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A little more of that, *a bit less of* this
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Enikő Tóth, Péter Csatár & György Rákosi

A little more of *that*, a bit less of *this*

A probe into demonstrative use in Hungarian child language

Abstract

This paper reports on the results of a pioneering pilot production study and a corpus study aimed at exploring demonstrative use in child Hungarian. Production data from an elicitation task have revealed that children use proportionally more distal demonstrative items than members of the adult control group. We have found a similar difference between child language and child-directed adult language data in an independent corpus study that we have conducted. The experimental results indicate that the demonstrative use of 4-year-old children is divergent: adopting the terminology introduced by Clark and Sengul (1978), some children are at the NO CONTRAST stage, others show signs of being at the transitional, PARTIAL CONTRAST stage, and 6 children out of 13 participants have already developed adult-like patterns, they are at the FULL CONTRAST stage.
Keywords: proximal demonstrative, distal demonstrative, child language, Hungarian, deixis

1 Introduction

Demonstrative expressions form an integral part of communication, and the category itself is assumed to be a universal (Diessel 2012). In everyday conversations, people frequently refer to various objects and locations in their immediate physical environment using demonstratives like *this* or *there*, and such uses are often accompanied by pointing gestures and by other non-verbal means of communication, like shifting eye gaze and changing body posture. Such extra-linguistic gestures are almost always present in the speech situation, since the inherent meaning of demonstratives is not rich enough, and the addressee heavily relies on contextual clues when identifying the referent. As Gonzalez-Peña (2020) points out, demonstratives in general serve to guide the attention of the addressee to the intended referent, and reference resolution is a highly interactional process. Deictic words occur relatively early in child language, but, as noted, for example, by Guijarro-Fuentes et al. (2022) and by Gonzalez-Peña et al. (2022), children do not use these terms in a fully adult-like manner up to the age of 10 in Spanish and in English. Clark and Sengul (1978) noted early on that when children acquire the use of demonstratives, they have to cope with their constantly shifting reference and they have to master the spatial opposition encoded by proximal and distal pairs, which again is based on a constantly shifting boundary between near and far.

This paper is a first attempt at probing into the acquisition of demonstratives by Hungarian children, and we focus on the following two research questions: i) What is the proportional distribution of distal and proximal demonstrative forms in child language, in comparison to

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adult controls and adult child-directed speech? ii) What individual strategies do children follow in the use of demonstratives, and what may these strategies reveal about their linguistic and cognitive development? Previous empirical work on Hungarian has been restricted to the exploration of demonstrative selection by adult language users (see, for example, Tóth et al. 2014, Tóth 2018, Tóth *forthcoming*). In a pilot study, we have gathered elicited data in a task-based setting where children interact with the experimenter during a puzzle completion task. We have also conducted a small corpus query, and the overall results of these two studies converge in suggesting that children overuse distal demonstratives in comparison to their adult interlocutors. The experimental results show that the demonstrative use of 4-year-old children varies: at this age, some children have already mastered the appropriate use of demonstratives, while others have not developed adult-like competence.

The structure of the paper is as follows. Section 2 is an overview of previous research into the child language acquisition of demonstratives. Section 3 provides a brief description of pertinent Hungarian demonstrative data, and it reports on the results of a corpus study we have conducted to approximate demonstrative use patterns in child language as well as in child directed speech. Our pilot study is presented in Section 4, Section 5 contains a discussion of the results, and Section 6 concludes the paper with an outlook on remaining issues which we aim to investigate in future research.

2 Demonstratives in child language

Although demonstratives appear early on in language acquisition, and cross-linguistic studies emphasise the relatively high frequency of demonstrative expressions in child language (for an overview based on analysing data from CHILDES, see Diessel & Monakhov 2023), the number of experimental studies dedicated to exploring demonstrative acquisition is still low (González-Peña 2020). This scarcity of research is partly due to the complexity of the developmental process (cf. Clark & Sengul 1978). The production and comprehension of demonstratives in Hungarian child language have not been studied systematically, and, consequently, our understanding of how children master the use of demonstrative expressions remains limited.

