WHAT KIND OF LANGUAGE ARE L2 SPANISH STUDENTS LEARNING? A
CRITICAL STUDY ON THE RELEVANCE OF TEXTBOOK RELATIVE CLAUSE
EXPLANATIONS

by
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Abstract

This is a critical study of how Spanish language textbooks present relative constructs at the post-secondary level. Specifically, do textbooks give information about what Spanish speakers actually say or do they simply prescribe usage patterns? Subordination through relative constructs (i.e., *que* [that, who], *quien* [who], *lo que* [that which], and so on) is one of the ways through which L2 Spanish learners begin to produce complex discourse (e.g., to clarify, to integrate, and to avoid repetition). Thus, these constructs deserve special attention. For this study, we reviewed the presentation of eleven relative constructs in 30 textbooks at the three different levels of language proficiency (beginner, intermediate and advanced) and then we compared them with occurrences in the *Corpus de Referencia del Español Actual* (CREA 2008) [Reference Corpus of Current Spanish] electronic corpus of the Spanish language. Results showed that the relative construct *que* [that, who] presents the highest frequency in the electronic corpus, corroborating the information explained in the textbooks. For all other constructs, our analyses revealed great discrepancy between frequencies of appearance in the electronic corpus and the textbooks. For example, many textbook authors give great importance to the relative construct *quien* [who], when its use in actual discourse is much lower than expected. The analysis shows that textbooks give preference to specific relative constructs in a decontextualized setting. Results suggest that L2 Spanish students may be learning to speak in a pragmatically marginal style. Therefore, textbooks may be hindering full integration into a Hispanic community. The data collected from the electronic corpus suggest that Spanish speakers are replacing the relative constructs with other constructs when communicating in Spanish. Some relative constructs are less frequent than the grammars lead us to believe.
# Table of Contents

Abstract ......................................................................................................................................................... ii  
Table of Contents........................................................................................................................................ iii  
List of Tables................................................................................................................................................ vii  
List of Figures ............................................................................................................................................... vii  
Acknowledgements ........................................................................................................................................ viii  
Dedication................................................................................................................................................... ix  

## INTRODUCTION ................................................................................................................................. 1

### CHAPTER 1: REFERENTIAL FRAMEWORK ....................................................................................... 5

1.1 Diachronic analysis of relative clauses in Spanish........................................................................... 5  
1.2 Previous studies on relative clauses in Spanish................................................................................ 15  
1.3 The present study................................................................................................................................. 22  
1.4 Predictions........................................................................................................................................... 23  

### CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY .......................................................................................................... 24

2.1 Target forms analyzed......................................................................................................................... 24  
2.2 Materials............................................................................................................................................ 26  
2.2.1 Corpus of L2 Spanish textbooks.................................................................................................. 27  
2.2.2 Grammatical references............................................................................................................. 28  
2.2.3 Electronic corpus.......................................................................................................................... 30  
2.3 Procedure........................................................................................................................................... 32  
2.3.1 First stage...................................................................................................................................... 32  
2.3.2 Second stage................................................................................................................................. 34
2.3.3 Third stage........................................................................................................34
2.4 Data analysis..........................................................................................................35

CHAPTER 3: RESULTS....................................................................................................37
3.1 Intra-analysis ........................................................................................................37
  3.1.1 Identification of target forms in L2 Spanish textbooks ....................................37
    3.1.1.1 Most frequent relative construct in L2 Spanish textbooks .....................40
    3.1.1.2 Relative constructs across levels of language proficiency ..................44
  3.1.2 Prescriptive vs. descriptive tendency for target form presentation ................48
3.2 Inter-analysis .......................................................................................................50
  3.2.1 Most frequent relative constructs in the CREA electronic corpus ..............51
  3.2.2 Patterns of target form usage: Textbooks vis-a-vis CREA .........................54

CHAPTER 4: DISCUSSION..............................................................................................58
4.1 Intra-analysis .......................................................................................................58
4.2 Inter-analysis .......................................................................................................61
4.3 General observations ..........................................................................................63

CONCLUSIONS..........................................................................................................68
Contributions of the current study ........................................................................69
Limitations of the current study ............................................................................70
Suggestions for further research ............................................................................71

BIBLIOGRAPHY..........................................................................................................73
Appendix A: Corpus of L2 Spanish Textbooks .........................................................77
Appendix B: Distribution of textbooks with prescriptive and descriptive characteristics
........................................................................................................................................80
List of Tables

Table 1: Division of relative constructs by pronouns, adjectives and adverbs.........................24

Table 2: Target forms in L2 Spanish textbooks .........................................................................39

Table 3: z-test performed on target forms presented in L2 Spanish textbooks .......................43
List of Figures

Figure 1: Percentage of appearance of target forms in textbooks .........................................41
Figure 2: Percentage of appearance of target forms in beginner level textbooks..................44
Figure 3: Percentage of appearance of target forms in intermediate level textbooks ..........45
Figure 4: Percentage of appearance of target forms in advanced level textbooks..............45
Figure 5: Percentage of textbooks with prescriptive and descriptive characteristics ..........49
Figure 6: Frequencies of target forms in the CREA electronic corpus .................................52
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Dedication

To my two beautiful and bright sisters, Adriana and Anabella,

for education will get us far.
INTRODUCTION

The present study aims to contribute to the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) with a critical analysis of the validity of textbook information relative to the current state of the Spanish language. By identifying the relative constructs presented in L2 Spanish textbooks used in North American post-secondary institutions, we examined how these constructs are actually used in the Spanish-speaking world. The target forms included in this study are relative constructs (e.g., *que* [that, who], *quien* [who], *lo que* [that which] and so on), presented in Chapter 2 of this study, used for subordination by means of relative clause construction.

L2 Spanish students in North American post-secondary institutions do not spend a lot of time in direct contact with the foreign language they are learning. In fact, it is safe to say that the average L2 Spanish learner spends only three to four hours per week in direct contact with the Spanish language via his/her instructor in a classroom setting. Therefore, the course textbook and any online components the textbook might include make up most of the time students are exposed to the target language. Due to this minimal exposure to the Spanish language, students have to rely on textbooks for most of their learning process. Thus, textbooks play a central role in the L2 Spanish student’s learning process. Sutton (2009) explains that textbooks serve as tools through which students are able to enhance their comprehension of grammatical input outside the foreign language classroom. For this reason, it is important to verify that the information presented in the textbooks is up to date and is representative of the real use of the language in the Spanish-speaking world.

The examination of the validity of relative constructs presented in L2 Spanish textbooks is relevant because the use of an outdated version of these constructs would make
non-native Spanish speakers communicate in a rather atypical way, making them sound odd or pragmatically deviant. Eisenstein (1983) stated that native speakers may emit negative judgments and reactions to the way non-native speakers communicate. Her study indicated that non-native speakers tend to be downgraded due to different factors involved in their communication with native speakers, such as accent, use of outdated lexicon and expressions, fluency and grammatical structures. This depretiation of the non-native speaker takes place in very different contexts, ranging from L2 classrooms to the workplace (Eisenstein, 1983). Zwadzka (1991) explained that native speakers may become impatient and irritated when non-native speakers communicate in an unusual or irregular way. Zwadzka (1991) concluded, however, that there is a certain level of tolerance for non-native speakers’ interlanguage when they have been linguistically immersed in the target language community. Therefore, this would require direct contact with an extended exposure to such community. An example of this could be carried out through study abroad programs, which are not available to all L2 Spanish students at all post-secondary institutions in North America. When students are immersed in a L2 target language, they would acquire language as it is used in the target language community.

Drawing on Eisenstein (1983) and Zwadzka’s (1991) studies, Birdsong’s (1992) notion of ‘membership’ in a community comes into play when non-native speakers of Spanish cannot completely integrate into the community to which they are exposed. When the community of native speakers makes judgments or has negative perceptions on non-native speakers of a language, the probability of these non-native speakers blending into the community becomes low. Davies and Elder (2003) also elaborate on issues of assimilation and dissimilation of non-native speakers to a dominant linguistic community. Their view of
the native speaker coincides with Birdsong’s (1992) notion of ‘membership’ in that both view the native speaker as the linguistic authority. In this sense, the native speaker may reject a non-native speaker and, therefore, hinder her assimilation into the target language community.

Previous studies have referred to the reactions of native speakers to the accents of non-native speakers (Arthur, Farrar & Bradford, 1974; Mulac, Hanley & Prigge, 1974; Ryan, 1983), intelligibility (Smith & Rafiqzad, 1979; Smith & Bisazza, 1982) and error gravity, such as verb complementation errors, concord errors and word order errors (Chastain, 1980; Johansson, 1975). However, studies about the way native speakers react to non-native speakers’ pragmatic errors seem to be scant. That is, about reactions L1 speakers would have to an incorrect choice of verb ending, determinants and so on. It would seem fair to say that, just as accent, intelligibility and grammatical errors are aspects that tend to produce negative reactions and judgments among native speakers, outdated or marginal grammatical forms of language should also trigger similar reactions. As a result, we would predict that non-target grammatical forms would also make a non-native speaker feel excluded from the target language community. The question that arises has to do with the current state of instructional materials in North American post-secondary institutions. More specifically, are these textbooks teaching L2 Spanish learners relative constructs that are being used in the Spanish-speaking world today or are they teaching students to use them in an outdated fashion? If L2 Spanish learners are not using relative constructs as native Spanish speakers use them, we wonder what kind of consequences this would have on their integration. Would an L1 Spanish speaking community reject an L2 Spanish speaker who uses an outdated or
pragmatically marginal relative construction as Eisenstein (1983) and Zwadzka (1991) argued?

In order to determine whether or not L2 Spanish students are learning valid relative constructs, we consulted the *Corpus de Referencia del Español Actual* (CREA) electronic corpus. This electronic tool is representative of how Spanish is used by native speakers today; hence, it demonstrates how relative constructs are being used. Conrad (1999) and Mallikamas (1999) address the importance of textbook authors' consultation of electronic corpora in order to validate the information presented to language students.
CHAPTER 1: REFERENTIAL FRAMEWORK

This study is a critical analysis of the validity of grammatical explanations as presented in textbooks compared with the current state of the Spanish language. The study focuses on eleven relative constructs that convey subordination in the language.

We were motivated by the following questions: What are the relative constructs taught in North American L2 Spanish textbooks? Which relative constructs present the highest frequencies in the corpus? Which constructs are presented at each level of language proficiency (e.g., beginner, intermediate and advanced)? Do L2 Spanish textbook explanations adhere to prescriptive or descriptive grammatical explanations? What are the relative constructs used by Spanish speakers as reported by the CREA electronic corpus? And, finally, is the presentation of relative constructs in L2 Spanish textbooks aligned to and representative of current trends in Spanish language usage? In order to determine this, we referred to the importance of using an electronic corpus of the Spanish language as a means to verify the relevance of the relative constructs under study.

The chapter begins with a diachronic analysis of relative constructs. Next, we present a literature review of previous studies on the use, teaching and learning of relative constructs in Spanish.

1.1 Diachronic analysis of relative clauses in Spanish

The year 1492 not only marked the discovery of a new continent, but also the consolidation and strengthening of the ever-more powerful and growing Spanish Empire. Also in that year, the Spanish humanist and grammaticus, Antonio de Nebrija (1492), decided to write his Gramática castellana [Castilian Grammar], a compilation of all
grammatical rules needed for the correct use of vernacular Spanish. The writing of this set of rules is what clearly defined the shift from Latin, the lingua franca from that period used by all educated Europeans, to Spanish, the widely spoken language in the Spanish proto-nation. Nebrija’s (1492) main three reasons for writing his *Gramática castellana* were based on the following: first, his idea that the Spanish language was the “imperial companion” to the Conquest of the New World; second, his belief that a language must be regulated through grammar for it to endure time, and; third, he believed that a grammatical compilation like his would be able to show and teach the Spanish language to the rest of the world (Calero, 1986, pp. 13-14). In this section, we will see how the concept of the relative clause has been developed by different grammarians along the years, starting with Antonio de Nebrija (1492), to the most current definition of this grammatical structure given by supporters of the cognitive grammar approach, Larry King and Margarita Suñer (2008). The basis of this approach lies in the processing of information in the mind, targeted by a linguistic input given to a student, which can become meaningful to him/her (Ellis & Fotos, 1999; Langacker, 1991).

