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DEPARTAMENT DE FILOGIA ANGLES I GERMANÍSTICA

**The *That*-Deletion Phenomenon in English and the
Restrictions that Constrain its Use**

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Abstract

In the English language, *that*-deletion is considered to be an optional phenomenon according to descriptive grammars. However, due to the impossibility of applying this phenomenon in all *that*-clauses, the present work aims to examine the most common contexts in which *that*-clauses can be found and identify the factors that constraint the omission of the complementiser. This dissertation focuses on both the syntactic and lexical restrictions that can be analysed in these contexts: Verb + *That* Clause, Noun + *That* Clause and Adjective + *That* Clause. Moreover, this study intends to review the pragmatic factors that either restrain or enhance the omission of the complementiser: formality vs informality of registers and written vs oral language/production. Our analysis indicates that syntactic restrictions are necessary to distinguish *that*-subordinate clauses from main clauses. In addition, formality and written speech are the pragmatic factors that restrain the omission of *that*. Because of these results, it has been concluded that the *that*-deletion phenomenon is not optional since it is motivated by grammatical and pragmatic factors.

Keywords: *That*-deletion phenomenon, syntactic and lexical restrictions, formality, written and oral speech, grammatical and pragmatic factors.

1. Introduction

In the English language, the *that*-deletion phenomenon is considered to be an optional phenomenon by descriptive grammars. Therefore, it should be possible to find two different subordinate structures when this phenomenon is applied: one with *that* and one without *that*. Nevertheless, the complementiser cannot always be omitted and, hence, *that* deletion cannot always be applied. For this reason, it is important to determine whether there are any actual restrictions to the deletion of the complementiser in *that*-subordinate clauses, and if so, which restrictions there are.

The present dissertation pretends to examine the most common contexts in which *that*-clauses can be found and try to identify the factors that constrain the deletion of the complementizer. Given the large number of contexts where *that*-clauses can appear, the study has been limited to the following subordinate contexts: Verb + *that* Clause, Noun + *that* Clause and Adjective + *that* Clause.

The aim of this study is to determine what the actual restrictions to the deletion of *that* are and describe them. What is more, the present dissertation pretends to identify the factors that constrain the omission of the complementizer. Both syntactic and lexical restrictions will be taken into account to provide further conclusions.

Furthermore, this dissertation will also consider the analysis of the pragmatic factors that either enhance or restrain the omission of the complementizer. Thus, an analysis of formal and informal registers and a review of written and oral speech will be also taken into account.

This work aims to provide further conclusions which could be of interest for future pedagogical approaches since it has been displayed that second language learners have

problems when learning how and when to use *that*-deletion in English. Thus, in Llinàs-Grau, et al. (2013), it was found that L2 Spanish and Catalan learners of English presented L1 interference in the acquisition of this phenomenon. Besides, in Llinàs-Grau and Bel (2019), it was established that only advanced students of English were able to produce *that*-deletion in a native-like manner.

In what follows, this paper will focus on the analysis of *that*-clauses and the contexts where they occur (Section 2). Afterwards, the *that*-deletion phenomenon will be explained (Section 3) and the restrictions that constrain its use will be described (Section 4). Finally, the pragmatic factors that either restrain or enhance the omission of *that* will be analysed (Section 5). Moreover, further conclusions will be reached (Section 6).

2. *That* - clauses as subordinate clauses and the different contexts where they occur

According to Quirk and Greenbaun (1982), “subordination is a non-symmetrical relation, holding between two clauses in such a way that one is a constituent or part of the other” (Quirk and Greenbaun, 1982: 3009). Moreover, there is a large number of contexts in which a subordinate clause introduced by the complementiser *that* can appear. However, it is important to note that the most typical ones are the following: *Noun + That Clause*, *Verb + That Clause* and *Adjective + That Clause*. Therefore, these contexts will be the ones taken into account in this dissertation’s analysis.

Noun + That Clause

Regarding this first context, it should be considered that there are two different types of *that*-clauses which can follow a noun. Capdevila, *et al.* (2006) claim that “the finite clauses which may follow nouns in noun phrases are relative clauses and appositive clauses” (Capdevila, *et al.*, 2006: 68). Thus, it is crucial to examine the main differences between these two different clauses since it may be hard to distinguish them when they share the same complementizer.