A cornerstone of adult language use is the ability to conceptualise space from an egocentric perspective with the help of demonstrative pairs such as *this/that* or *here/there* in English, or *ez/az* ‘this/that’ and *itt/ott* ‘here/there’ in Hungarian. Demonstratives identify their referents with respect to the deictic centre, or origo, which coincides with the speaker’s location at the time of the utterance in the default case. Adult language users divide or organise space using demonstratives according to largely language-specific conventions.

Overall, acquiring the use of demonstratives involves navigating a pragmatically diverse environment for children. They must (i) recognise the reference point of the deictic expression (the deictic centre or origo) that constantly changes between the interlocutors and (ii) learn the spatial and contrastive nature of demonstratives. The need to decide whether “themselves or the speaker” is the point of reference, is labelled as the SPEAKER PRINCIPLE by Clark and Sengul (1978: 457), while the need to differentiate locations depending on their relation to the deictic centre is called the DISTANCE PRINCIPLE.[1]

[1] It is important to note that Clark and Sengul (1978), though they discuss the production of demonstratives, focus on the comprehension of deictic terms in their experimental framework.

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A further complicating factor is that the construal of the speech situation, and accordingly, the boundaries of reference, i.e., what is considered to be included as part of the deictic centre, can also shift. For example, *this pile of wood* may refer to a specific location relatively close to the origo, while *this is the place where the mill used to be* refers to a broader area. The development of the cognitive skills required to manage the triadic communication network that includes the speaker, the addressee(s), and the referent is a lengthy process and can extend up to 10 years of age (Küntay & Özyürek 2006, Shin & Morford 2020, González-Peña et al. 2022, Guijarro-Fuentes et al. 2022).

Researchers in the field typically divide the acquisition of demonstratives into three major phases (Clark 1978, Clark & Sengul 1978). In the first phase, the so called NO CONTRAST stage, children are not yet capable of linguistically structuring space using demonstratives. Typically, they use only one term (either *here* or *there*) to refer to entities uniformly, since they have not mastered the DISTANCE PRINCIPLE. According to Clark and Sengul (1978), this stage lasts until approximately 4 years of age. At this point, they propose the emergence of a transitional, so-called PARTIAL CONTRAST phase. At the PARTIAL CONTRAST stage, children contrast demonstratives in an adult-like manner in certain contexts. However, there are other situations where their use is different from that of adults, for example, they might not adopt the speaker's perspective in interactions about the location of a particular object. The duration of this transitional period can vary from child to child. Earlier it was assumed that the final stage, FULL CONTRAST, is reached around the age of 7 (Clark & Sengul, 1978), but more recent research suggests a more elongated developmental trajectory and emphasises that there might be cross-linguistic variation depending partially on the complexity of the demonstrative system that is acquired. For instance, González-Peña et al. (2020) describe different developmental processes for English and Spanish, which have a two-term and a three-term demonstrative system, respectively.

It is also worth mentioning that, according to Clark (1978), in English, *there* and *that* are the demonstrative elements that appear first in child language, and their use is always accompanied by some kind of pointing gesture. At 3 years old, children often use both members of the deictic pairs spontaneously. However, it is hard to decide whether children at this age have mastered the spatial contrast inherent in the use of these terms, since errors are not easy to detect because of the shifting boundary associated with the terms. Clark and Sengul (1978) report the results of a comprehension study (where children had to rely on the meaning of demonstratives when identifying the intended referents, i.e., no extra-linguistic clues were offered) and argue that children either start with a child-centred hypothesis or a speaker-centred hypothesis when identifying the location described by a demonstrative adverb, i.e. they either assume that *here* and *there* both refer to locations near themselves, or they believe that both demonstrative adverbs identify locations in the vicinity of the speaker. These two assumptions belong to the NO CONTRAST stage described above, wherein they have not acquired the SPEAKER and the DISTANCE PRINCIPLE. At the PARTIAL CONTRAST stage, children show an appropriate use of demonstrative adverbs depending on the position of the interlocutors. More specifically, self-centred children understand the spatial contrast indicated by these terms provided they share the speaker's perspective who is located next to them, but speaker-centred children manage to figure out the implied contrast only when the speaker is located face-to-face. Finally, at the FULL CONTRAST stage, "[children] do what adults do and pick the objects nearest the speaker, whatever her position, when she uses *here* and the object further away when she uses *there*" (Clark 1978: 109). It is also mentioned by Clark (1978) that the same strategies are applied in

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the acquisition of *this* and *that*, but mastering the contrast between the demonstrative adverbs precedes mastering the one between *this* and *that*. Clark and Sengul (1978) claim that this order of acquisition can be explained if we assume that the meaning of *here* and *there* is part of the meaning of *this* and *that*, and this assumption is made explicit by the procedural meaning of demonstratives within the relevance-theoretic framework where "*this* encodes the procedure 'find the speaker and then find an object near the speaker'; for *that* the procedure is the same except the hearer expects to find an object far away from the speaker" (Scott 2020: 138).

