

Spatial Demonstratives and Perceptual Space: Describing and remembering object location

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Spatial demonstratives – terms including *this* and *that* – are among the most common words across all languages. Yet, there are considerable differences between languages in how demonstratives carve up space and the object characteristics they can refer to, challenging the idea that the mapping between spatial demonstratives and the vision and action systems is universal. Overviewing findings from multiple experiments, I show direct parallels between spatial demonstrative usage in English and (non-linguistic) memory for object location, indicating close connections between the language of space and non-linguistic spatial representation. Spatial demonstrative choice in English and immediate memory for object location are affected by a range of parameters – distance, ownership, visibility and familiarity - that are lexicalized in the demonstrative systems of some other languages. The results support a common set of constraints on language used to talk about space and on (non-linguistic) spatial representation itself. While demonstrative systems are not diagnostic of the parameters that affect demonstrative use in a language, demonstrative systems across languages may emerge from basic distinctions in the representation and memory for object location. In turn, these distinctions offer a building block from which non-spatial uses of demonstratives can develop.