On the one hand, relative clauses are introduced by a relative pronoun, which is often a WH-word. Hence, according to Miller’s rules of thumb (2002), if a *that*-clause can be replaced by a WH-word that means that the clause is relative. Furthermore, relative *that*-clauses may be introduced by a relative pronoun and it may have several functions as it is explained in Capdevila, *et al.* Thus, it can either function as a subject, an object or a complement of a preposition.

(1) Subject function: The book that was written by Tolkien is *The Hobbit*.

(2) Object function: The book that I used to read when I was young was *The Hobbit*.

(3) Complement of a preposition: The book that you were looking at is my favourite one.

In addition, it should be noted that relative *clauses* can be divided into two types, regarding their relationship with the head noun. Thus, there exists a distinction between *restrictive relative clauses* and *non-restrictive relative clauses*.

According to Capdevila *et al*, the former “have a stronger, defining link with the head noun and add information which is essential to identify the head noun” whereas the latter “add information which is not essential to identify the head noun and may be omitted without affecting the essential meaning of the head noun” (2006: 68). What is more, in non-restrictive relative clauses, it is not usually possible to use *that* as a relative pronoun and they are always written between commas. This can be observed in the following examples:

- *Restrictive relative clause*:

(4a) *The person that we met before was my cousin.*

- *Non-restrictive relative clause*:

(4b) *John, who is that boy over there, is my cousin.*

Nevertheless, according to Huddleston and Pullum, some speakers may allow supplementary (non-restrictive) *that-clauses* (2002: 1052). It is important to consider this example:

(5) *The patas monkey, that spends almost all of its time in open grassland, adopts just some tactics.*

(Example from Huddleston and Pullum, 2002: 1052)

On the other hand, there is another kind of finite clause that can modify a Noun phrase. Capdevila *et al.* name it the *appositive clause*. They point out that relative clauses are different from appositive clauses although they look similar (2006: 69). Moreover, they state that in appositive clauses “the element *that*, which introduces them, does not have a function in the clause” since it is a conjunction and not a relative pronoun (2006: 69). An example of this type of clause can be found below:

(6) *The news that Bush has won the American elections has disappointed many people*
(Example from Capdevila, *et al.*, 2006: 69).

Furthermore, in these clauses, the head noun is expanded by the clause. That means that they refer to the same concept.

Finally, it should be considered that, knowing the differences between the two types of *that*-clauses that follow a noun will be crucial to determine some syntactic restrictions on the deletion of *that*.

Verb + That Clause

Concerning this context, first, it is crucial to understand that only a content subordinate clause may modify a verb. According to Huddleston and Pullum (2005), declarative content clauses are subordinate clauses that mainly function as a complement of a verb, a noun, an adjective or a preposition (Huddleston and Pullum, 2005: 176). Because of this, some authors like Miller (2002) call them *complement clauses*. However, it should be pointed out that not all types of verbs permit the subordinator *that*. For instance, there are some verbs that need a subordinator that introduces a question, like *if* or a WH-word. This can be observed in this example:

(7a) *I wonder *that John will help us with our school project.*

(7b) *I wonder if John will help us with our school project.*

Moreover, Huddleston and Pullum (2002) make a distinction between expandable and non-expandable *that*-clauses (Huddleston and Pullum, 2002: 604). Non –expandable content clauses do not permit the complementizer *that*. On the other hand, those clauses introduced by the subordinator *that* are called expandable. Considering this, the analysis of this study will only focus on expandable clauses. Both types of clauses are exemplified below:

Expandable content clause:

(8) *I know (that) you've done your best.*

Non-expandable content clause:

(9) *We left before the meeting ended.*

(Examples from Huddleston and Pullum, 2002: 604)

Furthermore, *that*-content clauses usually fulfil the function of the Direct Object of the main clause as it can be observed in the following examples.

(10) *Elizabeth regretted that she had met Wickham.*

(11) *Catherine feared that the Abbey was haunted*

(Examples from Miller, 2002: 63).

Nevertheless, *that*-content clauses can also occur before the verb and then they function as the Subject of the main clause, as can be seen in this example.

(12) *That Anne was in conversation with Mr Elliott dismayed Captain Wentworth* (Miller, 2002: 63).

Finally, it is important to understand that the change in position of the content clause will be crucial to determine several syntactic restrictions on the deletion of the complementizer *that*.