In this paper, we present the results of a production experiment, which, due to the lack of previous work,[2] is a pilot study primarily focusing on data collection and raising relevant questions for the acquisition of Hungarian nominal and adverbial demonstratives. The target group consisted of kindergarten children in the age range between 3 years 6 months and 4 years 6 months, as the literature places the emergence of deictic contrast around the age of 4 (Clark & Sengul 1978: 461).

3 Demonstratives in adult and child Hungarian: the empirical background

3.1 Demonstratives in Hungarian

Hungarian has a two-term demonstrative system: *ez* 'this' is a proximal demonstrative, whereas *az* 'that' is a distal term. Traditional descriptive grammars of Hungarian assume that a proximal demonstrative is used when the intended referent is relatively close to the speaker, i.e., the deictic centre, while distal demonstratives indicate that the entity being referred to is located further away from the speaker. The demonstrative adverbs *itt/ott* 'here/there' also encode a spatial contrast, *itt* 'here' describes the area around the deictic centre, which is identified by the speaker's location in the default case, and *ott* 'there' marks a location outside the deictic centre. Our study focuses on the aforementioned demonstratives in Hungarian, since these surfaced in the production study that we report. Thus, we analyse the use of nominal and adverbial demonstratives, adjectival demonstratives lie outside of the scope of the present work.

For the purposes of this article, we classify pertinent demonstrative data into two groups as follows:

proximals

- demonstrative pronoun: *ez* 'this'
- adnominal demonstrative: *ez a N* 'this N' (lit.: this the N)
- demonstrative adverb: *itt* 'here'

distals

- demonstrative pronoun: *az* 'that'
- adnominal demonstrative: *az a N* 'that N' (lit.: that the N)
- demonstrative adverb: *ott* 'there'

Children and adult subjects as well used more demonstrative pronouns than adnominal demonstratives in the experiment, and both occurred either in their unmarked nominative forms

[2] The acquisition of Hungarian demonstratives is only sporadically mentioned in the pertinent literature, see for example Kálmán (1957), Réger (1990), S. Meggyes (1985).

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or with superessive case (*ezen* 'on this', *azon* 'on that').[3] This grouping is therefore functional in nature, and the two classes of *proximals* and *distals* include elements with diverging morphosyntactic properties.

3.2 Demonstrative frequencies in adult and child Hungarian: a corpus study

We have carried out a small corpus study of demonstratives in one section of the MONYEK corpus[4] (see Mátyus & Orosz 2014), which contains the transcripts of 62 interviews with 4;6-5;6 Hungarian children. Each interview was structured the same way, and they included, among others, tasks in which the children had to tell or retell a story using pictures as prompts. This feature of the MONYEK corpus made it especially relevant to our study.[5] The MONYEK corpus contains roughly 39,000 utterances of altogether 140,000 words, and it includes data from both the adult investigators and the child participants of these interviews. For the purposes of this study, we have selected the first 10,000 utterances of this corpus (cc 39,000 words).

Table 1 below gives a summary of the results of this corpus search, relative to the subcorpus we have selected. We have merged frequency data concerning demonstrative pronouns and adnominal demonstratives, as this syntactic difference plays no role in our current investigation.[6] The search was constrained to the nominative and superessive forms of nominal demonstratives, and to the two demonstrative adverbs, and all occurrences of these items have been included, irrespective of whether they have a spatial function or not.

	ez	***az***	***ezen***	***azon***	***itt***	***ott***
	'this'	**'that'**	**'on this'**	**'on that'**	**'here'**	**'there'**
child	52	**148**	8	7	96	163
adult	223	**149**	6	0	128	71

Table 1. Raw frequencies of demonstrative items in the subcorpus

We have grouped these data into *proximals* and *distals* (distals are grey-marked in Table 1), and their overall distribution in children's and adults' utterances is represented in Figure 1.

