

## STRATEGIES USED IN TRANSLATING SYNTACTIC IRREGULARITIES IN SHAKESPEARE'S "THE TWELFTH NIGHT"

Gabriela DIMA

### Introduction

Translation theorists and practitioners such as Nida (1964), Newmark (1988a, 1993), Baker (2006), have launched operational concepts to be used in understanding and performing translation both as a cultural act and a linguistic exercise. Strategy, procedure, method are generally the most frequent concepts used in designing translation methodological patterns. Translation strategy/procedure is seen either as a *conscious plan*, the "*translator's potentially conscious plans for solving concrete translation problems in the framework of a concrete translation task*" (Krings: 1986) or *task*, translation strategies: "*involve the basic tasks of choosing the foreign text to be translated and developing a method to translate it*" (Venuti 1998: 240).

Considering translation in terms of both process and product, Jaaskelainen (2006) divides translation strategies into global and local: *global strategies refer to general principles and modes of action and local strategies refer to specific activities in relation to the translator's problem-solving and decision-making* (Jaaskelainen 2006: 16).

Equating strategy with procedure (Loescher 1991), we favour Newmark's opinion that translation strategies or procedures are used for sentences and smaller units of language whereas translation methods are used for whole texts. Newmark (1988b) proposes a whole list of translation strategies: *transference, naturalization, cultural equivalent, functional equivalent, descriptive equivalent, componential analysis, synonymy, through - translation, shifts or transpositions, modulation, recognized translation, compensation, paraphrase, couplets, notes*.

One of the main objectives of the paper is to search for the strategies used in translating syntactic irregularities in *The Twelfth Night* and to argue about their role in obtaining equivalence, keeping in mind the fact that the translator should be careful in being as faithful as possible both to the form and the meaning of the original text (Croitoru 2007, Dima 2009a).

### 1. Levels of Grammaticality, Levels of Meaning

The meaning of words is first and foremost defined through their denotation. The concept of denotation is viewed in a larger sense as referring also to the grammar of words, their forms and sentential order, subordination and grammatical synonymy (Levițchi 1994: 47). According to Dima (2003: 25), **grammatical meaning** is added to lexical meaning and can be expressed by the arrangement of words in a sentence, by grammatical affixes such as the plural, by grammatical words or function words, all helping in decoding the message contained in the given sentence. Violation of these rules can lead to ungrammatical sentences and raise difficulty in grasping the sentence meaning.

What Johnson (1765) called *ungrammatical, intricate and obscure* Shakespearean style, *not being designed for the reader's desk* can be transposed into the modern concept of *ill-formedness* (pairing with that of *well-formedness*) introduced by Chomsky in 1965 along with that of *acceptability*. The former is a matter of *competence* whereas the latter pertains to *performance*. Consider the sentences:

e. g. 1. *I spoke to the man twice last week.*

2. *The owl spoke to the tree twice last week.*
3. *The old woman spoke to the chimney twice last week.*
4. *Ending the spoke to man.*

Native speakers of English would certainly consider **a**, **b**, **c** well-formed sentences built according to the canonical pattern SVO, but they would rather say about **b** and **c** that are semantically odd, unless **b** has been picked up from a fairy-tale context or the woman in **c** is senile. Sentences like **b** and **c** are not linguistically ill-formed in any way, but rather simply pragmatically anomalous, in the sense that they express ideas which do not conform to our view of the way the world is. Sentence **d** would certainly be considered linguistically ill-formed, almost inconceivable, since it does not enter any level of grammaticality. We have here referred to ideal speakers who never make performance errors. In fact, an informant gives judgments about acceptability, which the linguist generalizes into judgments about well-formedness, otherwise an unfamiliar term to common people.

From the translator's point of view these judgements are based on the supposition that every language has its own syntactic features at the sentence surface structure level: the arrangement and the relationships among words in the sentence, the use of punctuation marks and the hierarchical leveling of meaning in the text.

The last perspective allows the translator to freely shape both the factual/semantic meaning and the assigned meaning according to his social standing, culture, age, intellectual tastes, etc. hence the variations in translations along the centuries, *variations* nowadays used by linguists either as comparable or parallel corpora in theorizing about translation (Dima 2009b).

The variant we have chosen to discuss is Mihnea Gheorghiu's translation (1959) of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*. What we had in mind was to search for both demolished and recreated factual and assigned meanings through syntactic irregularities and analyse the impact upon the reader's accessibility to the Shakespearean text within the intercultural act of translation.

## 2. Corpus Analysis. Syntactic Irregularities and Stylistic Effects

The accessibility of Shakespearean texts has been the subject of much debate among literary critics, translators, linguists, book editors, etc. since one can easily grasp many points of difference in grammar, syntax and meaning, when compared with the English of today. The following features may stand as some of the most relevant features of Elizabethan English as characterizing Shakespearean style, too:

- Clearness is preferred to grammatical accuracy. Constructions are sometimes irregular or confused, while the meaning is perfectly plain, i.e. sentences are acceptable but syntactically ill-formed.
- Brevity is preferred to logical precision, resulting in many ellipses.
- Emphasis is obtained by various devices such as redundancies (double negatives, double comparatives, double objects), inversions and omissions.

