Exploring Hungarian and Dutch Gestural Demonstratives

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Abstract: This paper examines various hypotheses regarding the choice of Hungarian and Dutch proximal and distal gestural demonstratives, i.e., demonstratives accompanied by a pointing gesture, in an experimental framework. Using the so-called scripted dialogue technique, the study demonstrates that there is a significant difference between the choice of gestural demonstratives that depends on the nature of the context (non-contrastive vs. contrastive). In non-contrastive contexts accessibility as a factor is ruled out, but the traditional factor of distance plays a crucial role. In contrastive contexts the pattern of demonstratives changes, i.e., in contrastive contexts distance as a factor competes with some other factors.

Keywords: deixis, proximal and distal, gestural demonstratives, Hungarian, Dutch.

1. Introduction

Deixis is an intriguing linguistic phenomenon at the semantics/pragmatics interface; it is extremely widespread in everyday speech. “The term deixis refers to a class of linguistic expressions that are used to indicate elements of the situational and/or discourse context, including the speech participants and the time and location of the current speech event” (Diessel 2012, 2408). Demonstratives form a central issue within studies on deixis. In this paper the results of a production experiment are presented, investigating the use of Dutch and Hungarian demonstratives, and more specifically,

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those uses of demonstratives where some sort of extra-linguistic gesture is present. The relevant literature disagrees on the factors influencing the choice of demonstratives. Recently the traditional factor of distance has been challenged, and new factors, such as accessibility or salience, have been suggested to replace distance. We examined three factors—distance, accessibility and contrastiveness—in two typologically different languages. To broaden the scope of the available data sources we attempted to reinforce the results of previous experiments (see, for instance, Tóth 2014b for English results) by investigating Hungarian, which belongs to the Finno-Ugric language family, and comparing the results with data on Dutch, a Germanic language, obtained in an identical experimental setting.

2. Demonstratives in Dutch and Hungarian

Most languages have a two-way deictic system (English), but in other languages (e.g., Irish) there is a three-way distinction (Diessel 2012). Dutch and Hungarian contain two demonstrative terms, traditionally referred to as proximals and distals. In Dutch, depending on gender and plurality, dit (het-words) and deze (de-words) are proximals, plural deze; dat (het-words) and die (de-words) are distals, plural die.

(1) (a) Dit \textit{meisje}  
\text{this-DEM.PROX.SG.FEM} \text{girl}  
kan \text{goed} \text{skateboarden.}  
\text{can-PRESENT.3SG} \text{good} \text{skateboard}  
\textit{This girl can skateboard well.}”

(b) Deze \textit{voetbalfinale}  
\text{this-DEM.PROX.SG.FEM} \text{soccer final}  
\textit{is very exciting}  
\textit{This soccer final is very exciting.”}

(c) Deze \textit{fietsen}  
\text{this-DEM.PROX.PL.} \text{bike-PL}  
\textit{are expensive}  
\textit{These bikes are expensive.”}

(2) (a) \textit{Die jurk} \text{wordt verkocht in de winkel.}  
\text{that-DEM.DIST.SG.FEM} \text{dress} \text{is sold in the shop}  
\textit{That dress is being sold at the shop.”}

(b) De \textit{jongen} \text{droomt over dat meisje.}  
\text{the boy} \text{dream-PRES.3SG} \text{about that-DEM.DIST.SG girl}  
\textit{The boy dreams about that girl.”}
(c) De vrouw zou graag die surfplanken uitproberen.
   the woman would like those-Dem.Dist.Pl. surfboard.Pl. try
   “The woman would like to try those surfboards.”

In Hungarian ez “this” and ezek “these” are proximal demonstratives, whereas az “that” and azok “those” are distals.

(3) (a) Ezt/ezeket kérem.
      this/these-Dem.Prox.Acc.Sg./Pl. want
      “I want this/these.”

(b) Ez a kule nyitja az ajtót.
    this-Dem.Prox.Sg. the key open-Pres.3Sg the door-Acc
    “This key opens the door.”