Adjective + That Clause

With respect to this third context, it is important to observe that *that*-content clauses can follow an adjective and become its complement. Moreover, as it is explained in Huddleston and Pullum, only adjectives in predicative function can take complements with the form of *that*-content clauses (2002: 964). This can be observed in the following examples:

- Attributive use of adjectives:

(13a) *An afraid man.*

(13b) **The afraid that he was a man.*

- Predicative use of adjectives:

(14) *He is afraid that he won't be given a second chance.*

(15) *It is certain that he is being victimised.*

(Examples from Huddleston and Pullum, 2002: 964)

In (14), the *that*-clause is a complement to an adjective phrase whereas, in (15), the clause functions as an extraposed subject. Furthermore, Quirk and Greenbaum maintain that *that*-content clauses which follow an adjective may contain an indicative verb, a putative should or a subjunctive verb.

a) Indicative verb:

(16) *I am sure that he is here now.*

b) Putative should:

(17) *I was angry that he should ignore me.*

c) Subjunctive verb:

(18) *I was adamant that he be appointed. (Formal British English)*

(Examples from Quirk and Greenbaum, 1982: 355)

According to them, an indicative verb is used if the adjective is factual. An indicative verb or putative should is used if the adjective is emotive and related to attitude. Finally, a subjunctive verb or *should* is used when the adjective is volitional. Thus, when it expresses indirectly a command (1982: 355). It is important to observe that the different types of adjectives that introduce a *that*-clause will be essential to determine the restrictions on the deletion of the complementizer *that* in the context *A + That-Clause*.

3. The *that*-deletion phenomenon

In the English language, the *that*-deletion phenomenon consists of the possibility of omitting the complementiser in a *that*-subordinate clause. This results in two alternative subordinate structures: one with *that* and one without *that*. In some *that*-clauses the phenomenon can be optionally applied, as it can be observed in these examples:

- Noun + *That*-clause:

(19) The Grammar (that) I used to read was Huddleston and Pullum's. (Relative Clause)

(20) The fact (that) her job was illegal did not seem to worry Marisa. (Appositive Clause)

- Verb + *That*-clause:

(21) I think (that) my mother could help you with your homework. (Content Clause)

- Adjective + *That*-clause:

(22) Helena is conscious (that) she might not be hired again. (Content Clause)

Moreover, it should be considered, that in English, the complementizer *that* cannot be always omitted in those contexts presented in section 2. As explained in the introduction, the aim of this study is to determine what the actual restrictions to the deletion of *that* are in those contexts. What is more, the present dissertation pretends to identify the factors that constraint the omission of *that* and provide further conclusions.

4. The restrictions that constrain *that*-deletion

As Llinàs-Grau and Fernandez-Sanchez (2011) point out, the *that*-deletion phenomenon is commonly understood to be optional. However, it should be considered that there are several contexts in which the presence of the complementiser is not optional (Llinàs-Grau and Fernandez- Sanchez, 2011: 4). For this reason, in order to identify the factors that constraint the omission of the complementiser, it is important to determine what the actual restrictions on this phenomenon are. The present section will focus on the syntactic and lexical restrictions on the omission of *that*.

4.1. Syntactic restrictions

There are several syntactic restrictions that restrain the acceptance of a null *that*. The most typical ones can be found in these colligations which have been presented and exemplified in the preceding sections: Noun + *That*-clause, Verb + *That*-clause and Adjective + *That*-clause. Moreover, that means that some *that*-clauses must be headed by the complementiser *that* since the English grammar constrains its deletion, and that is why these restrictions are considered to be syntactic. Therefore, the omission of the *that* complementiser in those contexts is not possible since that would lead to ungrammaticality.

4.1.1. Verb + *That*-clause

Considering this first subordinate context, it must be noted that several authors have pointed out that there are various restrictions to the omission of the complementiser in several contexts. In order to analyse and describe the contexts in which those restrictions can be found, this dissertation will focus on the analysis from Boskovic and Lasnik (2003), Llinàs-Grau and Fernández -Sánchez (2011) and Huddleston and Pullum (2002).

Firstly, in Boskovic and Lasnik (2003), there is a list of some verbal structures in which the deletion of *that* is not possible due to syntactic constraints. The authors claim that a null *that* cannot be licensed in the following constructions: subject clauses (23), topicalization (24), pseudo-clefting (25), gapping (26), Right Node Raising (27) and extraposition (28) (2003: 529). These constructions are exemplified below:

(23) *(That) John came *didn't surprise Mary.*

(Example from Llinàs-Grau and Fernández Sanchez, 2011: 4).

(24) *(That) John likes Mary Jane *didn't believe.*

(25) *What the students believe is* *(that) they will pass the exam.