[3] Adnominal demonstratives occur to the immediate left of the definite article in the noun phrase, and the demonstratives show case and number concord with the head noun. See Dékány (2021) for a recent overview of the morphosyntax of Hungarian nominal demonstrative constructions. Our experimental data include nominative and superessive demonstrative forms because of the nature of the scripted task: other case forms were simply not prompted. See example (1) in Section 4.2.

[4] MONYEK: Magyar Óvodai Nyelvi Korpusz [Morphologically Disambiguated Corpus of Spoken Child Hungarian]

[5] Babarczy (2019) offers a brief overview of Hungarian child language corpora.

[6] We only note here that demonstrative pronouns are more frequent in the corpus than adnominals, especially in children's utterances.

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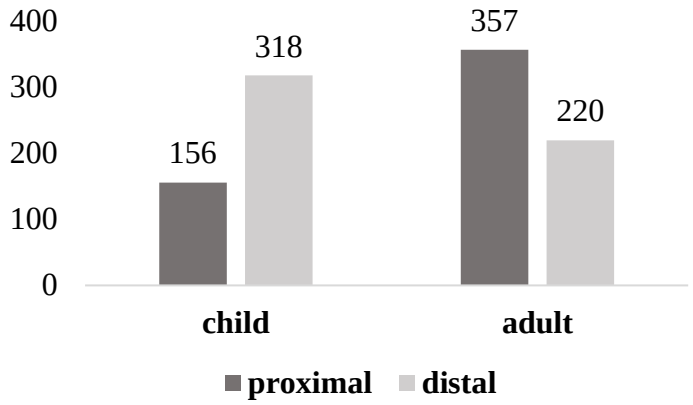

Figure 1. Proximals and distals in the subcorpus

As is evident, the relative distribution of the two categories is different in the two populations: children use more distals than proximals, whereas adults use more proximals than distals. This tendency is relatively robust, and the overall pattern seems to hold irrespective of independent task-specific or other potentially relevant contextual or discourse factors.

The corpus data include all uses and functions of demonstratives. To be able to assess whether a similar distributional pattern emerges in spatial uses of demonstratives in controlled experimental settings, we have designed a production study, which we discuss in Section 4 below.

4 Method

4.1 Participants

13 children (6 male and 7 female) participated in the experiment between the ages of 3;6 and 4;6, and their average age was 3;9. We specifically targeted this age group as cross-linguistic studies (Küntay & Özyürek 2006, Shin & Morford 2020) found that children at the age of 4 produce a full range of demonstratives, but their use of demonstratives is not adult-like at this point of their development. All the children were raised in a monolingual Hungarian environment. The adult control group included 11 adults (6 male and 5 female), who studied at the University of Debrecen (Hungary); their average age was 23. Data from two adult participants (1 male and 1 female) were not included in the final analysis since they leaned forward onto the table and produced proximal demonstratives throughout the task, probably due to their body posture. The participants were tested one by one and received a small gift at the end of their session. All the sessions were video recorded. The recordings were transcribed and the tokens of demonstrative elements were coded along the following variables: (i) type of demonstrative: proximal vs. distal; (ii) location of the puzzle piece: within reach, forced reach, beyond reach.

4.2 Materials and procedure

The pilot study comprised a jigsaw puzzle completion task inspired by the experimental design described in Shin and Morford (2020); however, we simplified and modified the procedure to fit the purposes of the pilot study and the needs of the children. More specifically, the puzzle to

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be completed had only 15 pieces, and the barrier dividing the top of the table into two parts was removed. First, the experimenter explained to the subject that they needed help to complete the puzzle, but there was a special rule: only the experimenter was allowed to touch the pieces. The participant had to answer six *which-piece* questions, for example, *Melyik darabon van a pillangó?* 'Which piece has the butterfly?' (lit.: On which piece is the butterfly?). We expected that at least some subjects would point to a particular puzzle piece and utter a demonstrative to identify it. Example (1) below illustrates one *wh*-question used in the experiment, and typical responses to it.

(1) Experimenter: És a kisvakond keze, melyik darab-on van?
and the little_mole hand.POSS.3SG which piece-on is
'And the little mole's hand? Which piece has it?'

