On the Use of English Demonstratives  
“This” and “That”

Instructions

This study is conducted in collaboration with the Faculty of Applied Linguistics at the University of Warsaw. The Faculty of Applied Linguistics provided us with a database of scenarios, in which someone utters a sentence containing an English demonstrative expression—“this” or “that”. We were told that the scenarios were extracted from recorded conversations, books, movies, daily newspapers, and a variety of short-lived and internet texts. Members of the faculty had used the database to train an AI system to recognize what people mean when they say, e.g., “**this** smells bad” or “you looked so pretty in **that** dress”. The system had been trained to answer questions, such as: do people mean the things they are holding up to their noses or the room they just happen to walk into? Analogously, do people mean the dress that is already the subject of conversation or the one that is not yet so?

Now, the system can tell whether a particular utterance of demonstrative expression is correct in the context of the scenario. For example, the system “knows” that knowingly saying “if you want to get to the museum, you need to go in **this** direction” and pointing to the opposite direction to where the museum actually is, is as incorrect as it gets.

In what follows, you will see scenarios from the database that the AI has recently qualified as either correct or incorrect. Before each scenario, a cue, describing its nature, will be presented. The word TRUE will be displayed when the content is correct, while FALSE will indicate that the content is incorrect. Note that this information will be true most of the time. However, there might be a few cases where it will not: we want to identify these cases because we are seeking to fine-tune the AI’s recognitional skills. Therefore, after each scenario, you will be asked to rate whether you agreed with AI’s judgment or not.

Measures: conventionality, objectivity and permissibility

## The materials come from Training Phase 6/10 of the experiment

Now, we ask you to state your opinion about the nature of the scenario: how conventional, objective and permissible was the utterance of the demonstrative**“this/that”**, given the context of the scenario? And to what extent do you agree with the AI’s judgment?

There is no time limit to submit the responses, so you will see no timer on this screen. However, you must actually use the sliders to be able to proceed.

The answers you submit by using those sliders can be understood in the following way:

* Conventional: in many cases, the connections between words and what they stand for are conventional. For instance, the conventional rule governing the use of demonstrative **“this/that”** dictates that the speaker can use the expression to refer to an object in the environment if she can ensure that her audience is in a position to identify the referent. If the audience could not identify the object referred to, then the use of a demonstrative was unconventional.
* In the lexical, objective meaning: according to a dictionary, demonstrative **“this/that”** is used to identify a specific thing being indicated. Therefore, English speakers use demonstratives to speak specifically about certain objects that they indicate, say, with a pointing gesture. At times, however, speakers take some objects for something else. On such occasions, people seem to mean different things than what they actually indicate. Suppose two people see the picture of an Elvis impersonator and take him for Elvis himself. They have a brief colloquy: “Do you know who **this** man is?” “**This** is Elvis, a famous singer, and an actor”. It seems the second participant has said something about Elvis even though they both indicated his impersonator. We may say that the utterance of demonstrative **“this”** by the second participant was in a subjective meaning because what she meant was determined by what she wished to talk about and not by what she indicated in practice.
* Permissible: any language consists of rules which are inherently social and normative: these rules govern how to communicate with others to ensure clarity and understanding. To what extent the use of the demonstrative **“this/that”** in the present scenario was permissible from your perspective or the perspective of your community?

[+*d*]: *possible* discrepancy between actual demonstration and intended demonstration

## [+*d*] scenario 1 (Kaplan, 1978, p. 239, adapted)

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| Suppose that without turning and looking David points to the place on his wall which has long been occupied by a picture of Rudolf Carnap, a famous philosopher, and he says:  “**That** is a picture of one of the greatest philosophers of the twentieth century”.  But unbeknownst to David, someone has replaced his picture of Carnap with one of Elvis Presley, a famous singer but not a philosopher at all. |

## [+*d*] scenario 2 (Gauker, 2008, p. 363)

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| Suppose that Harry and Sally are at a department store and Harry is trying on ties. Harry has wrapped a garish pink-and-green tie around his neck and is looking at himself in a mirror. Sally is standing next to the mirror gazing toward the tie around Harry’s neck and says:  “**That** matches your new jacket”.  As a matter of fact, Sally has been contemplating in thought the tie that Harry tried on two ties back. At first, she thought she did not like it, but then it occurred to her that it would look good with Harry’s new jacket. We can even suppose that in saying “that” what she intended to refer to was the tie two ties back. But under the circumstances, Harry is in no position to realize that the tie she intended to refer to was the tie two ties back. |