(26) *Mary believed* (that) Peter finished school *and Bill* *(that) Peter got a job.

(27) *They suspected and we believed* *(that) Peter would visit the hospital.

(28) *It seemed at the time* *(that) David had left.

(Examples from Boskovic and Lasnik, 2003: 529)

Regarding subject clauses, Llinàs- Grau and Fernández-Sánchez point out that a null complementiser cannot appear in content clauses “occupying a preverbal position” (2011: 4). Furthermore, Huddleston and Pullum claim that the use of *that* is obligatory when the content clause is the subject of the main clause or otherwise precedes the verb from the main clause (2002: 952). This is reflected in the following examples and it is also observed in the topicalization construction (24):

(23b) *(That) they were lying *is now quite obvious.*

(23c) * *But* (that) he really intended to cheat us *I still can't believe (Huddleston and Pullum, 2002: 952).*

In sentences (23b) and (23c), the *that*-clause functions as the subject of the main clause. In these examples, the subordinate complementiser cannot be omitted. What is more, *that* is needed to “signal the start of a subordinate clause (2002: 952). For this reason, the absence of *that* in these previous contexts would suppose that the subordinate clause is perceived as a main clause in the first two examples, and that would mean that these sentences are ungrammatical. In (23c), in addition, a null *that* cannot appear since the complementiser is needed to indicate that it is not possible to find two main clauses in a complex sentence. Therefore, the absence of *that* in 1c would indicate that *he really intended to cheat us* is a main clause introduced by a coordinating conjunction and that it is followed by another main clause (*I still can believe*). Since this would not be a grammatical construction, the complementiser is, hence, obligatory.

Furthermore, the same happens with all topicalization constructions, in which the complementiser is needed to distinguish the subordinate clause from the main clause. Thus, in (24) a null *that* cannot appear for it would be impossible to identify the subordinate *that*-content clause.

Concerning pseudo-clefting (25), in this context the complementiser is needed because this construction was derived from a construction in which the *that*-content clause was the Subject of the main clause. This is exemplified in (25b). Therefore, since in Subject content clauses the complementiser cannot be omitted, the same happens with their derived construction.

(25) *What the students believe is *(that) they will pass the exam.*

(25b) **(That) they will pass the exam is what the students believe.*

Regarding gapping (26), in this context there is a coordinating conjunction that separates two clauses. What is more, the verb that introduces the subordinate content

clause in the second main clause is omitted. Thus, the complementiser is obligatory since a noun phrase cannot follow a subordinate clause with a null complementiser in this context. This can be observed in (26b):

(26b) ... *and Bill *(that) Peter got a job.*

In addition, in a Right Node Raising context like (27) it is possible to find a coordinate structure that joins two verbs together and these two verbs introduce a subordinate content clause. Therefore, since the subordinate clause is introduced by both verbs, the complementiser is obligatory. Otherwise, if the complementiser was deleted, that would mean that the second verb from the coordinate should be the one introducing the subordinate clause, as it can be seen in (27b). However, this is not a proper interpretation of two coordinate verbs that introduce a subordinate clause and, hence, the sentence would be ungrammatical.

(27b) *[They suspected and [we believed (that) Peter would visit the hospital].

Regarding the last syntactic restriction presented by Boskovic and Lasnik, it should be noted that in an extraposed context like (28), in which there is a linking verb like *seem*, the complementiser cannot be omitted since there is a prepositional phrase between the main verb of the matrix clause and the subordinate clause. Thus, Huddleston and Pullum claim that the complementiser cannot be deleted if “the content clause is separated from the verb by another phrase” (2002: 953). What is more, the deletion of the complementiser is not possible since it is necessary to know where the subordinate content clause starts. Nevertheless, it is possible to use a null complementiser in an extraposed construction like (28b), in which the content clause is not separated from the main verb.

(28b) It seemed (that) I was mistaken.

In addition to this point, Llinàs Grau and Fernández-Sánchez (2011) note that some authors like Quirk and Greenbaum (1982) “point out the ungrammaticality of complementiser deletion in non-adjacent V-CP (Verb – Complementizer Phrase) constructions” (2011: 5). This also refers to structures in which the complementiser is separated from the main verb, and hence, it is needed to determine where the content clause starts. Thus, Huddleston and Pullum claim that in these contexts “*that* signals that the phrase belongs in the subordinate clause, not the matrix clause”.