Child 2: Itt (*pointing gesture*), ez-en.
here this-on
'Here, on this one.'

Adult 4: Ez-en itt. (*pointing gesture*)
this-on here
'On this one here.'

The participant and the experimenter were located face to face, at opposing ends of the table; the puzzle pieces and the board where the experimenter placed the pieces were laid out on the table. The session ended when the puzzle was completed. From the perspective of the participant, the puzzle pieces were arranged in three spatial regions (for a detailed description of these regions see Tóth & Csatár *forthcoming*). Two pieces were located within easy arm reach of the participant, two were placed in a position where the participant could only reach them if they made an effort and extended their arms, and finally, two were definitely beyond the reach of the participant. The experimenter followed the same routine in each session and asked the same questions in a fixed order.[7]

4.3 Results

The participants' replies to *which-piece* questions were transcribed and labelled based on the type of demonstrative used: proximal vs. distal (see Section 3 above). Sometimes participants relied on non-linguistic tools only to select a particular puzzle piece, such cases were also coded, and the use of other types of definite descriptions was registered. The overall results are presented in Table 2 and 3.

[7] See the Appendix.

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Adults

expression / region	proximal	distal	gesture (only)	other definite description	missing data
within reach	16	0	0	2	0
forced reach	10	6	0	2	0
beyond reach	2	13	0	2	1
total	28	19	0	6	1
percent	52	35	0	11	2

Table 2. Adults' production data

Children

expression / region	proximal	distal	gesture (only)	other definite description	missing data
within reach	14	8	3	0	1
forced reach	11	14	0	1	0
beyond reach	4	21	1	0	0
total	29	43	4	1	1
percent	37	55	5	1.5	1.5

Table 3. Children's production data

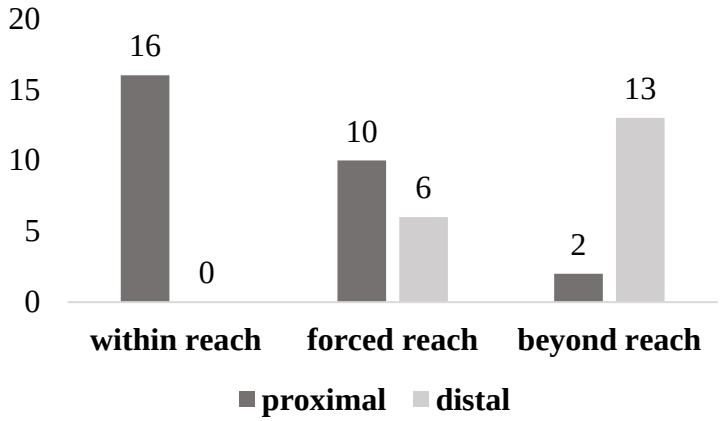

Figure 2. Adults' use of demonstratives

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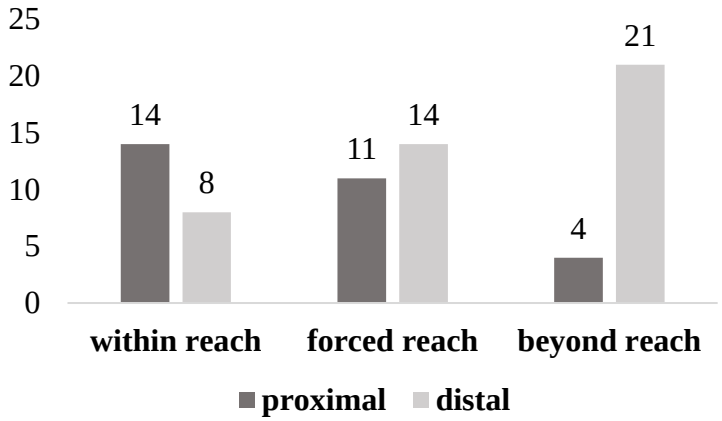

