

THE PROCESSING OF PREPOSITIONAL RELATIVE CLAUSES IN L2 SPANISH

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This research, a partial replication of Perpiñan (2014), investigates advanced L2 Spanish learners' use of three *wh*-movement strategies in the formation and comprehension of prepositional relative clauses: Pied-piping (1), Preposition-stranding (2), and Null-preposition (3). Pied-piping is the only prescriptively grammatical strategy in Spanish, but Null-preposition is attested in production for L2 and some L1 speakers.

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| (1) | a. La montaña en (la) que _i crees t _i | b. The mountain in which _i you believe t _i |
| (2) | a. *La montaña la que _i crees en t _i | b. The mountain which _i you believe in t _i |
| (3) | a. *La montaña (la) que crees ____ | b. *The mountain which you believe ____ |

The study looks at (i) whether the production and processing of these clauses is different in native Spanish speakers and Anglophone L2 learners. If so, (ii) do these differences stem from different grammars or from processing differences in L1 vs L2?

To answer these questions, participants completed an elicitation task and an acceptability judgement task, the results of which were compared to a proficiency task that tested knowledge of the target verbs. Compared to Perpiñan's (2014) L2 group, my participants had higher accuracy rates in all tasks, with a strong correlation between proficiency and task performance. Most prominently, they had native-like acceptance rates for Pied-piping and Null-preposition in the judgement task. These results support the idea that L2 learners are capable of attaining native-like competence in their L2, and that differences in performance for advanced L2 speakers can be attributed to processing difficulties.

Keywords: *Spanish / pied-piping / relative clauses / L2 processing / replication*

Sub-discipline: *Second Language Acquisition / Syntax*

Talk presentation preferred.

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