These are the examples from Quirk and Greenbaum (1982) used by Llinàs-Grau and Fernández-Sánchez (2011):

(29a) We had hoped, in a moment of optimism, that the government would look favourably on our case.

(29b) *We had hoped, in a moment of optimism, the government would look favourably on our case.

(Examples from Llinàs-Grau and Fernández-Sánchez, 2011: 5)

Finally, Huddleston and Pullum (2002) point out that there is another syntactic restriction to the deletion of the complementiser. According to them, the complementiser cannot be omitted if the content clause is an adjunct. This syntactic restriction is explained and exemplified by means of the following sentence (2002: 952):

(30) *He appealed to us to bring his case to the attention of the authorities *(that) justice might be done.*

In this case, the authors claim that the complementiser “is needed to show the relation of *justice might be done* to the matrix structure” (2002: 952). Therefore, *that* is used here to indicate that the subordinate clause is an adjunct which adds extra

information to the matrix clause. Besides, the complementiser is used obligatorily in order to separate the main clause from the additional information expressed through the subordinate *that*-clause.

4.1.2. Noun + *That*-Clause

Regarding this second context, it should be considered that there are syntactic restrictions to the *that*-deletion phenomenon in both relative and appositive clauses. Both of them will be analysed in this section.

Relative Clauses

According to Huddleston and Pullum (2002), there are three restrictions on the omission of the complementiser that can be found in relative clauses. They claim that in the following cases, “the subordinator cannot be omitted from a *that* relative without loss of grammaticality” (2002: 1055).

Firstly, it should be noted that the complementiser cannot be omitted in Subject relative clauses, since “the relativised element is subject of the relative clause” (2002:1055). This can be observed in the following examples:

(31a) The car [that hit us] was Ed’s.

(31b) *The car [_ hit us] was Ed’s.

(Examples from Huddleston and Pullum, 2002: 1055)

As Huddleston and Pullum claim, “when the subject itself is the relativised element, and hence missing, *that* must be retained as in (31b) (2002: 1055). What is more, “the prohibition on dropping *that* with relativised subjects is associated to the need to distinguish the subordinate relative clause from the matrix predicate” (2002: 1055) Therefore, in this context, if the complementiser were deleted, that would imply that “*the*

car hit us” is an ungrammatical sentence followed by a VP (*was Ed’s*). For this reason, *that* cannot be deleted in Subject relative clauses, since the complementiser is crucial to differentiate the subordinate clause from the main clause or matrix clause.

On the other hand, it is possible to delete the complementiser in object relative clauses, since the *that* clause has an explicit subject, and therefore, the complementiser is no longer obligatory. Thus, the subject from the subordinate clause can appear with a null complementiser as can be seen in this example:

(32) *The car [(that) I bought] was a Mercedes.*

According to Boskovic and Lasnik, it is possible to have a null complementiser in relative clauses provided that it is adjacent to the head noun as it can be seen in the previous example (Boskovic and Lasnik, 2003 :535).

Secondly, another restriction in relative clauses can be found in contexts where the complementiser is not adjacent to the subject of the subordinate clause, as it happens in this sentence.

(33) *I found I needed a file [that only the day before I had sent to be shredded].*

(Example from Huddleston and Pullum, 2002: 1055)

As maintained by Huddleston and Pullum, “*that* is needed to mark the beginning of the subordinate clause” (2002: 1055). Therefore, without the complementiser, the sentence could be misinterpreted since it would seem that the adjunct “*only the day before*” belonged to the main clause and not to a relative clause. In order to avoid this confusion, *that* will always be obligatory in these types of contexts.

Thirdly, it is important to consider that the complementiser cannot be omitted in supplementary or non-restrictive relative clauses, which are explained and exemplified in section 2. It is important to consider this example:

(34) *The patas monkey, that spends almost all of its time in open grassland, adopts just some tactics.* (Huddleston and Pullum, 2002: 1052)

Again, *that* is necessary in this context due to the fact that it is essential to mark the beginning of the *that-clause*. Note that without the complementiser “*spends*” would be the main verb from the matrix clause and the sentence would be ungrammatical since after that verbal predicate there is another one (*adopts*) and that is not possible in English. In the main clause, it is only possible to have one verbal predicate unless there is another subordinate or a coordinate clause. What is more, there would be also a comma between the subject and the predicate, and this would not be possible because the subject is never separated by the predicate with a comma.

