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TRABAJO DE FIN DE GRADO

Filling the gaps: acceptability and production of
English Resumptive Pronouns in L2 English
speakers

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ABSTRACT

The main objective of this work is to provide empirical data evidencing the level of production and acceptability of Resumptive Pronouns (RP) in English. Although this type of pronominal categories has been considered to be ungrammatical in English, actually, has been reported to be employed regularly in oral communication. The participants selected for this study are a group of Spanish speakers who were classified according to their English grammatical background: some of them had in-depth linguistic knowledge of the language (G1) and some other had mostly knowledge of the oral dimension of the language (G2). The analysis of the results of the tests to which they were submitted showed greater acceptance and production of the resumptive pronoun on the part of the G2, verifying this way the oral status of this type of pronoun in English even in non-native speakers. Even so, in both groups, the levels of production and acceptability of the RP did not reach high levels.

Keywords: resumptive pronoun, relative clause, production, wh-island, acceptability, extractability.

RESUMEN

El objetivo principal de este trabajo es proporcionar datos empíricos que evidencien el nivel de producción y aceptabilidad de los pronombres reasuntivos en inglés. Aunque este tipo de categorías pronominales han sido consideradas agramaticales en inglés, en la práctica, se ha observado que se utilizan con bastante asiduidad en la comunicación oral. Los participantes seleccionados para este estudio son hablantes de español clasificados en función de sus conocimientos gramaticales en inglés: algunos hablantes tienen un profundo conocimiento lingüístico del idioma (G1) y otros cuentan con un conocimiento del idioma desde una perspectiva fundamentalmente oral (G2). El análisis de los resultados de las pruebas a las que fueron sometidos muestra una mayor aceptación y producción del pronombre reasuntivo por parte del G2, verificando así el carácter oral de este tipo de pronombres en inglés. Aún así, en ambos grupos, los niveles de producción y aceptabilidad del reasuntivo no alcanzaron niveles altos.

Palabras clave: pronombre reasuntivo, cláusula relativa, producción, wh- isla, aceptabilidad, extractabilidad.

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1. Introduction

The use of Resumptive Pronouns (RPs) in English has been one of the most controversial issues over the last few decades in linguistics literature. The reason for this controversy lies in the fact that these pronouns have been generally judged as marginal categories (Keffala, 2011; Prince, 1999; Ferreira and Swets, 2005; McDaniel and Cowart, 1999, among others) that should not be used, unless they are strictly required in specific structures (e.g. wh-islands). However, the development of new methods and materials for linguistic analysis, such as corpora, have mitigated the negative categorization of RPs by showing that they are regularly used in many other situations especially in oral communication.

In the light of this, a number of studies have become interested in analyzing the acceptability and production of RPs in English within one of the most common structures in which they usually appear: the relative clause (RC). In the present paper, we will also carry out an experimental analysis of the acceptability and production of these pronouns in RCs, but with the difference that, in this case, the focus will turn to Spanish speakers whose L2 is English. For this purpose, a group of L1 Spanish with a C1 level of proficiency in English have been selected. This group was split into two, of which, one has a more orally developed skill in English while the other has an academic formation in the linguistic aspects of the English language.

The following undergraduate dissertation consists of seven separated sections in addition to the current one. Section 2 is divided into three clearly differentiated parts: 2.1 provides a theoretical basis on the relative clauses essential for the complete understanding of the study; 2.2 provides a brief description of how RPs work in English and its implications within these structures; and 2.3 and 2.4 provides a review of the various studies related to the acceptability and production of RPs in L1 and in L2, respectively. Section 3 covers the objectives pursued as well as the research questions concerning the acceptability (3.1) and production (3.2) of RPs. Section 4 outlines the methodology adopted for our empirical study: 4.1 describes the participants who took part in the study and 4.2 the materials that were used in each of the tasks. Section 5 includes the results obtained and 6 a brief discussion of them. Finally, section 7 sets out

the main conclusions that can be drawn from this work. At the end, an index with both tasks has been included.

2. Theoretical background

Section 2 has been developed to provide our approach to this study about RPs in English. This section is organized in four major subsections: the first one (2.1) contains some specific information about the structure and syntax of RCs as they are the type of clause which concern us; the second subsection (2.2) offers a complete description about RPs in English and the differences with some other languages; and finally, the last two subsections are focused on previous works concerning different factors that trigger the production and acceptability of these pronouns in native English speakers (2.3) and the implications that they have when acquiring this language as an L2 (2.4).

2.1. Contextualization: the relative clause in English

Prior to the study of the resumptive pronouns (RP) in English, we have provided a brief introduction to the relative clause since we strongly consider that it will facilitate the understanding of the present work. In addition, this section will also serve to justify the position we have taken with respect to the analysis of these structures.

A relative clause can be defined as a subordinate structure whose main function is that of modifying a Determiner Phrase (DP), often known as antecedent. A clear example of a relative clause (RC) can be the one presented in (1) where the antecedent *the man* is modified by the RC *who I met yesterday* comprising a unique constituent as shown the outer brackets.

(1) [The man [who I saw yesterday]]

In English, these structures are introduced by elements which received the name of relativizers (Huddleston and Pullum, 2002) or complementizers (Suñer, 1998) and can be of two types: wh-relative pronouns such as *what*, *why*, *when* or *who* (as presented in (1)) or conjunctions (as in (2)). The latter ones, that is conjunctions, can be also divided into overt, represented by *that* in (2a) or non-overt in (2b).

(2)

a. [The man [**that** I saw]]

- b. [The man [\emptyset I saw]]

Following Pérez-Leroux, these complementizers are employed to establish a link between the antecedent and “a relativized position inside the relative clause” (1995: 106). The relativized position is the expression used to refer to the gap which normally appears in the RC and which refers to the same entity as the DP that is being modified (Tallerman, 2005); that is, ___ in phrases like (3). Since both, the antecedent and the relativized position, are pointing to the same entity, it means that they are coreferentials and so, that they must have the same sub-index (i).

- (3)
- a. The man_i who_i I saw ____i
 - b. The man_i that I saw ____i
 - c. The man_i I saw ____i

Syntactically talking, this gap can be found occupying the object position of a transitive verb as in the previous examples in (3) or the subject position as in (4).

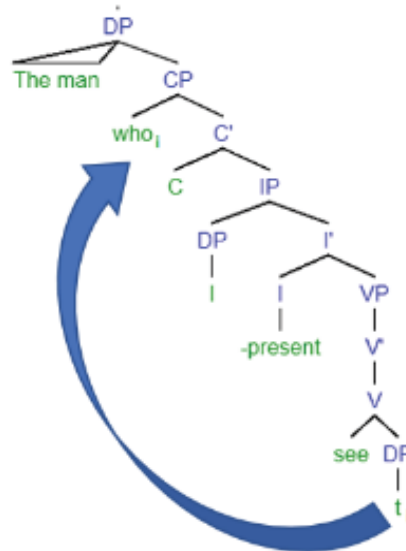
- (4)
- a. The man_i who_i plays the piano
 - b. The man_i that ____i plays the piano

When the gap appears in object position, we would say that we are in front of an object RC whereas, on the contrary, when it is the subject position we would have a subject RC. As in the examples in (4), subject RCs may contain a gap or not depending on the element which introduces the RC. In (4a) there is no gap because the element *wh-*, that is *who*, has a twofold role: that of a complementizer, to connect both parts, and that of a relative pronoun, which allows it to perform a grammatical function; in this case that of the subject. On the contrary, this does not occur when the RC is introduced with the conjunction *that*. This is so, because *that* does not have pronominal features and thus, it is deprived of fulfilling the subject function of the RC, resulting in a gap in this position, as we see from (4b).

To connect these two positions (the one of the antecedent and the gap or relativized position) in cases like (1) researchers agree in that there is a movement of the *wh-*

pronoun from the relativized position (in this case the object position) to the Specifier of Complementizer Phrase (CP) as (5) illustrates.

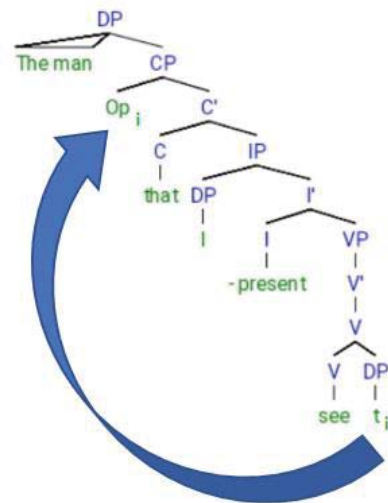
(5)



As a result of this movement, the wh-pronoun leaves a gap in its former position which is occupied by its trace (t), a specific type of empty category which only occurs when some kind of movement takes place in the sentence. This trace retains the syntactic and semantic properties of the displaced element to which it is bound.

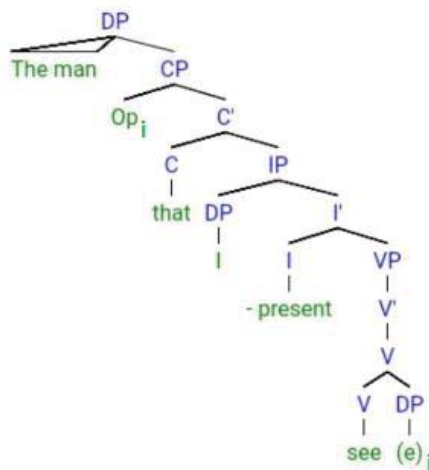
However, in English much debate has been generated because of the analysis of those relative structures with the complementizer *that* (or in their absence with \emptyset in the object relatives). One of the major tendencies towards the analysis of this RCs is that, given the lack of an element wh-, we must assume the displacement of a null operator (Op). This proposal, supported by the works of Demirdache (1990), Pérez-Leroux (1995), McKee and McDaniel (2001) and Friedmann (2006), states that this null operator moves from the relativized position within the clause relative to the Spec of the CP (just as a wh- element does) and this movement as illustrated in (6).

