

Deictics in Philippine Languages

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A comparison of deictic pronouns in seven major Philippine languages (Tagalog, Sebuano, Ilokano, Hiligaynon, Bikol, Kapampangan, and Pangasinan) using a translational concordancing program reveals a complex pattern of similarities and divergences. Modern Tagalog has three degrees of deixis (near me, near you, and far), and three case forms for each pronoun. Other languages have differing numbers of pronouns and case forms. Some languages have plural forms. In some languages, including Tagalog, the third (oblique) form of deictics also expresses location/direction. In other languages the locatives are distinct, but derived from, the deictics. In some but not all languages, there are derived forms expressing similarity (Tag. *ganito* 'like this') and presence (Tag. *narito* 'be here').

The translational approach also reveals that the boundaries between the deictics are not sharp, in contrast, for example, to the personal pronouns, where the boundary between 1st and 2nd person pronouns is extremely sharp. We also find an interplay between the deictics and 3rd person pronouns (e.g. using *ito* 'this' in place of *siya* 'he, she').

For historical linguistics the study points to a number of avenues for changes or shifts to take place. For theoretical linguistics it raises the question of whether any model using binary processing, or assuming a central processing unit can account for this degree of linguistic change.