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Between “Qui” and “Qua” and “Lì” and “Là”: Some Observations on Locative Adverbs and Linguistic Space in Italian

Alice Giovanelli

Università degli Studi di Firenze (<alicegiovanelli3@gmail.com>)

Abstract:

This article discusses some aspects of spatial conceptualisation in Italian, focusing on deixis and the Italian locative adverbs: the proximal *qui* and *qua* (‘here’), and the distal *lì* and *là* (‘there’). It examines how deixis is realised through demonstrative adjectives or pronouns and through locative adverbs, highlighting and debating some shared properties and features. It is argued that Italian speakers think of space through two metaphors, which can be defined generally as SPACE IS A POINT and SPACE IS WIDTH. This hypothesis is supported by a set of examples, including a comparison with another Romance language (Spanish) based on data from Fleming and Lloy (2023), that illustrate the variable cognitive understanding of space associated with different adverbs. In conclusion, this work suggests that there is a tendency among Italian speakers to favour the deictic pair in *-i* to indicate a specific, punctual space, and the deictic pair in *-a* for a broad, unlimited environment, in line with the two proposed spatial metaphors.

Keywords: Deixis, Demonstratives, Locative Adverbs, Metaphors, Spatial Conceptualisation

1. Introduction

This paper intends to explore certain characteristics and properties of four Italian locative adverbs: *qui* and *qua* (‘here’), and *lì* and *là* (‘there’)¹. It begins with a discussion of the frame of

¹ It is important to emphasise right from the outset a notable issue in translating from Italian to English. English lacks precise equivalents for Italian locative adverbs. *Qui* and *qua* can both be rendered as ‘here’; however, as this article will later explain, *qui* conveys greater precision than *qua*. Therefore, a more accurate translation would distinguish between the two terms, using ‘right here’ for *qui* and ‘here’ or ‘over here’ for *qua*. The same challenge applies to *lì* and *là*, which are both commonly interpreted as ‘there’. To capture the nuance between the adverbs, *lì* can be translated as ‘there’, while *là* might be better rendered as ‘over there’ or, less commonly, ‘yonder’.

reference employed by Italian speakers when conceptualising space, followed by an introduction to the metaphors through which the spatial dimension is interpreted. This study intends to put forward the hypothesis that the metaphor presented by Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 30-31), THE VISUAL FIELD IS A CONTAINER, can be further refined and specified into SPACE IS A POINT and SPACE IS WIDTH. The Italian deictic system is subsequently described, encompassing demonstrative adjectives and pronouns, and locative adverbs. Through a series of examples and observations, common properties and features are underlined, revealing analogies and overlaps between these distinct lexical categories.

Afterwards, the discussion addresses the spatial understanding of Italian speakers, aiming to identify a tendency to associate the deictic pair in *-i* (*qui* and *lì*) with precise or pinpointed spaces and the deictic pair in *-a* (*qua* and *là*) with areas that are undefined and boundless (Salvi and Vanelli 2004: 324). First, complex prepositional phrases are examined based on two studies (Folli 2008; Tortora 2008) that investigate spatial distinctions. Then, a comparison is made with Spanish, whose deictic system, featuring dual anchoring (Da Milano 2005: 79-86), bears significant similarities to Italian. Finally, an attempt is made to draw some general conclusions based on the findings, and it is noted that Italian speakers tend to employ a dual spatial metaphorical cognition.

1.1 *Frames of Reference (FoR)*

The first step in examining space from a linguistic outlook is to define how it is conceptualised in different languages, that is, how speakers place themselves and entities within the external world in which they live and move. Everett (2013: 79-101) shows that multiple orientation strategies exist and explains that cross-linguistic variations in spatial language lead to consistent differences in non-linguistic cognition concerning spatial orientation. Although it is generally assumed that there are no topological concepts universally encoded in the world's languages, this does not mean that there are no strong cross-linguistic tendencies. Topological notions, which are fundamental in terms of biological development, are structured on frames of reference – mental coordinate frameworks that allow speakers to position elements in their surroundings.

Everett demonstrates that these referential configurations can be egocentric or relative if they rely on the speaker's perspective, wherein the speaker perceives themselves as the centre of the system when describing the orientation of particular objects, thus relating the physical reality to their own person. That said, these orientational schemes can also be allocentric, wherein the location of items and human beings is traced from a fixed feature of the environment. In this scenario, the systems are described as absolute and geocentric (or intrinsic), where the spatial positioning of objects is independent of the relative location of the speaker and instead depends on the space itself (e.g., cardinal directions).

These FoRs are employed variably, but speakers of a language tend to prioritise, if not exclusively use, at least one of these models. The languages considered in this paper (Italian and Spanish) are prototypical examples of the egocentric FoR. Cinque (1976) discusses the possibility that individuals construct a psychological map of the environment they interact with². This mapping is defined as current and actual, as it is established only during the act of linguistic enunciation in which a deictic term is employed. According to Cinque, this is because there is no location that is objectively near or far from the speaker; rather, there are constraints on how reality is imagined.

² This hypothesis could be further elaborated in light of Mental Spaces Theory. For a concise definition of this theoretical framework, see Evans (2007: 135-136).

However, it might be more appropriate to suggest that individuals, in moving through real and figurative contexts, *always* possess a spatial perception, regardless of whether the setting is concrete or interpreted as a translated place that has dimension only within personal cognition. Consequently, the selection of deictics would be influenced by the individual's position within the psychological map they create, which combines not only real but also non-literal elements and which precedes the formulation of a speech act. From this point of view, language serves as a tool to more accurately define the spatial environment, connecting a coordinate system to the subject.

1.2 Spatial Metaphors

The data examined in this paper aim to demonstrate that speakers of certain languages, specifically Italian speakers, mentally represent space through distinct metaphors³. A fundamental notion to introduce is the conceptualisation of the visual field as presented by Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 30-31). The authors outline the metaphor THE VISUAL FIELD IS A CONTAINER, which emerges empirically from the fact that, since the area of an individual's visual apparatus is limited, the human eye necessarily delineates a boundary when observing a physical space. This implies that a defined environment is recognised, within which elements are figuratively contained. Indeed, humans employ ontological metaphors to comprehend events or activities and to describe states or actions. They often qualify themselves as entities distinct from the rest of the world, interpreting themselves as CONTAINERS, with an external boundary (e.g., flesh) and an internal component (e.g., bones or blood) (*Ibidem*, 74; 149).

CONTAINERS can be conceptualised either as a delimited surface possessing a centre and a periphery or as the containment of a substance, variable in quantity and with a core located at its centre (*Ibidem*, 31). The first of these views aligns with Hottenroth's (1982) assertion that some speakers mentally divide space into concentric circles, identifying themselves as the *origo* of their spatial perception and thus as the privileged point of reference. This theory, consistent with Lakoff and Johnson's metaphor, aligns with the egocentric FoR postulated for the Italian language.