(6)



An opposite point of view to this analysis was that proposed by Labelle (1990 and 1996), Shlonsky (1992), Suñer (1998) and Liceras and Senn (2008) who defend a non-movement approach in which a null operator generated in the base appears in the CP Specifier and, after that, it is co-indexed with the empty category (e) found within the CR as shown in (7).

(7)



Though both theories have compelling arguments, in this undergraduate dissertation we will opt for the movement approach, that is, the one that involves the displacement of a

null operator. Therefore, we will not considerate the idea of base generated operator because, as McKee and McDaniel argue, movement in languages such as English is "obligatory" (2001: 119) unless a grammatical principle is violated. In these cases, a category capable of establishing a relationship between the antecedent and its relativizing position would be needed. These categories are known as resumptive pronouns, which will be discussed in the next section.

2.2. Resumptive pronouns in English

As already mentioned in section 2.1, we are going to assume that movement always occur in RCs. Taking this into account, we have considered that there are two types of movement: on the one hand, we would have the displacement of a relative pronoun (that is, that of a *wh*-word) from its initial position as we have seen in (5), repeated here as (8); and, on the other hand, we would have the movement of a null operator as in (9). Both operations would generate a gap within the RC that would be occupied by its own trace.

(8) DP[The man_{CP}[*who*_i IP[I saw (*t*)_i]]]

(9) DP[The man_{CP}[*Op*_i C[that IP [I saw (*t*)_i]]]]]

However, even though canonically this gap is filled by the trace of the element that has been displaced, there are cases in which "a pronominal element" (McCloskey, 2006:1) appears in this position, as exemplified in (10).

(10)

- a. This is the cowboy that Snow White thinks that *he* is crying
- b. This is the cowboy that Snow White thinks that (*t*) is crying

This type of pronominal elements are commonly referred to as resumptive pronouns (RPs). According to Pérez-Leroux, among others, RPs in English "function as reference pronouns" (1995: 107); this in simpler terms means that their main task is to retrieve information from a DP that has been already expressed in the sentence (that is, the antecedent). Consequently, it implies that, just like ordinary pronouns, RPs need to establish a relationship with this DP in terms of gender, number and person (*phi*

features). This relation can be seen in (10a) where the RP *he* and the DP *the cowboy* share the features [-female], [+singular] and [3rd person]. A change in any of the features of the RP would make it impossible to agree with its antecedent, as shown in examples (11), (12) and (13).

(11) **Change of the RP in gender:** * This is the cowboy that Snow White thinks that *she* is crying

(12) **Change of the RP in number:** * This is the cowboy that Snow White thinks that *they* is crying

(13) **Change of the RP in person:** * This is the cowboy that Snow White thinks that *I* is crying

However, in contrast to other languages, the use of RPs in English has been considered "officially ungrammatical" (Prince, 1990: 482) or even "outlawed by the English grammar" (Tryzna, 2013: 199). Sells (1984), who was one of the first authors to study the distribution and behavior of these pronouns, concluded that there are two types of languages according to the type of resumption they use: on the one hand, some languages use true resumption, whereas, on the other hand, some others employ intrusive resumption. True resumption would embrace those languages in which RPs can "freely alternate with a gap" (Liceras and Senn, 2009) such as Yiddish, Arabic, or Hebrew as demonstrated in (14).

- (14) **Hebrew**
- a. Trace in Hebrew**
- ha- ?i? ?e- ra?iti (*t*)
- the-man that (I) saw (*t*)
- b. RP in Hebrew**
- ha- ?i? ?e- ra?iti *oto*
- the-man that (I) saw *him*

(Shlonsky, 1992: 4)

In this example, we can see how the gap containing the trace in (14a) is replaced by the RP *oto* in (14b). Both options, the one with the trace and the RP, are examples of grammatical sentences in Hebrew.

However, according to Sells' division (1984), the possibility of exchanging a gap with a RP is much more restricted in languages that present an intrusive resumption such as English. Sells (1984) and later Demirdache (1990), Shlonsky (1995) and Licerias and Senn (2009), argue that English is a language in which RPs seems to be accepted exclusively in syntactic islands, i.e. a type of structure from which 'elements cannot get off of' (Munn, 2007: 2), as *what they are* in (15).

(15) **English**

a. Trace in English

* These are the things that we don't know what (*t*) are

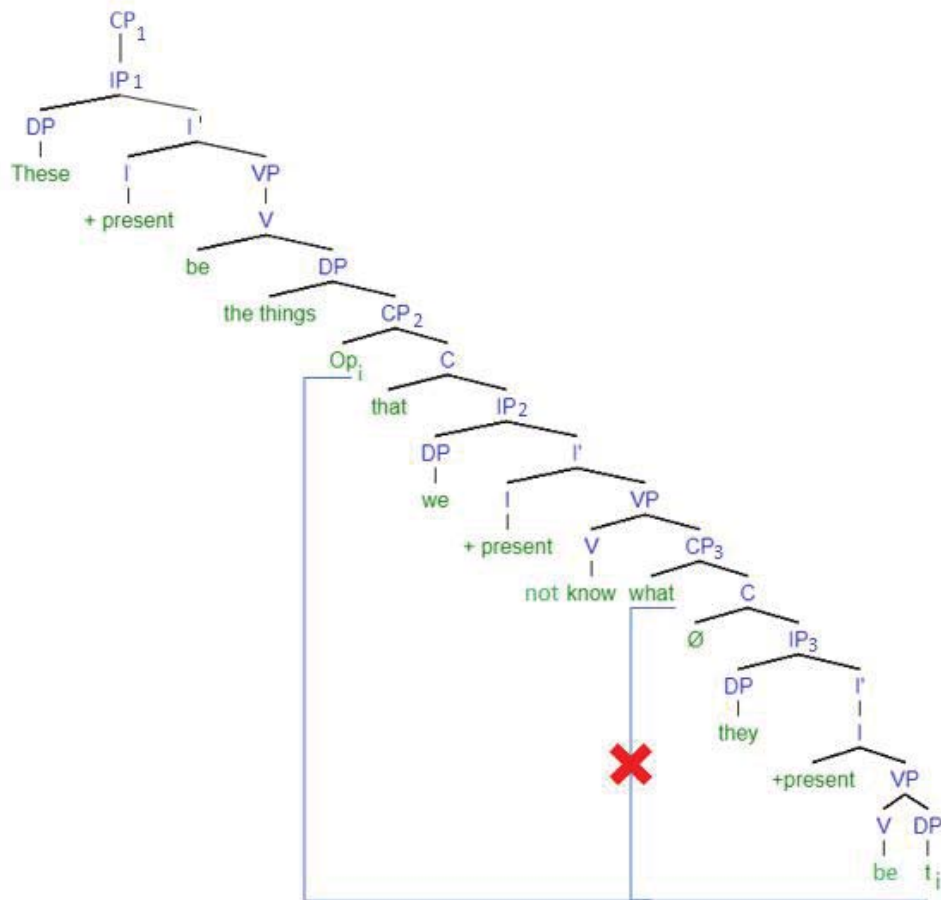
b. RP in English

These are the things that we don't know what *they* are

(Ferreira & Swets, 2005: 1)

Therefore, the use of the RP in English as in (15b) would be a kind of saving device (Sells, 1984; Demirdache 1991) or last resort element (Shlonsky, 1992) that would be used when movement is blocked due to the so-called Subjacency Principle. The Subjacency Principle (1973) was first introduced by Chomsky and is based on the idea that, when an element moves, this cannot cross more than one boundary node (i.e., an Inflected Phrase (IP) or a DP) at the same time. To avoid this, Chomsky argues that movement must be cyclic, meaning that the moving element must stop in intermediate phases before reaching the final landing site; that is, in the case of *wh*-pronouns and null operators the movement must be from the Spec of a CP to the next Spec of another CP. Nevertheless, this cyclic movement would not occur in sentences like (15) since the null operator would not be able to stop at the Spec of CP₃ as shown in (16) because it is already occupied by another element (*what*); this way, it would be forced to move to the next available position in the sentence, i.e. the Spec of CP₂, crossing two boundary nodes (IP₃ and IP₂). As a result, it would leave behind an illicit trace (McDaniel, 1999; Alexoupoulou & Frank Keller, 2002) which could not be connected to the displaced element due to the limits imposed by the island.

(16)



For this reason, when the speaker has to face these structures with illicit movement, he introduces a RP that is able to connect both positions without requiring any movement, as shown in (17).

(17)

CP_1 [These are *the things*_{*i*} CP_2 [that we don't know CP_3 [what *they*_{*i*} are]

The RP, contrary to the trace, is not affected by the boundaries imposed by the island since it is able to establish a direct relationship with its antecedent through the features of gender, number and person, as we have seen before. This relationship is substantiated

by Principle B of the so-called Binding Theory (Chomsky, 1981), which states that pronouns are anti-local categories that can be related to elements outside their own domain, i.e. outside the CP where they appear (CP3 in the case of (17)); thus, Demirdache (1991: 15-16), following the works of Sells (1984), asserts that illicit movement would be replaced by this type of "anaphoric" relationship.