Appositive Clauses

Concerning appositive clauses, Boskovic and Lasnik (2003) claim that a null C cannot be the complement of a noun in an appositive clause since they assume that “the null C can be hosted only by [+ V] elements” (2003: 535). For this reason, they consider the following sentences ungrammatical:

(35a) **I heard about the proof C Mary did it.*

(35b) **I heard about the fact C Mary did it*

(Examples from Boskovic and Lasnik, 2003: 534).

This assumption is not accurate considering that there is some evidence of several appositive clauses that are headed by a null complementiser. For instance, according to

the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, it is possible to produce a sentence like the following:

(36) *He refused to help me, despite the fact (that) he knew I was not feeling well.*

Therefore, for this reason, it is not possible to maintain that there is a general restriction to the omission of the *that-complementiser* in appositive clauses. Nevertheless, there are indeed some syntactic restrictions dealing with the omission of the complementiser in appositive clauses that are to be considered below.

Until now, all the examples given so far are examples of integrated *that*-clauses. However, it should be noted that an appositive clause may be also postposed as it can be observed in these examples:

(37a) *The possibility can't be ruled out that she will call an early election.*

(37b) *He presented evidence to the commission that the fire was deliberately lit.*

(Examples from Huddleston and Pullum 2002: 966)

In those two examples, it seems like *that* cannot be omitted since the appositive clause does not appear next to the heading nouns. Moreover, omitting the complementiser in these previous sentences is not possible since it would affect the comprehensibility of the main sentence. Thus, the fact that the head noun is not adjacent to an appositive clause is a restriction to the omission of the complementiser since omitting it would suppose a difficulty to speakers when distinguishing the subordinate *that* clause from the matrix clause.

4.1.3 Adjective + *That*-clause

Concerning this last subordinate context, it is important to consider that in the vast majority of cases, it will be possible to use a null *that* to introduce a subordinate *that*-clause. However, Quirk *et al.* (1985) maintain that there is a distinguished construction in which a null *that* is not usually accepted. This happens when the “*that*-clause is an extraposed subject” (Quirk *et al.*, 1985: 1224). What is more, *that* deletion is not accepted when the *that*-clause has a putative *should* or a subjunctive verb in an extraposed construction, as it can be seen in (38a) and (38b).

(38a) *It is essential *(that) the ban should be lifted tomorrow.*

(38b) *It is essential *(that) the ban be lifted tomorrow.*

(Examples from Quirk *et al.*, 1985: 1224)

In those examples, both the putative *should* and the verb *to be* in subjunctive mode are the reasons why the complementiser cannot be deleted. Moreover, the complementiser is needed in order to signal that “the ban (should) be lifted tomorrow” belongs to a subordinate clause and not to the matrix clause.

4.1.4. Summary of syntactic restrictions

As it has been analysed so far, there are different syntactic restrictions to the omission of the complementiser. Nevertheless, it can be concluded all the restrictions are driven by the fact that, in all the contexts presented, it is necessary to mark the beginning of the *that*-clause in order to distinguish it from the main clause. This general syntactic restriction is important to consider since it can be found in all the three contexts examined in section 4.1.

4.2. Lexical restrictions

Apart from syntactic restrictions, it should be also considered that there are some restrictions on the *that-deletion* phenomenon that are not grammar specific but are rather induced by the meaning of the head noun, or the verb or adjective that precedes the subordinate clause. In other words, it is also possible to find lexical restrictions on the *that-deletion* phenomenon in the following contexts, presented and exemplified in section 2: Noun + *That*-clause, Verb + *That*-clause and Adjective + *That*-clause. Hence, in these contexts, some *that-clauses* cannot be headed by a null complementiser due to lexical constraints which cannot be explained by means of syntax.

4.2.1. Verb + *That*-clause

As maintained by Llinàs-Grau and Fernández-Sánchez (2011), “there are some verbs which take object complement clauses that do not allow complementiser deletion”. Franks claims that this is true of <non-bridge> verbs” (2011: 7). What is more, Doherty (1993) claims that these are a small group of verbs that express “manner of speech.” He includes the following list of verbs in his work: *murmur, whisper, quip, grieve, reflect, gloat, scream, squeal, whistle and chuckle* (Doherty, 1993: 42). All these verbs, therefore, will not accept a null complementiser in a *that*-content clause as it can be observed in these examples:

(39) *Jason whispered *(that) the phoenix had escaped.* (Adger, 2003: 239)

