

Hablando de gramática

por Señor Conner

Señor Conner is the author of the popular language series *BREAKING THE SPANISH BARRIER*. Each month he will feature a grammatical topic of interest to our readers. Do you have ideas of topics you would like to see covered? E-mail Señor Conner at: john@tobreak.com. You can also visit his website: www.tobreak.com.

Demonstrative Adjectives (and pronouns!)

The term “demonstrative adjective” sounds so foreboding. There are so many syllables in those words, and I remember that when I was a student, I never really knew what this term meant. So, what is it exactly? A demonstrative adjective is simply a word that helps to identify and distinguish a noun from other nouns of the same type. These words often use spatial imagery to place a noun in relationship to other nouns. Demonstrative adjectives generally precede the noun that they modify. The corresponding words in English are: “this,” “these,” “that,” and “those.”

Masculine	Feminine	(English translation)
este	esta	this (close to speaker)
estos	estas	these (close to speaker)
ese	esa	that
esos	esos	those
aquel	aquella	that (way over there)
aquellos	aquellas	those (way over there)

Aquel, aquella, aquellos and *aquellas* all help to identify something that is a greater distance away, the farthest distance away of a number of objects, or something quite removed in time from the speaker’s framework

EXAMPLES:	<i>este oso</i>	this bear	<i>esta jirafa</i>	this giraffe
	<i>estos osos</i>	these bears	<i>estas jirafas</i>	these giraffes
	<i>ese oso</i>	that bear	<i>esa jirafa</i>	that giraffe
	<i>esos osos</i>	those bears	<i>esas jirafas</i>	those giraffes
	<i>aquel árbol</i>	that tree	<i>aquella montaña</i>	that mountain
	<i>aquellos árboles</i>	those trees	<i>aquellas montañas</i>	those mountains

Some learners (I was one of them!) have difficulties remembering if “*este*” means “this” or “that” or if “*estos*” means “these” or “those.” The following rhyme may help you to keep these forms straight in your mind:

“This” and “these” have “t’s.” (*este/esta* and *estos/estas*)

DEMONSTRATIVE PRONOUNS

Demonstrative adjectives can turn into pronouns simply by adding an accent mark. For example, instead of saying “*esta planta*” (this plant), you could say “*ésta*,” which means “this one.” Similarly, instead of saying “*esos bancos*,” you could say “*ésos*,” meaning “those (ones).” The accent mark here doesn’t affect the pronunciation at all. It’s simply a written signal that this word is now a pronoun and not just a lowly adjective!