

SOME DEICTIC FEATURES IN THE TRANSLATION OF SHAKESPEAREAN PLAYS INTO SPANISH

TRANSLATION STUDIES

DRA SILVIA MOLINA PLAZA

Facultad de Letras, Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha

smolina@fimo-cr.uclm.es

This paper aims at exploring spatial, temporal and personal deixis in English and Spanish and their relevance to the area of translation. The examples given are part of a small corpus drawn from instances of (a) , Moratín's (1798) and Conejero's (1999) translations of *Hamlet* ; (b) *The Merchant of Venice* by Conejero (ed.) 1993 and (c) *King Lear* by Benavente (1976). These will be compared to the meaning of their SL texts using the *Oxford English Dictionary* CD version. (From now on, OED). Varying the deictic perspective from language to language implies establishing a focus on the texts being translated which must be coherent with a world-view that the reader can identify with. In subtle ways, deixis is an aspect which touches on the very limits of translatability.

SOME DEICTIC FEATURES IN THE TRANSLATION OF SHAKESPEAREAN PLAYS INTO SPANISH

Silvia Molina Plaza

A deictic perspective in English and Spanish

Deixis appears to be a universal feature of human communication (Levinson, 1992; Kryk

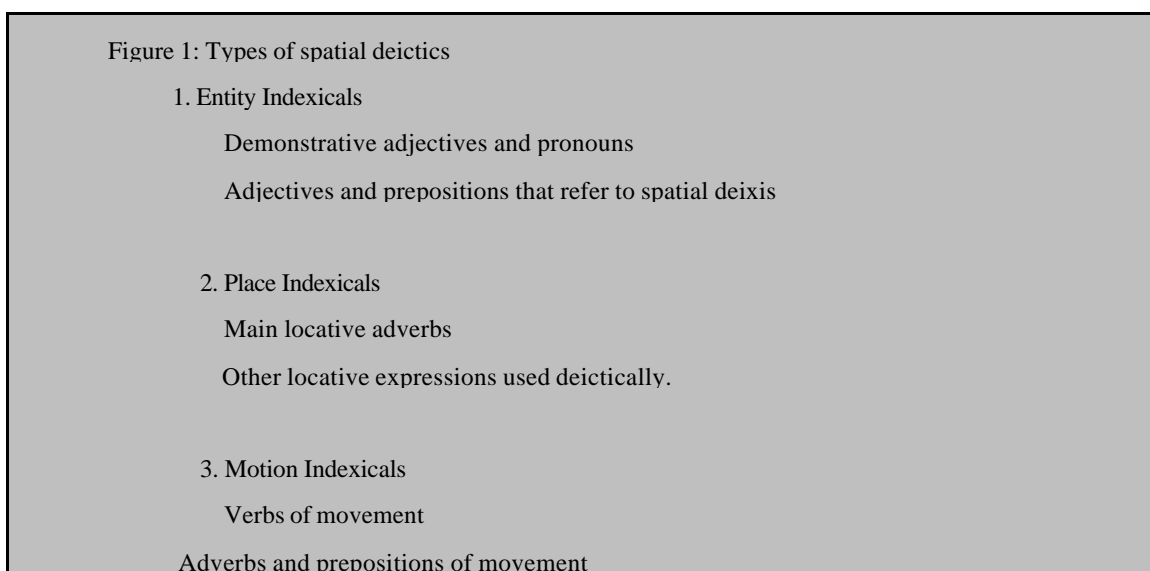
1990) , linking utterances to the contexts in which they are produced via the three basic dimensions¹ : **spatial** , **temporal** and **personal** . Although there are many approaches to analysing this area of theoretical study (cfr. Rauh, 1983; Levinson, 1992; Green, 1995), deixis is generally interpreted as being a sub-category of **reference** . In Levinson's words (1992: 55) " (it) straddles the semantics/pragmatics border". Deixis is treated as one of the core areas within Pragmatics (Nuyts, 1987) . Thus, deixis leads us to pay attention to the variety of ways in which texts interact with their contexts, both exophorically and endophorically. This paper aims at exploring such basic interactions (spatial, temporal and personal deixis) and their relevance to the area of translation. The examples given are part of a small corpus drawn from instances of (a) two translations of *Hamlet*, Moratín's (1798) and Conejero's (1999); (b) *The Merchant of Venice* by Conejero (ed.) 1993 and (c) *King Lear* by Benavente (1976). These will be compared to the meaning of their SL texts using the *OED* CD version.