Antonio de Nebrija did not coin the term relative clause. Nevertheless, he was the first grammarian in the vernacular Spanish language to provide an approximate definition of what a relative clause is. Nebrija (1492) proceeds to explain this structure in his fourth chapter of *Gramática castellana* [Castilian Grammar], “Syntax and Stylistics”, categorizing this grammatical structure in a chapter titled “DELAS OTRAS FIGURAS” [of other figures] (Nebrija, 1492, p. 96). Among the forty-nine structures explained in this section, Nebrija (1492) explains the term antiptosis, “the putting of one case for another” [Webster’s Online Dictionary: antiptosis] by giving a very clear example of a relative clause. The concept of
antiptosis given by Nebrija (1492) is *cuando un caso se pone por otro, como diziendo* [when one case is replaced by another one, as if saying]:

(1)  *del ombre que hablavamos viene agora...*

[the man whom we were talking about is coming now…]

*i llamase antiptosis, que quiere dezir caso por caso* [and let it be called antiptosis, which means case by case] (Nebrija, 1492, p. 97). Even though the term antiptosis does exist in contemporary grammar, this term can be viewed as the precursor to the notion of the relative clause in Spanish.

It was not until the end of the sixteenth century that another influential grammatical production was made by Francisco Sánchez de las Brozas (The Brocense) (1587). His masterpiece, *Minerva, seu de causis linguae Latinae* [Minerva, On the Properties of the Latin Language] was written in Latin and was better appreciated in other European countries, given that Nebrija’s grammatical texts were still perceived as the authority and the “official” grammar to use in Spain. The Brocense’s (1587) work yielded some of the subsequent theories in “rational” linguistics. Noam Chomsky has seen some of the grammatical structures explained in *Minerva* as the roots of modern generative grammar (Calero, 1986, p. 15).

It was the Brocense’s (1587) goal to improve the works of Nebrija, because he viewed himself as his successor. Keeping this idea in mind, the Brocense explains with more elaborate examples, in both quantity and quality, the different cases where relative clauses can appear in vernacular Spanish. First of all, he defines a relative clause as a construction containing an entity, in this case, a relative pronoun, that is placed between two different
syntagmata in order to build a relationship between them (Sánchez de las Brozas, 1587, p. 136). Some of the examples given by the Brocense are the following:

(2)  *uidi hominem, qui homo disputabat*

[I saw the man, which man, was arguing]

In this example, the relative pronoun *qui* [who] builds the link between the two different syntagmata: *hominem* [the man] and *disputabat* [was arguing]. At the same time, *qui* takes the place of the subject that is being modified by the verb acting as adjective, *disputabat* (Sánchez de las Brozas, 1587, p. 137).

The following example shows the use of a Latin relative clause where the relative pronoun takes the place of the accusative case:

(3)  *unde habes? quam Bacchis secum addutix adolescentulam*

[Where is the young girl that Bacchis took along?]

In this case, the use of the relative pronoun *quam* [that] establishes the link between *adolescentulam* [the young girl] and *Bacchis secum addutix* [Bacchis took along]. This time, *quam* [that] takes the place of the direct object [the young girl being taken by Bacchis] (Sánchez de las Brozas, 1587, p. 139).

In the instance where the relative pronoun takes on the function of the dative case, we can see the use of the pronoun *quis* in the following example:

(4)  *sunt quis curriculo puluerem Olympicum collegisse iuuat*

[There are those who enjoy raising the Olympic dust with their chariots]

The use of the relative pronoun *quis* [to whom] establishes the dative relationship between *sunt* [there is someone] and *curriculo puluerem Olympicum collegisse iuuat* [enjoys raising the Olympic dust with his chariot] (Sánchez de las Brozas, 1587, p. 140).
In the Brocense’s (1587) *Minerva*, a relative pronoun can also take on the function of the object of a preposition within a relative clause. An example of this is:

(5)  
*est causa, qua causa mecum ire ueritus est*

[There is a reason for which reason he feared going with me]

In this example, the relative pronoun *qua* acts as an object of a preposition [for which], building a link between *est causa* [there is a reason] and *mecum ire ueritus est* [she feared coming with me] (Sánchez de las Brozas, 1587, p. 139).

Other well-known grammarians, such as Bartolomé Jiménez Patón, Benito de San Pedro and Juan Manuel Callejas, also explained the basis for the correct use of the Spanish language. However, none of them made a substantial contribution that would question or confront the views of Antonio de Nebrija and Francisco Sánchez de las Brozas. Gaspar de Jovellanos (1795) with his *Rudimentos de gramática general* [Rudiments of General Grammar] and Juan Antonio González Valdés’ (1791, 1798) *Gramática de la lengua latina y castellana* [Grammar of the Latin and Castilian Languages] and *Gramática completa grecolatina y castellana* [Complete Greek-Latin and Castilian Grammar] were attempts to bring to Spain the philosophical grammars that were being studied in France (Calero, 1986, p. 18).

Interestingly, there seems to be a general tendency in instructional materials of the Spanish language to adhere to a prescriptive grammatical approach. That is, textbooks and other sources, for the most part, conceive and present grammar stressing rule formation. They make emphasis on the notion of *correctness*, also known as a prescriptive approach, more so than on their discourse-pragmatic adequacy.

One person who questioned the authority of the prestigious Nebrija and Sánchez de las Brozas was Vicente Salvá (1831) at the beginning of the nineteenth century. He was the
first one to break away from the “logistic” way of grammatical writing and focused his work, *Gramática de la lengua castellana según ahora se habla* [Grammar of the Castilian Language as it is Spoken Now], on the way Spanish was used and not how it should be used. Salvá (1831) used a methodology that was based on mere observation and the description of the linguistic use of the language (Salvá, 1831, p. xviii). This is the first example of a grammatical text written in Spanish in which the grammar described is purely descriptive (i.e., addressing degrees of formality and oral or written forms of language), rather than prescriptive (i.e., how certain structures should be used, disregarding all context), as all the other grammarians before him used in their approach to the writing of grammatical rules. For this reason, we can say that the work of Salvá (1831) opened the path to explaining grammar in the Spanish language, contextually bound. In other words, Salvá (1831) recurred to an experiential way of describing the use of language by means of observing and later explaining what was meaningful and important to a speaker, also known as a descriptive approach.

Salvá (1831) did not write about the relative clause as a grammatical construct. Instead, he explained the role of a relative pronoun in a subordinate clause using descriptive terms. For example, he said that a relative pronoun is nothing but an adjective and the possible ones are: *que* [that, who], *quien* [who], *el cual* [which] and *cuyo* [whose] with their possible variations (Salvá, 1831, pp. 48-49).

Andrés Bello (1847) was another grammarian who explained the nature of relative clauses in Spanish in his *Gramática de la lengua castellana* [Grammar of the Castilian Language]. As his fellow grammarians, he states that a relative phrase is one whose function is equivalent to that of an adjective. He makes reference to the use of a relative pronoun in
this type of clause by saying that one can be used with an article in order to make known the nature of the antecedent. Bello (1847) also states that the use of this type of clause is necessary because language will not always allow the possibility for the use of an adjective, hence the need of a relative clause (Ibid., 1847, p.49). An example used by Bello is the following:

(6)  *Ella fue la que me enseñó*  
[She was the one who taught me]

In this example, the relative pronoun *que* [that, who], preceded by the article *la* [the], serves the function of an adjective, *la que* [the one], by establishing the link between the antecedent, *ella* [she], and *me enseñó* [taught me] (Bello, 1847, p. 50).

According to the more recent cognitive school of thought, where the belief of a more contextualized approach to understanding and teaching descriptive, rather than prescriptive grammar, Ronald Langacker (1991) explains in his *Foundations of Cognitive Grammar* what a relative clause is: “one that modifies a head noun” (Langacker, 1991, p. 417). He further explains the nature of this type of clause and highlights the role of the relative pronoun contained in it by saying that it is not important what kind of function the relative clause has, be it the function of subject, direct object, object of a preposition or a possessive, but rather the clause's relationship with its *antecedent* (emphasis added) is what establishes the link between the relative clause and the main clause (Langacker, 1991, p. 431). Langacker gives the following example:

(7)  *The person who picked out that tie must be colorblind.*

This example shows how the phrase ‘who picked out that tie’ modifies the head noun and antecedent ‘person’ by using the phrase as a relative clause, introduced by the relative pronoun ‘who’ (Langacker, 1991, p. 417).
In the same line of a cognitive approach to grammar, Professors Larry King and Margarita Suñer (2008) explain in great detail in their *Gramática española: Análisis y práctica* [Spanish Grammar: Analysis and Practice] the nature of Spanish relative clauses. They explain that a relative clause is one that can modify any noun phrase in the sense that if a sentence has a noun, which can be modified by an adjective, then the same noun could easily be modified by a relative clause. An important feature of this type of clause is that its nucleus, the noun or noun phrase it modifies, is called an antecedent, whose nucleus is called a referent, and it is found in the main clause. They also explain that the link between the main clause and the relative clause is the relative pronoun, which serves the purpose of avoiding unnecessary repetition of the antecedent (King & Suñer, 2008, pp. 45-46). They illustrate this through examples (8) and (9):

(8) *Compraron una casa. Una casa tiene cuatro cuartos y dos baños*  
    [They bought a house. A house has four bedrooms and two bathrooms]

In this example, there is a repetition of the noun phrase *una casa* [a house], which can be avoided by inserting a relative pronoun and then joining the two sentences into one, as shown in the example below:

(9) *Compraron una casa que tiene cuatro cuartos y dos baños*  
    [They bought a house that has four bedrooms and two bathrooms]

In this sentence, the relative pronoun *que* [that] serves to reproduce the antecedent *una casa* [a house] and to avoid its repetition.

Other scholars who have also explained the nature of relative clauses in Spanish from a cognitive point of view have been Aquilino Sánchez and Ramón Sarmiento (2005) in their digital corpus-based *Gramática práctica del español actual* [Practical Grammar of present-
day Spanish], where they show the use of the relative pronouns *que* [that, who] and *quien* [who] in actual discourse by consulting two variations of the electronic corpus CUMBRE of the Spanish language. In addition to this, the two authors define relative clauses in Spanish as sentences that depend on a noun or a pronoun, acting as antecedent, as opposed to the dependence on a whole sentence (Sánchez & Sarmiento, 2005, p. 206). They also clarify that the antecedent is introduced before the relative construct. Sánchez and Sarmiento (2005) give the following example in order to address this point:

(10) *Comienzan a recordar los motivos por los cuales se unieron hace unos años*

[They begin to remember the motives for which they got together a few years ago]

In this example, the antecedent *los motivos* [the motives] immediately precedes the relative construct *los cuales* [for which], which also serves to reproduce the antecedent and avoid its repetition.

Jesús Sánchez and Nieves García (2007) also elaborate on this topic in their *Gramática nuevo español 2000* [Grammar New Spanish 2000], where they briefly explain what a relative clause is in Spanish. In their cognitive approach to grammatical explanation, a relative clause is one that modifies a noun or pronoun within the main clause. Its function in the complex sentence, which consists of a main clause and a dependent clause, is the same as the function of an adjective in a simple sentence (Sánchez & García, 2007, p. 273). Sánchez and García give the following example:

(11) *Las motos que hacen ruido (ruidosas) son insoportables*

[(Noisy) motorcycles that make noise are unbearable]

In this example we can see how the adjective *ruidosas* [noisy] can be replaced by a noun phrase, *hacen ruido* [make noise], introduced by the relative pronoun *que* [that]. More recent
Spanish language instructional materials have considered this descriptive approach. These textbooks and other resources present grammar within the context of communication. In this sense, Spanish students can learn information that is relevant to context. In other words, students can learn to discriminate levels of formality and whether a certain construct is preferred for written or oral language.

All in all, relative clauses are grammatical structures that modify a head noun or a pronoun the same way an adjective modifies a noun within a simple sentence. They also form a construction used in order to avoid the unnecessary repetition of information. According to the examples cited before, this has not been the case, historically, because the antecedent of the main clause used to be repeated in the dependent clause. Relative clauses are important and relevant to the realm of SLA in the sense that they are one of the ways through which L2 Spanish learners begin to use subordination in their production (Gili y Gaya, 1961). Delahunty and Garvey (2010) further explain that relative clauses serve as a mean for L2 Spanish learners to produce more complex and sophisticated discourse. It is for these reasons that these clauses deserve special attention.