This paper seeks to refine the metaphor THE VISUAL FIELD IS A CONTAINER to provide a more precise description of the underlying principles governing the spatial interpretation of native Italian speakers. It is proposed here that within the metaphor THE VISUAL FIELD IS A CONTAINER, an underlying concept such as SPACE IS DISTANCE is inherently present, consistently employed due to the fact that humans inhabit a three-dimensional world with volumes constructed along the spatial axes (x, y, z). Clearly, it is challenging to simultaneously account for all three dimensions (longitudinal, transverse, and sagittal) when using one's native language, partly because language itself lacks a volumetric nature. For this reason, spatial interpretation is simplified through the use of metaphors.

Consequently, this paper proposes that mental space is organised around two more specific concepts, represented by distinct metaphors. The first metaphor, SPACE IS A LINE, may be interpreted in certain contexts as either SPACE IS LENGTH or SPACE IS A POINT⁴. The second metaphor, SPACE IS WIDTH, can be articulated as SPACE IS BREADTH in non-physical contexts and differs from SPACE IS A LINE due to the diverse dimensional perception it entails at a cognitive level. It is argued that these two metaphors are usually not used simultaneously

³For the definition of metaphor and of the concept of SPACE, see Evans (2007: 136-138; 202).

⁴The metaphor SPACE IS A LINE is defined based on the principle that, in geometry, a line has only one dimension and contains an infinite number of points, thereby encompassing SPACE IS A POINT. Similarly to the line, the point is also a primitive concept and can be regarded as either a simple position or the indication of a coordinate.

and that their respective application, depending on communicative circumstances, determines the distinction between the morphemic pairs found in Italian deictic adverbs. Therefore, this paper will illustrate that SPACE IS A POINT underpins the *-i* pair (*qui* and *lì*), while SPACE IS WIDTH serves as the foundation for the *-a* pair (*qua* and *là*).

2. *Space: A Dynamic Description of Interactions*

Deixis is a linguistic phenomenon defined by elements whose meaning is contingent upon the communicative circumstances (spatial, temporal, personal deixis, and more recently, social and textual deixis). As noted by Cinque (1976), natural languages exhibit, on the one hand, sentences that require no additional or extralinguistic information to be understood and, on the other hand, sentences that necessitate conceptual effort to determine their correct semantic representation. The latter ones depend on contextual information to establish truth conditions and are the so-called deictic sentences, which rely on knowledge of the participants' roles and the spatial and temporal locations of entities to be accurately encoded.

In Italian, deixis is typically realised through demonstratives and through locative adverbs, which provide indications about the placement of an element in metaphorical or concrete space. The following paragraphs will provide a brief description of the Italian deictic system, first defining demonstratives and then adverbs, with the intention of examining a range of analogies and overlapping characteristics between these different lexical classes.⁵

2.1 *The System of Demonstratives in Italian*

Demonstratives are distinct linguistic forms, functioning as either pronouns or adjectives, utilised to identify and situate things, individuals, or entities within a specific context. Salvi and Vanelli (2004: 321, 329) describe a generally binary demonstrative system in Italian (*quest-*, 'this', and *quell-*, 'that') and emphasise that knowledge of certain contextual coordinates (such as the identity of the participants in the communicative act and their positioning in both space and time) is crucial for the interpretation of deixis.

In the Tuscan variety, this system expands into a tripartite structure (*quest-*, *quell-*, and *codest-*⁶) in which the three demonstratives are inflected for both gender (masculine or feminine) and number (singular or plural), as illustrated in Table 1. The distinctions among them are determined specifically by the relative positions of the speaker, the listener, and the referent.

	proximity to the speaker	proximity to the listener, distance from the speaker	distance from the speaker
singular	<i>questo/questa</i>	<i>codesto/codesta</i>	<i>quello/quella</i>
plural	<i>questi/queste</i>	<i>codesti/codeste</i>	<i>quelli/quei/quegli/quelle</i>

Table 1. Demonstrative adjectives and pronouns in Italian

⁵ For a more accurate explanation of deixis, particularly in Italian, see Antinucci (1974), Cinque (1976), Vanelli (1981), Salvi and Vanelli (2004) and Da Milano (2005).

⁶ English does not have a tripartite system and does not mark the medial field. In English, *codest-* would be rendered as 'this' or 'that', depending on the context.

As shown in Table 1, three variants of the masculine plural demonstrative can be identified in Italian, resulting from the allomorphy of the masculine plural definite article (*il/gli*). Ordinarily, *quei* and *quegli* function as adjectives before nouns (as in *quei bambini*, 'those children', and *quegli zaini*, 'those rucksacks'), whereas *quelli* takes on a more general pronominal role.

In this regard, the position of Cardinaletti and Giusti (2015) is salient. They reflect on the realisations of the masculine plural morpheme, considering, for instance, the alternation between *bei* and *begli* (the inflection of *bello*, 'beautiful') as pronominal adjectives, which follow a particular declension similar to that of the definite articles (*il/gli*). A phonological distinction is observed, as *bei* is chosen before masculine plural nouns beginning with a consonant, while *begli* is selected before those starting with a vowel. Similarly, Italian determiners are subject to phonological rules, which require, for example, the use of *gli* before masculine plural nouns starting with a vowel, certain consonants (e.g., *x-*, *z-*) or specific consonant clusters (e.g., *ps-*, *gn-*).

Cardinaletti and Giusti argue that *que-* is a demonstrative devoid of agreement features, which exhibits a compensatory concord mechanism when it occurs in a pronominal position. To compensate for the absence of such features, it is proposed that *que-* requires an explicit functional head D, which is realised as a morpheme identical to the definite article. As a consequence, it can be hypothesised that the distinction between the pronominal *quelli* and the adjectival *quei/quegli* arises from the pronominal nature (i.e., without a D head) of *quelli*, which is evidently subject to different syntactic and phonological processes.

With regard to the set of demonstratives, Da Milano (2005: 90-93) suggests that a tripartite system (such as the Italian one) is not solely distinguished by person or distance but also reflects the importance of the listener. It would therefore be more accurate to present it as a dual-anchor type system, where the selection of one demonstrative over another depends on the relative positions of all participants in the communicative interaction in terms of proximity or distance.

However, this article seeks to broaden the discussion by proposing that the choice of demonstratives is also linked to the degree of specificity attributed to the referent entity, with objects present within the shared visual or cognitive field of both the speaker and listener being more specific than those absent from the communicative context. Integrating the spatial dimension with the speaker's perspective allows for the identification of three key properties that facilitate a more precise categorisation of demonstratives. These properties are here defined as follows:

1. proximity, which denotes the closeness of the entity being discussed to the subject;
2. specificity, which indicates the degree of definition of the entity being referred to;
3. subjectivity, which focuses on the significance of the subject in the context of spatial reference.

