

Presence and absence of the article in oblique relative clauses in European Spanish: a corpus-based study

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this presentation is to analyse a phenomenon of syntactic variation in European Spanish: the alternation of the structures [PREP + DET + *que*] and [PREP + *que*] as complementizer in so-called *oblique relative clauses* (Brucart 1999; Comrie & Kuteva 2013), as shown in (1):

- (1) a. es que yo he conocido una época **en la que** los maestros tenían la mano muy larga
(COSER, 3924, Beratón, Soria)
I experienced a time in which teachers had a very long hand (= they hit the children)
b. recuerdo que hubo una época **en que** venían misioneros que le llamaban
(COSER, 1503, Aguilar de la Frontera, Córdoba)
I remember there was a time in which missionaries used to come, as they were called

Unlike other documented phenomena in the field of relative complementation, often considered to be characteristic of "neglectful registers" (DPD: *que*, 1.3), the alternation that will be discussed here is tolerated and described in the most recent publications of the Real Academia Española (DPD: *que*, 1.2.2.2.2; NGRALE §44.2d ff.).

To determine the extent of this alternation, a corpus-based study was conducted with data from the COSER (*Corpus Oral y Sonoro del Español Rural*, Fernández-Ordóñez 1990-). The results were confronted with the theoretical premises found in the reference grammars (Brucart 1999; NGRALE), as well as with those of two previous variationist studies, namely Santana Marrero (2004), which refers to the cultivated speech of the Spanish spoken in main European and American cities, and Vellón Lahoz & Moya (2017), based on a corpus of journalistic texts.

The study confirmed a preference for the article-free structure by certain lexical choices involving the notion of time. A tendency towards this structure was also detected when the reference of the antecedent had already been established by using the definite article. Finally, as a third finding, the mapping of the results showed that oblique relatives headed by both structures [PREP + DET + *que*] and [PREP + *que*] are hardly to be found in the bilingual areas of the Spanish state, suggesting that, due to language contact, relativisation of local, temporal and modal contents is performed in these areas through lexical complementizers such as *donde* (where), *cuando* (when), and *como* (how), respectively. This hypothesis, which points in the same direction as Uth & Auhagen (forthcoming) on relativization strategies in Yucatec Spanish in contact with Yucatec Maya, will be explored in future research.

Main references:

COSER = Corpus Oral y Sonoro del Español Rural (Inés Fernández-Ordóñez, 1990-)
<www.corpusrural.es> (29 August, 2022)

Brucart, Josep Maria. 1999. La estructura del sintagma nominal: las oraciones de relativo. In Ignacio Bosque & Violeta Demonte (eds.), *Gramática descriptiva de la lengua española (1. Sintaxis básica de las clases de palabras)*, 395–522. Madrid: Espasa Calpe.

Comrie, Bernard & Tania Kuteva. 2013a. Relativization on Obliques. In Matthew S. Dryer & Martin Haspelmath (eds.), *The World Atlas of Language Structures Online*. Leipzig: Max Planck Institute. <<https://wals.info/chapter/123>> (29 August, 2022).

DPD = Real Academia Española & Asociación de Academias de la Lengua Española. 2005. *Diccionario panhispánico de dudas*. <<https://www.rae.es/dpd/>> (29 August, 2022).

NGRALE = Real Academia Española & Asociación de Academias de la Lengua Española (eds.). 2009. *Nueva gramática de la lengua española*. Madrid: Espasa Libros.

Vellón Lahoz, Javier & Rosa Ana Moya Isach. 2017. Pervivencia de las relativas oblicuas sin artículo: Factores y contextos condicionantes. *Spanish in Context* 14(3). 464–486.

Uth, Melanie & Patrick Auhagen (forthcoming). Variation of relative complementizers in Yucatecan Spanish: A case of grammaticalization in progress? *Languages*.