(4) (a) Azt/azokat add ide!
      that/those-Dem.Dist.Acc.Sg./Pl. give here
      “Give me that/those.”

(b) Az az autó az enyém.
    that-Dem.Dist.Sg. the car the mine
    “That car is mine.”

As illustrated by the examples above, in Indo-European languages demonstratives can either be used as independent pronouns (dit “this”) or they may function as a modifier of a co-occurring noun (dit huis “this house”) (Diessel 1999). From a syntactic point of view, Hungarian demonstratives (ez, az, ezek, azok “this, that, these, those”) constitute a full DP. When the demonstrative modifies an NP, a definite article is inserted between the demonstrative and the head noun (compare this with English and Dutch). The whole phrase is treated as a DP containing two coordinated DPs, which receive case markers (ez a könyv “this the book = this book,” ez-t a könyv-et “this.Acc.Sg the book.Acc.Sg = this book”) (E. Kiss 2003). This is an interesting and yet relatively unexplored phenomenon in Hungarian; however, for present purposes these constructions will not be differentiated.

As suggested by the results of various experiments, language users have strong intuitions about the use of demonstratives (see, for instance, Maes and De Rooij 2007). It is a widespread belief that proximal demonstratives are used to refer to objects that are close to the speaker, whereas distal demonstratives are used to refer to objects that are further away (Fillmore 1971/1997). However, recent linguistic research proposes that the choice between a proximal and a distal demonstrative is not so straightforward. For instance, Diessel (1999) states that “These labels [proximal/distal] are, however, only
rough approximations. The meaning of a demonstrative is often more complex” (Diessel 1999, 160). Various authors also argue that the traditional analysis of demonstratives is not always adequate to characterize the meaning and use of demonstratives (see Enfield 2003, Levinson 2004, Piwek et al. 2008, Sidnell 2009). It has also been assumed that other factors may play an essential role in the choice of demonstratives. For instance, Piwek et al.’s (2008) work on Dutch proposed accessibility as a basic factor influencing the choice of demonstratives. The experiment to be presented here tested the role of three factors in the choice of Hungarian and Dutch gestural demonstratives: distance, accessibility, and contrastiveness in linguistic contexts. (For further discussion see Section 4.1.)

3. Different Uses of Demonstratives
Demonstratives can fulfill various pragmatic functions in everyday interactions. A taxonomy of demonstratives, based on Levinson’s (2004) and O’Keeffe et al.’s (2011) work, is given in Figure 1. For a detailed description of this taxonomy we refer the reader to Tóth (2014b). Here only brief definitions and a few examples will be presented.

![Diagram](image)

**Figure 1.** Different uses of a deictic expression.

In the case of deictic uses the demonstrative refers directly to the extra-linguistic physical context, and the utterance is probably accompanied by a pointing gesture. For non-deictic uses just the opposite holds. These uses are illustrated by (5)–(6) and (7)–(8) below:

(5) Heb je *dat* book gelezen?

have you that-Dem.Dist.Neut.Sg book read

“Have you read *that book*?”

(6) *Ezt/Ez* a könyvet kérem.

this-Dem.Prox.Acc.Sg. the book.Acc want

“I want *this.*I want *this book.*” (Laczkó 2008, 320–21)
(7) Ja, az új Brown-regényről beszélsz?
Oh the new Brown-novel-about talk-PRESENT.2SG
“Oh, you are talking about the new Brown novel?”
Azt már olvastam.
that-DEM.DIST.SG already read-PAST.1SG
“I’ve already read that.”

(8) Mark kwam Arthur tegen.
Mark come-PAST.3SG Arthur across
“Mark ran into Arthur.”
Die droeg een regenjas
that-DEM.DIST.SG wear-PAST.3SG a raincoat
“That one was wearing a raincoat.”

(Kaiser 2011, 1594; translation adjusted by Tóth et al.)

Within deictic cases, a further distinction can be made: gestural demonstratives are accompanied by a pointing gesture, while symbolic demonstratives are not. (See Levinson 2004; O’Keeffe et al. 2011.) Examples of gestural and symbolic uses of Hungarian and Dutch demonstratives are provided in (9)–(10) and (11)–(12), respectively.