In instructed Spanish learning, relative constructs are introduced to L2 Spanish learners once they have learned to form simple sentences in the form of Subject-Verb-Object statements. The information L2 Spanish learners will need in order to accomplish simple sentence construction comprises the acquisition of the lexicon, lexical morphemes, the construction of phrases and the notion of grammatical objects. Once students have reached the stage of simple sentence formation, they are able to reach the stage of relative clause construction, which is one of the types of subordination. The need for the acquisition of the structures required for simple sentence formation, preceding the learning of subordination
through relative clause construction, coincides with Pienemann’s (1998) Teachability Hypothesis, in which he states that students can reach the level of subordinate construction, level 5, once they have achieved the hierarchy of processing procedures. In other words, L2 Spanish learners will only be able to reach the stage for subordination through relative clause construction when they have acquired all the necessary skills for simple sentence construction. Syntactically, this means that a student will be able to form a sentence that comprises a subject, a verb and an object. Semantically, this means that there is an entity (Subject) performing an action through the nucleus of the sentence (Verb) to an entity that is receiving such action (Object) (Pienemann, 1998, p. 80).

In the next section, we present studies that investigated the acquisition and L2 usage of relative clauses.

1.2 Previous studies on relative clauses in Spanish

There are many studies related to the nature of relative clauses in the English language. Though there seems to be a small number of studies on relative clauses in Spanish, those found set precedents for this study.

Oscar Ozete (1981) conducted a study in which he showed that the application of grammatical rules, when it comes to the construction of relative clauses in Spanish, is quite problematic (Ozete, 1981, p. 85). Without any predictions to his study, Ozete (1981) tried to demonstrate this problem by examining the relative constructs *que* [that, who] and *quien* [who] from the examination of three different corpora: fifteen first-year college textbooks of Spanish, three academic articles of unspecified origin and a corpus of one magazine and one newspaper from Spain, Mexico, and Argentina (Ozete, 1981).
After showing inconsistencies in the way relative constructions are used by different authors in different types of corpora, the purpose of Ozete’s (1981) research was to provide a more concise set of rules for the use of Spanish relative pronouns, which could be put into practice in the classroom immediately. What Ozete (1981) criticized is that the authors of the first-year college textbooks he analyzed did not agree upon the use of *que* [that, who] over *quien* [who]. The results showed that two out of the fifteen textbooks did not recommend one relative pronoun over another, but only one of them stated that after a preposition, *quien* [who] is preferred over *que* [that, who] when used to refer to persons. By contrast, the other textbook recommended that *quien* [who] be preceded by the preposition *a* [to]. Seven of the fifteen textbooks excluded the use of *quien* [who] and focused only on the uses of *que* [that, who]. The other six textbooks included the functions of both *que* [that, who] and *quien* [who] with human antecedents, from which one of the textbooks claimed *que* [that, who] was more commonly used in a conversational context. The results from the analysis of the academic articles showed that the relative pronoun *que* [that, who] is used in 72% of the occurrences involving an inanimate antecedent and 28% with an animate antecedent. However, the analysis of the magazines and newspapers did not favor the use of one relative pronoun over the other. In fact, the corpus showed an extremely low frequency, unstated in the study, of both *que* [that, who] and *quien* [who] when referring to an animate antecedent (Ozete, 1981, p. 86).

The only limitation mentioned in the study is the scarcity of disyllabic and compound prepositions (Ozete, 1981, p.88). However, the fact that only one magazine and one newspaper from three different countries were used as part of the corpus, allows us to believe
there may be a much greater limitation to this study and the possibility of a greater discrepancy with the results obtained from the study of a larger corpus.

The study concluded providing a set of seven steps, which have proven to be beneficial and useful to the researcher when teaching first-year Spanish courses in post-secondary institutions. The ultimate goal of these seven steps was to facilitate the teaching and learning left to the instructor (Ozete, 1981, p. 90). The following are the steps recommended by Ozete (1981):

1. Showing the difference between the conjunction *que* [that] and the relative pronoun *que* [that, who].

2. Draw attention to the different meanings the relative pronoun *que* [that, who] can convey, such as [that], [who], [whom] and an omitted relative in English.

3. Explaining the change of meaning created by restrictive and non-restricted relative clauses.

4. Presenting the difference between *que* [that, who] and *quien* [who].

5. Teaching of various replacement possibilities.


7. Giving students deletion and combination drills to practice.

Rolf Eberenz (1983) carried out a study regarding the nature of relative clauses in Spanish. His empirical study tried to find evidence of its practical use in Peninsular Spanish language. For his study, the researcher collected data regarding the production of relative constructions at the beginning of the twentieth century in order to compare their frequency to that of data collected in the 1980s (Eberenz, 1983, p. 248). Eberenz (1983) predicted that relative construct *el que* [that which] and its various forms, *(art+)que* [that which, those
which], preceded by a preposition, would appear a lot more often in contemporary texts than in those from the beginning of the twentieth century. He made this prediction based on the degree of interchangeability of *el que* [that which] and its various forms with *que* [that, who] and *quien* [who]. In his methodology, he used a corpus made up of three literary, three scientific and three journalistic texts. Eberenz compared the texts to two previous empirical studies by Keniston (1937) and Fernández Ramírez (1951) for the use of the selected relative pronouns during the first three decades of the twentieth century. Eberenz (1983) stated that users of informal written Spanish make adaptations and replace certain relative constructs with other relative constructs. Given that the study only considered productions of relative constructs in informal written contexts, it was determined that the use of *(art+)que* [that which, those which] is reserved to a more formal discourse, without taking into account data in oral production in both formal and informal registers (Eberenz, 1983, p. 250). The results of the study partially supported Eberenz’s prediction in the sense that the use of the relative construct *el que* [that which] has increased compared to Keniston (1937) and Fernández Ramírez’s (1951) studies, especially in journalistic, technical and scientific texts. However, the increase in frequency of *(art+)que* [that which, those which] was not as high as predicted. Eberenz attributed this increase to the possibility that the change in relative construct use, predicted by Keniston (1937) and Fernández Ramírez (1951) has not yet achieved complete evolution. Another interesting finding was the tendency for the relative pronoun *quien* [who] to decrease in frequency of use. The author noted that this relative construction can be easily replaced with other more commonly used relative pronouns, such as the relative pronoun *que* [that, who] (Eberenz, 1983, p. 265). A limitation found in Eberenz’s (1983) research is that oral language, in formal contexts, is not taken into account. According to the researcher,
relative constructions are reserved for formal language, so the inclusion of data collected from different oral registers might support his conclusion about the nature of relative constructs.

Michael Powers (1984) also studied relative constructs in Spanish and how native Spanish speakers in Mexico City use them. The purpose of his study was to provide pedagogical rules for the proper selection of relative pronouns in Spanish having studied the nature of their use in actual discourse (Powers, 1984, p. 87). Drawing on Ozete (1981) and Eberenz (1983), Powers (1984) prescribed grammatical rules of relative clause formation based on the usage of this construction given by various users of the Spanish language. As in the case of Ozete (1981), there were no predictions to his research, given that it was a comparative study. The research surveyed a group of 292 native speakers of Spanish in Mexico City using a questionnaire made up of 55 sentences that involved the completion with a relative construct. Afterward, he compared the results with grammatical rules proposed by grammarians Bello (1847), Fernández Ramírez (1951), Ramsey (1954), Gili y Gaya (1961), Cressey (1966), Neale-Silva and Nelson (1967) and Solé and Solé (1977). When a grammatical rule given by a grammarian was not supported by empirical findings, then he would rewrite the rule according to the result he was able to draw from the data. One of the findings strongly supported Solé and Solé’s (1977) rule on the use of relative constructs cuyo [whose] and de quien [whose] as being limited to literary use (Powers, 1984, p. 85). However, Powers (1984) neglected to include any reference to the type of language associated with the rest of the relative constructs (i.e., formal, informal, written or oral). It could have been beneficial to provide domain-specific associations for these constructs; in other words, it may have strengthened the study to say whether the use of (art+)que [that
which, those which], *que* [that, who] and *quien* [who] is limited to specified areas, such as literature, journalism, and so on.

Margarita Suñer’s (2001) study focused on the use of relative constructs in spoken language of the dialectical variety of Caracas, Venezuela. This study was motivated by the realization that Spanish speakers (in informal contexts) in Caracas, Venezuela, do not follow the prescribed grammatical rules for relative construct selection. Suñer (2001) predicted that Spanish users would favor the relative *que ESCUETO* [succinct that] over all the other relative constructs. She also predicted that the less frequent relative constructs would be reserved for the more formal or literal form of language. The study included the use of two corpora. The first was an electronic corpus, Caracas-77, from which she was able to collect data from various demographic subjects and from different socio-economic and educational levels. The second was a written corpus of rules for relative construct selection, including Bello (1847), Ramsey (1956), Gili y Gaya (1973), *Real Academia Española* (RAE) (1973) and Solé and Solé (1977). There were 24 participants in the study (12 males and 12 females) from two different age groups and three different socio-economic backgrounds. From the data collected, Suñer (2001) was able to identify the following relative constructs: *que ESCUETO* [succinct that], *que* [that which], *quien* [who], *(art*)*cual* [that which], *dónde* [where] and *cuando* [when]. She emphasized that her data did not show any occurrence of relative constructs *como* [how], *cual* [as much, as many] or *cuyo* [whose]. Results supported her prediction in the sense that Spanish speakers in Caracas, Venezuela tend to resort to the *que ESCUETO* [succinct that] in informal, oral language as long as there is no lost information in a communicative setting. This happens when no prepositions are used, when the [+human] feature antecedent is ignored or when resorting to the resumptive strategy. The researcher
concluded that the parallelisms between the electronic corpus of spoken language, Caracas-77, and the written corpus on relative construct selection provided by Ramsey (1956) and the other grammarians, suggested that the results could be generalized to other dialectal varieties of the Spanish language.

In summary, relative constructs in Spanish have evolved in the way they are explained and used in actual discourse. As seen in the grammatical works of Nebrija and Sánchez de las Brozas, relative constructs were always introduced with a prescriptive approach rather than a descriptive one. One of the first to challenge the way grammar was explained was Vicente Salvá, who used observation and description in order to explain how relative pronouns were used in relative clauses. The way he did this was by explaining that certain constructs were preferred over others for different contexts and registers. Just as Salvá intended to explain grammar according to how it was used and not how it should have been used, it is relevant to examine the validity of relative constructs explained in textbooks of L2 Spanish today, in order to make sure Spanish learners are learning constructs that are valid and used in actual discourse. In this sense, Salvá was the first one to offer a descriptive approach to a grammatical reference, as opposed to Nebrija and Sánchez de las Brozas.

Empirical evidence suggests that relative constructs are structures more amenable to substitution and to the evolution of language. These structures have received pedagogical attention, especially when it comes to their treatment with instructional purposes. This reinforces the idea that it is necessary to evaluate how the explanations of these structures are contextualized in textbooks of Spanish as a foreign language used by Anglophone students in North America.
1.3 The present study

This is a first approach to a critical analysis of relative constructs as they are presented in Spanish language textbooks. The aim was to determine relevance of the explanations by identifying the most frequent relative constructs presented to L2 Spanish students, describing the presentation of these constructs changes across levels of language proficiency, defining whether textbooks treated explanations from a prescriptive or descriptive point of view, determining the most frequent relative constructs in actual discourse, and observing current patterns of relative construct usage in an electronic corpus.

The design of this study considered two types of corpus, a pedagogical corpus made up of textbooks and the *Corpus de Referencia del Español Actual* (CREA). We considered this electronic corpus in response to studies carried out by researchers, which specified the benefits of its use. Some researchers address the need to analyze frequent linguistic patterns shown in electronic corpora as a complement to the study of any linguistic form in order to establish tendencies associated to the real use of such form (Conrad, 1999; Mallikamas, 1999; Mackey and Gass, 2005). Therefore, the information drawn from the CREA electronic corpus will only allow us to find information regarding frequencies and patterns in order to establish tendencies for this particular study. It is important to note that CREA is mostly made up of written sources of language (90%). For this reason, the presentation of oral productions of language is more limited, as most of the language production found therein pertains to written texts.
1.4 Predictions

The present study addresses the following five predictions:

P1: The most frequent relative construct in the corpus of L2 Spanish textbooks will be relative pronoun *que* [that, who].