Figure 3. Children's use of demonstratives

When comparing the demonstrative selection of children and adults, it is clear that the adult pattern is more uniform: when the puzzle piece under discussion was within easy arm reach, adults consistently used proximal terms, while in the beyond reach region, distals were preferred. Children also chose mostly distals within the latter region, but their demonstrative selection showed more variation when the entity referred to was within easy arm reach. In the case of the forced reach region, the patterns are exactly the opposite, and this is the region where the demonstrative selection varies the most. It is also notable that the relative frequency of proximal and distal demonstratives in adult and child production shows a remarkable difference: overall, children used more distal terms, while adults more often selected proximal demonstratives (see Table 2 and 3). González-Peña et al. (2020: 11) also remark that in English, more children used *that/there* than *this/here*, i.e., distal terms occurred in more transcripts in CHILDES between the ages 18-24 months. Our preliminary corpus queries also found a greater proportion of distal terms in the MONYEK corpus (see Section 3.2). In the experiment, children produced distal demonstratives even in the within reach region, where adults always selected proximals. The adult participants also often opted for the use of other types of definite descriptions and described the location of the particular puzzle piece as follows, for example:

(2) Experimenter: Melyik-en vannak a mozdony kerek-ei?
which-on are the engine wheel-POSS.PL.3SG
'Which piece has the wheels of the engine?'

Adult 9: A bal legfelső-n.
the left topmost-on
'On the left topmost one.'

5 Discussion

The results of the adult control group presented above replicate and confirm previous findings regarding demonstrative selection in table-top space (for a detailed discussion see Tóth & Csatár *forthcoming*). Namely, relative distance from the speaker matters, the selection of demonstratives is determined by the location of the puzzle piece referred to: entities that are

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within easy arm reach from the participant trigger the use of proximal terms. In the forced reach region, where the participants have to make an effort and extend their arm if they want to point at a given puzzle piece, demonstrative selection varies, but proximal terms are preferred. The higher frequency of proximal terms at forced arm reach indicates that the participants treat this region as an extension of the within reach region. Finally, when the entities are beyond reach, almost exclusively distal forms are selected. The adult group produced only two proximal terms when referring to entities located in the beyond-reach region, and in these cases the speakers leaned forward and tried to reach the puzzle pieces in question.

Turning to children's data, the following observations arise: we identified four groups of children based on their use of demonstratives, these are shown in Table 4. In what follows we discuss the strategies used by these groups and offer plausible interpretations for their behaviour. Four children out of 13 produced one type of demonstrative only, a boy aged 3;11 and a girl aged 4;6 selected only proximals (*ez* users, including nominal and adverbial demonstratives), while two boys (their age was 3;6 and 4;5) always used distal terms (*az* users, including nominal and adverbial demonstratives). There were three other children, two girls and a boy (aged 3;10, 4;4 and 4;6, respectively) who produced only one proximal term and five distals, i.e., they showed a strong preference for distals. Finally, 6 children showed an adult-like behaviour.

Patterns identified	**Number of children**	**Gender**		**Stages**
		Male	Female	
ez users	2	1	1	NO CONTRAST
az users	2	2	-	NO CONTRAST
children with a strong preference for distals	3	1	2	NO CONTRAST/ PARTIAL CONTRAST
adult-like users	6	2	4	FULL CONTRAST

Table 4. Demonstrative patterns observed

First we discuss the uniform patterns emerging in the case of *ez* users and *az* users. Shin and Morford (2020) also observed that two (out of 4) children, between the age of 3 and 5 years, showed a preference to use only one demonstrative term regardless of the location of the referent in a similar task. One child always used the Spanish proximal term, *esa*, while the other always opted for the distal one, *esta*.[8] The authors assume that these children apply an early strategy when they use a single demonstrative regardless of spatial considerations. Clark and Sengul (1978) argue that this is the initial stage in demonstrative acquisition, where children treat proximal and distal terms in the same way, and they label this as the NO CONTRAST stage. However, we suggest that another explanation is also plausible. Namely, some children use only a single form because, though they might understand spatial contrasts, they cannot produce the appropriate linguistic form, so they adopt a simplifying strategy, and in a random fashion, they either select the proximal term or opt for the distal term. In our experiment, two subjects consistently used the proximal form *ez* throughout the task (*ez* users), while two children always selected the distal term (*az* users).

[8] *Aquel* did not occur in children's spontaneous language use.

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It is an intriguing question why children at the NO CONTRAST stage opt for a certain demonstrative form and not for the other. Apart from the simplifying strategy mentioned above, we first discuss some other potential explanations for the demonstrative choice of *ez* users:[9]

(i) It might be the case that these children prefer the use of speaker-centred forms, and the SPEAKER PRINCIPLE governs their demonstrative selection.