(9) Az a kutya pisilte a bicajomat.
that-DEM.DIST.SG the dog pee on-PAST.3SG the my bike.ACC
“That dog has peed on my bike.”

(10) Ebben a városban sok jó étterem van.
DEM.PROX.SG-in the city-in many good restaurant be
“There are many good restaurants in this city.”

(11) Dat meisje draagt gele schoenen.
that-DEM.DIST.SG girl wear yellow shoe.PL
“That girl is wearing yellow shoes.”

(12) Dit land heeft een goede regering nodig.
this-DEM.PROX.NEUT.SG country have a good government need
“This country needs a good government.”
According to Lyons (1977), a genuine case of deixis occurs when the deictic term is accompanied by some sort of extra-linguistic gesture. Accordingly, gestural uses of demonstratives constitute the scope of our study.

Levinson (2004) divides gestural uses into two subcategories: contrastive and non-contrastive uses. However, the present study extends the scope of contrastive and non-contrastive uses to linguistic contexts where contrastiveness is explicitly marked, e.g., by using adversative conjunctions or a sentence containing an identificational focus (see É. Kiss 1998 on identificational focus in English and Hungarian). In accordance with the well-known semantic function of identificational focus and relying on Chafe’s (1994) definition of contrastiveness, we identify two main characteristics of contrastiveness for the time being:

(i) contrastiveness involves “a selection of one candidate rather than another from an available set” (Chafe 1994, 77; see also Chafe 1976);

(ii) contrastiveness as a conversational phenomenon often goes beyond turn boundaries.

We will provide a working definition of contrastive uses in Section 4.1. Example (13) below illustrates the notion that will be explicated later.

(13) This garden hose is better than that one.¹

4. The Experiment

4.1 Background and Research Questions

As mentioned earlier, traditional studies of deixis often explain the use of demonstratives in terms of relative distance from the speaker. Tóth (2014b) and the experiment reported here revisited the traditional view and tested the assumption that other cognitive factors may also play an essential role in the choice of gestural demonstratives in British English and in Dutch and Hungarian, respectively. As a starting point the following view of communication was considered. A crucial feature of deixis is that demonstratives serve to establish a joint focus of attention between the speaker and the hearer (Clark 1996, Diessel 2012), namely, that in order to communicate, the speaker and hearer must realize that their partner views the situation from a different perspective. Hence, throughout the communicative process, the perspective of the other person must be constantly adopted (see Clark and Bangerter 2004, Diessel 2006). Speakers may try to refer to a given object, and pointing serves as a means to help the addressee locate the referent, but a successful referring act requires a joint focus of attention from the speaker and addressee.

On the basis of these background assumptions, and adopting Luz and van der Sluis’s (2011) experimental methodology, a production study was carried out.\footnote{In the study described here perception issues were not considered.} In neutral, i.e., non-contrastive contexts, the role of two factors—distance and accessibility—was explored. In order to investigate the contrastive/non-contrastive distinction (see Levinson 2004), the use of demonstratives in contrastive and neutral contexts was compared. The relevant notions will be defined as follows.

Distance as a factor is usually left unspecified in the relevant literature. This is not unexpected, since a precise definition of distance could be a function of several factors and the role of these factors may vary from situation to situation. For instance, if one can take an object into one’s hands (such as medium-sized articles for personal use or pets), then being an arm’s length away seems to be a natural criterion for defining distance. However, there are cases where this criterion obviously cannot be used; for instance, in the case of mountains seen from a window, islands on a map or planets in the sky it is more plausible to consider the path to be taken to “reach” these objects. Taking these considerations into account, only a working definition of distance is provided here. Relying on Kemmerer’s (1999) findings and Wilkins et al.’s (2007) guidelines, it can be stated that in a communicative setting which takes place in a room and where a joint focus of attention has been established, near space is more or less within arm’s reach and far space expands outward from that boundary.\footnote{Coventry et al. (2006) showed that near space is extendable when a tool (a 70-cm stick) is used to point at the objects to be named.} Hence, we will treat entities that are located physically next to the speaker as being close (peripersonal), while everything else will be considered to be far (extrapersonal) in terms of the speaker’s point of view (see Figure 2).