P2: The number of relative constructs presented in L2 Spanish textbooks will increase as the level of language proficiency increases.

P3: L2 Spanish textbooks used in North American post-secondary institutions will have a tendency to favor prescriptive over descriptive grammatical explanations.

P4: The most frequent relative construct in the CREA electronic corpus will be relative pronoun *que* [that, who].

P5: The presentation of relative constructs in L2 Spanish textbooks will reflect patterns of usage found in the CREA electronic corpus.
CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY

2.1 Target forms analyzed

The present study analyzes the explanation of eleven relative constructs in L2 Spanish textbooks used in post-secondary institutions in North America. We define a relative construct as any form used as a subordinator, and that has one of the following relative words: que [that, who], quien [who], cual [which], cuyo [whose], cuanto [as many as], donde [where], como [how] or cuando [when]. Table 1 presents the target forms to be analyzed, divided into three different categories.

Table 1

Division of Relative Constructs by Pronouns, Adjectives and Adverbs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Relative Construct</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relative Pronouns</td>
<td>que</td>
<td>that, who</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>quien(es)</td>
<td>who</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>lo que</td>
<td>that which</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>lo cual</td>
<td>that which</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relative Adjectives</td>
<td>el/la/los/las que</td>
<td>the one that, the one who</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>el/la/los/las cual (es)</td>
<td>the one that, the one who</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>cuyo(s)/cuya(s)</td>
<td>whose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>cuanto(s)/cuanta(s)</td>
<td>as many as</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relative Adverbs</td>
<td>donde</td>
<td>where</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>como</td>
<td>how</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>cuando</td>
<td>when</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The relative pronoun que [that, who] is used to refer to (+animate) and (-animate) antecedents, whereas the relative pronoun quien [who] is only used to refer to (+animate) antecedents. That is, if we compare que [that, who] and quien [who] with respect to their antecedents, we can say the former is less definite, which allows it to be more pervasive. An
example of the use of these two constructs can be seen in examples (12), (13) and (14) below, provided by King and Suñer (2008).

(12)  *La casa que compraron necesita muchas reparaciones*

[The house (that) they just bought needs a lot of repairs]

(13)  *Invitaron a la profesora que acaban de contratar*

[They invited the Professor who they just hired]

(14)  *Invitaron a la profesora a quien acaban de contratar*

[They invited the Professor whom they just hired]

Examples (12) and (13) show the use of relative pronoun *que* [that, who] with two different antecedents. The (-animate) antecedent in example (12), *La casa* [the house], and the (+animate) antecedent in example (13), *la profesora* [the Professor] show that the relative pronoun *que* [that, who] is more versatile than the relative pronoun *quien* [who], preceded by the dative *a*, signaling the indirect object *a quien* [whom], in the case of example (14), where the antecedent is *la profesora* [the Professor].

Another example is the relative adjective *cuyo* [whose], which is used to determine possession and it is inflected by the noun possessed and not by the antecedent, as is the case for the rest of the relative constructs. Example (15) provided by Bosque and Demonte (1999) illustrates the use of this relative adjective.

(15)  *El niño cuyos padres lo abandonaron*

[The child whose parents abandoned him]

This example shows the relationship between the possessing role of the antecedent *El niño* [the child] and the noun possessed, *padres* [parents] by using the relative adjective *cuyos* [whose].
2.2 Materials

The materials for this study included two types of corpus. The first corpus consisted of L2 Spanish textbooks, from which the target forms for relative clause construction were identified. Additionally, prescriptive and descriptive grammatical references were used in order to determine whether the L2 Spanish textbooks adhered to one grammatical reference over the other. The second corpus was the *Corpus de referencia del español actual* (CREA), which consists of an electronic database of the Spanish language. The CREA corpus shows how language is used nowadays in formal and informal registers and written and oral language from all over the Hispanic world, such as Spain and Latin America, covering very diverse subjects and genres.

This study was based on the analysis of two types of corpora: a pedagogical corpus made up of L2 Spanish textbooks and an electronic database of the Spanish language. According to Crystal (1992), a corpus is:

A collection of linguistic data, either compiled as written texts or as a transcription of recorded speech. The main purpose of a corpus is to verify a hypothesis about language - for example, to determine how the usage of a particular sound, word, or syntactic construction varies (Crystal, 1992, p. 85).

Tom McArthur’s (1992) definition goes further to distinguish a difference between two types of corpora. He defines a corpus as “a collection of texts, especially if complete and self-contained”. He goes even further to define it as “a body of texts, utterances or other specimens considered more or less representative of a language, and usually stored as an electronic database”. When he addresses the computerized feature of some corpora, he says that they may be able to store many millions of running words, which could be analyzed by means of *tagging*, the addition of identifying and classifying tags to words and other formations (McArthur, 1992, pp. 265-266).
2.2.1 Corpus of L2 Spanish textbooks

A group of 345 textbooks was available at the Department of French, Hispanic and Italian Studies (FHIS) at The University of British Columbia (UBC) at the three different levels of proficiency: beginner, intermediate and advanced. From this group, 145 textbooks corresponded to a beginner level of proficiency, 133 textbooks to the intermediate level and 67 textbooks to the advanced level. These textbooks were then reviewed to see if they met the necessary criteria for the study. The following were the criteria necessary for the L2 Spanish textbooks to be included in the corpus:

1) That the textbooks specify their intended use at each of the following L2 Spanish levels: beginner, intermediate and advanced.

2) That they be intended for students of L2 Spanish at North American post-secondary institutions.

3) That the textbooks be intended for the teaching of L2 Spanish at a predominantly English-speaking post-secondary institution.

4) That they present relative constructs with the purpose of introducing the notion of relative clause construction.

5) That they be intended for the instruction of L2 Spanish in a classroom setting.

Therefore, grammar and reference books were not considered in the selection of the corpus in order to keep a homogeneous sample of textbooks.

From the 345 textbooks available, 310 met the selection criteria, out of which 42.26% \((N = 131)\) were for the beginner level of proficiency, 40.32% \((N = 125)\) for the intermediate level and 17.42% \((N = 54)\) for the advanced level. Out of these textbooks, 10 textbooks were randomly selected for each level, yielding a total of 30 textbooks for the three different levels.
of proficiency combined. The level of proficiency of each textbook was indicated in each textbook.

Most of the textbooks included in the corpus were recent editions. This means that their dates of publication ranged from the year 2003 until 2011. However, this does not mean that all the textbooks included in the corpus corresponded to the latest edition published. The intention for the selection of the textbooks was to keep the sample as random as possible. For a complete list of the textbooks that comprise this corpus, please refer to the Appendix A.

2.2.2 Grammatical references

The following references were used with the intention of observing how the target forms were presented in the L2 Spanish textbooks. In this way, we determined which textbooks focused on syntax in the form of prescriptive grammatical rules and which textbooks considered the structures within the realm of a discourse-pragmatic context (descriptive grammatical references).

A prescriptive reference, as defined by Celce-Murcia (1999), is an academic publication which focuses on the syntax of language and how such language should be used. According to this definition, three prescriptive grammatical references were consulted (Gili y Gaya, 1961; Hernández, 1984 and Alarcos, 1994). These references all agreed in the way they presented relative constructs. This means that they explained the notion of subordination by means of relative clause construction and they defined a relative construct as a grammatical unit which links a main clause and a subordinate clause. Additionally, they
explained the two types of relative clauses, restrictive and non-restrictive and they also presented the target forms in question as grammatical units used as subordinators.

A descriptive grammatical reference is, as defined by Celce-Murcia (1999), an academic publication which focuses on the semantic and contextualized form of language as it is used in the real world. According to this perspective, the descriptive grammatical references used to analyze the corpus of L2 Spanish textbooks were those by Solé & Solé (1977), Bosque & Demonte (1999) and King & Suñer (2008). Just as the three prescriptive grammatical references agreed on the way relative constructs were presented, the three descriptive grammatical references present all the characteristics focused on syntax contained in the prescriptive rules presented in the prescriptive grammars. In addition to this, they distinguish the contexts where relative constructs are used, such as oral or written language and they distinguish the register where one target form is preferred over another (i.e., formal versus informal language). An example of a grammatical rule explaining the use of relative adjectives *el que* [that which, that who] and *el cual* [that which, that who], adherent to a prescriptive approach in Textbook #13 is the following: “relative adjectives *el que* [that which, that who] and *el cual* [that which, that who] are used in order to disambiguate when there is more than one antecedent” (Blanco & García, 2004). A descriptive explanation, on the other hand, not only includes a focus on rule formation, but also addresses the context in which one relative adjective is preferred over the other one. An example of a descriptive explanation on the use of these constructs is as follows. According to Textbook #17, “relative adjective *el cual* [that which, that who] can only be used in non-restrictive relative clauses and can never begin a sentence, as opposed to relative adjective *el que* [that which, that who], which can be used in both restrictive and non-restrictive relative clauses and can
also begin a sentence. Additionally, *el cual* [that which, that who] is preferred for formal written form of language” (Spinelli, García & Galvin, 2006).

### 2.2.3 Electronic corpus

As indicated above, an electronic corpus is a tool through which we can study language as the users of that particular language make use of it at a given time. We considered this tool in order to observe how Spanish speakers actually produce the target forms analyzed and then compare the results to those of the Spanish read in the textbooks. In other words, we were able to determine whether the explanations presented in the L2 Spanish textbooks were valid with respect to the way Spanish speakers use relative constructs in discourse.

The existing electronic corpora deal with the Spanish language in different ways. These corpora address different aspects of language, as is the case of formal and informal registers, written and oral sources, regional dialectical varieties, and different genres.

Among all the electronic corpora considered, the one that provides the most updated and current use of the language is the *Corpus de Referencia del Español Actual* (CREA) (2008) [Reference Corpus of Current Spanish]. This corpus was designed and updated by the *Real Academia Española*, the utmost academic authority of the Spanish language. This electronic corpus was chosen because it is considered to be of a general nature, which means that it contains terminology from diverse disciplines (i.e., science and technology, finance, the arts, and so on) in both informal and formal registers and from written and oral sources. CREA was last updated in 2008.
The selection of the electronic corpus was based on the following criteria:

1) That the electronic corpus has, if not the largest, one of the largest inventories of words among the electronic corpora considered for the study.

2) That it contain written and oral forms of text.

3) That it present formal and informal language forms to show the use of language in all possible circumstances of production.

4) That it be composed of recent language samples in order to show the most current usage patterns.

5) That it be updated regularly.

6) That its inventory of words come from a variety of genres.

7) That its inventory of words come from different dialectical varieties across the Spanish-speaking world.

CREA comprises more than 400 million terms, out of which 90% come from written texts and 10% come from oral texts. It contains live language ranging from 1975 until 2008, which is when the corpus was last updated (CREA, 2008, CREA Escrito y Oral). The written portion of the CREA corpus comes from different written sources of language (i.e., press, books, magazines). The oral portion of the CREA corpus is based on transcriptions of spoken language and comes from two different types of oral production, which are recordings of radio and television programs and of transcribed texts from other oral corpora.

CREA was chosen for this study because it fulfilled all selection criteria.

In this case, the electronic corpus was considered in its entirety, without separating the information pertaining to written and oral texts, because only 13.3% (N=4) of the L2
Spanish corpus of textbooks establish a difference between oral and written language.

2.3 Procedure

This study was carried out in three different stages. The first stage was the identification of the eleven target forms in the L2 Spanish textbooks. The second stage involved determining whether these textbooks adhered to prescriptive or descriptive grammatical explanations; that is, we examined the way in which textbooks went about explaining the target forms from a prescriptive or a descriptive viewpoint. Finally, the third stage involved a validation of the L2 Spanish textbooks’ presentation of the target forms vis-à-vis a current source of the Spanish language seen through the CREA electronic corpus.

2.3.1 First stage

The first stage of this study consisted in the identification of the target forms in the corpus of L2 Spanish textbooks.

All the textbooks in the corpus explained relative constructs with the purpose of teaching relative clause construction. However, the number of constructs presented varied from textbook to textbook, depending on the level of proficiency at which the textbooks were set.

The analysis of the textbooks considered how each of the eleven relative constructs was presented with respect to its syntactic and discourse-pragmatic functions. In this study, a syntactic function is understood as the relationship between a particular relative construct and its antecedent. A discourse-pragmatic function is the relationship between a relative construct and the meaning conveyed by the main clause. For example, a syntactic function
of relative pronoun *que* [that, who] is that it reproduces an antecedent, be it a person or a thing and one of its discourse-pragmatic functions is that it serves to eliminate ambiguity when a determinate article *el/la/los/las* [the] is placed in front of it, in order to refer to a particular antecedent in the case there is more than one present in the main clause.

