

**THE ITALIAN VERB *SAPERE* IN ITS FUNCTION AS A DISCOURSE
MARKER**
A corpus study of spoken Italian

The object of the thesis is to analyse the Italian verb *sapere* ('to know') in its function as a discourse marker. The basic assumption is that a very close connection exists between the position of the analysed items and their respective pragmatic functions. In search of the confirmation of this assumption the LIP-Korpus, i. e. a corpus of spoken Italian, has been examined. In chapter 2, by way of introduction, certain general semantic and syntactic characteristics of *sapere* will be discussed. The emphasis in this connection is on characteristics that are also important for the use of this verb as a discourse marker. Afterwards, in chapter 3, the term *discourse marker* will be explained and the most important characteristics and functions of discourse markers regarding the verb *sapere* will be discussed. The representation in tabular form in chapter 4 lists the single pragmatic forms of *sapere*. From the following discussion of data we will see that it is very difficult and often nearly impossible to distinguish between the literal and the pragmatic use of the items in question. It will be shown that the verb *sapere* in its function as a discourse marker differs from other verbs that can be used pragmatically because of the indicative mood. Furthermore, it turns out that *sapere* is used as a discourse marker in very different forms but that they all have in common that they keep their propositional meaning even when used pragmatically. Moreover, it will be shown that nearly each item shows some specific characteristics concerning position and/or function. So the conclusion that can be drawn from the analysis is that even without taking into account the intonation and extralinguistical signals, most of the analysed items show a connection between the position of the specific pragmatic form of *sapere* and the respective functions.