Although RPs in English are considered to be ungrammatical but reparatory tools for syntactic islands, recent studies based on corpus data have revealed that RPs do not only appear in these situations, but that they also occur quite frequently in other contexts especially in spoken and colloquial English (Prince, 1990; Cann et al., 2004; Polinsky 2013; Keffala 2014). Some examples of RPs that appear in different corpora are those shown in (18):

(18)

- a. She got a couch at Sears that *it* was on sale
- b. He's a professor that nobody liked *him*

(Cann et al. 2004)

- c. I have this friend who *she* does all the platters
- d. Apparently, there are such things as bees in the area which if you're stung by *them*

(Prince, 1990)

Taking into account that these latter studies state that RPs may appear in "island and non-island situations" (Polinsky 2013: 1), observed also in examples in (18), the main objective of this work will be focused on analysing the level of acceptability of these pronouns in different structures in two non-native groups of English: one which has been grammatically and linguistically instructed whereas the other has only received oral input. In the following chapter we will review the different studies that have been carried out so far on the acceptability and production of RPs in English.

2.3. Acceptability and production of Resumptive pronouns in English: Previous studies

As we have suggested in the previous point, RPs in English are not as marginal or isolated as originally suggested the studies conducted by Sells (1984) and Shlonsky (1992) (among others). The fact that new studies have shown that RPs in spoken language do not only appear in syntactic islands has prompted several researchers to review their acceptability and production in other situations.

One of the first factors that has been considered when analysing the acceptability of RPs is the distance between the antecedent and the relativized position. When the antecedent is separated by a large amount of syntactic material from this position in the RC, as shown in (19), insert a RP may be a way to prevent the loss of the connection between them.

- (19) There was **one prisoner** that we heard that the guard taunted ___/him
mercilessly

On this basis, Norcliffe & Hofmeister (2014) and Beltrama & Xiang (2016) agree in that "sentences with multiple embeddings represent another environment in which resumption has been reported to make the sentence "sounds better" (Beltrama & Xiang, 2016: 2). These researchers focus on two main issues related to this type of long distance structures: first, the RP would be more accepted the more embedded it appears, as shows the contrast between (20a) and (20b); and second, in sentences with the same number of embeddings, the option with the RP as in (21a) would be preferable than the one with the gap as in (21b).

(20)

- a. **Multiple embedding (long distance):** This is the girl that Peter said that John thinks that yesterday his mother had given some cakes to *her*
- b. **One level of embedding (short distance):** This is the girl that Peter gave some cakes to *her*

(21)

- a. This is the girl that Peter said that John thinks that yesterday his mother had given some cakes to *her*.
- b. This is the girl that Peter said that John thinks that yesterday his mother had given some cakes to ___

(Erteschik-Shir, 1992, cited in Beltrama & Xiang, 2016: 2)

The experiments they conducted attempted to examine the acceptability and comprehension of RPs in English native speakers. To do so they used sentences with multiple subordinations (with 2 embeddings in both cases, or even 3 only in the case of Beltrama & Xiang's study) and with the island condition. The results obtained were quite similar and can be summarized as follows:

1. In general terms, both in one study and in the other, RPs received little acceptability. In the case of sentences with multiple embeddings the level of acceptance of the RP was low and in wh-island condition it was not much higher.
2. Despite their low acceptability in multiple embedded RCs, RPs appear to be minimally acceptable as they become more distant from their antecedents. That is, RPs in "less embedded" sentences like (20b) are worse judged than those in "more embedded" sentences like (20a).
3. RPs when found deeply embedded are no more acceptable than gaps in sentences such as those in (21).

Based on these results, Norcliffe & Hofmeister (2014) and Beltrama & Xiang (2016) determined that, though they cannot be considered grammatically accepted pronouns, to some extent they can help the listener to understand difficult to process sentences such as the type of sentences they tested.

However, these researchers only give an account of those cases where the RP appears only in the object position. Nevertheless, McDaniel and Cowart (1999) undertook an

experiment in which they tested the acceptability of English RPs in the subject and object positions of the wh-islands on 36 adults of American English. These two researchers draw from the premise that in these contexts, it is worse when the gap occurs in the position of the subject, as in (22a), than when it appears in the position of the object (22b) as indicates.

(22)

- a. That's the girl that I wonder when __ met you
- b. That's the girl that I wonder when you met __

According to them, this could be explained because cases such as the one presented in (22a) violate not only the Subjacency Principle, but also the so-called Empty Category Principle (ECP). This principle states that empty categories must be adequately governed either by their antecedent (i.e., the relationship between the displaced element and its trace) or by a lexical word (i.e., such as nouns, verbs, adjectives... but not by complementizers). In both cases a) and b), the null operator would not be able to govern its trace due to the limits imposed by the wh- island and so, the antecedent-trace government would not take place; however, opposite to (22a), in (22b) the object position can be governed lexically by the verb "to meet".

For this reason, McDaniel and Cowart (1999) state that when the position of the subject of an island appears phonologically empty, two principles would be violated: that of Subjacency due to the illegal movement of the null operator and that of the ECP, since the trace it leaves would not be properly governed neither by the antecedent nor by a lexical element. However, in the case of the object, only the first one would be violated and so, the RP would be less needed.

The results obtained in their experiment corroborated their hypotheses since the participants judged sentences like (22a) worse than the ones (22b); in other words, this means that the gap in subject position is much less accepted than in object position in island condition. In addition, this study enabled them to observe that when the RP appears in the subject it helps to improve the sentence, whilst when it appears in the object there is no difference in its acceptability.

Later, Keffala (2011) tried to go a step further in the study of resumption in English, and extended the previous study by analyzing the acceptability of subject and object RPs, not only in island situations, but also in other contexts where aspects of distance were also considered, and which are gathered in (23)

(23)

a. **Plain relative clause:**

Subject: This is the chef that ___/*she* prepared the potatoes

Object: These are the potatoes that Ted prepared ___/ *them*

b. **That-clause**

Subject: This is the chef that Ted realized that ___/ *she* prepared the potatoes

Object: These are the potatoes that Ted realized that the chef prepared ___/ *them*

c. **Wh- island**

Subject: This is the chef that Ted inquired how ___/ she prepared the potatoes

Object: These are the potatoes that Ted inquired how the chef prepared ___/ *them*

d. **Relative clause island**

Subject: This is the chef that Ted devoured the potatoes that ___/*she* prepared

Object: These are the potatoes that Ted flirted with the chef that prepared ___/*them*

In this study Keffala analyzed the data of 121 English native participants at the University of California. Even though the results of her experiment were not conclusive and require more exploration, they revealed quite interesting information about the acceptability of RPs that we will try to summarize here. Table 1 shows the results she got based on the asymmetries between the gap and the RP depending on the type of sentence in which they appeared and the syntactic position it took (Keffala 2011: 150).

Table 1. Totals of the tests for resumption factor levels

Sentence Type + Position	Gap	Resumptive	<i>p</i> (two-tailed)
Plain Relative + Subject	8.2	4.6	< 0.001
Plain Relative + Object	8.6	4.8	< 0.001
'That'-clause + Subject	4.9	4.4	= 0.087 (NS)
'That'-clause + Object	6.1	4.1	< 0.001
Wh-island + Subject	3.9	4.5	< 0.05
Relative Clause Island + Subject	3.8	4.5	< 0.05

As it can be seen from table 1, in the case of plain clauses, the participants showed preference for a gap in both subject and object positions. Nevertheless, completely unexpected were the results of that-clauses. In this case, she argues that although gaps were still generally more accepted than RPs, when it came to the subject, the difference between the RP and the gap was insignificant (RP 4.4 vs. Gap 4.9). Moving to island contexts (that is, wh-island and relative clause island), Keffala, concluded that RPs are more accepted when they are found occupying the subject position of an island rather than the object position.

McKee and Mcdaniel (2001) carried out a similar study with the difference that their objective was not only to find the level of acceptability of the RP in English as an L1, but also that of the production. For this purpose, they also made use of different contexts in which PRs appeared in long and short distances and in Subject and Object positions. These contexts were, then, divided according to their degree of extractability that is, whether a gap "is acceptable or not" (115). According to them, extractability is explained in terms of economy, which means that under normal conditions, the RP would not appear because this would imply an additional step that would be much more costly (115-116). This way, they established two possible situations: the unextractable ones like the subject of a wh-island and the genitives in which there is not possibility of a gap, and the extractable positions in which the gap is possible. Some examples of sentences they used for their study are shown in (24):

(24)

a. **Unextractable positions:**

Subject of an island: This is the Troll that Ariel doesn't know what * ___/ *he's* eating

Genitive subject: This is the rober that * ___/ *his* iron is hot

Genitive object: This is the pirate that Minnie Mouse buried * ___/ *his* treasure

b. **Extractable positions:**

Subject short embedding: This is the man that ___/ *he* is swimming

Subject long embedding: This is the girl that Pluto thinks ___/ *she's* napping

Subject whenever-clause: This is the boy that whenever it rains ___/ *he* cries

Object extractable positions: This is the woman tha Bert Kissed ___/ *her*

One of the cases that attracted most attention in their study were *whenever* clauses, as they argued that in this type of sentences it seems to be equally accepted the option of including a RP as in (26a) or not as in (25b):

(25)

a. This is the boy that whenever it rains ___ cries

b. This is the boy that whenever it rains *he* cries

They explained this phenomenon with two different analyses: on the one hand in (25a), we can consider that the whenever clause is a “parenthetical structure” (2001:116), that is, an expression which is inserted, mostly between commas, inside a sentence to add unimportant information. Parenthetical expressions are not considered to form part of the sentence and therefore they can be removed. As a consequence, some speakers would take sentences as (25a) as if they were facing a simple relative clause like *this is the boy that cries*, in which it is much more probable to maintain the trace rather than pronouncing the RP due to reasons of economy. On the other hand, in (25b) the whenever structure would be treated not as a parenthetical but as an instance of an

adjunct that has been displaced to the left as in (26). This displacement generates a distance which, as we have previously, it can minimally boost the RP to emerge.