The first step in the procedure involved dividing the 30 textbooks according to the three levels of language proficiency, yielding 10 textbooks at each level. Then, the information extracted from the textbooks was distributed in columns on a chart. The chart was then divided into five columns containing the following information:

- Frequency of forms presented in each one of the textbooks.
- The syntactic function of each target form.
- The discourse-pragmatic function of each target form, if any.
- Examples of the use of the target forms.

Each proficiency level was studied separately in order to find out which relative constructs were presented at the beginner, intermediate and advanced levels. Once we identified all relative constructs, we quantified the frequency of each target form in order to see what the authors of the L2 Spanish textbooks believed to be the relevant and important relative constructs to be explained to L2 Spanish learners for relative clause construction.

At this stage of the research we were able to determine which target forms were explained to Spanish learners in L2 Spanish textbooks used in post-secondary institutions in North America and which relative constructs were presented across the three levels of language proficiency.
2.3.2 Second stage

The second stage of this study consisted in identifying how many of the L2 Spanish textbooks adhered to prescriptive grammatical references and how many adhered to descriptive grammatical references when explaining relative clauses. The purpose of doing this was to determine whether the L2 Spanish textbooks focused more on rule formation or on discourse-pragmatic functions of relative constructs.

Once all target forms, along with their syntactic and discourse-pragmatic functions were identified in the textbooks, they were compared to the characteristics of the prescriptive grammatical references (Gili y Gaya, 1961; Hernández, 1984 and Alarcos, 1994) and the descriptive grammatical references (Solé & Solé, 1977; Bosque & Demonte, 1999 and King & Suñer, 2008). Once we identified which textbooks adhered to each grammatical reference, we quantified the number of textbooks that showed prescriptive characteristics and those that presented descriptive characteristics. This was done with the intention of identifying a tendency in the way authors of L2 Spanish textbooks in North America present relative constructs to L2 Spanish learners. This procedure helped answer another research question, which aimed to answer whether textbooks adhered to prescriptive or descriptive grammatical explanations when explaining relative constructs.

2.3.3 Third stage

The third and last stage of this analysis consisted in determining which were the most frequently used relative constructs in actual discourse, as seen through the electronic corpus, CREA. We also wanted to compare the data collected from the corpus of L2 Spanish textbooks with the electronic corpus. At this stage, two variables were identified, one
independent and one dependent. The independent variable was each one of the target forms identified in the L2 Spanish textbooks. The dependent variable was the frequency of occurrence for that specific target form, provided by the CREA electronic corpus. All target forms were entered in the CREA corpus in order to record their respective frequencies.

The results were compared with the frequencies of target forms found in the textbooks in order to see the importance authors of L2 Spanish textbooks give each target form and the way Spanish speakers use each relative construct in actual discourse. This way, we were able to see if the authors of L2 Spanish textbooks are predicting the actual use of the target forms under study. Data from this stage of the procedure helped answer the questions of which relative constructs were the most frequently used in actual discourse and whether the explanation of relative constructs in the corpus of L2 Spanish textbooks were aligned with the current trends of Spanish language usage.

2.4 Data analysis

Most of the results of this study were processed using descriptive statistics in order to provide general tendencies, though we did perform two statistical tests. We first conducted a z-test on the quantitative data collected from the corpus of textbooks in order to find out the probable range at which each target form would appear in the universe of 345 textbooks that was available for this study. The second statistical test we ran was a binominal test in order to determine whether the difference in number of textbooks adhering to prescriptive grammatical references and those adhering to descriptive grammatical references was significant or not. This significance level was determined at $p < 0.05$.

No statistical test could be run on the data collected from the electronic corpus, because the whole population (universe) of the CREA corpus is constantly changing.
Therefore, the data collected from this corpus is indicative and representative of actual discourse and language usage today. Therefore, we are only using descriptive statistics on this set of data to establish tendencies.
CHAPTER 3: RESULTS

In this chapter, we will present the results gathered in this study and we will provide some interpretations. This section will be divided into two different types of analyses, one Intra-Analysis and an Inter-Analysis. This has been done in order to determine whether L2 Spanish students are learning the language as it should be used or as it is actually used in the Spanish-speaking world.

In the analysis of the corpus of L2 Spanish textbooks, all textbooks are given a number. In this chapter, the textbooks to which we will make reference will be addressed according to their assigned number (see Table 2).

3.1 Intra-analysis

We will refer to Intra-analysis as the study of the data collected from the corpus of 30 L2 Spanish textbooks. At this stage, we identified the eleven target forms intended for the teaching of relative clause construction presented to L2 Spanish learners. We also identified the most frequently explained relative constructs in all 30 textbooks and across the three different levels of language proficiency. Finally, we determined which textbooks explained relative constructs according to prescriptive grammatical references and which ones explained them according to descriptive grammatical references.

3.1.1 Identification of target forms in L2 Spanish textbooks

Table 2 provides an account of all target forms identified in each of the L2 Spanish textbooks analyzed at the three different levels of proficiency. There is detailed specification as to the level of proficiency, and category of the relative constructs. The number of the
textbook will be given when addressing a particular feature about a specific textbook. It is important to clarify that relative adjectives in Table 2 not only include the forms shown, but also their feminine and plural forms. In other words, where *el que* [the one that] appears, information regarding *la que*, *los que* and *las que* [the one(s) that] is also included.
### Table 2

**Target Forms in L2 Spanish Textbooks**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>#</th>
<th>Textbook</th>
<th>Relative Pronouns</th>
<th>Relative Adjectives</th>
<th>Relative Adverbs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beginner</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>¡Tu dirás!</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>¿Cómo se dice?</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Mosaicos</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Así es</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>¡Claro que sí!</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Plazas</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Puntos de partida</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Vistas</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>¡Viva!</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Gente</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Conexiones</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Imagina</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Enfoques</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Ventanas</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Mundo 21</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Atando cabos</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Interacciones</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Conversación y repaso</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Punto y aparte</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>A otro nivel</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>En contacto</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Palabra abierta</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Repase y escriba</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Rumbos</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Pueblos</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Miradas</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Aprendizaje</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Por escrito</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Spanish Comp. Through Literature</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Composición: Proceso y Síntesis</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As shown in Table 2, there is an overall tendency in the textbooks to present relative pronouns and relative adjectives, with the exception of _cuanto_ [as many as]. The presentation of the target forms can be said to be a graduated process, because L2 Spanish learners are introduced to only certain relative constructs at the beginner level of language proficiency. As students move forward in their learning of relative clause construction, the relative constructs they learned at the beginner level are repeated and, additionally, more relative constructs are introduced. This can be seen in Table 2, where certain relative constructs, such as _que_ [that, who] and _quien_ [who], appear in almost all textbooks. This demonstrates that the explanations of these relative constructs are not limited to just one or two levels of proficiency, but to all of them. The same can be said for the advanced level of proficiency, where students are explained the same constructs as students in the beginner and intermediate levels. Additionally, at the advanced level, students are introduced to some new relative constructs, as is the case of the relative adverbs, such as _como_ [how] and _cuando_ [when].

### 3.1.1.1 Most frequent relative construct in L2 Spanish textbooks

Our next analysis aimed to test our first prediction, which was that the relative construct with the highest frequency of appearance in all the textbooks would be the relative pronoun _que_ [that, who]. Figure 1 shows the frequency of each relative construct in the corpus of 30 L2 Spanish textbooks.
Figure 1

*Percentage of Appearance of Target Forms in corpus of L2 Spanish Textbooks*

![Bar chart showing percentage of appearance of relative constructs in L2 Spanish textbooks.]

Figure 1 shows the percent distribution of all eleven relative constructs found in the corpus of L2 Spanish textbooks. As observed, the most commonly presented relative construct is relative pronoun *que* [that, who], which is presented in 100% (*N* = 30) of the textbooks. The next most presented target form is the relative pronoun *quien* [who], which is shown in 96.67% (*N* = 29) of the textbooks. The third most frequently presented relative construct is the relative pronoun *lo que* [that which], which is presented in 76.67% (*N* = 23) of the textbooks. Following these relative pronouns are two equally presented relative adjectives: *el que* [the one that, the one who] and *el cual* [the one that, the one who], which are both shown in 66.67% (*N* = 20) of the textbooks. Then, the relative adjective that explains possession, *cuyo* [whose], is explained in 60% (*N* = 18) of the textbooks. The next most frequently presented relative construct is the relative
pronoun *lo cual* [that which], which appears in 50% \( (N = 15) \) of the corpus. Finally, the least frequently presented target forms are the three relative adverbs: *donde* [where], *como* [how] and *cuando* [when] and the relative adjective *cuanto* [as many as]. *Donde* [where] is the most taught relative adverb in its category, being included in 20% \( (N = 6) \) of the textbooks. The other two relative adverbs, *como* [how] and *cuando* [when], are equally explained in 6.67% \( (N = 2) \) of the textbooks. The relative adjective *cuanto* [as many as] is only shown in 3.33% \( (N = 1) \) of the textbooks. An interesting aspect to consider is that 73.3% \( (N = 22) \) of the textbooks in the corpus stated that the relative pronoun *que* [that, who] is the most commonly used relative construct in the Spanish-speaking world. However, the authors of the textbooks analyzed neglect to give a reason as to how they came across this information or as to the reason for its very high use. Our data supported our first prediction, which is that relative pronoun *que* [that, who] is the most frequently presented relative construct in the L2 Spanish textbooks.

We performed a z-test on the frequency of appearance of each target form in the corpus of 30 textbooks used in this study in order to determine the probable range at which each target form would appear in the universe of 345 textbooks available for this study. Table 3 shows the range, marked by the lower and upper bounds, at which each target form in probable to appear in the whole universe of textbooks available.
Table 3

*z-test Performed on Target Forms Presented in L2 Spanish Textbooks*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target form</th>
<th>Proportion</th>
<th>Standard error</th>
<th>Lower bound</th>
<th>Upper bound</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>que</em></td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>quien</em></td>
<td>95.80</td>
<td>1.28</td>
<td>93.28</td>
<td>98.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>lo que</em></td>
<td>71.62</td>
<td>4.38</td>
<td>63.04</td>
<td>80.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>lo cual</em></td>
<td>40.61</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>34.38</td>
<td>46.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>el que</em></td>
<td>58.32</td>
<td>1.74</td>
<td>54.91</td>
<td>61.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>el cual</em></td>
<td>57.97</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>cuyo</em></td>
<td>52.17</td>
<td>1.30</td>
<td>49.62</td>
<td>54.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>cuanto</em></td>
<td>1.94</td>
<td>0.57</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>3.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>donde</em></td>
<td>17.74</td>
<td>2.78</td>
<td>12.29</td>
<td>23.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>como</em></td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>1.91</td>
<td>5.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>cuando</em></td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>1.91</td>
<td>5.86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In table 3, the first column is the estimated proportion of textbooks that explain each target form. The second column is the standard error of the estimated proportion. The last two columns are the lower and upper bounds of the 95% confidence interval for the true proportion in the universe of 345 textbooks that were available for this study. Following the range provided in the table above, we can make the following statement: “We are 95% confident that the target form *quien* [who] will appear in between 93.28% and 98.31% of the 345 textbooks of L2 Spanish available in the Department of French, Hispanic and Italian Studies at The University of British Columbia”. This type of statement can be applied to each relative construct with their respective lower and upper bounds. Note that the confidence intervals for target forms *que* [that, who] and *el cual* [that which] are not available because the standard error is zero. In other words, there is no uncertainty that can be drawn from these data.
3.1.1.2 Relative constructs across levels of language proficiency

In order to test whether textbooks filter the number of constructs according to level of proficiency, we divided the information presented in Figure 1 into the three different levels of language proficiency. Figure 2 shows the percentage of textbooks that present each relative construct at the beginner level of language proficiency. Figures 3 and 4 present the same information pertaining to the intermediate and advanced levels, respectively.