The **relationship of deixis and translation** can be perceived through at least four domains of language: the morphosyntactic, the semantic, the pragmatic and the discourse domains. For example, at the morphosyntactic level, deictic reference may, on occasion, give rise to changes in word class in translation (e.g. the suffixes *ito*, *ita* to indicate small size in Spanish that have a non-matching *adjective+ noun structure* in English, i.e. "small house"); at the semantic level, basic lexical differences between two languages can bring about different patterns of expression of similar concepts(i.e. the lexicalisation of expressions of motion in English and Spanish ²); at the pragmatic level, there are differences between formal and familiar pronominal address patterns; finally at the level of discourse, the arrangement of features of the text which bear deictic information may need to be altered in the transition from English into Spanish. Deixis implies these four domains to such an extent that it is often impossible to separate them. However, our emphasis in this analysis is pragmatic, in the sense of tracing the dynamic construction of meaning in language use. Understanding context will be essential in this enterprise as deixis is concerned with the ways in which linguistic utterances relate to their contexts of production. Following Verschueren (1995), the translator's task can be conceived in terms of creating a linguistic representation in the Target Language (TL) of the construction of meaning achieved in a particular instance of use of the Source Language (SL). A direct consequence of this process is that the deictic perspective in the TL must be structured in a coherent way for the TL reader. The translator cannot forget that the majority of texts are clearly the product of a certain culture and need to be adapted . One basic level of this adaptation no doubt relates to the spatio-temporal deictic features of the text ³. In literary translation, however, the translator cannot always operate transpositions on the spatio-temporal characteristics of the messages in order to ease understanding for the TL reader, s/he may be expected to make the necessary imaginative leap and to understand allusions which a SL XVIth theatre-goer would

understand. Such a translation, more literal and less "communicative" may be felt to convey something essential about the author's "world-view". The reader is expected to play a more active role and perform the necessary transformations at the moment they encounter the text. Shakespearean plays require re-translation for succeeding generations for reasons related to the fact that an old translation itself becomes outdated and can appear no less "foreign" than the original text.

Spatio-Temporal Deictics

Spatial deictics can be classified in English and Spanish in three groups, according to the predominant deictic feature. The categories are as follows: 1- Entity Indexicals , 2- Place indexicals, 3- Motion Indexicals. (Figure 1).



Sometimes it is not easy to identify the referents of certain elements in classes nº1 and nº 2 in Spanish. Demonstrative adjectives and pronouns and locative adverbs are usually shown in Spanish grammars as elements which correspond to grammatical persons ⁴. An example of this tendency can be found in Bello (1984:98).

However, the experience of native speakers of Spanish does not coincide with his explanation and we can find examples often that require a different analysis like the following:

(*) María ¿ Adónde vamos a comprar?/ Juan: Vamos a esa tienda de la esquina. It is obvious that "esa" has not got a special relevance to the speaker of the utterance, the "You" in the case of Juan. It refers more to a "third person" area that can be located across the road, at the same distance from María's and Juan's areas. We must then avoid the symmetrical correlation

established by grammars between pronouns, demonstratives and locatives respectively. Such correspondence may oversimplify the use of these particles.

Let us examine now some examples in the Shakespearean translations. The first subgroup, *entity indexicals*, can be exemplified in the opening scene of *King Lear*. The Duke of Gloucester speaks about his sons and uses the demonstrative *this* to refer to Edmond: "But I have a son sir, by order of law, some years older than **this**, who yet is no dearer in my account" > tengo también un hijo legítimo algo mayor que **éste** (?), pero no más querido. The fact that this deictic element is followed by a question mark suggests that the translator thought the actor could do perfectly without it, avoiding redundancy with motion and gesture.

Motion indexicals

Hamlet (i.i. 50) Ber-See! it **stalks** away.

The definition of stalk in OED is "to march along in a proud way" but Moratín changes it into a contemptuous way "despreciándonos". The translators in the 1999 version apprehend better the message conveyed by the communication as it is construed in the original text and recreate it in the TL using a deictic perspective which is more adequate for the TT: "¡mirad, mirad, se **aleja!**".