(26) This is the boy that [whenever it rains]; he cries [~~whenever it rains~~];

Taking all this into account, these researchers conducted a study on English native speakers consisting of 3 experiments: two of them tested the production of RPs in 82 children and 32 adults, and the remainder one tested the acceptability of these pronouns on 89 children and 20 adults. After analyzing the results, McKee and McDaniel observed that, in general terms, participants (especially children) accepted the RP more than they produced it. Moreover, it was found that adults produced and accepted RPs in island contexts such as (24) where they are unextractable but not in the other three cases where the RP is extractable; however, although children admitted and sometimes produced RPs similarly to adults in unextractable places, they still overproduced the RP in extractable situations. As far as *whenever sentences* are concerned, both groups in the 3 experiments showed that both the trace (gap) and RP versions were accepted and produced in a similar way. However, it is important to consider that in this last type of sentence, McKee and McDaniel only tested the acceptability of the RP in subject position, ignoring the possible acceptance of the subjects in the case of object position.

All the studies mentioned above proved the acceptability and production of RPs in L1 speakers of English. Nevertheless, the intention of the present undergraduate dissertation is to add a different perspective to the body of study of RPs in English. To do this, we will analyze these pronouns in Spanish native speakers with English as their L2.

In the following section we will present a number of studies which are focused in the study of RPs when acquiring English RCs.

2.4. Studies on the L2 acquisition of RCs in English and the implication of RPs

Currently, many studies have attempted to analyze the implications and problems that RPs in the L1 adult grammar may pose during the process of acquiring a L2. Below, a number of works have been summarized providing evidence of the influence of the L1 in terms of RP transference.

Rezaeian, Abedini and Sadighi (2015) developed a study in which they explore the possible transfer of Persian RPs into English. Contrary to English in which, as we have already discussed, Persian is a language in which RP has three different behaviours:

1. Optional in object position (i.e. gap and RP are interchangeable)
2. Required after a preposition
3. Not allowed in subject position.

With this in mind, they conducted two tests in which resumption in English was tested on a group of English L1-Persian L2 adult speakers who were divided for the tests according to their level of competence in their L2 (elementary, intermediate and advanced). The tests consisted of an acceptability and a translation task (Persian to English) in which the position where the PR appeared was considered, i.e. subject or object (including direct object and prepositional object).

In both tests, the results obtained showed that the higher the level of proficiency was in the L2, the closer the levels of acceptance and production of the RP were to those of a native English speaker. The fact that in the acceptability task elementary and intermediate level participants considered RPs in subject (a case impossible to occur in Persian), rejected the possibility of a direct transfer from their L1.

Something similar happened in the study conducted by Simoiu (2016). In his study a group of intermediate and Elementary Romanian speakers who have English as their L2 were asked to judge a series of English sentences in which an RP was included. The results of both groups revealed that these participants tend to overaccept the RP in situations in which they it is completely obligatory in Romanian, that is, in wh-questions and object relative clauses. Still, this study did show that the intermediate participants judged better the RP in English rather than the elementaries.

Notwithstanding that RPs have been well documented in languages such as Persian or Romani, there is not much literature on the acquisition of English RCs considering the strategy of resumption that is available in Spanish. In Spanish, RPs are expressed by means of clitics which are unstressed morphemes "that function as non-prepositional complements of a verb" (translated from the Diccionario Panhispánico de Dudas, 2005). Examples of clitics can be *lo*, *las* and *les* presented in (27)

(27)

- a. Un texto con buena altura de análisis político que *lo* podría hacer un muy buen analista...
- b. Esas movilizaciones que no *las* hemos vuelto a ver.
- c. Hay personas que *les* interesa mucho la política

(Mora-Bustos, 2004: 3-4)

One of the few studies that took into account the interaction between Spanish RPs and English RCs was that developed by Escobar (2001). Her study consisted of a multiple-choice task in which a group of Spanish natives with Catalan origin and different levels of competence in English were tested: 29 with an intermediate level and 36 with an advanced level. Participants had to complete a series of RCs with one of the four options provided, and two of these contained a RP. From all the data obtained in this test, it was observed that, with regard to the RP, the advanced level participants barely chose the options which presented a RP; whereas, on the contrary, the intermediate level showed more preference especially in those RCs headed by the relative pronominal *who*. Escobar (2001) indicated that this last case could be a clear example of transference from their L1 as, in Spanish, the RP is able to appear together with the relative pronoun *who* (equivalent to *quien*) as shown in (28).

(28) El chico **a quien le** diste un regalo era mi hermano

Escobar's study, as well as the other two studies previously discussed in this section, proved that the development of RCs in English is closely related to the amount of time a speaker has been exposed to his/her L2.

Although Escobar's work is quite illustrative, the experimental sentences included in her task only focused on RCs introduced by relative pronouns such as *which* or *who*. Our

study, unlike hers, will examine RPs in CRs with that, because, as previously noted in section 2.1, that is a type of complementizer devoid of pronominal features and so, the use of a RP in these cases could compensate this lack. This theory is supported by many authors such as Brucart (1999) and Bianchi (1984) who studied the use of RPs in Spanish thoroughly. According to these Spanish researchers, the relative *que* (whose equivalence in English is *that*) has suffered a “despronominalization”, which means that it has lost all the pronominal properties (Brucart, 1999: 404); as a result, it is possible to insert a RP to supply this lack as shown example (29):

(29) Es una persona **que** no **la** verás nunca triste

According to Senn (2008), following Brucart's criteria, the strategy of resumption in Spanish is not reduced only to those cases with [+pronominal] relative pronoun, but also, and coinciding with the studies in 2.3, it is possible, though not recommended, to introduce an RP always in object position when there are long distances between the relativized position and its antecedent as in (30b).

(30)

- a. Este es **el hombre**_i que viste ____i
- b. Este es **el hombre**_i que mi madre pensaba que no **le**/**___**_i había visto nunca

In the same way as McDaniel and Cowart (1999) and Mckee and McDaniel (2001), Licerias and Senn (2009) reported the status of the RP in Spanish island constructions coming to the conclusion that, similar to English, these are contexts in which the RP seems to be required as (31) illustrates.

(31)

- a. * No encuentro **las gafas**_i que siempre island[dejo donde puedo ver ____i]
- b. No puedo encontrar **las gafas**_i que siempre dejo island[donde **las**_i puedo ver]

But, again, the main difference with respect to English RPs is that in Spanish the RP is able to occupy the object position, but rarely the subject position as in (32).

(32)

- a. This is **the girl**_i that I don't know what **she**_i/***__**_i did
- b. Esta es **la chica**_i que no sé qué ***ella**_i/**__**_i hizo

With all this in mind, the following sections will be devoted for the presentation of the objectives pursued as well as for the explanation of the methodology employed.

3.Objectives of the study

This study has as its main objective to report the degree of acceptability and the production of RPs in L2 English learners with Spanish as their L1. The participants who took part in this study had all a C1 level of English and were divided into groups depending on their interaction with English grammar. Group 1 (G1) was a group with extensive knowledge of English linguistics and grammar; while group 2 (G2) was a group that, although it had a good command of spoken English, had not received academic training in the specific aspects of the language. With this in mind, this section of our work will formulate the research questions that have guided our study.

All our research questions are directly related to the information provided in section 2 and have been grouped into three sets divided into two different sub-sections. The first set of questions, (3.1), deals with the acceptability of RPs and the second set of questions, (3.2), with the production of RPs.

3.1 Set of questions for Acceptability

- Given that, according to some authors (see section 2.2), RPs have been considered ungrammatical categories in English, will our participants show a lower level of acceptance than with its counterparts, i.e. the gaps? And if so, will there be any difference between G1 and G2 knowing that, despite their ungrammaticality, RPs are pronouns that occur quite frequently in spoken speech?
- Will the fact that the RP is separated from its antecedent by more than one level of embedding (long distance) lead to an increase of its acceptability in both

groups? And if so, will they admit it more when it appears as subject or as object?

- In the case of islands which, as we have already seen are contexts in which the RP has proven to have reparatory functions (see section 2.3), what level of acceptability will receive the RP in this case from the G1 and G2? Will they show any difference when it appears in subject (unextractable position according to McKee and McDaniel (2001) than in object position?
- Finally, knowing that the results obtained by McKee and McDaniel (2001) showed that RPs and gaps had similar acceptance when they appear in the subject of *whenever* clauses, will the same happen with our participants or the fact that they do not share the same theoretical knowledge on English grammar will illustrate some difference between them? And what if the RPs appear in the object position (variable that they did not consider), will they still judge the RP and the gap similarly?