Figure 2

*Percentage of Appearance of Target Forms in Beginner Level Textbooks*
Figure 3

Percentage of Appearance of Target Forms in Intermediate Level Textbooks

Figure 4

Percentage of Appearance of Target Forms in Advanced Level Textbooks
As seen in Figure 2, all of the textbooks at the beginner level showed only a few of the target forms. Only 30% \((N = 3)\) of the textbooks (Textbooks #1, #2 and #3) at this level presented two of the target forms, which are relative pronouns \(que\) [that, who] and \(quien\) [who]. The other 70% \((N = 7)\) of the textbooks (Textbooks #4, #5, #6, #7, #8, #9 and #10) presented three of the relative constructs. Six out of the seven textbooks that presented three target forms explained relative pronouns \(que\) [that, who], \(quien\) [who] and \(lo que\) [that which]. The only exception to this pattern was textbook #10, which showed relative pronoun \(que\) [that, who], relative adjective \(el que\) [the one that, the one who] and relative adverb \(donde\) [where]. It appeared that the focus of this textbook was placed on oral communication as opposed to the rest of the sample at the beginner level, which appeared to be more focused toward the building of both communication and grammatical concepts of L2 Spanish. The reason only very few relative constructs were presented at this level seemed to be that L2 Spanish learners do not possess sufficient knowledge (i.e., lexical inventory, verb tense knowledge) to produce elaborate sentences by means of subordination. We could say that, at this level of language proficiency, students are introduced to the realm of subordination by means of relative clause construction.

Figure 3 shows a difference compared to Figure 2. At the intermediate level, L2 Spanish learners are not only taught the relative constructs presented in most of the textbooks at the beginner level (all but Textbook #10), but they are also introduced to the relative adjectives and, in the case of textbooks #19 and #20, students are introduced to the relative adverb \(donde\) [where]. This could be attributed to the fact that at this level of proficiency, students have become more linguistically competent in Spanish, in order to
produce sentences that are more complex than the ones they could have produced at the beginner level of language proficiency.

Figure 4, however, shows only a slight difference from Figure 3 in the number of target forms presented to L2 Spanish learners. At the intermediate level, all identified relative constructs were presented to students with the exception of *cuanto* [as many as], *como* [how] and *cuando* [when]. At the advanced level, however, all the identified target forms were presented to students. In fact, the three target forms not covered at the intermediate level were explained in very few textbooks at the advanced level of language proficiency. In other words, only 10% ($N=1$) of the textbooks (Textbook #30) presented relative adjective *cuanto* [as many as] and only 20% ($N=2$) of textbooks (Textbooks #29 and #30) presented relative adverbs *como* [how] and *cuando* [when]. In sum, the biggest difference can be seen when comparing the number of target forms presented at the beginner level with respect to the number of target forms presented at the other two levels of language proficiency, as shown in Figures 2, 3 and 4. This evidence supports our second prediction, which states that the number of relative constructs explained to L2 Spanish learners will increase as students move across levels of language proficiency. This, in turn, coincides with Delahunty and Garvey (2010), who argued that students use rules for relative clause formation in order to produce more complex and sophisticated discourse. The support of our second prediction also coincides with Pienneman’s (1998) Teachability Hypothesis, because as students move up from one level of language proficiency to the next, their lexicon inventory has increased and their proficiency of the foreign language has evolved in the sense that students are more capable of producing more complex sentences by means of subordination.
3.1.2 Prescriptive vs. descriptive tendency for target form presentation

In order to determine whether the L2 Spanish textbooks adhered to prescriptive or descriptive grammatical references (Prediction 3), we took into account the characteristics that make up each grammatical reference.

According to the definitions of prescriptive and descriptive grammatical references, the corpus of L2 Spanish textbooks was analysed. For this analysis, we identified which textbooks presented prescriptive characteristics and which ones presented descriptive characteristics. We counted those in each group in order to obtain the total number of textbooks that adhered to each grammatical reference and, accordingly, to establish a tendency.

Appendix B provides a detailed list of the distribution of textbooks at the three different levels of language proficiency, which present either prescriptive or descriptive characteristics.
Figure 5 shows the total number of textbooks which present prescriptive and descriptive characteristics when teaching relative constructs. As seen, 70% ($N = 21$) of the textbooks in the corpus present prescriptive grammatical characteristics. In other words, this means there is a focus on rule formation on the explanation of the target forms used in relative clause construction. The other 30% ($N = 9$) of the textbooks adhered to descriptive grammatical references. That is, these textbooks focus on the discourse-pragmatic information explaining the relative constructs. This means that relative constructs are not only explained in syntactic terms, but there are also explanations regarding the way these constructs are used in real life, according to textbook writers. For instance, these textbooks suggest when one target form is
preferable over another one in oral, written, formal and informal contexts. We performed a binomial test in order to verify whether the difference in number of prescriptive and descriptive textbooks was significant. Results confirmed that most textbooks adhered to a prescriptive approach, which suggests there is a significant difference in the number of textbooks presenting each grammatical reference, $p < 0.04$. From the results observed, we can support our third prediction, which predicted that most of the L2 Spanish textbooks in the corpus would adhere to prescriptive grammatical references. In other words, evidence suggests that most L2 Spanish textbooks in our corpus have a tendency to focus on rule formation rather than on the discourse-pragmatic functions of the relative constructs.

### 3.2 Inter-analysis

The Inter-analysis consisted of the data gathered from the CREA electronic corpus and how this information compared to the data collected from the corpus of L2 Spanish textbooks.

In this section, we will present the frequencies recorded for each target form provided by the electronic corpus. We will also show which were the most frequently used relative constructs in actual discourse and, finally, we will compare the information gathered from the L2 Spanish textbooks with the information gathered from the electronic corpus. It is important to recall that the CREA electronic corpus is only an approximation of the Spanish language in use. For this reason, the frequencies of each target form provide approximate patterns of relative construct usage.
3.2.1 Most frequent relative constructs in the CREA electronic corpus

This part of the analysis was carried out with the purpose of identifying the frequency of occurrence of each relative construct in actual discourse. We were particularly interested in knowing which target form is the most frequently used in actual discourse. At this stage, we inserted each target form identified in the Intra-Analysis section in the search field of the CREA electronic corpus. The frequency of each of the eleven target forms came from their occurrence in different kinds of written and transcribed oral texts from all over the Spanish-speaking world. Figure 9 shows the frequencies recorded for each of the target forms in the electronic corpus CREA.
Figure 6

*Frequencies of Target Forms in the CREA Electronic Corpus*
The total number of relative constructs used by Spanish speakers, according to the information collected from the CREA corpus, is of 6,452,836 hits. As seen in Figure 9, the most frequent target form found in the corpus is, by far, relative pronoun *que* [that, who]. This target form represents 68.98% \((N = 4,450,981)\) of the total relative constructs used by Spanish speakers. This finding supports our fourth prediction, which anticipated that relative pronoun *que* [that, who] would be the most frequently used relative construct in actual discourse. The next most commonly used target form is relative adverb *como* [how], which represents 11.88% \((N = 766,643)\) of the relative constructs. A caveat is in order. The lack of specification of *que* [that, who] and *como* [how] in CREA yielded approximate results. The frequencies recorded for these two target forms are not exact frequencies, given that they are not unique in the sense that they each have more than one grammatical function. Therefore, the number of hits for *que* [that, who] and *como* [how] include their other grammatical functions as well, because the electronic corpus lacks a feature for grammatical function discrimination. The next most frequent target form is relative adjective *el que* [the one that, the one who] with 4.57% \((N = 294,691)\) of appearance in the electronic corpus, followed by the relative pronoun *lo que* [that which], which accounts for 4.30% \((N = 277,617)\) of the relative constructs. The next two more commonly used target forms are relative adverbs *cuando* [when], which makes up for 3.44% \((N = 221,775)\) of all relative constructs and *donde* [where], appearing 2.15% \((N = 138,660)\) of the time. Next is relative pronoun *quien* [who], which comprises 1.83% \((N = 117,943)\) of the relative constructs used by Spanish speakers. The least used target forms are relative adjectives *cuyo* [whose] appearing 0.95% \((N = 61,092)\) of the time, followed by *el cual* [the one that, the one who], which makes up for 0.87% \((N = 56,369)\) of the relative constructs and *cuanto* [as many as] comprising 0.75% \((N = \ldots)\)
= 48,209) of the target forms. Finally, relative pronoun *lo cual* [that which] makes up for 0.29% (*N* = 18,849) of the relative constructs used by Spanish speakers.

### 3.2.2 Patterns of target form usage: Textbooks vis-à-vis CREA

This part of the analysis was carried out in order to test our fifth prediction. We wanted to determine whether the relative constructs presented in the corpus of L2 Spanish textbooks reflect patterns of usage found in the CREA electronic corpus. For this reason, we make three comparisons between the two corpora.

According to the data collected from the L2 Spanish textbooks, all the relative pronouns and relative adjectives, with the exception of *cuanto* [as many as] are presented to students in a significant number of textbooks. However, as the target forms become more precise in the way they are used (e.g., less conflated, in the case of relative adverbs), their occurrence in textbooks tends to be lower. It is also important to note that relative adverbs are explained to students, mainly, at the advanced level of language proficiency, with the exception of one textbook at the beginner level, which presents relative adverb *donde* [where] (see Table 2).

The first comparison between the corpus of L2 Spanish textbooks and the CREA electronic corpus has to do with the usage of target form categories. The target forms identified in the L2 Spanish textbooks were divided into three grammatical categories, relative pronouns (*que* [that, who], *quien* [who], *lo que* [that which] and *lo cual* [that which]), relative adjectives (*el que* [the one that, the one who], *el cual* [the one that, the one who], *cuyo* [whose] and *cuanto* [as much as]) and relative adverbs (*donde* [where], *como* [how] and *cuando* [when]).
With respect to the presentation of the three target form categories in L2 Spanish textbooks, relative pronouns account for 58.43% \((N = 97)\) of target form presentations. This category is followed by the presentation of relative adjectives, which comprise 35.54% \((N = 59)\) of the total target form presentations. Finally, relative adverbs make up the category with the least exposure to students, given that they comprise 6.02% \((N = 10)\) of the target forms presented in the 30 textbooks analyzed in this study.

In contrast, the CREA electronic corpus shows some discrepancies as to the usage prediction made by L2 Spanish textbooks. As in the case of textbooks, the grammatical category mostly used by Spanish speakers is that of relative pronouns, making up 75.38% \((N = 4.45 \text{ million})\) of all relative constructs used in actual discourse. The next mostly used grammatical category is relative adverbs, as opposed to what L2 Spanish textbooks indicate. Spanish speakers use relative adverbs 17.38% \((N = 1.13 \text{ million})\) as introducers of relative clauses. Finally, results of CREA suggested patterns of usage of relative adjectives in 7.08% \((N = 0.46 \text{ million})\) of their relative clauses, as opposed to what a language learner could predict according to what was presented to him/her in the textbooks.

Drawing on these results, we can say that L2 Spanish textbooks do not precisely match patterns of usage provided by the CREA electronic corpus. The way this difference could affect L2 Spanish students is that they may be inclined to use more relative adjectives than relative adverbs when they get in contact with a Spanish-speaking community. This, in turn, would make students sound pragmatically marginal, given that the CREA corpus suggests there is a stronger tendency for the use of relative adverbs than relative adjectives.

The second comparison made from the two corpora is that of the interchangeability of the relative adjectives *el que* [that which, that who] and *el cual* [that which, that who]. These
two relative adjectives have the same frequency of appearance in the corpus of L2 Spanish textbooks, because they are equally presented in 66.67% (N = 20) of them. When we compared how textbooks presented these two target forms and the way Spanish speakers use them as suggested by CREA, we observed that results differed. L2 Spanish textbooks present these constructs as if they were equally frequent in actual discourse. However, the CREA electronic corpus revealed that relative adjective *el que* [that which, that who] appears 82.86% (N = 0.29 million) of the time and relative adjective *el cual* [that which, that who] is used only 17.14% (N = 0.06 million) of the time when one of these two target forms is used by a Spanish speaker in actual discourse. This difference in frequency revealed that *el que* [that which, that who] is used 4.8 times more often than *el cual* [that which, that who] in actual discourse. This can be explained by the fact that *el que* [that which, that who] can be the head of a sentence, whereas *el cual* [that which, that who] cannot (Bosque & Demonte, 1999; King & Suñer, 2008; Solé & Solé, 1977). Therefore, patterns of usage for these two relative constructs reveal that L2 Spanish textbooks do not reflect the use of these relative adjectives in actual discourse. The implication this could have on L2 Spanish students is that they may be prone to using these two relative adjectives indistinctly. The phenomenon that could arise is that students could start using *el cual* [that which, that who] at the beginning of a sentence, when it is a syntactically incorrect use, as explained by only 22.22% (N = 4) of the textbooks that present these two relative adjectives.