## [+*d*] scenario 3 (Reimer, 1991a, pp. 190–191, adapted)

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| Suppose that I suddenly realize that I have left my keys on the desk in my (shared) office. I return to my office, where I find the desk occupied by my officemate. I then spot my keys, sitting there on the desk, alongside my officemate’s keys. I then make a grab for my keys, saying just as I mistakenly grab my officemate’s keys:  “**These** are mine”. |

## [+*d*] scenario 4 (Reimer, 1991b, p. 180, adapted)

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| A dog named Spot has been making himself especially noticeable by barking raucously and dashing in front of Jane and Peter. But Jane hasn’t noticed any of this and her attention has been caught by another dog—a dog way off in the distance—who seems to resemble remarkably her own dog Fido. Jane comes out with an utterance accompanied by a pointing gesture in a general direction in front of her:  “**That** dog just looks like Fido”.  It would be natural to suppose that Jane believes—mistakenly—that Fido is also the focus of Peter’s attention. However, the most noticeable dog appears to be Spot. |

## [+*d*] scenario 5 (de Gaynesford, 2006, p. 169)

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| My horse *Doorlatch* is in a race. As the horses thunder past for the finish, *Doorlatch* in the lead, I point and say:  “**That** is my horse”!  Unfortunately, in my excitement, I have closed my eyes for an instant and my gesture has not quite kept track of the field. So, as I utter the sentence, my finger actually points to the leading contender, *Two-fingered Salute*. |

## [+*d*] scenario 6 (McGinn, 1981, p. 162, adapted)

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| Noah is a factory inspector certifying cars as roadworthy as they come off an assembly line. His job is to say, as successive cars pass by,  “**That** car is certified as roadworthy”.  Normally, he looks at each car and utters his incantation while gesturing in the appropriate direction; but on this occasion he absentmindedly looks away as a new car arrives before him, while uttering his usual sentence accompanied by his usual gesture. |

## [+*d*] scenario 7 (McGinn, 1981, p. 162, adapted)

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| Emma is looking through a transparent medium that alters the path of light in such a way that the real position of objects seen through it is three feet to the right of their apparent position. Emma knows the medium to have this property. She wishes to refer to a penny which she does not perceive but which she knows to be in a certain place, just the place in fact at which a penny she does perceive appears illusorily to be. To fulfill her intention she points to just the place where the second penny appears to be, but is not, and says:  “**That** penny will appear to be three feet to the left of where it really is”. |

## [+*d*] scenario 8 (Perry, 2009, p. 193, adapted)

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| Suppose I believe that George W. Bush is the greatest president in US history, and I wish to express this belief by saying  ‘‘**This** is the greatest president in US history’’  in a situation in which you and I have just turned on the television late at night, and a very Dubbya-looking fellow has appeared on our screen, making very Dubbya-like expressions and gestures. But it isn’t really George W. Bush; it is the George W. Bush mimic that appears every so often on Jay Leno’s Tonight Show. |

## [+*d*] scenario 9 (Siegel, 2002, pp. 10–11)

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| You are a salesman in a tie store. By reaching past an opaque door into a display case, you put your hand on a blue silk tie. At the same time, another salesman is reaching through the cabinet and touching a red silk tie. Through the glass top of the cabinet, you can see the red tie being held by the other salesman, whose arm looks like yours. You mistake his hand for yours and you believe that you are the one touching the red tie. You say to a customer, who was looking in another direction for a red silk tie  “**This** one is red”. |

## [+*d*] scenario 10

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| There are many people at the party of abstainers. Everyone toast with mineral water. Without knowing it and thinking that there is a martini in the glasses, Oliver points to the person sitting at the piano, who has just finished the concert, and says:  “**This** martini drinker is a good pianist”.  In fact, one person at the party has secretly brought a martini with them and is now drinking it. |