(40) *Billy quipped *(that) he saw a ghost.* (Llinàs-Grau and Fernández-Sánchez, 2011: 7)

(41) *He grieved *(that) she never returned.* (Doherty, 1993: 42)

(42) *They reflected *(that) they were very lucky.* (Doherty, 1993: 42)

(43) *She gloated *(that) he had been fired.* (Doherty, 1993: 42)

(44) *Mary screamed *(that) there was a mouse on the table.* (Doherty, 1993: 42)

(45) *John squealed *(that) his finger was caught in the door.* (Doherty, 1993: 42)

4.2.2 Noun + *That*-clause

Regarding this context, it should be considered that there are no lexical restrictions in relative clauses. On the other hand, it is possible to find lexical restrictions in appositive clauses.

According to Hidarto and Adrianto (2015), there is a group of head nouns that express emotions. Some words included in this group are the following: *happiness*, *pride* and *terror*. All these nouns have a “zero percentage of *that* omission”. However, the authors maintain that these head nouns “have extremely few occurrences of noun complement clauses” (Hidarto and Adrianto, 2015: 11). This means that these kinds of nouns hardly ever precede an appositive clause and that is why the complementiser cannot be omitted since there are only exceptional instances of *that*-clauses followed by nouns that express emotions. This restriction can be observed in the sentences from below:

(46) Meredith might only remember happiness **(that) Connie had come (...)*

(47) Hayblainers took great pride **(that) everyone carried their own share of the work (...)*

(48) Our terror **(that) something like this might happen again.*

(Examples from Hidarto and Adrianto, 2015: 18)

Moreover, the authors claim that there is one category of nouns that express “evidence” such as *sign*, *clue*, *proof*, *doubt* or *fact*. These nouns offer a high percentage of *that* omission in appositive clauses. However, “the nouns in all other categories show only relatively low percentages of *that* omission” (Hidarto and Adrianto, 2015: 10)

Therefore, *that*-omission is mostly found in a few nouns that express “evidence”. Nevertheless, it is also possible to find an appositive clause introduced by a null complementiser after other noun classes although it is not typical. For example, nouns that express “beliefs, ideas or wishes” can precede an appositive clause with a null complementiser. This can be observed in this example:

(49) *A belief they could face threats.*

(Example from Hidarto and Adrianto, 2015: 17)

4.2.3. Adjective + *That*-Clause

In section 4.1.3. it was concluded that, in the context Adjective + *That*-Clause, the complementiser could not be omitted if the content *that*-clause was an extraposed subject and had a putative *should* or a subjunctive verb.

It should be noted that some groups of adjectives can only take content-*that* clauses as their complements if the subordinate clause is an extraposed subject. Moreover, in Quirk *et al.* (1985) these adjectives are presented as those which express “modality or volition” and those which are mainly considered to be “emotive” (1985: 1224).

Regarding the first group, the *that*-clause may have a putative *should* or a subjunctive verb. These are the adjectives that express modality or volition: *essential, appropriate, imperative, important, necessary, obligatory, proper, etc.*

(50a) It is important **(that) John should come tomorrow.*

(50b) *John is important (*that*) he should come tomorrow.

As it can be observed, these adjectives cannot take a content-*that* clause unless this is an extraposed subject. Therefore, this is a lexical restriction since these adjectives,

due to their semantic meaning, must appear in a context in which a null *that* is not accepted.

The same happens with the “emotive” adjectives if a putative *should* is used. These are some examples to bear in mind: *awkward, extraordinary, peculiar, annoying, depressing, disappointing, surprising, etc.*

(51a) It is disappointing *(that) John should be always late.

(51b) *He is disappointing that John should be always late.

5. Pragmatic factors that restrain the omission of the complementiser

Until now, both the lexical and syntactic restrictions that can be found on the *that-deletion* phenomenon have been analysed. However, it is important to note that there are other factors that either restrain or enhance the omission of the complementiser. Therefore, there are some cases in which it is either possible to delete the complementiser or not, but English native speakers will usually use one structure rather than the other. What is more, their choice differs depending on the formality of registers and also on the distinction between written and oral speech. The present section pretends to determine what the tendencies are in native speakers regarding the omission of the complementiser in formal and informal registers and written and oral speech.