The third comparison between the two corpora has to do with relative pronoun *quien* [who]. This relative pronoun is the target form most presented in the corpus of L2 Spanish textbooks after relative pronoun *que* [that, who]. A total of 96.67% (N = 29) of the textbooks explain this target form to Spanish learners. However, the CREA electronic corpus reveals a
different tendency for the usage of this construct. In fact, *quien* [who] is one of the least used relative constructs in Spanish, as indicated by the electronic corpus. From the data collected, it appears that Spanish speakers use *quien* [who] in 1.85% ($N = 0.12$ million) of relative clauses. This tendency indicates very low usage in actual discourse relative to what L2 Spanish textbooks suggest. This discrepancy may affect L2 Spanish learners in that they may start using it as if it was very common. It is for this reason that they may be talking in a pragmatically marginal way when talking with a native Spanish speaker.

In summary, these comparisons suggest that L2 Spanish textbooks do not entirely align with what appear to be patterns of usage in Spanish. Therefore, we were able to reject our fifth prediction, which stated that relative constructs explained in the corpus of L2 Spanish textbooks would be aligned to patterns of usage found in the CREA electronic corpus. We must remember that the CREA electronic corpus is only an approximation of language usage because 90% of the data contained therein comes from written texts.
CHAPTER 4: DISCUSSION

This study identified and showed how relative constructs are presented to L2 Spanish learners in thirty textbooks used at the three levels of language proficiency in post-secondary institutions in North America. Additionally, we wanted to compare how users of Spanish, via the CREA electronic corpus, use the relative constructs identified in the textbooks in actual discourse. The study aimed to observe how the relative constructs were presented to Spanish learners according to their rule formation and to discourse-pragmatic functions. This began with an Intra-analysis, where we identified the target forms explained in each textbook. Then, we proceeded to determine the most frequently presented relative construct in the corpus of L2 Spanish textbooks and, finally, we determined whether the textbook explanations of relative constructs adhered to prescriptive or descriptive grammatical references. Additionally, we carried out an Inter-analysis by identifying the relative construct mostly used by Spanish speakers, as demonstrated by the CREA electronic corpus and we established comparisons with respect to the explanations presented to Spanish learners in the Spanish textbooks.

4.1 Intra-analysis

This section provides interpretations of the results gathered from the corpus of L2 Spanish textbooks. The study began with the identification of eleven target forms in thirty textbooks of L2 Spanish, which were divided into three categories: relative pronouns, relative adjectives and relative adverbs. We then determined that the relative construct most presented across all the textbooks was relative pronoun *que* [that, who]. We then found a pattern where the number of relative constructs presented to students increased as the levels
of language proficiency moved from the beginner level to the intermediate level and then to the advanced level. In fact, only two or three target forms were presented to Spanish students at the beginner level. At the intermediate and advanced levels, we found that students were presented with almost all of the target forms. At the beginner level, we found that 70% (N = 7) of the textbooks presented three of the target forms and 30% (N = 3) presented only two. A total of 90% (N = 9) of the textbooks at this level showed relative pronouns. The only exception to this case was Textbook #10, which seemed to be counterintuitive because the relative constructs presented therein seemed to go against the pattern of target forms found in the rest of the textbooks. This textbook presented one relative pronoun, one relative adjective and one relative adverb.

At the intermediate level, more target forms were introduced to Spanish learners, including an additional relative pronoun, *lo cual* [that which], three of the four relative adjectives, *el que* [that which, that who], *el cual* [that which, that who] and *cuyo* [whose], and in only 20% (N = 2) of the textbooks, the relative adverb *donde* [where]. This occurrence is similar at the advanced level of language proficiency, where all relative pronouns are presented, all relative adjectives, with the exception of *cuanto* [as many as], which is presented in only 10% (N = 1) of the textbooks and, to a smaller degree, the relative adverbs, where *donde* [where] is presented in 30% (N = 3) of the textbooks and *como* [how] and *cuando* [when] are only presented in 20% (N = 2) of the textbooks. This leads to the question: what criteria do textbook writers follow in order to select and present to students the different relative constructs for relative clause construction? We could predict that at the beginner level, students do not possess the sufficient word inventory and grammatical structures in order to produce complex sentences. We could say that at the beginner level,
students are being introduced to the production of complex discourse through relative clause construction. We could also say that, at the intermediate and advanced levels, students have acquired a wider lexical variety and grammatical structures in order to produce more complex sentences. The difference between the intermediate and advanced levels could be that the latter serves to reinforce what was learned at the intermediate level and introduce, in some of the textbooks, the use of relative adverbs.

Another finding of this study was the prescriptive or descriptive tendency to which the L2 Spanish textbooks presented relative constructs. Overall, 70% (N = 21) of the textbooks showed a prescriptive tendency in the way relative constructs were explained, because the information and examples given for each target form were decontextualized and the textbooks neglected to say whether a construct was preferred over another in different levels of formality and whether it was mostly used in oral or written form of language. For this reason, 70% (N = 21) of the textbooks emphasized rule formation, so that Spanish learners would use grammatically correct relative constructs. The other 30% (N = 9) of the textbooks showed a descriptive tendency in the way they explained relative constructs. With this said, the information pertaining to the target forms and their examples was contextualized in the sense that explanations focused on the discourse-pragmatic functions of relative constructs. Therefore, textbook explanations that adhered to descriptive grammatical references presented relative constructs in terms of their use in different levels of formality and their use in oral and written forms of language.
4.2 Inter-analysis

The study continued with the recording of frequencies for each of the relative constructs, which were taken from the CREA electronic corpus. These frequencies represent how Spanish speakers use these relative constructs in actual discourse. Results showed that *que* [that, who] is the target form that is most often used in actual discourse. These results support one of our predictions, because this relative construct is used in 68.98% (N = 4,450,481) of the time in relative clauses in Spanish.

In general, the CREA electronic corpus shows that all relative constructs presented in the L2 Spanish textbooks are being used in actual discourse today. However, not all relative constructs are used in the same frequency, and this is something textbooks do not explain to students. Relative pronoun *que* [that, who] is used far more often than the rest of the relative constructs. A possible explanation for this could be explained by Suñer’s (2001) results, which state that Spanish speakers in Caracas, Venezuela tend to resort to the *que ESCUETO* [succinct that] as a substitute for other relative constructs and, hence, increasing the frequency of occurrence of relative pronoun *que* [that, who] in the CREA electronic corpus. At the end of her study, Suñer (2001) explained that the way Venezuelans use the *que ESCUETO* [succinct that] is representative of the way Spanish speakers of other dialectal varieties use them, as we mentioned earlier.

According to the three comparisons made between the two corpora used for this study, our results demonstrated that L2 Spanish textbooks are not aligned with patterns of current language usage as seen through the CREA electronic corpus. Textbooks seem to present relative pronouns at all levels of language proficiency. However, the presentation of relative adverbs appears to be reserved for the advanced level of language proficiency with
the exception of one of the textbooks at the beginner level. This tendency seems to be counterintuitive considering that the second most frequently used grammatical category within relative constructs is the adverbs.

Another comparison between the two corpora revealed that relative adjectives *el que* [the one that, the one who] and *el cual* [the one that, the one who] are not interchangeable, as suggested by the proportion of these two constructs in the L2 Spanish textbooks. Patterns of usage provided by CREA showed us that *el que* [that which, that who] is used 4.8 times more than *el cual* [that which, that who]. One of the reasons why *el que* [that which, that who] may have a much higher frequency than *el cual* [that which, that who] is because the latter cannot be the head of a sentence. The fact that *el cual* [that which, that who] cannot do this is only addressed by 22.22% (N = 4) of the textbooks that show both of these relative adjectives.

The last comparison made between the two corpora was related to the usage of relative pronoun *quien* [who]. *Quien* [who] is one of the most explained relative constructs. Contradictory to its very frequent appearance in the corpus of textbooks, patterns of usage provided by CREA give a different tendency of use in actual discourse. CREA revealed that *quien* [who] is only used in 1.85% (N = 0.12 million) of the time a relative construct is used in Spanish.

Now that we have seen how the data collected from the two corpora compare to one another, we provide some general insight as to what these results could mean for the teaching and learning of the Spanish language.
4.3 **General observations**

Drawing on the results of this study, we know textbooks are teaching L2 Spanish students relative constructs that are being used by Spanish speakers today.

Overall, textbooks insisted on the importance of teaching relative constructs that have relatively low frequencies in actual discourse with respect to relative pronoun *que* [that, who]. We are not suggesting that the relative constructs with low frequencies be removed from the list of constructs explained to students of L2 Spanish. However, it would be beneficial for students to know that certain constructs are not used as often as others.

Another important aspect that can be drawn from this study is that 70% (N = 21) of the textbooks lacked any kind of notes that would let students know how relative constructs are used in actual discourse. Even though this would not be absolutely necessary at the beginner level, due to the limited exposure to and proficiency in the language that students at this level may have, intermediate and advanced level students could benefit from this kind of information, which would aid them when choosing one relative construct over another when presented with different levels of formality and either oral or written forms of language. It is for this reason that textbook writers should be aware of the frequency of use of relative constructs in actual discourse, so they do not make emphasis on a supposed high frequency of use for certain constructs when their actual usage is otherwise.

Given the much higher frequency of relative construct *que* [that, who] with respect to the other constructs analyzed in the CREA electronic corpus, we could predict that this very high frequency is due to the possible substitution of less frequently used relative constructs with relative pronoun *que* [that, who], as was suggested by Eberenz (1983), Fernández Ramírez (1951), Keniston (1937) and Suñer (2001).
Many of the textbooks used for this study presented target forms and examples abiding to prescriptive grammatical references. That is to say that explanations and examples were given in a decontextualized manner. The way these target forms were presented in the textbooks were not precise enough for students to clearly distinguish the context in which they are to be used, be it formal or informal, or whether they are used for oral or written communication. Even though 73.3% (N = 22) of textbooks stated that relative pronoun *que* [that, who] is the most commonly used relative construct in Spanish, the textbooks that adhered to descriptive grammatical references (30% of the textbooks), were the only ones that provided a more discourse-pragmatic approach to the use of relative constructs in actual discourse. It is for this reason that any comments in the form of margin notes or footnotes relating the information presented in the textbooks to their use in actual discourse would enrich the explanation of any grammatical point and would be beneficial for students.

When we consulted the electronic corpus in order to determine how Spanish speakers used the target forms under study as a means for relative clause construction, the results were striking. We were able to see that the most used relative construct, by far, is relative pronoun *que* [that, who]. One of the reasons it is the one that is used most frequently in actual discourse seems to be due to its wide scope, having the ability to reproduce or refer to antecedents with (+animate) and (-animate) characteristics. What is most striking about the results gathered from the electronic corpus is that all relative constructs have a much lower usage by Spanish speakers with respect to relative pronoun *que* [that, who]. One possible reason for this could be that Spanish speakers may be inclined to substituting those less frequently used relative constructs with *que* [that, who] or a combination of *que* [that, who] preceded by something else, but we will refrain from making any assumptions as to this
possibility, given that it escapes the scope of this study. Another possible reason for this tendency is that language could be evolving, as addressed by Fernández Ramírez (1951) and Keniston (1937), where certain relative constructs are disappearing, giving more strength to the ones that have a conflated usage. Suggestions for further study are provided in the Conclusions.

An electronic corpus could serve as a great tool for textbook writers when deciding the kind of information they want to include in their textbooks. Looking at an electronic source that is constantly being updated and is considered to be representative of how Spanish speakers use the language could help writers decide which information is relevant to present to students. This tool could also be used as a source of contextualized examples that could be incorporated in the textbooks to make a point about a grammatical aspect. The electronic corpus could also help textbook writers recognize which grammatical structures Spanish speakers are no longer using, helping these writers to avoid anachronisms. This way, outdated structures and terms would not be included in the materials of instruction.