3.2. Set of questions for Production

- Will G1 and G2 show preference to produce the RP or they will still prefer to maintain the gap?
- Will distance affect the production of the RP? In other words, will they use more RPs as the relativized position is located further away from its antecedent, or will this also occur in sentences with shorter distances? Will the production of G1 and G2 show differences in these cases?
- Taking into account the relation between RPs and *wh*- islands, will each group show differences in the production of RPs in these specific structures? And in the case of *whenever* clauses where, at least in the subject position, it has been reported that both options (i.e. an RP or a gap) are possible?

4. Methodology

In this section we will explain the process we have followed to design our empirical study. The information is divided into two subsections: in the first one a description of the participants involved in the experiment will be provided and, then, in the second one we will present the method and the different materials employed.

4.1 Participants

In this study we have elicited data from a total of 22 L2 English-L1 Spanish speakers with a C1 proficiency level according to the Common European Framework (CEFR) standards. For the tests, participants were divided into two groups (G1 and G2) according to their knowledge of English grammar. G1 was composed by 10 participants between 20 and 40 years of age who form part of the University of Valladolid (UVa) where they receive continuous and thorough training in linguistic and grammatical aspects of the English language. 8 out of the 12 participants are currently in their final stage of the degree in English studies, and the remaining 2 belong to the professorship of such degree. G2 was made up of 12 participants of Palencia whose ages also range from 20 to 40 years old. These participants attend a weekly English academy in order to develop communication skills and to improve their oral fluency in their L2.

Bearing in mind that the RP has been related primary to oral communication, the main reason why these participants have been chosen was to see the extent to which an oral character of the English grammar can influence in a greater acceptance and production of the RP.

4.2. Method and materials

To find the answer to the research questions presented in section 3, we designed a test which consists on 3 different documents in Word-format that were sent to both groups of participants on March 20, 2018 via e-mail. The test was calculated to last 15 minutes, but even so, we gave them five days to send back their answers in the same document.

In the first document (labelled as Instructions), participants were given a series of guidances which prepare them for the posterior realization of the tasks (see the Appendix). In the other two documents we included each of the tasks: the Word document labelled as “task 1”, which consists on a Acceptability Judgment Task (AJT) where participants had to grade sentences according to their personal criteria; and the Word document labelled as “task 2” which contains a production task in which participants had to fill the space provided with a meaningful sentence.

A depth analysis of the tasks, materials and the procedure followed in each of them will be described in the following subsections.

4.2.1 Acceptability Judgement Task (AJT)

In this task, participants were asked to grade the acceptability of 24 sentences on a scale of 1 to 3 where 1 meant "sounds bad", 2 "not too bad" and 3 "sounds good". From the 24 sentences that composed this task, 8 sentences were fillers and 16 were the experimental sentences. Regarding the 8 fillers, 4 of them were grammatically correct while the other 4 contained some grammatical errors as the examples in (33):

(33)

- a. Grammatical filler: These are the notes for the broadcast later tonight
- b. Ungrammatical filler: *This is the dog that am drinking milk

The experimental sentences were structured according to three main criteria following the studies of McKee and McDaniel (2001) and Keffala (2011) (see section 2.3): the type of structure, the function of the relativized position and the presence of a gap or a RP.

As for the type of structure, we employed 4 types of structures presented in table 2.

Table 2. Structures of the experimental items

Structure	RP/GAP in Subject or Object	Experimental sentence
Short distance (One embedding)	RP in Subject	This is the only dream that it came true
	GAP in Subject	This is the scientist that ___ won the Nobel prize
	RP in Object	These are the potatoes that Ted prepared them
	GAP in Object	This is the Firefighter that Lucy followed ___
Long distance (Two embeddings)	RP in Subject	This is the pizza that Ariel dreamed that ___ was yummy
	GAP in Subject	This the cowboy that Snow White thinks that he is crying
	RP in Object	This is the thief that I told Mary that I will catch him
	GAP in Object	This is the boy that the newspaper reports that the cop beat ___ up
Whenever clause	RP in Subject	This is the baby that whenever a dinosaur comes by he laughs
	GAP in Subject	This is the tower that whenever Barney jumps ___ crashes
	RP in Object	This is the museum that whenever we go to Madrid Mary wants to visit it
	GAP in Object	These are the flowers that whenever it is hot my mother waters ___
Wh-island	RP in Subject	This is the donkey that I do not know where it lives
	GAP in Subject	This is the girl that I wonder when ___ met you
	RP in Object	This is the masterpiece that no one knows who painted it
	GAP in Object	This is the car that I do not know how to fix ___

On the one hand, the first two types were intended to show a contrast between short distance (with only one level of embedding) and long distance (with two levels of embedding); and on the other hand, the other two types included a *wh-island* where the RP is “unextractable” and a *whenever* clause where the RP and the gap are both possible options. We intentionally opt for these 4 types of structure, basing us on the works of Keffala (2011) and McKee and McDaniel (2001), because each of them presents a particular situation in which, as already seen in section 2.3, the RP has different behaviors.

Regarding the position and the presence of a gap or a RP, out of the 16 experimental sentences, each type contained 4 which were divided in turn as follows: Subject-RP / Subject-Gap and Object-RP / Object-Gap.

The experimental sentences in this task were RCs with the conjunction *that* as we wanted to take into account Blanchi and Brucart’s (1999) arguments about the despronominalization of the relative (explained in section 2.4).

These sentences will be very helpful to answer the research questions in section 3.1. In other words, this task will allow us to check the level of acceptability of RPs in English according to the personal criteria of our L2 English participants. In addition, it will help us determine whether the fact that G2 is more familiar with spoken English (rather than with the study of English grammar) will be a reason for them to use the RP in a higher degree than G1.

4.2.2. Production task

The production task consisted of 8 incomplete sentences that the participants had to finish in a written form and in a coherent way. To do this, we reused the 4 types of structures from the previous experiment presented in table 2 and changed the experimental sentences so that they were not repetitive. Each type of structure included two sentences that were introduced by *that* and interrupted with three points just before the clause in which the RP would appear as illustrates the sample sentences in table 3.

Table 3. Sample of the type of sentences employed in the test

Structure	Experimental sentence
Short distance (One embedding)	This is the woman that...
Long distance (Two embeddings)	These are the girls that Pluto believed that...
Whenever clause	This is the doctor that whenever a pig walks by...
Wh-island	These are the friends that I do not know what...

The aim of this task was to report the production or avoidance of RPs in English by L1 Spanish participants (see the set of research questions in section 3.2). This production task as well as the previous one, will not only be useful to see the contexts in which the RP is more employed, but also to reveal if there will be differences between the oral dimension and the theoretical knowledge of the English grammar.

To see all the sentences that form part of both tests, see the appendix (section 9) where the whole AJT and the production task have been included.

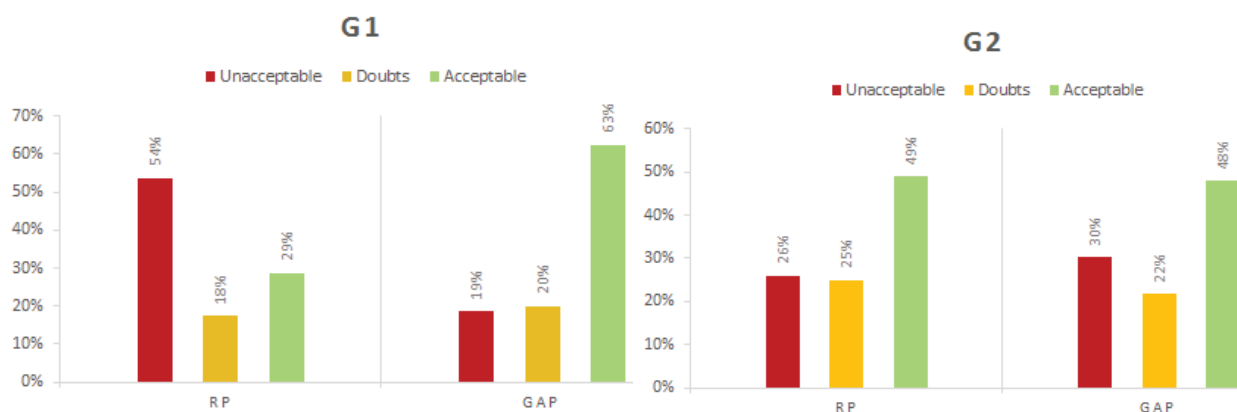
5. Analysis of the results

This section presents the experimental results obtained by the two groups of participants, G1 and G2. These data have been arranged in 3 well-differentiated subsections: in the first subsection, the data obtained in the GJT are displayed, in the second the results of the production task and finally, in the third subsection, a comparative analysis is offered between the acceptability and production of the RP in our L1 Spanish L2 English participants. After each subsection, in the discussion, the results will be compared with those of other authors.

5.1. Analysis of the data obtained in the GJT

The overall acceptability of RPs compared to gaps in both groups has been documented in figures (1) and (2).

