

A Survey on Spatial Cognition in Mainland China and Taiwan:

— Differences in the Perception of Distance Demonstrated
by the Choice of 这 (Zhe) or 那 (Na) —

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Suzuki's research in 2011 compared how the Japanese demonstratives *kore* (this), *sore* (that), and *are* (that over there) in a novel were translated in mainland China and Taiwan. The research found that the Chinese demonstrative 这 (this) was often used in mainland China, whereas the Chinese demonstrative 那 (that) was more frequent in Taiwan. Based on this result, Suzuki claimed that people in mainland China tend to perceive things and objects closer than they really are, and their Taiwanese counterparts further.

This paper will look at the claim from a different angle. Unlike the previous comparative research on text translation, 40 native Chinese students in Tianjin and Taipei were tested to examine a sense of perspective in choosing the two demonstratives and prove the author's claim. It turned out that there were no considerable differences in their choices. Yet students in Tianjin used 这 more often than those in Taipei, as already confirmed in the 2011 study.

This research revealed two new findings. First, a difference in translation between mainland Chinese and Taiwanese versions affected the students' choices of the demonstratives. In mainland China, 这 was a common choice in a given situation, whereas in Taiwan fewer students chose it. Second, there seems to be a gender difference in the use of the demonstratives. This was not the case in Taipei, but in Tianjin more male students than females chose 这. These were not found through the previous research, which focused on written texts in the form of a novel. Shifting the focus to a human sense of perspective, namely nonwritten material, led to the new findings.