These features are retrieved in all of Shakespeare's plays since their author was a dramatist even before he was a poet, making his men and women speak in their own character, being for the playgoer that the plays were written: *Shakespeare regarded more the series of ideas, than of words; and his language not being designed for the reader's desk, was all he desired it to be, if it conveyed his meaning to his audience* (Johnson 1765).

As we have already mentioned, in the act of translation words come alive, the translator enjoying a certain kind of freedom. This often happens with adaptations in translating theatre plays. Naturalizing Shakespeare's drama in Romanian is quite difficult since Shakespeare's language and style present obstacles that are not easy to surmount, *the basic loss being a continuum between overtranslation (increased detail) and undertranslation (increased generalization)* (Newmark 1993: 7).

Among the translation strategies used to render the syntactic irregularities in the excerpts below, an important place is held by shifts and transpositions, modulation, paraphrase, descriptive/ functional/ cultural equivalents, compensation, componential analysis.

## 2.1. Transposition of Adverbs and Adverbial Phrases

The general syntactic rule with respect to the position of both simple and complex AdvP in the English sentence is that they should be placed as near as possible to the word they determine. Shakespeare allowed himself considerable license in this respect:

I.iv.40. Duke: <i>And thou shalt live <b>as freely as</b> thy lord To call his fortunes thine</i> p: 10	Ducele : <i>Și <b>slobod</b> vei trăi ca și stăpînul Averea împărtășindu-i-o.</i> p: 225
V.i.378. Fabian: <i>How with a sportful malice it was follow'd May <b>rather</b> pluck on laughter than revenge</i> p : 81	Fabian : <i>Sînt glume, demne <b>mai curînd</b> de rîs Decît de răzbunări.</i> p: 351

The above examples can be rendered in a correct word order as it shows: [...] *thou shalt live to call thy lord's fortunes thine **as freely as** he calls them his* and [...] *laughter **rather** than revenge*.

This affords a good example of the Elizabethan tendency to aim at brevity of expression rather than grammatical accuracy: *It was common to place words in the order in which they came uppermost in the mind without much regard to syntax, and the result was a forcible and perfectly unambiguous, but ungrammatical sentence* (Abbot 1999).

The adverbs are preserved in the Romanian version, a direct product of modulation as a translation strategy (Croitoru, Dumitrașcu 2006). The meaning is kept all along, despite the fact that the *two languages are dissimilar in perspective* (Newmark 1988b: 88).

## 2.2. Omission of *that* – Complementizer

*That* is often omitted by Shakespeare in passages where we should not expect to find it inserted nowadays. Most often this omission occurs before a subjunctive mood, having an emphatic function:

I.v.90. Malvolio: <i>I marvel (<b>that</b>) your ladyship takes delight in such a barren rascal.</i> p : 13	Malvolio: <i>Mă mir <b>că</b> înălțimea-voastră se poate desfăta la glumele acestui obraznic neghiob.</i> p: 230
III.i.34. Clown: [...] <i>if <b>that</b> be to care for nothing, sir, I would (<b>that</b>) it would make you invisible.</i> p : 41	Bufozul : [...] <i>dacă aia înseamnă <b>că</b> nu-mi pasă de nimic, domnule, aș vrea <b>să</b> te faci nevăzut.</i> p : 280
III.i.85. Sir Toby: <i>Will you encounter the house? my niece is <b>desirous</b> (<b>that</b>) you should enter, if your trade be to her.</i> p : 42	Sir Toby: <i><b>Dorești</b> să intri? Nepoata mea dorește. Așa că, dacă ai treabă cu dînsa, pofteste.</i> p : 282

The strategy used by the translator is again modulation in the first two excerpts, by recreating the assigned meaning with the preservation of the subordinating conjunctions *că*, *să*. The third excerpt brings forth an illustration of shift and transposition, the translator taking advantage of both the form and meaning of the English adjective *desirous* and changing it into a verb symmetrically used in a question-answer form, e.g. *dorești*, *dorește*.

## 2.3. Omission of Relative Conjunctions

The omission of relative conjunctions is common in Shakespeare, especially when the antecedent clause is emphatic and evidently incomplete.

II. i. 26. Sebastian: <i>A lady, sir, (who), though it was said she much resembled me, was yet of many accounted beautiful.</i> p : 21	Sebastian: <i>Prietene, o tînă ră pe care mulți o socoteau preafrumoasă, deși se spune că-mi seamănă întocmai.</i> p : 244
II.iii.55. Clown(sings): <i>Youth's a staff (that) will not endure</i> p : 25	Bufonul: [...] <i>Iubirea este ca mătasa: O porți, n-o porți, se rupe!...</i> p : 250
II.iv.108. Viola: <i>My father had a daughter (who) loved a man</i> p : 33	Viola: [...] <i>Aveam o soră, ce-a iubit un om,</i> p : 264
V. i. 360. Olivia: <i>And now I do bethink me, it was she (who) first told me thou wast mad;</i> p : 81	Olivia: [...] <i>ea</i> <i>Mi-a spus, întîi, că ai înnebunit;</i> p : 350

This syntactic irregularity might make the reading a little bit ambiguous and confusing in choosing the subject of the dependent relative clause, but that leads to relevant stylistic effects, since subordination has an explanatory, informative and emphatic power as shown by the cleft sentence in the fourth example. These stylistic effects are preserved in Romanian where we notice the translator's choice of not eluding the relative pronouns e.g. *pe care* and *ce* in the first and in the third excerpt, respectively. The second example is translated into Romanian using a cultural equivalent based upon an explicit simile. This may be also considered a case of lexical creativity. In the fourth example the translator resorts to shift and transposition by changing the sentence structure and introducing a direct object clause.

