices reflect on the situation:

Extract 5

Sacha (00 :41 :55) : Il faut qu'on trouve le fric. Il déconne, Victor, avec ses histoires de balance. *Je me fous moi* de savoir qui l'a balancé. Je veux mon fric, putain.
We need to find the money. Victor's losing it with his obsession over the informant. I don't give a damn who ratted him out, me. I just want my money, damn it.

By enunciating *je me fous moi / I don't give a damn, me,* Sacha not only emphasizes his indifference to Kancel's fixation but asserts his own presence and priorities, signaling that he will not be overlooked. Sacha's attitude can also be observed in the following extract, a conversation with Joseph about Kancel's plan:

Extract 6

Joseph (00 :17 :40) : C'est quoi ton putain de problème ?
What's your dam problem ?

Sacha (00 :17 :43) : Il [Kancel] pourrait dire merci, non ? On l'a quand même sorti de prison, merde. Mais le fric, quand est-ce qu'on va aller le chercher ? *J'aime pas moi,* cette putain de barraque. On devrait tous être loin déjà.

He [Kancel] could at least say thank you, couldn't he? After all, we got him out of prison, for crying out loud. But when are we going to get the money? I don't like this damn house. We should all be far away by now.

In Sacha's statement, *j'aime pas moi cette putain de barraque*, the RpspD plays a key rhetorical role by adding emphasis and grounding the utterance in a strong personal stance. While the sentence could stand grammatically as *j'aime pas cette putain de barraque*, the use of RpspD strengthens Sacha's reasoning. His dislike of the house becomes not merely a comment but a key argument supporting the urgency to retrieve the money and leave. The personal emphasis adds emotional weight to his pragmatic focus, encouraging alignment from others. By signaling one's personal discomfort, it is expected to carry weight in decision-making, such an approach suggesting that RpspD appeals to group dynamics can be extended to the next extracts of dialogues.

In this scene, Kancel's lawyer is tasked with extracting crucial information from Carré, particularly the name of his informer. However, the dynamics quickly shift, exposing the lawyer's vulnerability and unease.

Extract 7

Carré (00:52:31) :   Complicité d'évasion, pour un avocat, ça sent la fin de carrière cher Maître, non?
Being an accomplice to an escape, for a lawyer, that smells like the end of your career, doesn't it, Counselor?

Lawyer (00:52:36) : Quelle complicité ? *Je n'y suis pour rien moi.*
Accomplice? I have nothing to do with it [me].

Contrary to the canonical *je n'y suis pour rien*, his RpspD *je n'y suis pour rien moi* conveys a mix of denial and desperation, exposing his growing fear of being cornered. It adds a layer of defensive tone that betrays his anxiety about the precariousness of his position. Such is also the case below, when Carré – pursuing his manipulative tactic – shifts the narrative, turning the focus back on the lawyer. He appeals to the lawyer's sense of urgency and survival, positioning himself as a partner who can help resolve the crisis.

Extract 8

Carré (00:53:19) :   [...] Alors je vais avoir besoin de vous, Maître, pour me sortir d'ici.
So, I'm going to need your help, Councelor, to get me out of here.

Lawyer (00:53:32) : *Je ne fais pas de la magie moi.*
I don't do magic [me].

The lawyer's response (*je ne fais pas de la magie moi*) goes beyond a mere dismissive denial of any extraordinary ability to resolve the situation (*je ne fais pas de la magie*). It marks the peak of exasperation in the exchange, reflecting his frustration at the impossible demands placed upon him. The RpspD reveals a complex

psychological state: his statements betray his irritation at being forced into a role he cannot fulfill. These utter-ances, deviating from canonical French word order, evoke a sense of victimhood, portraying the speaker as unfairly implicated in circumstances beyond their control. This linguistic strategy contributes to the depiction of a reluctant participant, trapped by external forces. The speaker's irritability and defensive tone further under-score their awareness of domination, amplifying their victimization in the eyes of the audience.

Building on the preceding analysis, the study draws on Goffman's *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* to situate RpspD within a symbolic interactionist framework. Goffman's dramaturgical approach views interaction as a "performance" shaped by the environment and audience, designed to create impressions that align with the performer's desired goals. Through this lens, identity emerges as a construct of social interaction, developed through the exchange of information that defines behaviour and persona in specific contexts.

Taken together, the findings from RpspD offers new insights into individual identity, group relations, environmen-tal influence, and the movement of interactive meaning. The data also point to specific ways in which linguistic structures intersect with social psychology, revealing the nuanced interplay between language, identity, and interpersonal dynamics.

Conclusions

This study has examined right-peripheral subject pronoun duplication in spoken French, focusing on its syntactic structure, prosodic patterns, and pragmatic functions. Drawing on a corpus of film dialogue and grounded in enunciative and interactionist frameworks, the analysis has shown that this construction—far from being an error or redundancy—serves as a strategic device for self-repair, stance-taking, and face management.

The findings demonstrate that RpspD contributes to meaning-making in interaction by modulating speaker involvement, managing emotional expression, and reinforcing positioning in dialogic exchanges. As such, it challenges the normative ideology of clarity and syntactic incorruptibility that underpins traditional representa-tions of French.

By situating the phenomenon within broader historical, philosophical, and pedagogical debates on language standardization, the study offers evidence that linguistic variation is not peripheral but central to actual lan-guage use. Integrating such features into language education would reflect the real conditions of communica-tion and afford learners access to the range of expressive and interactional tools French offers its speakers.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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Santrauka

Ruth de Oliveira

Tai, kas neaišku, nėra prancūziška: refleksijos apie sintaksės aiškumą ir asmeninio įvardžio dubliavimą sakinio pabaigoje

Prancūzų kalba dažnai yra vertinama dėl savo aiškumo ir tikslumo – tai palikimas, suformuotas Dekarto racionalizmo ir norminės kalbos politikos. Tačiau besikeičiančios šnekamosios prancūzų kalbos formos kelia iššūkį nusistovėjusių kalbos normų sampratai. Šiame tyrime yra analizuojama viena iš tokių ypatybių – sakinio

pabaigoje dubliuojamas asmeninis įvardis je kartu su jo toniniu atitikmeniu moi. Tai pasikartojantis, bet vis dar menkai išnagrinėtas šnekamosios prancūzų kalbos bruožas. Pagrindinis šio tyrimo tikslas – atskleisti, kokias pragmatines ir emocines funkcijas ši sintaksės ypatybė atlieka tikrame diskurse. Analizė, paremta kino dialogų tekstynu, rodo, kad įvardžio dubliavimas atlieka svarbų vaidmenį valdant pokalbio eigą, išreiškiant asmeninę poziciją ir savireguliacijoje. Taikant daugiadalykį požiūrį, apimantį sociolingvistiką, pragmatiką ir taikomąją kalbotyrą, tyrime teigiama, kad tokia kalbinė variacija praturtina prancūzų kalbos raiškos galimybes ir padaro atskirtį tarp rašytinių normų ir šnekamosios kalbos dar griežtesnę. Taip pat daroma prielaida, kad šių kalbinių ypatybių įtraukimas į kalbos mokymą padeda plėtoti prancūzų kalbos kaip gyvo reiškinio suvokimą.

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