All in all, it is important for both students and instructors to know how distant the materials from which they are learning and teaching are from actual discourse. The evidence collected from this study showed that most of the textbooks do not contextualize the explanations and examples regarding relative constructs in Spanish. This was seen in the difference in the number of textbooks, whose explanations of relative constructs adhered to prescriptive grammatical references (70%) and the number of textbooks, whose explanations adhered to descriptive grammatical references (30%). Therefore, we can say that students who learn subordination by means of relative clause construction through textbooks presenting prescriptive characteristics, could be learning to communicate in a deviant way.
This, in turn, could trigger a negative experience for a non-native Spanish speaker when he/she is immersed in a target language community. In this sense, a non-native speaker may be discriminated against in the workplace or in other areas of society because of his/her use of an outdated grammatical structure. This could have a very different outcome if the student were to be involved in a very formal work environment or in the academic world, where the use of formal relative constructs would not be something that would sound pragmatically marginal to a native Spanish speaker. However, if a student uses outdated structures while being immersed in an informal target language community, then he/she may be found to communicate in a deviant way and, therefore, could be rejected by the dominant linguistic authority made up by the target language community.

This study addressed some direct implications to the field of SLA. Based on our results, we could say that it is crucial for the materials of instruction used for second and foreign language teaching and learning to be updated. If the materials of instruction were aligned to current patterns of usage of lexicon, verb tenses and morpho-syntactic structures, among others, students would be able to learn language as it is used in target language communities. This, in turn, would benefit students in the way that, when immersed in these communities, they would have a lower probability of using structures that are pragmatically marginal.

It is important for both textbook writers and language instructors to be familiar with electronic corpora as a mean to provide validity and relevance to the information they are explaining to L2 learners. This is equally important to both writers and instructors because they would be certain that the information presented to students is aligned to current patterns of usage.
This study represents a contribution to the field of SLA in that it provides a baseline for the formal evaluation of instructional materials with respect to the way a morpho-syntactic structure is explained to L2 Spanish learners. This study is the first of its kind that provides a methodology for analyzing the validity of the information explained in textbooks to students of L2 Spanish. This study also provides flexibility for its use in the evaluation of other grammatical structures by comparing L2 textbook content with actual discourse, as seen through an electronic source of patterns of usage.
CONCLUSIONS

Textbooks play a crucial role in the learning process of foreign language students. As explained by Sutton (2009), textbooks provide foreign language students with access, beyond their language instructors, to the foreign language. Therefore, it is important that the information contained in them (i.e., lexicon, verb tenses and morpho-syntactic structures, among others) is updated and valid with respect to their use in actual discourse. It is important that textbooks be updated with respect to structures that are used by native speakers because of the potential negative implications the use of outdated structures may inflict upon a non-native speaker when involved in a target language community.

The present study focused on the identification of eleven relative constructs used for relative clause construction in 30 textbooks of L2 Spanish used in post-secondary institutions in North America. We then determined that relative pronoun que [that, who] was the most frequently presented target form in the textbooks. We also found that the number of relative constructs explained to students increased as the level of language proficiency increased. Also, we were able to show that, when presenting relative clauses, L2 Spanish textbook assigns more importance to syntactic rule formation than to a balance between syntax and discourse-pragmatic information. For this reason, we found a strong tendency for textbooks to have prescriptive over descriptive explanations, corroborated with a binomial distribution test, p < 0.04.

In order to assess the validity of the target forms presented to students, we proceeded to find the frequency of use of these constructs in actual discourse, via the CREA electronic corpus, managed and updated by the Real Academia Española, the utmost authority on the regulation of the Spanish language. Results showed that all relative constructs presented to
students are used in actual discourse today. The CREA electronic corpus provided a sample of the way Spanish speakers use the target forms under study, and we were able to confirm that relative pronoun *que* [that, who] is the most frequently used relative construct in actual discourse. This finding coincides with 73.3% (N = 22) of the textbooks used for this study and with the results gathered by other researchers who examined relative constructs in actual discourse, such as Eberenz (1983), Ozete (1981), Powers (1984) and Suñer (2001), who affirm that *que* [that, who] is the most widely used relative construct in the Spanish language. Results also suggested that, based on three comparisons made between the two corpora, the relative construct explanations contained in the textbooks of L2 Spanish are not aligned to the patterns of language usage shown by the CREA electronic corpus.

**Contributions of the current study**

This study serves as a baseline for the formal evaluation of materials used in the instruction of a foreign language. In this case, this study corroborated the validity and relevance of a grammatical structure presented to L2 Spanish learners vis-à-vis patterns of usage as seen through an electronic corpus of the Spanish language. The methodology designed for this study could be followed for the evaluation of the explanation of any other grammatical structure contained in instructional materials designed for foreign language teaching.

This study also serves as a call to action to both textbook writers and foreign language instructors: according to the results gathered in this study, L2 Spanish students are not learning relative constructs as native Spanish speakers seem to be using them in actual discourse, as seen through the CREA electronic corpus. The present study also serves to
suggest that textbook writers recur to the use of electronic corpora as a way to validate the information they explain to students. It also suggests the improvement of textbook editions, which go beyond the change of superficial traits, such as covers, colors, pictures or texts and focus rather on the improvement of the presentation of grammatical content.

Limitations of the current study

This exploratory study presents limitations. The first one is that it is limited to the presentation of relative constructs in textbooks of L2 Spanish used for classroom instruction and intended for English-speaking students. This study does not take into account any additional materials that could enhance the explanation of the target forms and which could be included with the textbooks, such as CDs, DVDs, virtual language laboratories or websites. It does not take into account any grammar books that could be used in lieu of a textbook at the intermediate or advanced levels.

Second, this study is limited to the analysis of one morpho-syntactic structure of the Spanish language: relative constructs used for subordination. It would be interesting to explore the other ways in which L2 Spanish students produce complex discourse, such as nominal clauses or adverbial clauses, as indicated by Gili y Gaya (1961) and Delahunty and Garvey (2010).

Third, one of the corpora is comprised of only 30 textbooks, which were taken from the 345 Spanish textbooks available at the Department of French, Hispanic and Italian Studies at The University of British Columbia and which were used in North American post-secondary institutions. Although we kept the sample of textbooks as random as possible, the fact that these textbooks were taken from the same university could have jeopardized a better
selection of textbooks. For this reason, no textbooks published in Spain or Latin America were included.

Fourth, even though the electronic corpus used for this study is the largest and most recently updated of all electronic corpora considered, 90% of it is made up of written texts and only 10% is made up of transcriptions of oral form of language. Thus, the use of the target forms under study in the oral form is underrepresented. It would have been beneficial to find an electronic corpus that were large enough and recently updated and which would also contain an equal ratio of written to oral forms of text.

A final limitation to this study is that words in the electronic corpus are untagged with respect to their grammatical function. This was seen in the case of *que* [that, who], which can serve as a relative pronoun and whose frequency was valuable to this study, or as a conjunction. Another relative construct with a limitation was *como* [how], whose recorded frequency includes both grammatical functions of relative adverb and the first person singular of the verb *comer* [to eat] in the present indicative.

**Suggestions for further research**

The present study provides a baseline for further research in this area of SLA. Given the valuable, yet few existing studies regarding the teaching and use of relative constructs in actual discourse, there is a vast field that can still be explored in this area.

This study could be seen as the first step in the analysis of relative construct vis-à-vis an electronic corpus. In order to establish a better grounded tendency in the use of these constructs in actual discourse, it would be interesting to corroborate this tendency by
comparing the use of the target forms seen through different electronic corpora (i.e., *Corpus del Español* (CdE) and CUMBRE, among others).

Another interesting study that could be carried out is that of how relative constructs are used in written versus oral form of language. For this, we could use the CREA corpus because its interface allows for the selection of frequencies coming from solely oral or written forms of language.

Given the low frequencies of relative constructs in contrast with relative pronoun *que* [that, who] in the electronic corpus, we are not certain whether these target forms have always had low usage or not. In order to determine this, or to find whether these forms are tending to disappear in actual discourse, we could examine the diachronic frequencies of these relative constructs across different decades. This way, we would be able to see if this phenomenon is something that has been occurring for some time or if language is evolving, as suggested by Fernández Ramírez (1951) and Keniston (1937), meaning that some of these constructs may be going extinct, yielding a loss in the richness of the language.

Another study that could provide more conclusive tendencies as to the way relative constructs are taught to non-native speakers of Spanish is by carrying out a parallel study to this one, where a different sort of corpus of textbooks, published in Spain and Latin America, are examined vis-à-vis the frequency of use of the target forms found in the electronic corpus.
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75


Appendix A

Corpus of L2 Spanish Textbooks

Beginner level:


Intermediate level:


**Advanced level:**


## Appendix B

*Distribution of Textbooks with Prescriptive and Descriptive Characteristics*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
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<th>Descriptive</th>
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<td>¡Tu dirás!</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>¿Cómo se dice?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Mosaicos</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Así es</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>¡Claro que sí!</td>
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<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Plazas</td>
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<td>Puntos de partida</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
It is important to mention that the CREA corpus has some limitations. One of the limitations is that this particular electronic corpus will fail to provide any qualitative data for words or constructs with more than four thousand frequency hits. It is for this reason that we consulted another electronic corpus, *Corpus del Español* (CdE) [Corpus of Spanish], created and managed by Professor Mark Davies from Brigham Young University, in order to provide examples used in the Spanish-speaking world for the target forms whose frequencies were higher than four thousand hits. Even though the CdE corpus is capable of providing both quantitative and qualitative data for each of the target forms under study, the benefits of using the CREA corpus, in terms of word inventory, number of genres and themes, among others, far outweighed the benefits of using the CdE corpus or any other electronic corpus available. Another limitation of using the CREA corpus is that it does not discriminate a word inserted in the search field in terms of its function. In other words, none of the electronic corpora considered for this study was able to provide frequencies according to each function word. This affects this study in the sense that we were not able to discriminate the frequency provided for *que* [that, who] in terms of its function as a relative pronoun alone. This means that the frequency recorded for *que* [that, who] includes the functions of relative pronoun as in *El niño que está corriendo es hijo de Estela* [The boy who is running is Estela’s son] and the function of conjunction, as in *Yo pienso que debes ir al médico* [I think (that) you should go to the doctor]. However, relative pronouns *el que* [the one that, the one who] and *lo que* [that which] are not accounted for in the final frequency presented for the *que* [that, who] target form, because their frequencies were subtracted from the total.

Footnotes

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i It is important to mention that the CREA corpus has some limitations. One of the limitations is that this particular electronic corpus will fail to provide any qualitative data for words or constructs with more than four thousand frequency hits. It is for this reason that we consulted another electronic corpus, *Corpus del Español* (CdE) [Corpus of Spanish], created and managed by Professor Mark Davies from Brigham Young University, in order to provide examples used in the Spanish-speaking world for the target forms whose frequencies were higher than four thousand hits. Even though the CdE corpus is capable of providing both quantitative and qualitative data for each of the target forms under study, the benefits of using the CREA corpus, in terms of word inventory, number of genres and themes, among others, far outweighed the benefits of using the CdE corpus or any other electronic corpus available. Another limitation of using the CREA corpus is that it does not discriminate a word inserted in the search field in terms of its function. In other words, none of the electronic corpora considered for this study was able to provide frequencies according to each function word. This affects this study in the sense that we were not able to discriminate the frequency provided for *que* [that, who] in terms of its function as a relative pronoun alone. This means that the frequency recorded for *que* [that, who] includes the functions of relative pronoun as in *El niño que está corriendo es hijo de Estela* [The boy who is running is Estela’s son] and the function of conjunction, as in *Yo pienso que debes ir al médico* [I think (that) you should go to the doctor]. However, relative pronouns *el que* [the one that, the one who] and *lo que* [that which] are not accounted for in the final frequency presented for the *que* [that, who] target form, because their frequencies were subtracted from the total.
of hits for this relative pronoun, making the two target forms, *el que* [the one that, the one who] and *lo que* [that which], unique and sources of reliable information as to their use in real life. A similar case was found for *como* [how], whose frequency in the electronic corpus includes the functions of relative adverb, as in the sentence *Ella se viste como quiere* [She dresses however she likes], the first person singular of the verb *comer* [to eat], as in the sentence *Yo como frutas todos los días* [I eat fruit every day] and as a comparative adjective as in *Ella es tan alta como yo* [She is as tall as I am]. Finally, the relative adjective *cuanto* [as much as] was also attributed uniqueness by subtracting the prepositional phrase *en cuanto a* [in terms of], which has a relatively high number of occurrences for this target form.