\textbf{Figure 2.} Entities located close to the speaker in the furniture shop scenario.
Accessibility has been analyzed by a number of authors in discourse studies (see, for instance, Ariel 2001); however, as Kahneman (2003) notes, there is no unique theoretical account of accessibility. Kahneman (2003) was the first to try to extend the scope of the notion to the physical level (see Piwek et al. 2008, 702). Relying on Kahneman’s (2003) work, the notion of accessibility in extra-linguistic contexts that will be applied here is based on the entity’s being in the focus of joint attention. Accessibility as a working notion will be defined as follows:

Accessibility:
(i) an entity is associated with low accessibility if, according to the speaker’s assessment, the addressee is invited to consider it to be new or unexpected, i.e., an effort is required on the part of the addressee to identify the referent;
(ii) an entity is associated with high accessibility if it is already known to the addressee, i.e., it is in the focus of the joint attention of the speaker and the addressee.

Traditional pragmatic approaches usually define the notion of context with respect to four subcomponents. Following É. Kiss (1998; 2003) and Kaiser (2011), the last factor, contrastiveness, is defined with the following components:

Contrastiveness in:
(i) physical context: no conditions;
(ii) linguistic context: contrastiveness is explicitly indicated linguistically, for instance by using a coordinating conjunction with a contrastive sense, e.g., but, or a sentence containing an identificational focus or a contrastive topic;5
(iii) epistemic context: the entities contrasted are highly accessible and compete to be highlighted in the joint focus of attention;
(iv) social context: not relevant.

Contexts satisfying these conditions will be labeled as contrastive, while contexts that do not satisfy the definition above are to be treated as neutral. Thus, (13) above and the examples below are contrastive contexts. We provide a detailed description of the context only for the first example below.

Two men are sitting next to each other at a table in a café. There are three sandwiches (a ham sandwich and two cheese sandwiches) in the middle of the table, at an equal distance (and within arm’s reach) from both men. The following mini-conversation takes place:

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4 The notion of accessibility surfaces in different forms, such as givenness or familiarity in the relevant literature. For a recent summary see Birner (2013).
5 The linguistic context here is not restricted to a given conversational turn; it can exceed it (see Chaie (1976; 1994)).
(14) Melyik szendvicset kéréd? A sonkásat? (rámutat)
which sandwich-ACC want-PRES.2SG the ham sandwich-ACC
“Which sandwich would you like? The ham sandwich?” (pointing at it)
Szeretem a sonkás szendvicset, de most
like-PRES.1SG ham sandwich-ACC but now
inkább ezt/azt a sajtosat kérem. (rámutat)
rather take-PRES.2SG this/that cheese sandwich-ACC
“I like ham sandwiches, but now I’d rather take this/that cheese sandwich.”
(pointing at it)

(15) Ik vind deze tafel mooi,
I find- PRES.1SG this- DIST.FEM.SG table nice
maar die is lelijk.
but that-DIM.PROX.FEM.SG be-PRES.3SG ugly
“I find this table nice, but that one is ugly.”

(16) Ezt a dobozt vidd le a pincébe
this- DEM.PROX.ACC.SG the box-ACC take-IMP.2SG down the cellar-into
azt viszont hagyd a helyén
that-DIM.DIST.ACC.SG but leave-IMP.2SG the place-Poss.3SG-on
“Take this box down to the cellar, but leave that one where it is.”
(Laczkó 2012, 296)

Relying on the factors defined above, in neutral contexts two hypotheses were to be tested:

Hypothesis 1 (distance)
In neutral (i.e., non-contrastive) contexts, gestural proximal demonstratives are selected by speakers to refer to entities that are close to the speaker, while gestural distal demonstratives are preferred by speakers to refer to entities that are further away.