5.1. Formal and informal registers

Regarding formality in registers, Llinàs-Grau and Fernández-Sánchez point out that formal registers favour the retention of the complementiser whereas informal registers disfavour its presence (2011: 9). According to them, this happens because formal language implies a more careful choice of words and phrases. Thus, “in a formal style, specific verbs may be chosen, which require the presence of *that*, and *that* insertion may be favoured” (2011: 11). On the other hand, they state that “informal language tends to be simpler, sentences are shorter and words and phrases are pronounced in a shortened way, if the medium is oral” (2011: 10). Therefore, this is why *that*-deletion is more common in an informal register. The difference between formal and informal registers regarding the omission of the complementiser can be observed in the following examples:

- Formal register: (52) Mr Gorbachev agreed that the NATO and the Warsaw Pact would be maintained and that the transatlantic members of the Western Alliance would play a vital role in the common European home. (NEWS) (Biber, *et al.*, 1999: 682)
- Informal register: (53) I've become so numb (that) I can't feel you there. (SONG)

5.2. Written and Oral Speech

With respect to the analysis of written and oral speech, Biber *et al.* (1999) point out that “in conversation, the omission of *that* is the norm, while the retention of *that* is exceptional” (Biber, *et al.*, 1999: 680) On the other hand, they maintain that “retention of *that* is the norm in academic prose” (1999: 680). According to them, oral speech presents the following grammatical characteristics which enhance the omission of the complementiser:

- The use of *think* or *say* as the main clause verb versus other less common verbs.
- The occurrence of co-referential subjects in the main clause and *that*-clause.
- The occurrence of a personal pronoun subject versus a noun-headed phrase in the *that*-clause.

These characteristics are illustrated in the following examples:

(54) *I think I'll make a shopping list today.*

(55) *I thought I might look.*

(56) *I said I bought them yesterday.*

(Examples from Biber, *et al.*, 1999: 681)

Regarding written speech, the authors state that it is rare to find clauses with *that*-omission in academic prose. This happens because *that*-retention is favoured by the following grammatical characteristics that are found especially in written speech:

- The use of coordinated *that*-clauses
- The use of the passive voice in the main clause.
- The presence of an intervening noun phrase between the main clause verb and the *that*-clause.

These characteristics can be observed in the following examples:

(57) *The major conclusion of both studies was that the nation and particularly the state of Florida must quickly reduce their large reliance on foreign oil and that conservation measures and increased reliance on the abundant national supply of coal were the major activities* (Use of coordinated structures)

(58) Western leaders were convinced that NATO's steadfastness had been crucial in bringing the communist bloc in from the cold. (Passive)

(59) The second U.S. reaction was to reassure the West Germans that Washington was happy to leave the details in Bonn's hands. (Intervening noun phrase)

(Examples from Biber, *et al.*, 1999: 682).

6. Conclusion

To conclude, it was pointed out that *that*-deletion was considered to be an optional phenomenon which consisted of having the possibility of omitting the complementiser in a *that*-clause. Nevertheless, after analysing the different syntactic and lexical restrictions on the omission of the complementiser and the pragmatic factors that either restrain or enhance the omission of *that*, it can be concluded that this phenomenon is not always optional but is rather restrained in many contexts.

As stated in section 4.1, there are some syntactic constructions that never allow *that*-deletion in the following contexts: Verb + *that*-clause, Noun + *that*-clause and Adjective + *that*-clause. It is important to conclude that in these contexts, the complementiser is obligatory since it is used to mark the beginning of the *that*-clause. Therefore, the syntactic restrictions are necessary in all constructions examined in this section in order to distinguish the *that*-subordinate clause from the main clause, and hence, avoid misunderstandings among speakers.

Furthermore, lexical restrictions can also be found in the previous contexts. In section 4.2 it was demonstrated that some verbs, nouns and adjectives can never precede a *that*-subordinate clause which is lacking an overt *that* due to their semantic meaning. What is more, it was established that some manner of speaking verbs, some nouns that express *emotions* and some adjectives which are *emotive* or either express modality or volition never take a null-*that*.

Regarding the pragmatic factors that either restrain or enhance the omission of the complementiser, in section 5 it was established that formal registers favour the retention of the complementiser whereas informal registers favour its omission. Moreover, it was

also concluded that *that*-retention is typical from written speech whereas it is exceptional in oral speech.

Finally, it is important to state that further studies need to be carried out dealing with the acquisition of *that*-deletion among non-native English speakers. Hence, teaching materials should be updated with new information on both syntactic and lexical restrictions and the pragmatic factors that restrain the deletion of *that*. This might help second language learners to learn to use *that*-deletion in a pragmatically proper way.

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