Temporal deixis

Two examples may suffice to illustrate some problems translators encounter to render temporal deictics effectively.

a) *Hamlet* (I.i.35) Bernardo, an officer, gives an account of the "apparition" (the ghost) to Horatio. He anchors this explanation with the following: "last night of all", referring to the previous night of several nights on duty. Moratín translates as "la noche pasada", referring just to the night before. More suitable translations to avoid this mismatch would be "En mi última noche de guardia" or "la última de esas noches". (The latter option is adopted by the 1999 translation).

b) *Hamlet* (I.i.140) Marc- **Shall I strike it with my partisan?**

There is a misuse of tense in TT. The tense in bold type is translated as a future tense: "¿le golpearé con mi lanza?" but its pragmatic illocutionary value is a suggestion which is more adequately rendered as "¿le golpeo con mi alabarda?" .

Personal deictics

The first person pronoun is the paradigmatic example of an indexical expression although Levinson (1983: 63) has pointed out that this "egocentric organisation" of deixis is not always and necessarily the case. Take for example when an actor utters *I*. Is he referring to herself/himself or to her/his character?.

The second person pronoun poses different problems. The addressee is whoever the speaker is addressing but there are no linguistic or external clues to who the individual addressed

may be. The addressee may not be present where the utterance is made or does not even have to exist at the time the utterance is produced (i.e. Hamlet's father).

First person plural pronouns have all the indeterminacies of second person pronouns. *We* may refer to the speaker and any number of other individuals, present or not, and not necessarily existing at the time of production. Cases of *inclusive we* must be distinguished from cases where the intended reference is to the speaker and one more others, not including the addressee (*exclusive we*). There are also instances of “royal we” (See example one below). *They* means more than one third person entity (Lyons, 1968: 277).

In all cases, it is knowledge of (or beliefs about) the speaker, including beliefs about his/her beliefs and intentions at all levels, that enables an interpreter to predict the intended references of indexical pronouns. The reference is some function of the spatio-temporal coordinates of the utterance, but there are other indexical features to bear in mind.

Despite the fact that person deixis is reflected directly in the grammatical categories of person, it is also necessary to develop an independent pragmatic framework of possible **participant roles** (in Levinson's terminology) in order to see how and to what extent these roles are grammaticalized in other languages, viz. Spanish.. Consider the following examples:

- (1) Hamlet (I.ii. 115-117) *And we beseech you bend you to remain
Here in the cheer and comfort of our eye,
Our chiefest courtier, cousin and our son*

TT> "Te *pedimos* que desistas de ella, permaneciendo aquí estimado y querido a vista *nuestra* como el primero de mis cortesanos, *mi* pariente y *mi* hijo"

There is a deictic mismatch in the TT in the use of first person plural and first person singular in Moratín's translation as there is a shift from first person plural ("pedimos, nuestra") to first person singular ("mi pariente, mi hijo") although all the ST forms correspond to "royal we". In example (2) Hamlet (iii.iv) Queen (to Hamlet) - Have **you** forgot me?, Hamlet addresses his mother using *you* and its possessive form *your / yours*. On the contrary, the Queen shifts between *you/thou*⁵ according to her communicative intentions. Thus, in the first part of the scene she uses *thou* but when she realizes that Hamlet is distanced from her, she shifts to the more formal variant. In the 1999 translation this deictic movement is not maintained as the queen encodes her address to his son formally using the distant forms “vos/vuestro”(example nº3). A feasible explanation is a deliberate attempt at archaisation, to make the text sound to the Spanish reader at the turn of the twentieth century as Sixteenth century Spanish. As Vladova (1993:13) suggests, Spanish readers require of the translator/s is that the work be “situated” temporally for them by the maintenance of references in the text to archaic forms like the pronouns which evoke the atmosphere of the historical setting, but that this should be done using the language of the period when the translation

is written, thus emphasizing the outdatedness of these references.

(3)Reina : Habeis ofendido gravemente a **vuestro**padre/ (..) ¿Olvidáis quien soy? /(...) Ya os enviaré a quien puedan y sepan hablaros.

The pronouns of address *tú/vos* are however kept in the Spanish translation of *The Merchant of Venice* throughout, trying to reflect the patterns of Shakespearean English. Shylock the Jew addresses Antonio with *you*: “**you** say so/ **you** that did void **your** rheum upon my beard” that is rendered by “vos” (example nº4) whereas Antonio treats him like a servant using the informal pronoun *thee*: “I am to call **thee** so again, to spit on **thee** again, to spurn **thee** too” translated by the corresponding informal “te” in Spanish (example nº5).

