

Evidence of binarism in Mexican Spanish spatial deixis

Ricardo Maldonado, Sara Stradioto

Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México

msoto@unam.mx, sarastradioto@gmail.com

Contrary to the range of studies which affirm that adverbial demonstratives in Spanish is organized in a ternary basis (Alonso 1968; Hottenroth 1982; Anderson & Keenan 1985; Alarcos Llorach 2001; RAE 2009), this study presents data suggesting that they operate in a binary manner in Mexican Spanish. The classic opposition, that in which *aquí* and *acá* indicate nearby distances or the speaker's domain, *ahí* indicates medial distances or the hearer's domain, and *allí* and *allá* indicate far away distances, is refuted by a system wherein *ahí* is a generic form with access shared by speaker and hearer while other forms are contrasted by proximity and distance.

Using a 3D game displayed on virtual-reality headset Oculus Rift, two experiments were conducted to test the base values of each deictic adverbial form. The test design was based on the dyads of Jungbluth (2005) to analyze distance-oriented and person-oriented deixis. The first experiment checked the interpretation of each demonstrative for interference between physical distance and discourse. The interactions showed that the base value of *ahí*, as opposed to what had been affirmed in prior studies, is not distance-oriented like *aquí*, *acá*, *allí*, and *allá*, but rather a locative attenuation was observed in this particle favoring anaphora. The second experiment sought to test if the hearer's location interferes with adverbial demonstrative selection in Mexican Spanish, a hypothesis that could not be corroborated.

The study allows for the conclusion that the deictic system of Mexican Spanish has a binary base, not a ternary one, extending the external role from adverbial demonstratives to *ahí*. The binary opposition is distributed with internal variations in distance and focus between the forms *aquí*, *acá*, *allí* and *allá*. No distinct variation for intermediate distances was observed for this variety of Spanish.

Alarcos Llorach, E. 2001. *Gramática de la lengua española*. Madrid: Espasa Calpe.

Alonso, M. 1968. *Gramática del español contemporáneo*. Madrid: Guadarrama.

Anderson, S.R. & E.L. Keenan. 1985. Deixis. T. Shopen (ed.), *Language Typology and Syntactic Fieldwork Vol. 3*, 259–308. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hottenroth, P. M. 1982. The System of Local Deixis in Spanish. J. Weissenborn & W. Klein (eds.), *Here and There: Cross-Linguistic Studies on Deixis and*

- Demonstration*, 133–153. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Jungbluth, K. 2005. *Pragmatik der Demonstrativpromina in den iberoromanischen Sprachen*. Tübingen: Niemeyer.
- RAE. 2009. *Nueva gramática de la lengua española*. Madrid: Espasa Libros.