Comrie and Keenan (1977) proposed the Accessibility Hierarchy (AH) for relative clause (RC) processing in (1), stating that RCs in syntactic positions to the left are easier to process than RCs in syntactic positions to the right.

(1) Subject > Direct Object > Indirect Object > Oblique > Genitive > Object of comparative

In addition, Hawkins’s (2004) Resumptive Pronoun Hierarchy Prediction (RPHP) proposes that resumptive pronouns (RPs) show up to ease the processing of the rightmost positions in the AH.

However, Spanish RCs headed by the complementizer que (‘that’) challenge the AH/RPHP in 3 respects: a) Indirect Object RCs require RPs, b) Direct Object RCs show a greater occurrence of RPs than Oblique RCs, and c) Subject RCs allow RPs. Instances of RPs mentioned in a) – c) are illustrated in (2) – (4), respectively.

(2) Río de Janeiro, que es una ciudad muy agradable pero que le falta sabor.
   ‘Rio de Janeiro, which is a very nice city but that it lacks flavor.’
   (lit: ‘… to which flavor is lacked)

(3) Una carrera que la desarrollas con la experiencia.
   ‘A career that you develop it with experience.’

(4) Se está controlando el peso, que eso también le ayuda.
   ‘He is controlling his weight, which that also helps him.’

This study is a quantitative variation analysis of RP occurrence in Spanish RCs. Data extracted from 24 hours of interviews to Peruvian native Spanish speakers and 12 hours of the Peruvian Congress sessions were used for the study.

The Goldvarb X results suggest that factors favoring the occurrence of RPs in RCs are non-restrictive RCs, sentential, animate, indefinite, and previously mentioned antecedents, and material between que and the verb.

The general contribution of this study is that it shows that linguistic phenomena considered amenable to universal principles can obey language-specific factors.