Hypothesis 2 (accessibility)
In neutral (i.e., non-contrastive) contexts, gestural proximal demonstratives are selected by speakers to refer to entities that are associated with low accessibility, while gestural distal demonstratives are selected to refer to entities associated with high accessibility (see Piwek et al. 2008, 710; Strauss 2002, 135).

Turning to contrastive contexts, we wanted to examine whether the nature of the context influences the choice of gestural demonstratives or not. In contrastive contexts
the referents are competing to be highlighted. For this reason, we expected that in contrastive contexts, when the distance is constant (near), the frequency of the demonstratives selected will change. Contexts where the entities being talked about are far from the speaker could not be tested by this method, since all factors would trigger the choice of distal. Hence, the third hypothesis concerning the choice of demonstratives in neutral vs. contrastive contexts is the following:

*Hypothesis 3 (contrastiveness)*
The pattern of gestural demonstratives selected is different in neutral and in contrastive contexts.

According to the principle of falsification, during the statistical analysis our null hypothesis is that the distribution of demonstratives is the same in the contexts in question.

In order to test these hypotheses we carried out the experiment reported below.

### 4.2 Materials and Methods

There were 37 Hungarian (H) and 48 Dutch (D) participants in the experiment, all adult native speakers, with an average age of H: 23 and D: 31, respectively. The subjects were randomly selected; there were H: 20 male, 17 female; D: 22 male and 26 female subjects. We adopted Luz and Van der Sluis’s (2011) experimental method. The participants read a scripted dialogue in a furniture shop setting between the shop assistant (female) and a buyer (male). Their task was to choose between different demonstrative expressions in a multiple-choice online test. The layout of the furniture shop is represented in Figure 2 above (obviously, the oval was removed), and the picture was visible throughout the test.

The dialogue consisted of 18 questions:

- 4-4 questions tested the distance hypothesis (accessibility was equally distributed): 1/8/11/14 and 3/6/15/17;
- 4-4 questions tested the accessibility hypothesis (distance was equally distributed): 3/8/11/17 and 1/6/14/15;

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6 Those cases where one of the entities is near and the other is far cannot be tested in this framework, either. Consider the example below:

(i) *This one* (here) is bigger than *that one* (over there). (Diessel 2012, 2419)

7 In each case a pointing gesture on the part of the speaker was assumed; this was always indicated in the text. The Hungarian test is available at the link below:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1d7xw6yoWzw3fGICyrbv3quS7f9a9Ag1IN1_fut6DDc/viewform

The Dutch test is available at the link below:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1hzzhtX-r44obgnmlBcUcbyPtkiCb-C2LRT7Vucf0s0/viewform

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4-4 questions tested contrastive and non-contrastive contexts (distance: near, accessibility: high): 2/9/10/13 and 1/8/11/14;
six questions served as fillers: 4/5/7/12/16/18.

The furniture shop scenario contained 31 objects; five of these were distractors. Objects considered to be near and far were equal in number.
An example from the test is presented below (Question 6):

   • abból a barna írőszalbóból
   • ebből a barna írőszalbóból
D: Klant: Ik wil ook nog zes …. bestellen. (De klant wijst naar de bureaus.)
   • van die bruine bureaus
   • van deze bruine bureaus
   “Buyer: I’ll also buy some of … (he is pointing at the desks). Add six to your list.
   • those brown desks
   • these brown desks”

4.3 Results
The results of the test and the predictions of the individual hypotheses are shown in Table 1.

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Table 1. Results.
The data were analyzed using chi-square statistics. Regarding distance, in neutral contexts there is a significant difference between near and far objects and the choice of demonstratives (proximal vs. distal), and hence the first hypothesis is accepted. ($\chi^2(1) = H: 65.93, D: 57.929, p < 0.01$) The distribution of gestural demonstratives with respect to distance is shown in Figure 3. Taking into consideration accessibility in neutral contexts, there is no significant difference; thus, the accessibility hypothesis is rejected. ($\chi^2(1) = H: 0.125, D: 0.045, p > 0.05$)

