

*Complementizer dropping in Spanish as L2 by English and German L1 speakers*  
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The present paper shows some of the results of two acceptability judgement tasks of an online study about the influence of German L1 and English L1 complementizer dropping patterns on complementizer dropping in Spanish L2. Participating speakers were Spanish L2 learners, with German L1 and English L1, and Spanish L1 speakers as the control group.

**Background:** Complementizer dropping is less frequent and more often unacceptable in Spanish than it is in English (2) or German (Wulff et al., 2014, p. 273) (1). In addition, German requires a change from SOV to SVO when the complementizer is dropped (3).

1a) Spanish L1 with *que* 'that'

Yo vi **que** Pedro besó a María  
I saw **that** Pedro kissed to Maria  
'I saw that Pedro kissed Maria'

1b) Spanish *que*-dropping

\*Yo vi  $\emptyset$  Pedro besó a María  
I saw  $\emptyset$  Pedro kissed to Maria  
'I saw Pedro kissed Maria'

2a) English L1 with *that*

I saw **that** Peter kissed Maria

2b) English L1 *that*-dropping

I saw  $\emptyset$  Peter kissed Maria

3a) German L1 SOV with *dass* 'that'

Ich sah **dass** Peter Maria **küsste**  
I saw **that** Peter Maria kissed  
'I saw that Peter kissed Maria'

3b) German L1 SVO *dass*-dropping

Ich sah  $\emptyset$  Peter **küsste** Maria  
I saw  $\emptyset$  Peter kissed Maria  
'I saw Peter kissed Maria'

In all three languages, epistemic, saying, and volitional verbs in the main clause (Brovetto, 2002; Rodríguez Riccelli, 2018; Thompson & Mulac, 1991; Torrego, 1983) are associated with higher complementizer dropping rates.

The following questions were investigated.

1. How do the dropping rates compare for the three speaker groups? Based on previous work, the highest dropping rates were expected for English L1 speakers.
2. Will German speakers transfer German word order patterns to Spanish L2? Since complementizer dropping in German allows for SVO order in the embedded clause, high dropping rates with SVO and low dropping rates with SOV were expected.
3. What verbs in the main clause promote complementizer dropping in Spanish L2? High dropping rates were expected with stimuli sentences with epistemic, saying, and volitional verbs in the main clause.

**Methodology:** An online behavioural experimental software, Gorilla.sc, administered two acceptability judgement tasks. One task presented stimuli in written form on screen, and one task used auditory stimuli. Speakers were recruited worldwide and classified according to their Spanish level.

**Findings:** 1. As expected, English L1 speakers had the highest complementizer dropping rates in Spanish L2.

2. Dropping rates for German L1 speakers were higher with SVO than with SOV, aligning with our expectations.

3. As expected, English L1 speakers favoured complementizer dropping with epistemic verbs and saying verbs. German L1 speakers favoured complementizer dropping with epistemic verbs, followed by saying verbs and volitional verbs in the main clause.

**Conclusion:** English L1 speakers showed slight transfer effects concerning the higher frequency of complementizer dropping in Spanish L2. German L1 speakers showed a slight transfer effect for word order in Spanish L2.

## References

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