The demonstrative *quest-* is typically used for entities that are spatially, temporally, or conceptually near and conveys an awareness of physical closeness to the speaker ([+ proximity]). It designates items within the visual or immediate referential context of the discourse ([+ specificity]). *Cost-*, though infrequently employed in everyday language, persists in certain dialects as well as in formal and literary registers (Salvi and Vanelli 2004: 329; Da Milano 2005: 90-93). It applies to an object that is close to the listener but distant from the speaker ([– proximity]) and is either physically situated within the visual field or connected to something both participants are familiar with or have recently mentioned ([+ specificity]).

In this regard, Da Milano (2005: 26) supports the ideas of Benedetti and Ricca (2002), who mention three independent features that may influence the selection of the term for the medial field. The proximity feature observed in this article aligns with their analysis, while the notions of physical and/or psychological distance are here reflected in the attributes of speci-

ficity and subjectivity. The component of visibility or ostension is not treated independently in this discussion, as it can only be assessed within a real, physical context rather than in purely cognitive or figurative terms. Furthermore, the characteristics outlined here apply to the entire demonstrative system, rather than being limited to medial forms alone.

Finally, *quell-* is used to refer to entities that are detached ([– proximity]) from both the speaker and the listener in real-world terms or that are figuratively separated from the immediate communicative context ([– specificity]).

	proximity	specificity	subjectivity
<i>quest-</i>	+	+	++
<i>codest-</i>	–	+	+
<i>quell-</i>	–	–	–

Table 2. Properties of demonstrative adjectives and pronouns in Italian

This brief description highlights two fundamental aspects: (1) the Italian language distinguishes three spatial areas (i.e., it divides the space into proximal, medium, and distal zones) based on the relationships between the participants in the communicative framework and the discourse referents. However, the perspective adopted is egocentric, primarily focused on the speaker; (2) what is proximal to the speaker seems to be more defined and specific, with only one of the three demonstratives being used for objects in immediate contiguity. This also implies that *quest-* has a higher degree of subjectivity ([++ subjectivity]) compared to the other two cases, as it does not presuppose an implicit reference to the interlocutor.

2.2 The System of Locative Adverbs in Italian

There are four distinct elements, specifically four locative adverbs, which define lexical deixis in Italian. Their distinction is either proximal (*qui* and *qua*, ‘here’) or distal (*lì* and *là*, ‘there’), mainly in relation to the speaker⁷. As stated in the Vocabolario Treccani Online, the Dictionary of the Italian language (2023), the adverbs *qui* and *qua* can be used interchangeably, although *qui* expresses a greater degree of definiteness ([+ specificity]) compared to *qua* ([– specificity]), with both referring to ‘in this place’ and indicating a location near the speaker ([+ proximity]).

Interestingly, the Treccani Dictionary also mentions that the adverb *lì*, while synonymous with ‘in that place’, appears to describe a place that is not particularly far from the speaker or listener, which seems to contrast with the idea that it typically defines distance. However, there

⁷ A straightforward method for verifying whether an adverb is typically interpreted as proximal or distal is to examine its compatibility with deictic verbs that describe movement in relation to the speaker’s or interlocutor’s presence at the destination of the movement. For instance, the verb *venire* (‘to come’) inherently presupposes the movement of an entity or a person towards the speaker. For example:

- (i.) Vieni *qui/qua*!
‘Come here!’
- (ii.) *Vieni *lì/là*!
‘*Come there!’

Since *lì* and *là* are used in reference to spaces far from the speaker, their placement conflicts with the movement expected from the verb, which requires something close. This issue is further explored in Cinque (1976) and Salvi and Vanelli (2004: 325).

must be an intrinsic difference between the forms in *-i* and those in *-a* in unmarked contexts, as otherwise, it would not be possible to substitute them with different demonstratives. This is consistent with the views of Cinque (1976) and Salvi and Vanelli (2004: 323-324), who associate distal adverbs with the identification of a location that is negatively correlated (i.e., farther) with the speaker's position, whereas proximal adverbs would be characterised by a positive correlation with these features.

suffix	vicinity	distance
<i>-i</i>	<i>qui</i>	<i>lì</i>
<i>-a</i>	<i>qua</i>	<i>là</i>

Table 3. Locative adverbs in Italian

The selection of referential expressions is intrinsically tied to the speaker's assumptions regarding the listener's capacity to identify the intended entity. Consequently, the variation in usage can, in certain instances, be cognitive in nature, depending on the accessibility of the referent, rather than solely linked to the physical space of reference (as in the case of textual deixis, which can also be purely oral rather than written). A common categorisation (Vanelli 1981; Salvi e Vanelli 2004: 324) attributes the distinction between *qui* and *qua* to three types of relations: coincidence, where the position indicated by the deictic adverb matches the speaker's own; inclusion, where the area in question encompasses the speaker's location; and proximity.

In this article, however, these properties are reconsidered. Firstly, this reformulation allows for the inclusion of the distal deictic pair, thereby enabling a broader discussion of locative adverbs. Secondly, the categories of coincidence and inclusion are considered imprecise. Specifically, the concept of coincidence, when applied to real-world contexts, appears problematic and it may be more fittingly associated with purely cognitive spaces – a limitation not emphasised by Salvi and Vanelli. For example, when using *qui*, it does not always refer to the precise point where the speaker's body is positioned. Instead, the deictic adverb often indicates a surrounding area or a proximate region, which can be considered the speaker's immediate environment, rather than coinciding with the precise spot of the subject's body.

The concept of inclusion is also debatable. While it might suggest that the speaker's location is part of the defined area, this is not always the case, especially when dealing with non-literal or abstract mappings of space, where the boundaries may be broader or less defined. For these reasons, the properties of locative adverbs are here presented differently, as outlined in Table 4.

	proximity	specificity	subjectivity
<i>qui</i>	+	+	++
<i>qua</i>	+	–	–
<i>lì</i>	–	+	+
<i>là</i>	–	–	–

Table 4. Properties of locative adverbs in Italian

With regard to their properties, the adverbs *lì* and *là* designate referents that are not proximal to the speaker ([–proximity]). By analogy with proximal adverbs, *lì* is assumed to be associated

with [+ specificity] and *là* with [– specificity]. In the domain of perception, no precise term seems to exist to denote the intermediate field, although Da Milano (2005: 99-101) proposes that *lì* possesses distinguishing characteristics that set it apart from *là*, allowing it to identify the intermediate field within a hypothetical tripartite system of *qui/lì/là*.

Concerning the degree of subjectivity, it may be proposed that, consistent with the earlier discussion on *quest-* and *codest-*, subjectivity is directly proportional to specificity. Therefore, subjectivity can be considered positive for *qui* and *lì*, and negative for *qua* and *là*, assuming that the inherent specificity and precision of *qui* contribute to making it more subjective than *qua*, which is broader and more generic.

These brief overviews illustrate that deictic adverbs and demonstratives share common properties and that the conceptualisation of space they convey is inherently egocentric.