(ii) These children might be at a stage where no distinction is made between the proximal and the distal terms during the task, i.e. these subjects do not seem to be aware that demonstrative terms exhibit a spatial contrast. This means that the DISTANCE PRINCIPLE has not been acquired.

(iii) The limited interactional space (table-top space) could also have affected the children's use of demonstratives, which might explain why two children used the proximal form in each scenario.[10]

In our sample, the demonstrative selection of two children was characterised by the sole use of the distal form. Let us ponder several possible explanations for the sole use of distals.

(i) The consistent use of distals can be explained if we assume that they switch from their egocentric point of view to the perspective of the experimenter, and consequently, treat the experimenter as the deictic centre. However, spatial contrasts have not been mastered yet. This results in an overuse of the distal term in their attempt to take into account the addressee's perspective.

(ii) The DISTANCE PRINCIPLE has not been acquired by these children, i.e., no spatial distinctions are made.

(iii) In Hungarian, distal *az* is the unmarked member of the pair: distal forms can be used where relative distance plays no prominent role or where distance effects are neutralised, and it is the distal demonstrative that has assumed grammaticalised functions.[11] According to Clark (1973), children always acquire the unmarked member of a pair first, thus, our observations may support this assumption.

Next, we turn to the demonstrative use of those children who showed a strong preference for distals, i.e. they used only one proximal form. In general, the assumptions made above regarding *az* users can be extended to this type of behaviour. It might also be the case that these children were at the initial phase within the PARTIAL CONTRAST stage (cf. Clark & Sengul 1978).

Two of the three children used the sole proximal term when they were referring to the last piece of the puzzle. This piece was within easy arm reach from the subject and it was highly salient, there was no other piece competing to attract the visual attention of the interlocutors. The highly salient nature of the last piece in itself might explain why these children switched to the proximal form, as beforehand there were always at least two pieces of puzzle on the table.

Among the children with a strong preference for distals (who used at most one proximal), the demonstrative selection of the third child is particularly interesting, as he did not use the proximal term in the within reach region, but used it once in the forced reach region. He also

[9] It needs to be emphasised here that the subject and the experimenter were located face to face.

[10] Similarly, two adult participants were discarded from the experiment, because they leaned over the top of the table, consequently, were able to reach each piece of the puzzle, and that might be the reason why they only produced proximal forms.

[11] The distal demonstrative *az* 'that' is the historical source of the definite article in Hungarian, and the distal form also serves as the matrix pronominal associate of certain finite subordinate clauses and of left-dislocated noun phrases. See Szűcs (2022) and Szűcs (2019), respectively, for recent overviews of the grammar of the latter two constructions, and for the pertinent literature.

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referred to the last piece by the distal demonstrative. Since this subject was close to the end of the age range (4;6), he might present a kind of deterioration with respect to demonstrative use. This phenomenon was first described by De Villiers and De Villiers (1974) for children within the same age group (4;0-4;6); they argued that the necessity of adopting another interlocutor's perspective could temporarily confuse children and may be the reason behind a sharp drop in the correct production of *this/that*.

Turning to the demonstrative selection of the remaining children (4 girls and 2 boys, aged 3;8, 4;0, 4;0, 4;4, and 4;2, 4;3, respectively), they seem to have developed an adult-like demonstrative use. We can compare the production data of these children to that of the adult control group if we consider Table 5 and Figure 4, which represent only the use of demonstratives by these children. It is noteworthy that the patterns in the three regions are remarkably close to the adult patterns,[12] namely, that the members of this group have mastered FULL CONTRAST in demonstrative use in Clark and Sengul's (1978) terms. De Villiers and De Villiers (1974) claim that since both nominal and demonstrative adverbs are often accompanied by pointing gestures in parent-child conversations, it is not surprising that children can master the appropriate use of these relational spatial terms relatively early during language acquisition, especially in those circumstances when they can rely on their own perspective during production. Thus, the adult-like production of this group might be accounted for by the fact that in the experiment reported here the production of demonstrative forms did not require a shift in perspective.

