

## What Deictic Gestures Tell Us about the Syntax-Gesture Interface: Gestural Pronouns in an Oral Language

**Goal:** to study the syntax-gesture through the analysis of the syntactic role of deictic gestures in various Latin-American varieties of Spanish (LS). Evidence is provided for the availability of what I refer to as gestural pronominals, that is to say, gestures which fulfill a nominal function. This result argues in favor of the multi-channeled syntax hypothesis, which states that even in oral languages the externalization procedure may include a gestural component *within* their syntax ([1], [2]; see also [3]’s modally hybrid grammar). **Data:** While hand-pointing (☞) with a deictic function is allegedly present in every single variety of Spanish, lip-pointing (☞) combined with slight head movements is attested in certain LS varieties (e.g., Chile, Colombia, Guatemala or Honduras; see [4] for the crosslinguistic distribution of ☞). ☞ is particularly favored in informal interactions, sometimes when attempting to hide the intended reference from others who are present but are not part of the conversation. **Analysis: (i.) Evidence for the grammatical role of ☞** Evidence for the availability of what I refer to as gestural or visual demonstrative pronouns in LS is provided by (a) the way the presence of pointing gestures or lack thereof has an effect on the grammaticality of the sentence, e.g., (1a), due to focus, or (1b) where we see that prepositions do not allow for null objects (*pro* /  $\emptyset$ ) and that ☞ helps avoid violating this constraint; (b) the fact that the distribution, licensing and interpretation of pointing gestures is restricted by well-established syntactic principles (e.g., Case Theory or Binding Theory; see the obligatoriness of the Case-assigning preposition in (2) and the relevance of c-command relations, which is a hallmark of Binding Theory, in (3)). **(ii.) The syntactic category of ☞** Evidence for the full DP status of ☞ is provided by (a.) coordination structures, where only identical categories can be coordinated; crucially, ☞ can be coordinated with a full DP, (4) (note that its presence is also crucial to the grammaticality of the sentence); (b) asymmetries found between DPs vs. bare NPs, where the distribution of the latter is limited, e.g., they cannot appear as the subject of a transitive verb ([5]), in contrast to ☞, (5); the fact that ☞ does not show such constraints provides still another argument for its DP status. **(iv.) An apparent counterexample: Doubling** The fact that labial pronouns might be doubled by overt pronouns, (6), is not unexpected, as oral pronouns are known independently to allow for doubling by so-called floating NPs (e.g., [6]), (7), which suggests that both elements are part of a complex a DP. This analysis can be straightforwardly extended to (6); the fact that oral and labial pronouns belong to different channels (the oral and the gestural channel, respectively) is argued to result in a certain degree of simultaneity or superimposition of the gestures and the oral items present in the derivation in contrast to the purely oral doubling found in (7), a result relevant to the study of the LCA ([7]). **(v.) ☞ vs. oral pronouns** It is shown that the directionality of the labial gestures is motivated by the need to identify the referent and, as such, the relation between the reference and the form is at least partially motivated as opposed to oral pronouns, whose forms is arbitrary. Furthermore, labial pronouns are incompatible with arbitrary interpretations, (8), allegedly due to this inherent deictic component. Finally, while (2) and (4) show that labial gestures are compatible with both masculine, feminine, singular and plural reference, ☞ does not show any overt morphology. Syntax, however, does not treat gestural and oral pronouns differently, as expected within the T-model, where syntax is not determined by PF-form of the lexical items entering the numeration. **(vi.) Spanish vs. French** [1], [2] provides evidence for the use of gestures as expletives and as Q particles. The data under discussion are relevant in that they expand the inventory of syntactic categories realized as gestures. **Conclusion:** This research sheds a light on the understudied gesture-syntax interface and on microvariation in

the use of gestures in Spanish. Evidence for the availability of gestural pronouns in Spanish has been provided.

### Data

- (1) a. A: Quién trabaja mañana?  
 who works tomorrow  
 ‘Who works tomorrow?’  
 B: \*(☞) (*pointing at somebody else who is present*)  
 ‘Him/her.’
- b. *Context: Mom has bought presents for her two toddlers and she is talking to her husband about the gifts. Their daughter (☞<sub>d</sub>) and their son (☞<sub>s</sub>) are sitting far away from one another talking to other family members at the other end of the room. Mom and dad want to keep their discussion private.*  
 Mom: Esto se lo he comprado a {☞<sub>s</sub>/él<sub>s</sub>/\*Ø/\*pro<sub>s</sub>}.  
 this CL have bought for him
- (2) a. Pedro fue visto \*(por) ☞.  
 Pedro was seen by him/her/them  
 ‘Pedro was seen by him/her/them.’
- (3) a. Ayer le di a ☞<sub>i</sub> un retrato de sí mismo<sub>i</sub>.  
 yesterday CL gave.1SG to him a portrait of himself  
 b. \*Ayer le di a la madre de ☞<sub>i</sub> un retrato de sí mismo<sub>i</sub>.  
 yesterday CL gave.1SG to the mother of him a portrait of himself
- (4) a. Ese hombre y {☞/\*Ø/\*pro} no quieren trabajar duro.  
 that man and him/her/them not want.3PL to-work hard
- (5) ☞/\*niños me han comprado un regalo.  
 children me have bought a gift
- (6) A: ¿Quién va a venir?  
 who will to come  
 B: *Gestural component:* ☞  
*Oral component (simultaneously):* Ese  
 that one
- (7) Nosotros los lingüistas....  
 we the linguists
- (8) ☞ / ☞<sub>arb</sub> / pro<sub>arb</sub> llaman a la puerta.  
 knock at the door

### References

- [1] Joutiteau, M. 2004. Gestures as Expletives, *Multichannel Syntax*. B. Schmeiser, V. Chand, A. Kelleher and A. Rodriguez, eds., *Proceedings of WCCFL 23*. Cascadilla Press. 422-435. [2] Joutiteau, M. 2007. Listen to the sound of salience: Multichannel syntax of Q particles. S. Baauw, F. Drijkoningen and M. Pinto, eds., *Romance Languages and Linguistic Theory 2005*. John Benjamins. 185-200. [3] Floyd, Simeon. 2016. Modally hybrid grammar? Celestial pointing for time-of-day reference in Nheengatú. *Language* 92: 31-64. [4] Enfield, Nick. J. 2001. “Lip-pointing: A discussion with special reference to data from Laos”. *Gesture* 1: 185-212. [5] Casielles-Suárez, E. 2004. *The Syntax-Information Structure Interface*. London: Routledge. [6] Torrego, E. 1996. On quantifier float in control clauses. *Linguistic Inquiry* 27, 111-126. [7] Kayne, Richard S. 1994. *The Antisymmetry of Syntax*. Cambridge MA: The MIT Press.