2.3 Analogies Between Locative Adverbs and Demonstratives

The distinction between adverbial deixis and demonstratives is linked to the grammatical nature of the elements classified within these two categories. Deixis is primarily expressed through adverbs, which, as fixed semantic modifiers, necessitate supplementary contextual information. In contrast, demonstratives are variable parts of speech, including adjectives and pronouns, which belong to open lexical classes and may only be considered as having a deictic subcategory. Generally, they serve to pinpoint an object or referent in relation to the deictic centre, represented by the speaker. However, examining the similarities between the behaviour of deictic adverbs and demonstratives offers additional insight into how Italian speakers conceptualise spatiality.

Firstly, the claim that deictic adverbs do not *demonstrate* anything can be scrutinised. While it is true that they neither specify a noun nor replace one, the etymology of *qui* likely has a demonstrative origin. According to the online Treccani Dictionary (2023), it can be traced back to the Latin phrase *eccu(m) hic*, meaning ‘here it is’ or ‘look here’, which denotes a reference to an implicit entity being shown or presented to the interlocutor. As a result, the distinction between the demonstrative function and the concrete locative adverbial role that *qui* is intended to represent becomes blurred. In this light, it could be argued that indication is fundamental for all these lexical items, thereby complicating any strict separation between locative adverbs and demonstratives.

This intrinsic link between deixis and the act of pointing becomes even more apparent when considering spatial perception. If one imagines an object occupying a position in a physical environment, it is reasonable to assume that objects closer to the observer’s gaze will appear clear or more distinct, whereas those situated in the background will seem less defined or more ambiguous. In this regard, the remark made by Benedetti and Ricca (2002) and described also by Da Milano (2005: 20) may be adopted: vagueness is associated with distance, and the further a spatial field extends, the more imprecisely it tends to be identified.

Secondly, a syntactic parallel emerges from the fact that demonstratives can function as heads within a NP, combining with the noun to form a fixed constituent structure (D + N). Italian, like Spanish and many other head-initial languages, conforms to the head-directionality parameter (Baker 2001: 51-84), which determines that the grammatical head (in this case, the demonstrative) precedes its complement. This structural pattern is exemplified in (1a) and (2a), where it is also clear that any alteration of the expected order would produce ungrammatical sentences ((1b), (2b)):

- (1) a. *Quel castello* sta cadendo a pezzi
'That castle is falling apart.'
b. **Castello quel* sta cadendo a pezzi
- (2) a. Prendi *questa cornice* d'argento e lascia *quella* d'oro
'Take *this* silver *frame* and leave *that* gold *one*.'
b. *Prendi *cornice* d'argento *questa* e lascia d'oro *quella*

The combination of a demonstrative and a deictic adverb is not uncommon, often employed to add greater emphasis or dynamism to sentences, particularly in spoken discourse or natural communicative situations. While adverbs ordinarily allow for flexibility in their placement within a sentence, deictic adverbs consistently occur to the left when speakers construct an adverbial phrase. This pattern is so systematic that any deviation from it tends to result in word orders that sound unnatural or degraded. For instance:

- (3) a. Vieni *qui accanto* a me
'Come here next to me.'
b. *Vieni *accanto qui* a me
- (4) a. Ecco *qui* il resto⁸
'Here is the rest.'
b. **Qui* ecco il resto
- (5) a. C'è una candela accesa *lì sotto*
'There is a lit candle down there.'
b. *C'è una candela accesa *sotto lì*
- (6) a. Passeggia *qua intorno* per esplorare il giardino segreto
'She walks around here to explore the secret garden.'
b. ?*Passeggia *intorno qua* per esplorare il giardino segreto
- (7) a. La gatta sta nascosta *qua dietro* vicino al divano
'The cat is hidden back here, near the sofa.'
b. *La gatta sta nascosta *dietro qua* vicino al divano

Italian speakers generally tend to position adverbs earlier in the sentence, guided by the principle of transitioning from the general to the specific (i.e., initially defining the speaker's anchoring in terms of [+ proximity] or [– proximity], followed by other descriptive properties). Notably, there is a parallel between the structure of an NP with a demonstrative and an AdvP with a deictic. In both cases, the initial element serves a deictic function, establishing the degree of spatial distance. For instance, in (1a), *quel* identifies a specific castle, much like a locative adverb identifies a location, regardless of additional specifications that may follow. The relatively fixed syntactic structure of NPs (or DPs) and AdvPs reinforces the analogies being explored.

⁸The use of *qui* in contexts such as these is sometimes considered pleonastic.

Among these examples, it is also worth noting that (6b) would likely not be considered ungrammatical by all Italian speakers. The assumption here is that grammaticality judgements are closely tied to the mental representation of space, whereby *qua* appears to evoke a spatial area within which movement is possible, rather than a fixed point. If *qua* is interpreted as an explorative space, then both (6a) and (6b) may be considered acceptable by some people, depending on the context.

Thirdly, distinguishing demonstratives from locative adverbs based on their dependence (or lack thereof) on situational context appears unjustified, as both rely on supplementary information for full interpretation. While it is undeniable that demonstratives belong to more open lexical classes compared to adverbs, they remain context-dependent, as proven by their cataphoric and anaphoric functions – both of which inherently depend on the availability of additional contextual cues. Consider the following examples:

- (8) a. Gianni vide una biblioteca antica. *Quella* era bellissima
'Gianni saw an ancient library. That one was beautiful.'
- b. *Quella* era bellissima
'That one was beautiful.'
- (9) a. Mio marito è andato a Venezia per lavoro. Domani *là* c'è il Festival del Cinema⁹
'My husband went to Venice for work. Tomorrow, the Film Festival will be held there.'
- b. Domani *là* c'è il Festival del Cinema
'Tomorrow, the Film Festival will be held there.'

Although it is plausible that *là* in (9a) does not refer to the city of Venice, but functions as an adverb to localise a generic place, its locality cannot be dissociated from the property of proximity, which has been identified as characteristic of demonstratives (in (9a), the husband is in Venice, but the speaker is far away, so the form in *-a* is chosen). Moreover, according to Cinque (1976), there are restrictions on what the speaker can consider to coincide or not with the context of the linguistic expression, as there must be consistency between the context and the choice of deictics. Therefore, in cases such as (9a) and (9b), it would not be possible to employ a distal deictic if the speaker is where the Film Festival will take place.

Another overlap, as opposed to the purely adverbial function, arises from the fact that *là*, similar to *quella*, maintains an anaphoric reference at both the phrasal and semantic levels, which cannot be fully understood without the presence of context. Given examples (8b) and (9b), it is evident that it is impossible to determine either the specific meaning conveyed by the adjective *bellissima* or the precise location of the Film Festival. In (9b), *là* replaces the locative prepositional phrase [_{pp} *a Venezia*], to such an extent that, in its absence, one might assume that the reference is being made to the Film Festival in Berlin or Rome.