![Diagram](image1)

**Figure 3.** Distribution of gestural demonstratives over distance in neutral contexts.

Finally, the choice of gestural demonstratives in neutral and contrastive contexts was compared (for details see the descriptions of the questions above). Using the chi-square test again, it was shown that there is a significant difference between the choice of proximals and distals, depending on the nature of the context ($\chi^2(1) = H: 12.306, D: 19.499, p < 0.01$), and hence, there is a relationship between the choice of gestural proximals and distals and the type of context (see Figure 4).
Figure 4. Distribution of gestural demonstratives in neutral and contrastive contexts.

5. Discussion

On the basis of the results of the experiment above, it seems to be the case that in neutral contexts distance is indeed an important factor; Hypothesis 1 (distance) adequately captures the choice of demonstratives in Hungarian and Dutch in neutral contexts. These findings agree with Luz and Van der Sluis’s (2011) results concerning English, Dutch, and Portuguese in a similar experimental setting and with Coventry et al.’s (2008) results for English and Spanish in a different setting. Although several studies have criticized distance and tried to replace it as a decisive factor, the experiment reported here, like many other experiments cited in the literature, reinforces the basic role of distance. A closer look at Figure 3 reveals an interesting phenomenon; when the entity being referred to is close to the speaker, the number of proximal and distal demonstratives selected is quite close in Dutch. Moreover, if we examine the relevant questions, it turns out that in the case of question 11 even more distals are selected in neutral contexts, though the entities are close to the speaker. These data, then,
seemingly contradict Hypothesis 1 (distance). Levinson (2004) argues that the choice of *this* always indicates some kind of proximity, but *that* is semantically unmarked with respect to distance. Diessel (2012) even argues that “in non-contrastive situations *this* and *that* are often interchangeable . . . , suggesting that they do not carry an inherent distance feature” (Diessel 2012, 2419). Those questions where the entities were far from the speaker yielded more uniform results; in each case more distals than proximals were selected (questions 3, 6, 15, and 17). Hence, the role of distance as a decisive factor is more convincing in those cases where the entities being talked about are far from the speaker.\(^8\) Those cases where the entities are close to the speaker will be discussed in a more detailed fashion later on.

Hypothesis 2 (accessibility) is rejected in both languages, i.e., the choice of gestural proximals versus gestural distals is not dependent upon accessibility in neutral contexts. One of the authors of this article has shown in a different experimental setting that accessibility does not influence the choice of demonstratives in Hungarian (Tóth 2013; 2014a). This outcome has been reinforced by the present experiment. Hence, accessibility seems to be a weak factor, if it is a factor at all; it cannot explain the use of gestural demonstratives in neutral contexts in Hungarian and Dutch. The weakness of accessibility may be represented by the results obtained for question 8, which are quite similar in proportion (H: 29 proximals, 8 distals; D: 34 proximals, 14 distals). Here a clash between distance and accessibility can be observed; if accessibility was a strong factor it would override distance or at least compete with it, and more distals would be selected.

The results concerning accessibility in the literature are controversial: Piwek et al. (2008) accepts the same hypothesis for Dutch in a controlled dialogue game setting, while Jarbou (2010) argues that in spoken Arabic just the opposite holds (his results are based on observations of naturally occurring speech). Many authors note that the notion of accessibility is not well defined (see Burenhult 2003, Hanks 2009). Hence, further studies may be required that are based on a more exact notion of accessibility, at least in an experimental framework.