Children (adult-like users)

expression / region	**proximal**	**distal**	**gesture (only)**	**other definite description**	**missing data**
within reach	9	1	2	0	0
forced reach	6	6	0	0	0
beyond reach	0	11	1	0	0
total	15	18	3	0	0
percent	42	50	8	0	0

Table 5. Children's production data (adult-like users)

[12] A closer look at the data reveals (see Table 5) that the children in this group still produced proportionally slightly more distals than proximals, however, in the within reach region and in the beyond reach region, the child and adult patterns are almost the same, i.e., the majority of the participants selected the same form across the board. In the forced reach region, both adult and child participants show individual variation, the analysis of which lies outside the scope of the present paper.

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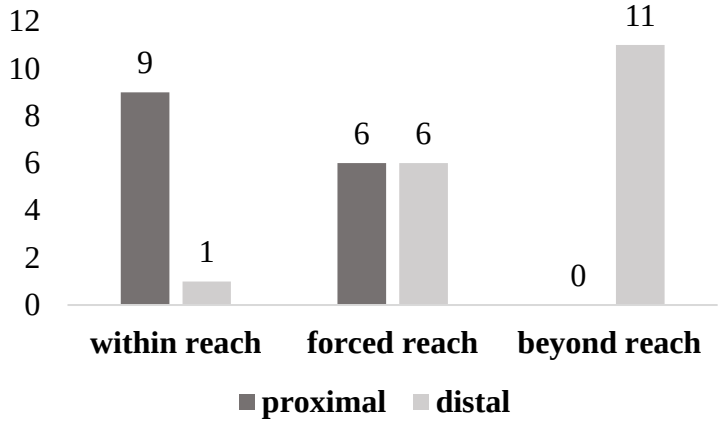

Figure 4. Children's use of demonstrative (adult-like users)

Several recent studies conclude that the adult-like use of demonstratives emerges only at about the age of 10 or 11 (see, for instance, Shin & Morford 2020 and Guijarro-Fuentes et al. 2022 on Spanish, which has a three-term demonstrative system). However, other sources place the acquisition of English demonstratives (a language with a two-term system) at the age of 4 or 5 (Webb & Abrahamson 1976, Diessel & Monakhov 2023). Our data support the latter view in Hungarian, another language with a two-term system.

6 Conclusion and outlook

The aim of the pilot study presented was twofold: (i) to collect data about the distribution of demonstrative elements in Hungarian child language and child-directed utterances in the MONYEK corpus and to compare the use of demonstratives by children and by an adult control group within an elicitation task; and (ii) to explore strategies used by 13 children aged 3;6-4;6.

The results of our preliminary corpus query and the data collected in the production task show the same tendencies, a higher proportion of distal forms was found in both the child language corpus and the transcripts of children's utterances during the puzzle completion task. This distribution is just the opposite of what adult language use shows, again in both the corpus (child-directed utterances) and the demonstrative use of the adult control group, proximal terms were more frequent. Regarding the second research question, a qualitative analysis of the experimental results revealed that Hungarian children aged 3;6-4;6 appear to be at different developmental stages with respect to the acquisition of demonstratives. Though the age difference was relatively small, all the three stages of demonstrative development that were first introduced by Clark and Sengul (1978) were represented among the 13 children tested.

Further research is required that targets Hungarian children belonging to a wider age range, especially as there is no consensus in the current literature on the age when children have fully mastered the appropriate use of demonstratives in their L1. The current study is a first attempt to gain insights into the acquisition of demonstratives in Hungarian, follow-up experiments and comprehension studies are called for to explore open questions.

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Appendix

Script

Nézd csak meg a képet, látod rajta a pillangót? 'Look at the photo. Can you see the butterfly?'
Melyik darabon van a pillangó? 'Which piece has the butterfly?' [BEYOND REACH]
És a kisvakond keze, melyik darabon van? 'And the little mole's hand? Which piece has it?' [FORCED REACH]
Melyik darabon látod a vakondot? 'Can you see the little mole? Which piece has the little mole?' [FORCED REACH]
Melyiken van a nyúl? 'Which piece has the rabbit?' [WITHIN REACH]
Melyik darabon vannak a mozdony kerekei? 'Which piece has the wheels of the engine?' [BEYOND REACH]
Mi kerül a sarokba? 'Which piece comes into the corner?' [WITHIN REACH]

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