Just as the anaphoric and cataphoric roles of demonstratives are considered crucial to maintain textual coherence, avoid repetition, and clarify connections within discourse, similarly, it could be argued that *qui* and *qua*, as well as *lì* and *là*, serve to refer back to, distinguish, or highlight elements previously mentioned or those that will be addressed within the situation¹⁰.

⁹ For similar examples, see Vanelli (1981) and Salvi and Vanelli (2004: 324).

¹⁰ The cataphoric and anaphoric functions of proximal deictics become even more evident when evaluating contexts where the reference is not physical but relates to a text (discourse deixis). This is due to the fact that discourse,

Therefore, it can be concluded that, at least in locative contexts, there is a convergence between deictic adverbs and demonstratives at the conceptual interpretation level, with the distinction primarily attributable to their lexical class rather than their function.

3. *Space: Limited and Point-Based or Unlimited and Areal?*

This section aims to connect the spatial metaphors introduced earlier and the assumed egocentric FoR with specific characteristics of Italian deixis. It seeks to prove that *qui* and *qua* and *lì* and *là* are not synonymous pairs but rather they identify locations that are semantically and conceptually distinct in the speaker's mind due to the existence of two different metaphors.

This analysis adopts the view that the deictics *qui* and *lì* are regarded as adverbs denoting a specific location, figuratively understood as restricted and point-oriented, stemming from the metaphor SPACE IS A POINT. Conversely, *qua* and *là* will be associated with the metaphor SPACE IS WIDTH, suggesting that they represent a more generic and unlimited area. As a consequence, it can be argued that the alternation and selection of Italian deictics ending in *-i* and *-a* is caused by a variable cognitive understanding of space, shaped by individual perceptions.

3.1 *Interpretation and Additional Properties of Deictic Adverbs*

There is a set of data supporting the idea that Italian speakers employ two metaphors based on different mental conceptualisations of space. Although grammars often classify *qui* and *qua* and *lì* and *là* as synonyms, these pairs exhibit semantic nuances that have grammatical implications. Cinque (1971) offers the following examples, here referred to as (10a) and (10b):

- (10) a. Girava *qua* e *là* senza meta
 'He roamed *qua* and *là* without any purpose.'
 b. *Girava *qui* e *lì* senza meta

The sentence in (10b) is unacceptable because the verb *girare*, 'to wander' or 'to roam', requires a wide space, which *qui* and *lì* cannot express as they denote point-based space. In contrast, *qua* and *là* function here because they imply an unrestricted region. In other contexts, it seems possible to use both pairs, but selecting one morpheme over the other results in a different locative and aspectual interpretation. Examine the following cases:

- (11) a. Nel lago le foglie galleggiavano *qua* e *là* mosse dalla corrente
 'On the lake, the leaves were floating *qua* and *là*, moved by the current.'
 b. *Nel lago le foglie galleggiavano *qui* e *lì* mosse dalla corrente
- (12) a. Cammina *qua* e *là* nel corridoio, indeciso su cosa fare
 'He walks *qua* and *là* in the hallway, undecided on what to do.'
 b. *Cammina *qui* e *lì* nel corridoio, indeciso su cosa fare

as it unfolds over time, can be interpreted as possessing a spatial dimension to which one may metaphorically refer. When discussing textual and phrasal space, *qui* is decisively preferred over *qua* in Italian. For a more detailed analysis of textual deictic usage, see Cinque (1976), Vanelli (1981), and Salvi and Vanelli (2004: 329-330).

- (13) a. I cani smarriti vagabondavano *qua e là*
 ‘The lost dogs were wandering *qua* and *là*.’
 b. *I cani smarriti vagabondavano *qui e lì*
- (14) a. La neve fresca li porta a sciare *qua e là* sulle pendici della montagna
 ‘The fresh snow leads them to ski *qua* and *là* on the slopes of the mountain.’
 b. *La neve fresca li porta a sciare *qui e lì* sulle pendici della montagna
- (15) a. Le fanciulle danzano *qua e là* sulle note della musica
 ‘The girls dance *qua* and *là* to the rhythm of the music.’
 b. *Le fanciulle danzano *qui e lì* sulle note della musica
- (16) a. I cavalli galoppavano *qua e là*
 ‘The horses were galloping *qua* and *là*.’
 b. *I cavalli galoppavano *qui e lì*

When a verb does not involve or rejects a specific movement goal, opting for the deictic pair in *-i* yields unsatisfactory results. This implies that the cognitive role of the *-a* deictic pair reflects the metaphor SPACE IS WIDTH, identifying a flexible area within which the subject of the sentence can move. However, interesting semantic and grammatical observations can also be made when certain verbs indicate movement towards a goal, even though the choice of locative adverbs is less systematic. Compare the following examples, which include motion verbs implying a destination:

- (17) a. Corri *qua*!
 b. Corri *qui*!
 ‘Run here!’
- (18) a. La palla rimbalza *qua e là*
 b. ??La palla rimbalza *qui e lì*
 ‘The ball bounces here and there.’
- (19) a. Il canguro salta *qua*
 b. Il canguro salta *qui*
 ‘The kangaroo jumps here.’
- (20) a. Il canguro sta saltellando *qua e là*
 b. ?*Il canguro sta saltellando *qui e lì*
 ‘The kangaroo is hopping here and there.’
- (21) a. Le rondini volano *là* nel cielo
 b. Le rondini volano *lì* nel cielo
 ‘The swallows fly there in the sky.’
- (22) a. Ieri Gianni è scivolato *qua*
 b. Ieri Gianni è scivolato *qui*
 ‘Yesterday, Gianni slipped here.’

It is unlikely that Italian speakers would deem (17a) ungrammatical, though they would likely consider it less precise and more colloquial than (17b)¹¹. The example in (18) is particularly noteworthy, as (18a) could be interpreted as describing a ball bouncing around a room, while (18b) indicates that the ball is bouncing between two specific points. While both instances in (19) are acceptable, the progressive and repetitive nature of *saltellare* ('to hop') makes (20b) seem less appropriate compared to (20a). Examples (21) and (22) offer parallel interpretations to (18). (21b) might be uttered by someone pointing out flying birds while perceiving *lì* as point-based space, whereas (21a) evokes swallows moving across an undefined zone. In (22a), the area where Gianni slipped – such as a marsh or bog – might be referenced, whereas (22b) more accurately pinpoint the precise spot where he fell.

These insights align with the arguments made by Cinque (1971), who posits:

- (23) a. I libri erano sparsi *qua e là*
 'The books were dispersed *qua* and *là*.'
 b. I libri erano sparsi *qui e lì*
 'The books were dispersed *qui* and *lì*.'

Example (23a) allude to the idea of books scattered across a room, whereas (23b) suggests that the books were spread out but located at two distinct and specific points (e.g., two piles in separate parts of the room). Thus, the hypothesis that language encodes two types of space is consistent with the interpretation of lexical items ending in *-i* and *-a*.