Turning to our final hypothesis, we have shown that in contrastive contexts the pattern of demonstratives is indeed different from that observed in neutral contexts. In neutral contexts, the set of entities, i.e., the possible referents of demonstratives, is relatively unlimited, and the choice of demonstratives seems to depend on the dimension of relative distance from the speaker in the default case (see Hypothesis 1). As opposed to that, in contrastive contexts the set of possible referents is much more limited; in most cases there are only two entities that may be referred to and these are competing to be

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\(^8\) A similar pattern was found for English by Tóth (2014b). These results suggest that in English and Dutch, which are Germanic languages, distance seems not to be as strong as it is in Hungarian, a Finno-Ugric language. Further experiments and new data sources (Finnish, Estonian) are needed to test this assumption.
highlighted. Our results proved that there is a significant difference between neutral and contrastive contexts. Keeping in mind the fact that accessibility was rejected as a crucial factor in neutral contexts, there must be another factor that is responsible for the higher number of distal demonstratives chosen in contexts where distance is constant, i.e., close to the speaker. Hence, there must be a factor that interacts and competes with distance in contrastive contexts. It is left for future research to explore and test for such a possible factor.

We think that contrastiveness may act as a trigger for activating or reinterpreting other factors. First, distance may still be a crucial factor, but only within the proximal dimension. More specifically, since the entities are close to the speaker, being within arm’s reach is no longer relevant; instead, immediateness becomes prominent. This means that distance is still important, but the space around the speaker, in which the entities are situated, is rescaled. In accordance with that the near-far distinction also has to be modified within this rescaled space. Second, other factors, such as the speaker’s emotions towards the entities being referred to (for instance, fear, disgust, like or dislike) may also play a role. Moreover, the familiarity or salience of the entities, which depends on the speaker’s background knowledge, might also be important.

Contrastive contexts are frequently mentioned in the relevant literature on deixis, as illustrated by the examples cited below (18)–(21). However, to the best of our knowledge such contexts have never been compared to neutral contexts and they have not been examined in an experimental framework before.

(18) (Pointing at two sample plates in a china shop): These are over at the warehouse, but those I have in stock here. (Wolter 2009, 454)

(19) This speck is smaller than that speck. (Talmy 2000, 25)

(20) This planet is smaller than that planet. (Talmy 2000, 25)

(21) Ezt kérem, az pedig maradjon a helyén.
but stay-IMP.3SG the be-POS.3SG-on
“I want this, but that one should stay there.” (Laczkó 2008, 326)

It was Levinson (2004) who introduced the contrastive–non-contrastive distinction within the category of gestural uses when he pointed out that the use of demonstratives may bring into existence a new focus of attention or signal a contrast between two referents that have been introduced into the conversation earlier (consider example [21]).
Fortis and Fagard (2010) note that relative distance is not only a matter of physical proximity (see the difference between examples [22] and [23] above). Hence, further studies are required to explore the relationship and interplay between distance and the nature of the context as factors influencing the choice of gestural demonstratives.

6. Conclusions
The experimental data seem to be helpful in differentiating and specifying the factors influencing the choice of gestural demonstratives in Hungarian and Dutch in different contexts. It must be noted here that the same results regarding the individual hypotheses have been obtained in an identical experimental setting for British English (see Tóth 2014b). The results shed new light on the factors determining the choice of demonstratives. We found a significant difference between the choice of demonstratives, depending on the nature of the context (neutral vs. contrastive). In neutral contexts, distance plays a crucial role in both Hungarian and Dutch, while accessibility as a determining factor was ruled out. It seems to be the case, though, that distance is more prominent in neutral contexts in Hungarian. In the case of contrastive contexts, where the entities referred to are highly accessible and close to the speaker, the results are more uniform; the pattern of demonstratives changed significantly in both languages, i.e., distals were preferred. We conclude that there is a significant difference between neutral and contrastive contexts, and as mentioned above, further studies are called for to test the factors determining the use of demonstratives in contrastive contexts.

It is clear that experimental studies make a valuable contribution to current cross-linguistic research on demonstratives. However, further experiments are needed. It is left for future research to explore and test for the possible factor(s) involved in contrastiveness, to explore languages that fall into different typological categories (languages with a three-term demonstrative system could be especially interesting) and to examine other uses of demonstratives (such as symbolic and non-deictic uses). Further experiments are called for to explore other potential factors (e.g., salience) and it is also important to keep in mind that since the factors might not be independent of each other, it is also necessary to examine the interrelationships among the relevant factors and to compare the results within a contrastive linguistic framework.

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Works Cited