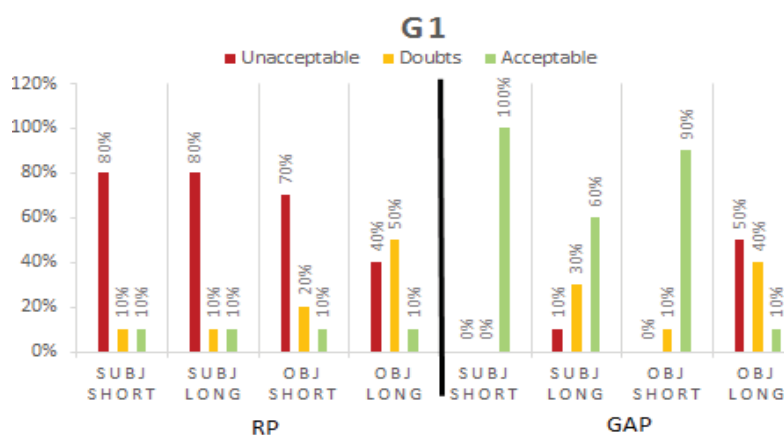
Figures 1 and 2. Acceptability of RPs vs gaps in G1 and G2



Contrasting the results of both groups, it can be observed that, whilst the preference for the RP in G1 is quite low (29%) in comparison to the gap (63%), in G2 the situation appears to be more balanced and even slightly in favor of the RP (49% in RP *versus* 48% in gap). Therefore, it seems that the participants in G1 are more aware of the ungrammatical status of the RP in English than those in G2. This fact leads us to predict that there exists a difference between both groups that may be related to the supposed oral-colloquial base to which this type of pronoun has been associated.

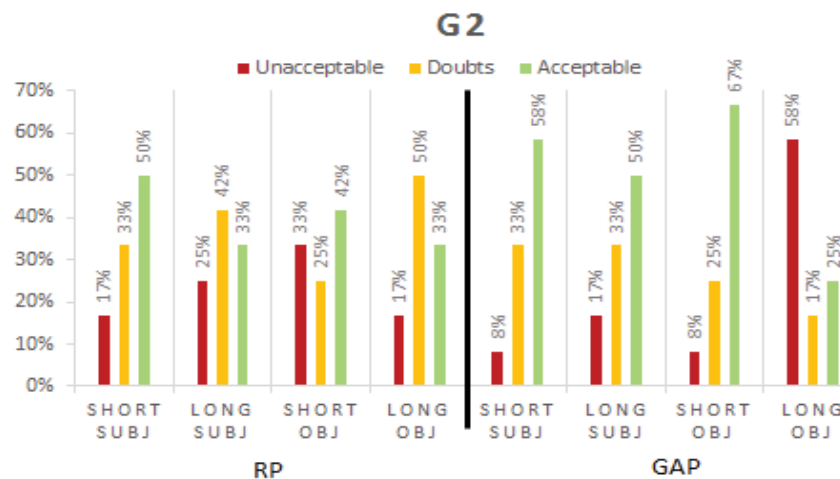
Figures 3 and 4 reveal the percentages of RPs and gaps taking into account the distance between the antecedent and the relativized position, and the syntactic function.

Figure 3. Acceptability of RPs and gaps on distance in (Short/Long) and syntactic function in G1.



One of the most relevant aspects in this figure is the scarce (if not null) acceptance of the RP in both short and long distances, regardless of whether it appears in subject or object position. On the contrary, the acceptability of their counterparts, the gaps, raise categorically when it comes to short distance with percentages that reach 100% in subject and 90% in object, and also in long distances but only in the case of the subject position (60%). Thus, it seems that, on the one hand, there is a preference for the gap in subject positions no matter the distance; but, on the other hand, there is a complete rejection of object gaps (90%) in long distances that is supported by the high percentages of doubtful judgements (40%).

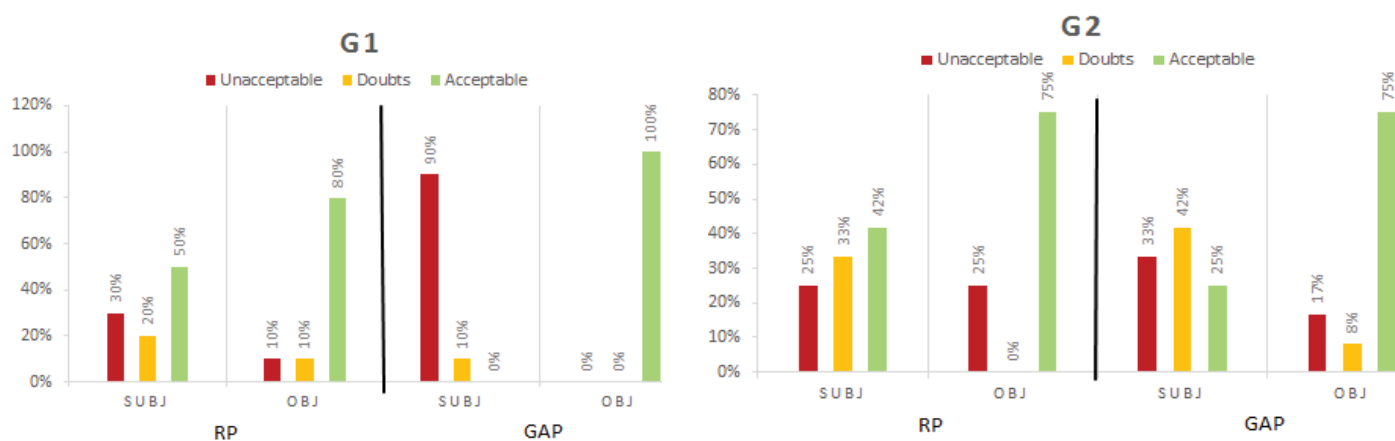
Figure 4. Acceptability of RPs and gaps on distance in (Short/Long) and syntactic function in G2.



Regarding G2, it is remarkable the increase of the acceptance of the RP, both in short (subject 50% / 42% object) and in long distances (33% in both positions), with respect to G1 (see figure 3) even though the levels in neither of the cases exceed 50%. Turning to gaps, the case that clearly stands out is that of short distances because, although the gap seems to be well accepted under these circumstances, the percentage of doubts in the case of G2 raises to 33% in subject and to 25% in object.

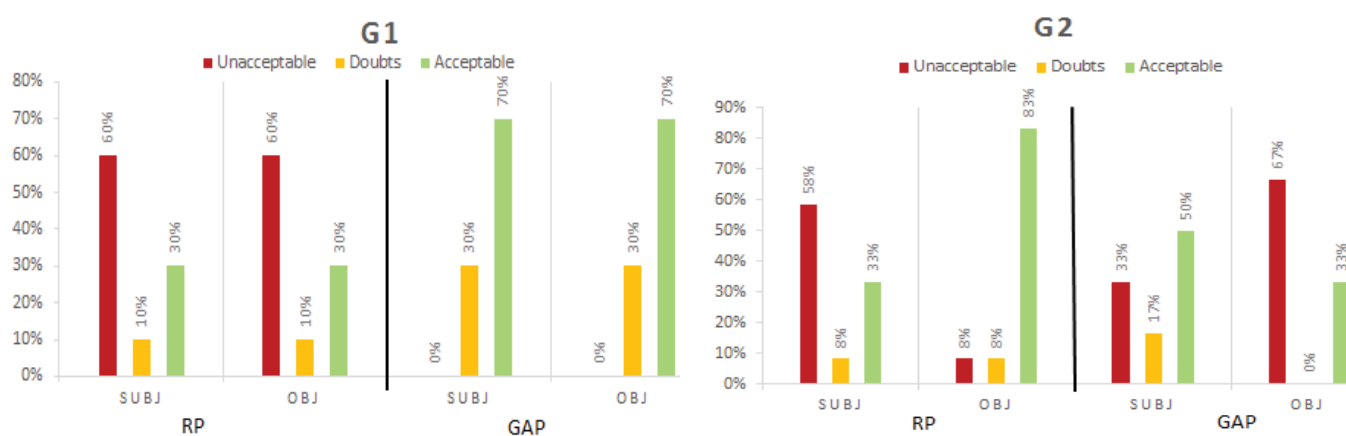
As for the last two types of structures, it has been elaborated figures 5 and 6 for the acceptability of RPs in *wh*-island, and figures 7 and 8 for their acceptability in *whenever* clauses.

Figures 5 and 6. Acceptability of RPs and Gaps in wh-islands in G1 and G2.



In wh-islands, RPs obtained more positive results especially in G1 where, as figure 5 shows, it rises up to 50% in subject and even to 80% in object. Similar results are obtained in G2 (subject 42% / object 75%) but with higher levels of insecurities in subject position (33%). Particularly noteworthy is the fact that object RPs are preferred than subject RPs. This is completely unexpected bearing in mind that leaving a gap in subject position means two violations (that of the Subjacency Principle and that of the ECP), whereas in object just one. Apart from this, it can be seen that G1 has minimum doubts about the ungrammaticality of the gap in subject position, whereas in G2 this is not so clear due to the relatively high rates of doubts (42%) and responses in favor of the gap (25%). Regarding the object, these two groups accepted the gap as much as the RP, and so, this reveals that both options seemed to be equally valid for them in this position.

Figures 7 and 8. Acceptability of RPs and Gaps in Whenever clauses in G1 and G2.