A comparable contrast is observed in Spanish, as reported by Tortora (2008), who cites a grammar that illustrates a similar semantic opposition:

- (24) Los libros estaban dispersos por *acá* y por *allá*
 'The books were scattered for *acá* and for *allá*.'
 [BOOKS ALL OVER THE PLACE]
 (25) Los libros estaban dispersos por *aquí* y por *allí*
 'The books were scattered for *aquí* and for *allí*.'
 [BOOKS IN TWO SPECIFIC POINTS]

Here too, *acá* and *allá* indicate a diffuse distribution, while *aquí* and *allí* refer to two determinate points within the spatial field. This cross-linguistic parallel reinforces the hypothesis that deictic adverbs encode distinct spatial configurations. On this basis, it can be argued that the speaker's selection among various deictic adverbs correlates to three additional properties, defined as follows:

1. extension (or punctuality), which refers to the dimensional scope of the space being considered, whether physical or mental;
2. precision, which concerns the degree to which the speaker can accurately place an element in a desired position¹²;

¹¹ According to Pablo (1990), as proposed also by Fleming and Lloy (2023), in Spanish, deictic forms ending in *-í* are privileged in academic contexts, whereas those ending in *-á* have been discouraged as improper when used with static verbs. As a result, *á*-terminal forms are more frequent in spoken language than in written language, thereby being classified as less formal and more conversational. Future research could investigate whether a similar phenomenon is attested in Italian.

¹² Vanelli (1981) talks about definiteness, which could perhaps be considered a supercategory that combines precision and boundedness.

3. boundedness, which pertains to whether the space in question has defined boundaries, either concrete and tangible or abstract and psychological.

	extension	precision	boundedness
<i>qui</i>	–	+	+
<i>qua</i>	+	–	–
<i>lì</i>	–	+	+
<i>là</i>	+	–	–

Table 5. More properties of locative adverbs in Italian

As shown in table 5, in Italian *qui* and *lì* are characterised by properties such as [– extension], [+ precision], [+ boundedness], in contrast to *qua* and *là*, which presuppose [+ extension], [– precision], and [– boundedness]. Thus, the examples in (21) and (23), repeated here as (26) and (27), should be represented as follows:

- (26) a. Le rondini volano *là* nel cielo
 ‘The swallows fly *là* in the sky.’
 [THE SPEAKER PRESUPPOSES A LARGE AREA IN WHICH THE SWALLOWS ARE FLYING]
- b. Le rondini volano *lì* nel cielo
 ‘The swallows fly *lì* in the sky.’
 [THE SPEAKER IS INDICATING A SPECIFIC POINT IN THE SKY WHERE THE SWALLOWS ARE FLYING]¹³
- (27) a. I libri erano sparsi *qua e là*
 ‘The books were dispersed *qua* and *là*.’
 [BOOKS ARE SCATTERED ALL OVER THE PLACE]
- b. I libri erano sparsi *qui e lì*
 ‘The books were dispersed *qui* and *lì*.’
 [BOOKS ARE IN TWO SPECIFIC POINTS]

These data, taken from Tortora (2008), serve as a foundation for illustrating that the concept of boundedness should also apply to lexical prepositions, reinforcing the idea that distinct mental representations of space have grammatical manifestations. Notably, the examples in (26) and (27) align with what Salvi and Vanelli (2004: 300–306) define as ostensive deixis – a mechanism requiring the speaker to employ paralinguistic cues, such as directing their gaze or gesturing, to facilitate the accurate interpretation of the linguistic expression.

In line with this perspective, during the drafting of this article, (26) and (27) were informally presented to six adult native Italian speakers. All respondents confirmed that (27a) and (27b) convey entirely distinct meanings, and the notational framework proposed here matches their intuitive use of these adverbs. Interestingly, when asked to describe their mental imagery while reading the

¹³ Following the interpretation where a speaker shows the precise position of the flying swallows to their interlocutor, a sentence such as this illustrates the analogy between demonstratives and locative adverbs noted in section 2.3.

sentences, four participants accompanied their explanations with gestures. In the case of (27a), their gestures were expansive, with the palms moving outward in a semicircular motion. By contrast, for (27b), they used their index finger to point at specific locations in the surrounding space.

As Vanelli (1981) observes, ostension is not a necessary condition for deictic reference. Nevertheless, the consistent association between gestures and different locative adverbs is particularly striking. The employment of ostensive gestures – appearing more as ingrained habits than deliberate actions – combined with the fact that deixis can function without a concrete referent (as evidenced in discourse deixis and metaphorical interpretations), indicates that spatial metaphors are intrinsically cognitive. Considering all these factors collectively, it may be posited that spatial awareness operates not solely within cognitive domains but also at a deeper level, potentially measurable in terms of embodied cognition, rather than being confined exclusively to a linguistic construct.

Against this backdrop, the theory of embodiment¹⁴ provides a compelling framework for understanding both spatial and abstract metaphorical structures. While many metaphors, such as those based on the vertical axis (e.g., UP and DOWN; Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 14–21), clearly derive from bodily orientation, the metaphors analysed in the present study appear instead to be shaped by the interpretation of the external spatial environment. Accordingly, future research could offer valuable findings into the degree to which spatial conceptualisation is rooted in bodily experience, and investigate whether the cognitive perception of the [+ boundedness] or [– boundedness] of a given spatial setting consistently corresponds to particular gestural patterns.

3.2 (Un)boundedness of PLACE

Tortora (2008) proposes that space, like entities and events, can be conceptually understood from a linguistic outlook as either limited or unlimited, regardless of the type of action being considered, and that this distinction applies not only to PATH but also to PLACE. Thus, the relevance of boundedness is extended to the supercategory SPACE, which can be regarded as the general metaphor through which individuals cognitively perceive their surrounding environment. Consequently, demonstrating that PLACE can have this dual definition strengthens the hypothesis that the difference underlying the deictic pairs in *-i* and those in *-a* is due to the fact that they express, respectively, a punctual space and a boundless one.

Based on Jackendoff's theories (1983), Tortora (2008) sets out to verify that Italian PPs are compliant with NPs and VPs in terms of functional syntax, as they can project categories similar to V and N. Furthermore, Tortora assumes that if PATH does not necessarily involve movement and is subject to criteria of limitation, the same can be true for PLACE, and supports the idea with a set of examples, including those provided in (28) and (29):

- (28) a. Vai a giocare *dietro a* quell'albero
'Go play behind that tree.'
b. *Vai a giocare *dietro* quell'albero
- (29) a. Gianni era nascosto *qua, dietro all'*albero
b. ??Gianni era nascosto *qua, dietro l'*albero
c. Gianni era nascosto *qui, dietro all'*albero

¹⁴ For further elaboration and discussion on the connection between metaphor and embodiment, see the works of Johnson (1987), Lakoff (1987), and Kövecses (2005).