(4) Shylock ..¡Pues adelante! **Vos** que venís a decirme “ Shylock, no es preciso un préstamo”. Si eso **decís**. Si **vos** que me **habeís** vaciado los mocos en la barba,...(I.iii.108-110)

(5) Antonio Estoy dispuesto a llamarte eso otra vez, a escupirte otra vez, a **patearte otra vez**(I.iii. 123-124).

There is a possible mismatch only in the personal deictics in the translation when Shylock speaks to Antonio in (I.iii. 69-70) “ No, not take interest as **you** would say” > no, no cargaba interés, al menos directamente como **vosotros** diríais.” *You* can either refer to Antonio or to both Antonio and Bassanio but the Spanish pronoun *vos* can be used with plural and singular reference (DRAE, p. 1393).

As a conclusion, I have attempted to show with several examples that the translation of deictic references must be also taken into account in intertemporal translation. When the ST is a text of classical literature, it is clear that it will sometimes be necessary to confront deictic differences to overcome the gap in language, culture and mentality.

References

- Bassnett-McGuire, S. “Ways through the Labyrinth” in Hermans, Th. (1985) *The Manipulation of Literature*. 87-102.
- Benavente, J. (1976) *El Rey Lear*. Madrid: Aguilar, págs. 133-244.
- Conejero, M. (ed) 1993 *El Mercader de Venecia*. Madrid: Cátedra, Letras Hispánicas .
- Green, K. ed. (1995) *New Essays in Deixis: Discourse, Narrative, Literature*. Amsterdam: Rodopi.
- Jones, P.E. (1995) "Philosophical and theoretical issues in the study of deixis: A critique of the standard account" in Green, K. ed. (1995) *New Essays in Deixis*. Amsterdam: Rodopi.
- Kryk, B. (1990) "Deixis -a pragmatic universal?" in Bechert, J. et al. (eds.) *Toward a Typology of European Languages*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Levinson, S. (1983/1992) *Pragmatics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lyons, J. (1977) *Semantics*, vols. I and II, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Merino, R. (1994) *Traducción, tradición y manipulación. Teatro inglés en España 1950-1990*. Servicio de publicaciones de la Universidad de León.
- Nuyts, J. (1987) *A Comprehensive Bibliography of Pragmatics*. Amsterdam: Benjamins.
- Rauh, G. (1983) *Essays on Deixis*. Tübingen: Narr.
- Shakespeare, W. (1999) *Hamlet*. Traducción del Instituto Shakespeare dirigida por Manuel Ángel Conejero.

Barcelona: Octaedro.

Slobin, D.I. (1996) "Two ways to travel: Verbs of motion in English and Spanish" in Shibatani, M. and Thompson, S.A. (eds) *Grammatical Constructions: Their Form and Meaning*. Oxford: O.U. P.

Verschueren, J. (1995) "The pragmatic perspective" in Verschueren, J. et al. (eds) *Handbook of Pragmatics Manual*. Amsterdam: Benjamins.

Vladova, I. (1993) "Essential features and specific manifestation of historical distance in original texts and their translations" in Zlateva, P.(ed.) *Translation as Social Action: Russian and Bulgarian Perspectives*. (pp. 11-17) London: Routledge.

¹ The starting point for deictic studies is Karl Bühler's (1967) concept of *origo*, defined as the reference point for the parameters related to three dimensions that can be summarized in the following words: "I here-now".

² "thou runnest away" in Romeo and Juliet's opening scene is translated as "saltar" by Menéndez Pelayo; "agitar" by Valverde and "moverse" by Astrana Marín.

³ Ubersfeld (1978:152-3), Bassnett-McGuire (1985:87) have pointed out how deictic elements are substituted from time to time by movement and gesture in drama translation.

⁴ See Lamíquiz (1967), Alcina Blanch y Blecua (1983).

⁵ The Middle English distinction in the use of ye/you from thou, by which the former implied politeness and the latter familiarity, superiority or contempt for the addressee, continued in Shakespeare's period but it was abandoned in the latter half of the Seventeenth Century (Burnly, 1992:200).