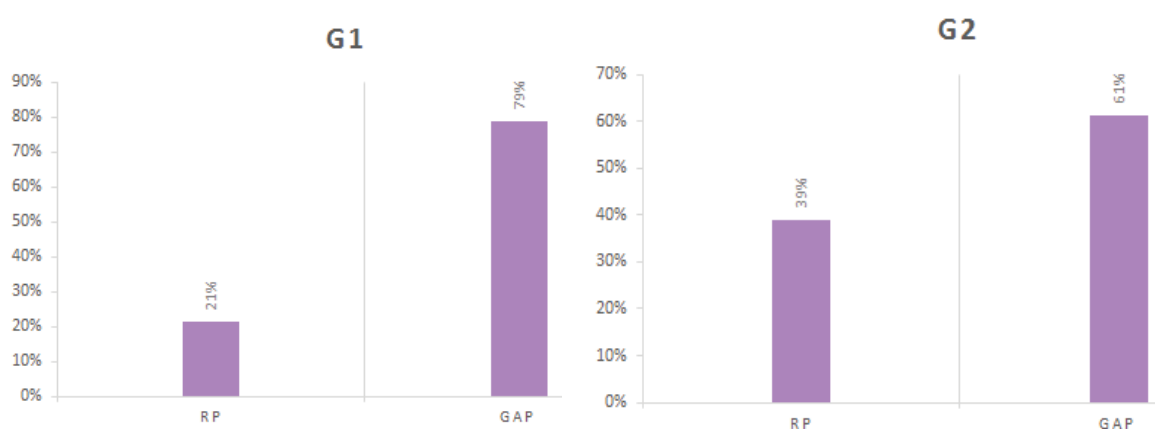


As shown in figures 7 and 8, in *whenever* clauses, the RP in subject position has not been much accepted nor in G1 (30%) neither in G2 (33%). However, in the case of object, each group presents a different situation: G1 judges object RPs similarly to subject RPs, whereas G2 shows a notable increase (83%) in favor of the use of a RP in the object position. The overwhelmingly acceptability of the object RPs in *whenever* clauses are the unique instance where we can see that the pronoun prevails over the gap in this structure.

5.2. Production task

The following section will be devoted to the analysis of the data obtained in the production task. The following figures in 9 and 10 display the overall production levels of RPs in both groups.

Figures 9 and 10. Production of RPs vs Gaps in G1 and G2



At first glance, it can be seen that, in general, our participants prefer not to employ RPs since their percentages are not particularly high (G1 21% / G2 39%); nonetheless, the value bars show that G2 still produces them to a greater extent, almost doubling the result obtained by the G1.

Once the general results have been considered, the rest of the figures in this section will display the following aspects: the production of RPs and gaps in short and long distances (figures 11 and 12), as well as in *wh-islands* (figures 13 and 14) and *whenever*

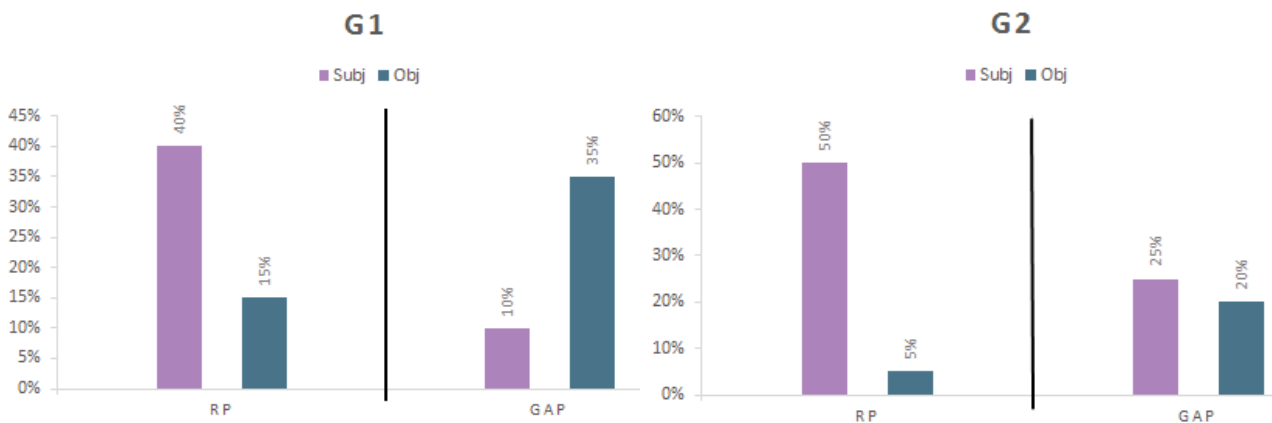
clauses (figures 15 and 16). Different colours have been used to distinguish the subject and the object positions.

Figures 11 and 12. Production of RPs and Gaps on distance in (Short/Long) in G1 and G2.



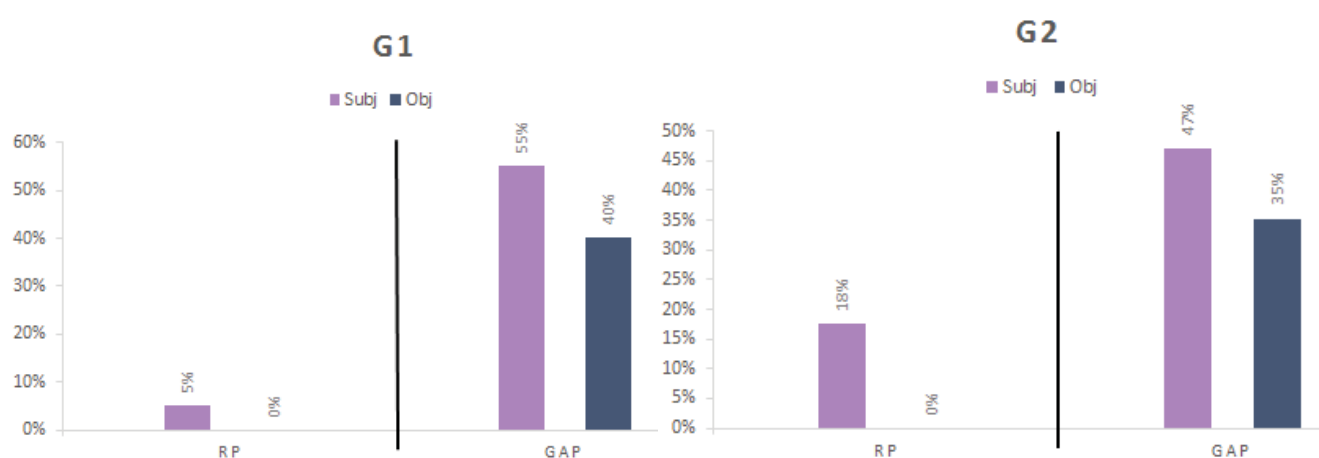
If we break down the data in figures 11 and 12, it can be perceived that in sentences with just one embedding (short distance) participants hardly produced a RP in subject position (G1 5% / G2 23%) and in object, they directly did not produce it. However, the rates of production of the RP increase substantially when moving to the subject position in long distances, reaching levels up to 20% in G1 and much higher in the case of G2 with 52%. In addition, it is important to note that in long-distance sentences, the responses of G2 in favor of the RP in the subject are similar to those of the gap (RP 52% vs. Gap 48%).

Figures 13 and 14. Production of RPs and Gaps in wh-islands in G1 and G2.



In relation to the RPs when they appear in wh-islands, the figures of both groups of participants show levels of production pretty high. On the one hand, the output of RPs in G1 reaches 55%, out of which 40% was produced in subject position and the remaining 15% in the object. Moving to the to G2, also 55% of the responses contained an RP and they were distributed as follows: 50% of these RPs appear as a subject and just 5% as an object. In addition, in the case of subjects, the production of RPs surpasses by far that of the gaps, thus recording the importance of this pronoun in this position.

Figures 15 and 16. Acceptability of RPs and Gaps in Whenever clauses in G1 and G2



Finally, as to the results of RPs in whenever clauses illustrated in figures 15 and 16, they reflect that most of the participants rejected to produce them in this type of constructions. In the case of G1, only 5% of the total responses contained a Whenever clause with a RP, and in G2, it rises up to 18% (still a quite low level), all of them in subject positions. On the contrary, the levels of production of the gap increases drastically in G1 and G2 in subject and in object.

5.3 Comparison between acceptability and production

Once the results have been analyzed in 5.1 and 5.2, in the present section we are going to compare the acceptability and production according to the results provided by our participants in both tasks.

In table 4, it has been gathered all the data provided by our participants in order to carry out a comparison of the RP in both tasks according to the type of clause in which it appeared.

Tabla 4. Comparacion aceptabilidad *versus* production of the RP depending on the type of structure

	Acceptability			Production		
	G1	G2	Mean	G1	G2	Mean
Short distance	10%	46%	28%	5%	23%	14%
Long distance	10%	33%	21.5%	20%	52%	36%
Wh-island	65%	59%	62%	55%	55%	55%
Whenever	30%	58%	44%	5%	18%	11.5%
Total	28.8%	49%	38.9%	21.3%	37%	29.1%

Looking at table 4, it can be demonstrated that the context in which the RP values increase in both tasks is undoubtedly in wh- islands, since they exceed the 50% in all cases. Furthermore, in these island contexts, it is important to note that the percentages of both, acceptability and production, remain more or less constant in G1 (acceptability 65% *versus* production 55%) and G2 (acceptability 59% *versus* production 55%).

Moreover, it appears that, in general, the participants who took part in this study accepted a RP more than they produced it in all types of structures except for long-distance sentences, where the situation is reversed (acceptability 21.5% *versus* production 36%). Despite this, it is necessary to emphasize that the total percentages of RPs in either of the tasks are not significant (total acceptability 38.9% / total production 29.1%).