- d. Gianni era nascosto *qui, dietro* l'albero
'Gianni was hidden here behind the tree.'

The ungrammaticality of (28b) is linked to the fact that *giocare* ('to play') is an activity that requires an open space, which, however, is only denoted by the structure in (28a), which includes the grammatical preposition *a*. The absence of the preposition implies a restricted space, which is incompatible with the action of playing. This indicates that different spatial concepts are reflected not only semantically but also syntactically: a complex PP, that is, one involving a lexical preposition in combination with a grammatical preposition such as *a*, gives rise to the same characteristics observed for *qua* and *là*. Conversely, a simple PP, without *a*, specifies a precise location similar to that of *qui* and *lì*.

In (29), a stative verb is selected (i.e., a verb that does not inherently require movement within an area), yet the distinction remains valid, as Tortora explains that the compatibility of *qui* with both simple and complex PPs is accounted for by the fact that a complex PP can occasionally refer to a point-based space. Conceptually, then, *qui* and *qua* are not strictly interchangeable, as their spatial interpretation varies according to the speaker's sensitivity.

Tortora's hypotheses concerning the property of PLACE as marked by [+ boundedness] or [– boundedness] have been further developed by Folli (2008), who reinterpreted them as a foundation for drawing additional conclusions. While both scholars explore the spatial dimension encoded in syntax, certain details in their analyses diverge. Specifically, Folli associates the preposition *a* in complex prepositional phrases with the presence of an aspectual head, thereby introducing an aspectual perspective into the interpretation of motion events.

Folli divides verbs into two main classes, based on whether or not they allow for resultative (Rv) interpretations, that is, whether they can express the completion of a movement towards a goal. Verbs permitting such readings and implying directionality (e.g., *correre*, 'to run') are combined with simple prepositions, while motion verbs that do not entail reaching a destination (e.g., *camminare*, 'to walk') require complex PPs, such as *dentro a*, 'inside of', *dietro a*, 'behind of', or *fino a*, 'up to'. From this point of view, the ability of a verb to express Rv depends on the presence of an aspectual head. In complex PPs, *a* is considered fundamental in signalling the completion of the movement, thus being classified as the head encoding Rv.

The examples in (30), (31), and (32), taken from Folli, illustrate how prepositional choice interacts with different NPs:

- (30) a. Gianni è corso *a casa/a scuola/al parco/all'ufficio postale*
'Gianni is run to home/to school/to the park/to the post office.'
b. ?*Gianni è corso *all'ufficio/alla camera/alla cucina*
'Gianni is run to the office/to the room/to the kitchen.'
- (31) Gianni è corso *in ufficio/in camera/in cucina*
'Gianni is run in office/in room/in kitchen.'
- (32) a. Gianni è *a casa*
'Gianni stayed home.'
b. Gianni vive *a Parigi*
'Gianni lives in Paris.'

Folli shows that such examples reveal the distributional contrast between *in* and *a* with NPs. It is inferred that *a* tends to precede NPs referring to locations recognised as expansive or

unlimited. For instance, places such as schools or parks, despite having perimeters, are mentally associated with an area of considerable extension. If the verb denotes movement towards a location and places of this kind follow the preposition *a*, it indicates that the exact endpoint of the motion is not concretely specified¹⁵.

Therefore, Folli's analysis paves the way for the following interpretation of (30): if Gianni is imagined running to school, upon reaching his destination and stopping, he would most likely be near the entrance or inside a classroom. The door or the classroom implied in a sentence such as (30a) would thus represent the concrete endpoints of Gianni's motion. By contrast, when the noun *scuola* ('school') is used in a more general sense, the imagined environment becomes less precise and undoubtedly broader in scope.

Conversely, when *a* precedes an NP denoting a bounded space – suggesting that the action is expected to conclude within that defined zone – its use is either degraded or ungrammatical. From (31), it follows that a different preposition, such as *in*, would be acceptable for all instances, while from (32), it is evident that *a* does not present issues when occurring with copular or stative verbs. Nevertheless, the unacceptability of (28b) implies that the way speakers conceptualise the dimensional properties of a given location affects the selection of prepositions at the syntactic level.

Building upon these considerations, the degraded or ungrammatical status of (30b) may not derive solely from the simple preposition *a*, but rather with its construction as a combined preposition, since the latter requires the combination with a definite article. It is likely that for some speakers, the examples would be grammatical if a specific office or kitchen is intended, one already known and congruent with the definiteness expressed by the article. Based on (30), it is possible to consider a sentence such as:

- (33) Il Presidente corre alla Camera
'The President runs to the Chamber.'

Here, the reference is to the Chamber of Deputies, which is a particular location, in contrast to the example with *camera*, 'room', in (30b). From this, it follows that if the NPs in (30b) are understood as generic and conceptually indeterminate, *a* leads to ungrammaticality.

Although Folli's analysis is not directly concerned with deictic adverbs, it intersects with earlier findings regarding the selection between *-i* and *-a* pairs (viewed as destinations of a movement) in the context of verbs that presuppose Rv. What remains indisputable and is corroborated by Folli's data is that the grammaticality of many phrases associated with spatial contexts is strongly tied to how the speaker perceives space.

3.3 Locative Adverbs in Spanish: A Brief Comparison

In line with Tortora (2008), who draws comparisons between PP structures in Spanish and Italian, this study will consider data collected by Sedano (1994) and Fleming and Lloy (2023) to facilitate a comparison with Spanish. The objective of identifying potential analogies or differences with another language is to prove that the observations made about Italian are not indicative of exceptionality but rather reveal tendencies attestable elsewhere.

¹⁵ For a discussion of prepositions in Spanish, including *a*, in relation to the [+ boundedness] versus [– boundedness] distinction, see Acedo-Matellán and Real-Puigdollers (2024).

Like Italian, Spanish employs an egocentric FoR with five deictic adverbial elements, which can be classified into at least three categories (Da Milano 2005: 79-86). Similar to the Italian adverbs *qui* and *qua*, *aquí* and *acá* denote a zone near the speaker. *Ahí* is used for something that is further away than the first two deictics but remains within the speaker's or listener's visual or cognitive field. *Allí* and *allá* refer to an area distant from the speaker, regardless of its closeness to the addressee. In particular, as in Italian, a morphological recurrence is evident: *aquí* and *allí* both end in *-í*, whereas *acá* and *allá* contain *-á*.

As cited also by Tortora (2008) and Fleming and Lloy (2023), Sacks (1954) proposes that in Spanish, the *-á* variant of each deictic pair is compatible with motion verbs, while the *-í* variant is restricted to stative verbs. However, this claim is discredited by Sedano (1994), who demonstrates that a contrast based on movement towards a goal is not empirically supported, despite a stronger tendency for *acá* to appear in contexts involving movement towards a destination. Instead, Sedano suggests a distinction for proximal deictics in which *aquí* is associated with a defined location (also referred to in Italian as *punctual*), whereas *acá* corresponds to an undefined location.

