REDUNDANCY AND SYNTACTIC REDUCTION
IN SPONTANEOUS SPEECH

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In deep respect, appreciation, and love
to my first friends and advisors,
Rolf and Christiane

Acknowledgments

High above the clouds of California, I feel an acute sense of loss. Yesterday I walked through golden hills. The last five years have been full of experiences that I wouldn't have dared to anticipate. I could not have imagined a fraction of the opportunities that have opened up. Coming from a German academic environment to Stanford, I have been most impressed by the truly scholarly atmosphere, where colleagues are not afraid to share ideas, where advisors have time for their students, and where academic curiosity is more important than academic hierarchies. It has been an extraordinary privilege to work and hang out with so many amazing people.

My walk through the graduate program may at times have appeared more like an erratic chicken dance than anything with a clear goal. That I found a topic that caught my imagination and made me look forward to a life of research, is mostly due to my advisors Tom Wasow, Dan Jurafsky, and Ted Gibson. One of Tom's classes inspired me to use corpora for psycholinguistic investigation. Ironically, I started working with Tom while I was visiting MIT. I had just joined Ted's lab and I was amazed by the productivity and scientific attitude of the peeps there. It was a time of intense learning for me (thanks, foremost, to Ted and Ev'). As should be obvious from the topic of this thesis, the idea was also inspired by Dan's work on probabilistic phonetic reduction. I am grateful to Tom, Dan, Ted, and Elizabeth Traugott for so many mind-opening conversations, their support and encouragement, as well as for giving me enough space to make my own discoveries (or letting me feel they were my own). I also thank them as well as David Beaver and Michael Ramscar for a truly enjoyable thesis defense that gave me plenty of food for thought. Elizabeth and Tom in particular read countless drafts of my thesis and always shared valuable feedback. Later in the process, Joan joined my reading committee. The methodological approach taken in this thesis is strongly influenced by Joan's work and I benefitted immensely from the first ever *Laboratory Syntax* class she taught.

This thesis grew out of collaborations with Tom and Dave Orr (foremost, Wasow, Jaeger, and Orr, 2006, where we first developed the idea that relativizer omission is influenced by the predictability of a relative clause). Parts of this thesis (Study 4 – 6) are based on collaboration with Roger Levy (Jaeger and Levy, 2006; Levy and Jaeger, to appear). I learned so much from Roger without whom those Studies would not have been possible. Thanks also go to the wonderful collaborators on other projects that have influenced this thesis: Dan Jurafsky, Neal Snider, Laura Staum, Mary Ann Walter, Rafe Kinsey, and Harry Tily. These collaborations have pushed me beyond where I could have gone by myself, so that I truly hope that we will continue them.

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