[-*d*]: *no* discrepancy between actual demonstration and intended demonstration

## [-*d*] scenario 1

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| James and Mary are at a party. At one point, Mary points at a man standing in the corner and says to James:  “**That** man is a spy”.  Only one man is standing in the corner. |

## [-*d*] scenario 2 (Textor, 2007, p. 955, adapted)

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| You and I hear a painfully loud noise. I know that you must hear it, and you know that I must hear it, and so forth. Hence, I can say:  “I wish **that** noise would stop”  without making any sort of gesture (pointing, nodding, glancing, etc.). |

## [-*d*] scenario 3 (Ciecierski & Makowski, 2020; cf. Perry, 2017, p. 979)

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| Someone utters the sentence in a dialect of Nebraska:  “**That** fish was yea big”  which differs from English as a global language only in that the Nebraska dialect contains the expression “yea”, which conventionally refers to the distance between the hands of the speaker. While uttering the expression, the speaker is making a suitable gesture. |

## [-*d*] scenario 4 (Ciecierski & Makowski, 2020, adapted)

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| Someone says:  “**This** is my favorite color”,  indicating a red object (lighting is normal, etc.). At the same time, imagine that the addressee (but not the speaker) of the statement does not distinguish between any colors except black and white: the addressee suffers from achromatopsia—total color blindness. |

## [-*d*] scenario 5 (King, 1999, p. 156, adapted)

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| Greg has just gotten back a math test on which he scored very poorly. Greg knows on completely general grounds that exactly one male received a score of one hundred on the exam—Greg’s evil but scrupulously honest teaching assistant told Greg this as he tossed Greg his failing effort. Reflecting on the difficulty of the exam, Greg says:  “**That** guy who scored one hundred on the exam is a genius”. |

## [-*d*] scenario 6 (King, 1999, p. 157)

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| “**That** police officer who made the most arrests in each precinct was given an award”,  the mayor said at a press conference. The officer is Jason Paredes and he is a fine officer. |

## [-*d*] scenario 7 (Reimer, 1991a, p. 194, adapted)

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| Suppose that you and I are in the park, observing the antics of several neighborhood dogs, one of whom I recognize as my dog Fido. Suppose further, that I wish to inform you of the fact that Fido is among this canine group, and that I thus say to you  “**That** dog is Fido”,  but fail to accompany my utterance with any sort of ostensive gesture (pointing, nodding, glancing, etc.), due to some sort of sudden, momentary, paralysis. Suppose that, though my intention was to point at Fido, I suddenly found myself (in the midst of my utterance) unable to do so. Suppose further that I was unable to demonstrate Fido via any sort of glance or stare in his direction, as my eyes, frozen in their sockets, had shifted from Fido to my addressee, and could not (due to the paralysis) be shifted back to Fido. |

## [-*d*] scenario 8

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| Somewhere in the monastery at Podolin there is, or was, an old painting, showing a shaggy-haired figure with a wild upcurled mustache, a thick beard, red as a woman’s hair, two big round eyes with elongated pale blue pupils and a complexion as ruddy as the color on a white tablecloth when light passes through a full wine glass on a sunny winter noon.  “**This** man was Prince Lubomirski”, said Sindbad looking at the painting.  The time is uncertain but the place is precise and the view is clear. |

[-*d*] scenario 9

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| Stephen bent forward and peered at the mirror held out to him, cleft by a crooked crack.  “Who chose **this** face for me?”—he wondered—“**This** dogsbody to rid of vermin. It asks me too”. |

[-*d*] scenario 10

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| From the other end of the square was coming a tall Arab, thin, vigorous, wearing a sky-blue burnoose, soft brown boots and gloves, and bearing his bronzed aquiline face loftily. Nothing but the *cheche* that he was wearing swathed as a turban distinguished him from those French officers in charge of native affairs whom Janine had occasionally admired. He was advancing steadily toward them, but seemed to be looking beyond their group as he slowly removed the glove from one hand.  “Well”—said Marcel as he shrugged his shoulders—“there’s one who thinks he’s a general. Yes, they all here look proud; but **this** one, really, is going too far”.  Although they were surrounded by the empty space of the square, he was walking straight toward the trunk without seeing it, without seeing them. Then the distance separating them decreased rapidly and the Arab was upon them. |

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