It is remarked that *aquí* occurs more frequently when denoting the point of origin of a movement, while *acá* is more commonly used when preceded by prepositions such as *hacia* or *para*. The presence of a preposition implies a focus on direction or final destination rather than the starting point. Sedano highlights that the choice between these prepositions hinges on subtle distinctions; for instance, *hacia* places greater emphasis on the orientation of movement compared to *para*. Consequently, if *aquí* is selected with a motion verb in the absence of a preposition, the effect is a spatial demarcation of the location. The orientational meaning associated with *hacia* and *para* should be understood as reflecting an act of movement towards the speaker's position.

Tortora (2008) refers to the same distinction, introducing the works of Sacks (1954) and Pavón Lucero (1999). From Pavón Lucero, Tortora draws additional confirmation of the separation between the pair in *-í* and the pair in *-á*, with only the latter being susceptible to modification by *más* ('more'), as it identifies a flexible, two-dimensional space. Similar circumstances can be seen in Italian, where adverbial modification with *più*, 'more', might yield the following instances:

- (34) *Il tuo posto è *più qui*
'Your seat is more *qui*.'
- (35) ?La luce è migliore *più qua*
'The light is better more *qua*.'

This is even more evident when the simple preposition *in* is introduced:

- (36) a. Sposta la sedia *più in qual in là*
'He moves the chair more *in qual in là*.'
- b. *Sposta la sedia *più in quil in lì*
'He moves the chair more *in quil in lì*.'

The second example cannot work because, for the pairs in *-í*, where SPACE IS A POINT, there is no additional physical space where the chair could be moved.

Following once more Sedano (1994), it can be inferred that movement towards a goal typically lacks an internal boundary that separates the point of origin from the destination.

As a consequence, the absence of a clearly defined spatial marker appears to lead speakers to conceptualise the area in which they are located as unbounded. This psychological effect, confirmed by the tendency to use *acá* when preceded by *hacia* and *para*, provides support for the delimitation hypothesis, according to which *-á*-forms indicate a vast or unconstrained space.

According to Sedano, when considering a verb such as *llegar* ('to arrive'), the focus lies on the destination point, and it is plausible to conclude that this location acquires psychological relevance, thereby prompting a point-like understanding, that is, a delimited space. The tendency to choose *aquí* when the adverb occurs without a preposition confirms the theory of delimitation, consistent with the argument that *qui* is preferred when a monodimensional point is conjectured.

This is in line with the findings of Fleming and Lloy (2023), who conducted experiments with a Peruvian speaker. Indeed, when a Peruvian speaker is instructed to go or come to an unspecified area and uses *para*, the adverb *acá* is selected. When *para* is removed, *aquí* becomes acceptable only when the speaker has a definite location in mind. If *aquí* and *acá* were entirely identical and synonymous, this difference would not exist, thus confirming that at the conceptual level, there is some intrinsic distinction between the two pairs.

Further support still comes from Fleming and Lloy in specific contextual elicitation tasks. When the Peruvian speaker imagined being inside a building, such as a shopping mall, and noted that a shop was situated within the same structure, *aquí* was the preferred term. In contrast, when describing "how things are done" or "how things are in a certain city or country", *acá* was preferred. In this context, a subtle semantic nuance can be perceived, where *acá* refers to something general and non-specific (presumably interpreted as alluding to the city, the population, the country, etc., in its wider sense).

Regarding distal deictics, *allá* is the preferred variant when indexing any country other than the one where the speaker is located (equivalent to *là*, which expresses [– proximity], [– specificity], and [– subjectivity]). These experiments appear to support the view that the morpheme *-í* favours a point-like and specific understanding (SPACE IS A POINT), while *-á* implies something broader and more indefinite, in line with the conceptual framework of the metaphor SPACE IS WIDTH.

It is also worth noting that, in the case of Chilean Spanish, Fleming and Lloy observe a divergent use of the deictics in *-á*, which appears to be more egocentric (i.e., expressing [++ proximity]). This may be related to the fact that *acá* in Chilean Spanish is more frequent than *aquí* and has over time acquired certain properties. Future research could investigate the diachronic development of deictics in Spanish. In any case, even when deictics in *-á* and *-í* are considered interchangeable, a fundamental difference between them remains evident, which concerns not only proximity or distance from the subject, but also the manner in which space is understood in its metaphorical terms.

Bringing all of these data together, a number of contrastive observations can be made: (1) Spanish maintains three degrees of distance, which are commonly found in Italian demonstratives; (2) in both languages, the choice of adverbs is strongly tied to the cognitive perception of the speaker, both as a subject and in connection to other referents in space; (3) in both languages, the deictic pairs in *-í/í* and *-á/á* differ in the semantic interpretation attributed to them, even where there is apparent interchangeable usage; (4) in Spanish, there is a general (though not universal) tendency to assign the forms in *-í* to defined spaces, whereas more flexible areas or zones without boundaries select the deictics in *-á*, consistently with Italian, which uses the forms in *-í* when a limited dimension is involved (SPACE IS A POINT) and those in *-á* when the reference space is unbounded (SPACE IS WIDTH).

4. Conclusions

The present analysis sought to briefly examine deixis in Italian, particularly focusing on the use of the locative adverbial pairs *qui* and *lì*, and *qua* and *là*. Based on shared properties and roles, it was found that demonstratives do not significantly differ from locative adverbs with deictic function, a finding which may suggest that the latter convey a fuller meaning compared to other elements within the same lexical class. It was demonstrated that, despite the common perception that *qui* and *qua*, as well as *lì* and *là*, are synonymous, they are not interchangeable in various contexts, as certain adverbs, when combined with specific predicates, result in ungrammatical outcomes.

By integrating studies on PPs in Italian, it was concluded that the distinction between the forms ending in *-i* and those ending in *-a* is due to a different metaphorical interpretation of space, with the former reflecting SPACE IS A POINT, while the latter refers to SPACE IS WIDTH. Finally, to empirical backing these hypotheses, a brief overview of Spanish adverbs was included, as their morphological and conceptual similarities with Italian locative adverbs offer grounds for a unified examination.

The investigation into Italian adverbs ending in *-i* and *-a* could be further developed by considering constructions with temporal connotations, such as *lì per lì* ('right then and there'), or by exploring potential syntactic implications in locative contexts, particularly in relation to the PATH and PLACE aspects. Moreover, a contrastive analysis comparing adverb usage in Italian, a verb-framed language, with that in a satellite-framed counterpart could offer additional insights.

Ultimately, although this paper primarily aimed to explore particular phenomena related to spatial perception, future research that incorporates additional linguistic dimensions within a comparative framework could substantially contribute to a deeper understanding of the mechanisms underlying spatial cognition, along with its semantic and syntactic ramifications.

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