

Different Cognitive Processes in Selecting Spatial Demonstratives: A Cross-Linguistic Experimental Survey

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Abstract : Our research conducts a cross-linguistic experimental investigation into the cognitive processes involved in distance judgment necessary for selecting demonstratives in deictic usage. Speakers may consider the addressee's judgment or apply certain criteria for distance judgment when they produce demonstratives. While it can be assumed that there are language and cultural differences, it remains unclear how these differences manifest across languages. This research conducted online experiments involving speakers of six languages—Japanese, Spanish, Irish, English, Italian, and French—in which a wide variety of drawings were presented on a screen, varying conditions from three perspectives: addressee, comparisons, and standard. The results of the experiments revealed various distinct features associated with demonstratives in each language, highlighting differences from a comparative standpoint. For one thing, there was an influence of a specific reference point (i.e., Standard) on the selection in Japanese and Spanish, whereas there was relatively an influence of competitors in English and Italian.

Keywords : demonstratives, cross-linguistic experiment, distance judgment, social cognition

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