

Topic chains and perspective: Demonstrative pronouns between indexical and anaphoric referential chains

In this paper we show how a multi-faceted analysis of topic chains based on three binary factors \pm topic shift, \pm chain switch, and \pm perspective, accounts for the choice of pronominal form. In a first step, we lay out a two-chain model of topic continuity drawing on corpus data on null vs. overt subject pronouns in Spanish. In a second step, we refine this picture by including speaker perspective, thereby capturing the subtle contrast between the discourse function of the demonstratives *this* and *that* in English.

Topic continuity (Givón, 1983) has been well investigated for 3rd persons (anaphoric chains), but less so with 1st and 2nd persons (indexical chains) (Frascarelli, 2007: 718; Bittner, 2014). Numerous studies have shown for Spanish that the overt subject pronoun rate increases (i.e. the null subject rate decreases) in contexts of referential change (e.g. Bentivoglio, 1987; Cameron, 1992; Otheguy et al., 2007). However, Adli (2011: 261) reports that this effect is much weaker in certain contexts in which an anaphoric chain is “interrupted” by 1st or 2nd person topics. Emphasizing the importance of the person feature (Ritter & Wiltschko, 2009: 186–191), this idea has been recently spelled out in a two-chain model (Adli, 2014) assuming that two parallel referential chains run through a discourse: an anaphoric and an indexical one. Consequently, two types of change can occur: A *topic shift*, which means that – within a chain – the topical referent changes, and a *chain switch*, which means that an entity of the other chain becomes the immediately active topic referent. The choice of the subject form (pronoun vs. null) depends on both, topic shift and chain switch.

However, another factor, *perspective shift*, comes into play in the analysis of English demonstratives *this* and *that* as in (1a) and (1b) (Lakoff, 1974: 349), where continuation a) could be by the same speaker, while b) must be a different speaker.

- (1) Dick says that the Republicans may have credibility problems.
 - a. This is an understatement.
 - b. That is an understatement.

Demonstratives can be used as anaphoric expressions referring back to already mentioned antecedents. Demonstrative systems with more than one demonstrative can express different contrasts. For English, Sidner (1979) assumes that *this* introduces or continues the main topic, while *that* introduces a secondary topic, a topic of some but restricted interest. This picture is described by Lakoff (1974: 349) as follows: “That can be used by the speaker to comment an immediately prior remark by another”.

In conclusion, we propose that all three factors \pm topic shift, \pm chain switch, and \pm perspective shift can be represented by a three-chain model consisting of (i) an anaphoric referential chain, (ii) an indexical referential chain, and (iii) a perspectival chain expressing perspective (dis-)continuity. Anaphoricity and indexicality depend on *both*, the respective referential chain and the perspective chain. *That* in (1b) is high on anaphoricity due to the 3rd person reference but also signals indexicality due to the perspective shift.

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