The following table (5) compares the acceptability and production of RPs in terms of their syntactic function in the sentence (i.e. subject or object).

Table 5. Comparison between acceptability *versus* production of the RP depending on its syntactic function

	Acceptability			Production		
	G1	G2	Mean	G1	G2	Mean
Subject	25%	39.5%	32.2%	17.5%	35.7%	26.6%
Object	32.5%	64.5%	48.5%	3.7%	1.2%	2.5%

As the table above shows, RPs continue to be more accepted than produced in both positions, that is, in subject (acceptability 32.2% versus production 26.6%) and object (acceptability 48.5% versus production 2.5%). Together with this, in the table 5, it can be also perceived the difference between the AJT, where the values of the subject exceed those of the object, and the production task, where it occurs completely the opposite situation.

6. Overall discussion

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the acceptability and production of English RPs in RCs by L1 Spanish students of English. For this purpose, factors such as distance (long vs. short), extractability (extractable position vs. unextractable position) and the syntactic function of the relativized position (subject vs. object) were taken into account. The next section will be structured around two distinct parts, acceptability and production of the PR, with the aim to answer the questions posed in section 3.

6.1. Acceptability of the RP by L2 *English* speakers

In general terms, it was observed that the results of our G1 participants showed a considerable low acceptance of the RP, thus coinciding with the marginal use of these pronouns defined by the studies of Sells (1984) and Slhonsky (1992). However, it is important to note that in this task the G2 participants showed neutrality for both options; in other words, the Gaps were as accepted as the RP. The increase in the values of the RP in this latter group in comparison with G1, make us believe that there could exist a

relationship between the oral input of English grammar and the oral-colloquial status of the RP.

Regarding the relation between the RP and distance, our participants did not show strong acceptability for the RP in either of the two types of distances presented in the task. This fact is comparable to the results obtained in the studies carried out by Norcliffe and Hofmeister (2014) and Beltrama and Xiang (2016) as in their case, the RP reflected insignificant rates of acceptability too. Nonetheless, their results contrasts with ours in the fact that they did show a small increase in the acceptance of the RP in sentences with more than one level of embedding with respect to those with just one or two levels of embedding, thus proving that distance could be a factor to show preference for the RP. In our results, this is not reflected in any of the groups. Our participants from both G1 and G2 were consistent in judging RPs both in short and long distances with almost no differences between the subject and object positions.

More significant have been the results obtained by our groups in the cases of wh-islands. These contexts have proven to be by far the circumstances where RPs have been more accepted, just as McDaniel and Cowart (1999) and McKee and McDaniel (2001) stated. However, it is true that our results differ from theirs in that the RP in the subject of an island, which is supposed to be an unextractable position according to them, has been judged by our participants from G1 and G2 less positively than in the object position which is supposed to be a more extractable position. The only explanation we can think about of this unexpected fact is that there is some kind of transference from their L1, since, as we have already seen in section 2.4, in Spanish, RPs tend to appear in object position.

On the other hand, in whenever clauses, the participants clearly opted for the gap, so, even though both options are possible in this case, they still show preference for one above the other. In addition, it is important to mention that, in this last type of clause, McKee and McDaniel (2001) did not contemplate the RP in object position, a case that in our analysis is quite striking in the group with an oral dimension of English, since their levels soared to almost complete acceptability (83%).

6.2. Production of the RP by L2 *English* speakers

Before beginning with the discussion about the production of RPs in our second task, it is necessary to point out, that the levels of acceptability of these pronouns were higher than the levels of production, just as in McKee and McDaniel's (2001) study.

In this experiment, the production of the RPs, was again small compared to that of the gaps in both groups. With this result, it is demonstrated that RPs are pronouns which are not commonly used even by the G2, something completely unexpected because, due to their grammatical knowledge of English, we expected higher values. Even so, it is true that we could observe a certain increase can be seen in contrast to the production of G1.

As far as our second research question in the production set is concerned, it has been possible to observe that in this case and unlike the previous task (i.e. the AJT), distance has slightly influenced our participants to produce more RPs. In the group provided with linguistic-grammatical knowledge, i.e. G1, the influence of this factor was minimal with values that do not reach 20% of the total, whereas in the group provided with oral knowledge of English grammar, i.e. G2, it was maximum since there was a dramatic increase on the production of the RP from 23% in short distance to 52% in long distances, and in the case of long distances, they even preferred to produce a RP (52%) rather than a gap (48%).

On the other hand, and in line with the studies carried out by McKee and McDaniel (2001), we can confirm that there was greater production of RPs by the two groups of participants in those RCs that contained a *wh*- island. It is quite significant the fact that, in the production task, unlike in the acceptability task, the subject position, in this experiment, does show values confirming its supposed unextractable nature (according McKee and McDaniel (2001)), as it has values superior to those of the extractable object position in both G1 and G2. This leads us to conclude that, although the RP is not widely accepted, it does occur when the speaker has to face with a gap in the subject position of an island.

Finally, in whenever clauses, participants from both groups rejected the RP in any of the syntactic positions, opting for the gap as in the AJT. This result, once more, seems to

indicate that, even though both options are possible there is always one which is more preferred.

7. Conclusion

The present undergraduate dissertation has focused on the analysis of the acceptability and production of English resumption in RCs by two groups of Spanish native speakers who have the same level of proficiency (C1) in their L2 (English), but with a different grammatical knowledge of English: G1, much more familiar with the linguistic aspects of the language, and G2, with only a connection with an oral input of the language (with no linguistic or grammar instruction). This experimental study has revealed important, though not conclusive, information about the marginal, oral, status that this type of pronouns have in the English of these L2 participants.

The results of this analysis were based in two different tasks, an Acceptability Judgement Task (AJT) where participants had to select whether the sentence sounded good or bad; and a production task where they have to complete RCs with a logical phrase or sentence. Both experiments showed a clear difference between these two groups because, even though the percentages of RPs rarely surpassed those of their counterparts (the gaps), this type of pronouns were much more admitted and produced by the G2. Thus, this suggests that the oral conditions to which these participants have been exposed to the English grammar, apparently, seem to be an important factor when judging or producing RPs in this language.

Added to this, we have been also able to see that, even though, some studies such as Polinsky (2013), Keffala (2013) Norcliffe & Hofmeister (2014) and Beltrama and Xiang (2016), among others, have tried to prove that RPs in English are ungrammatical elements that occur frequently under diverse conditions (as, for example, in long distances), our participants still show preferences for RPs in wh- island contexts. Among the four types of structures we employed, only islands were the situations where most RPs were accepted and produced.

The contrast between our results and the ones obtained by previous studies in the discussion section (section 6) allows us to talk about an almost native-like performance of our participants, especially on the part of G1 as, in general, there are not results in favor of the RPs, except for those cases in which it can have a reparatory effect. Nevertheless, it is important to point out that, there are still some situations in which we

have observed some minimum glimpses of transfer from their L1, such as, for example, the acceptability of object RPs over subject RPs in wh-islands.

To conclude, we must admit that, despite of the conclusions we have finally reached, the scale of this study was quite small as we only counted with 22 participants. Besides, we believe that further research is needed with respect to the relationship between this type of pronouns and the oral communication, as well as with the implications they may have for the acquisition of RCs in L2. For instance, some interesting future research would be the use of a native speaker group so as to have more conclusive results, or the possibility of including sentences with both types of complementizers (wh-relative pronouns and conjunctions (*that*)), to see if it is true that the fact that *that* does not have any pronominal feature is another reason that triggers the RP to occur. Besides, taking into account the genitive position which according to McKee and McDaniel (2001) is, together with the wh-island, another unextractable position will expand our little contribution about this pronominal category.

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APPENDIX

Task 1. Grade from 1-3 (being **1 sounds bad**, **2 not too bad** and **3 sounds good**) the following 24 sentences. Mark your answers with an X.

Sentence	1	2	3
These are the flowers that whenever it is hot my mother waters			
This is the boy that the newspaper reports that the cop beat up			
This is the frog that wiping off the plate			
This is the scientist that won the Nobel prize			
This is the donkey that I don't know where it lives			
These are the tigers that they is eating at the Savannah			
This is the thief that I told Mary that I will catch him			
These are the new hybrid cars with wind turbines and battery systems			
This is the firefighter that Lucy followed			
This is the deluxe suite room with large King size bed			
This is the baby that whenever a dinosaur comes by he laughs			
This is the girl that I wonder when met you			
This is the only dream that it came true			
These are the notes for the broadcast later tonight			
This is the pizza that Ariel dreamed that was yummy			
This is the pen that who writes very well			
This is the masterpiece that no one knows who painted it			
These are the potatoes that Ted prepared them			
This is the tower that whenever Barney jumps crashes			
This is the dog that am drinking milk			
This is the car that I don't know how to fix			
This is the cowboy that Snow White thinks that he's crying			
This is the robber with a hot iron			
This is the museum that whenever we go to Madrid Mary wants to visit it			

Task 2. Complete the following statements with a meaningful sentence.

1. **These are the girls that Pluto believed that...**
2. **This is the woman that...**
3. **This is the doctor that whenever a pig walks by...**
4. **These are the friends that I do not know what...**
5. **This is the chef that...**
6. **These are the dishes that whenever visitors come...**
7. **These are the books that I wonder why...**
8. **This is the man that Peter said that...**