## 2.4. Omission of Verb Groups

With adverbs expressing motion, the verbs which they should qualify are often omitted; the adverb thus becomes almost an interjection. It is to be observed that the omitted verb is still a motion verb, the omission taking place most frequently after *will*, *shall*, or other auxiliary. Such ellipses often make for emphasis.

liii.112. Sir Andrew: <i>'Faith, I'll (go) home to-morrow,</i> p : 8	Sir Andrew: <i>Dacă-i pe-așa, mîine o-ntind acasă,</i> p : 221
III. iv. 62. Servant: <i>I could hardly entreat him (go) back : he attends your ladyship's pleasure.</i> p : 51	Slujitorul:[...] <i>N-a fost prea ușor să-l aduc îndărăt.</i> p : 298
III. iv. 215. Fabian: <i>Here he comes you're your niece: give them way, till he take leave, and presently (go) after him.</i> p : 55	Fabian: <i>Uite-l ca vine cu nepoata dumitale: să dispărem pînă își iau rămas bun și ia-te după el cînd pleacă.</i> p : 305

The semantic field of movement verbs is kept in the Romanian version, but meaning equivalence is rendered through a change in register, the translator choosing to add some flavour providing idiomatic translational equivalents (Dumitrașcu 2007) to the verb *go*: *a o întinde acasă, a aduce îndărăt, a te lua după cineva*. This is a case of lexical creativity based on modulation.

## 2.5. Omission of the Auxiliary Do

It may be considered that this feature sometimes adds much to the beauty and vigour of expression.

II. iv. 120. Duke: <i>(Did... die) Died thy sister of her love, my boy?</i> p : 33	Ducele : <i>Și surioara ta s-a prăpădit?</i> p : 265
---	---

The '*feeling*' is enriched in the Romanian translation by a change in register through modulation and an euphemism, e.g. *die: a se prăpădi*.

## 2.6. The Use of Double Object

Double object is used in order to further extend the meaning of the transitive verb, often a clausal object following the direct object, as a means of explaining.

I. ii. 53. Viola: Conceal <i>me what I am</i> ; and be my aid For such disguise p : 4	Viola :[...] Te rog,deci, ginta nu mi-o da-n în vileag p : 214
I. v. 276. Viola: I see <i>you, what you are</i> , you are too proud; p : 18	Viola : Acuma văd cum <i>ești</i> , da: ești trufașă, p: 240

The English double object construction is rendered into Romanian through modulation again, introducing the repetition of the verb *ești* in the subsequent direct object clauses in the second excerpt, and through both paraphrase and descriptive equivalent strategies in building up explicitation in the first example.

## 2.7. Non – Agreement between Plural Subject and Singular Predicate

This token of syntactic ill-formedness may be accounted for in several ways:

- a. The subject noun may be regarded as singular in thought or the coordinate subject may convey one idea.

II. v.176. Malvolio: <i>Daylight and champain discovers not more:</i> <i>this is open.</i> p : 38	Malvolio : E limpede <i>ca lumina zilei.</i> p : 275
III.i. 148. Olivia : <i>And yet, when wit and youth is come to harvest,</i> <i>Your wife is like to reap a proper man</i> p : 44	Olivia : [...] <i>La vremea ta, soția</i> <i>Ce ți-i sortită-ntreg te va culege.</i> p : 286

- b. When the verb precedes the subject , the writer has perhaps not yet decided upon the subject.

IV. iii. 11. Sebastian: : <i>Yet doth this accident and flood of fortune</i> <i>So far exceed all instance, all discourse,</i> p : 68	Sebastian:[...] <i>Dar întâmplarea asta,</i> <i>Această revărsare de noroc</i> p: 329
--	--

The content of the message is preserved in Romanian but the versions are clear cases of non-equivalence. In the first variant the translator has used a collocation based on comparison, e.g. *e limpede ca lumina zilei*, to render the dimension of meaning of *light* coming from *daylight* through the strategies of componential analysis, transposition and deletion. The second and the third examples are cases of using compensation and descriptive/functional equivalents.

## Conclusions

By way of conclusion we share Steiner's opinion that: "Translation is realizable precisely because deep-seated universals, genetic, historical, social, from which all grammars derive can be located and recognized as operative in every human idioms, however singular or bizarre its superficial forms. To translate is to descend beneath the exterior disparities of two languages in order to bring into vital play their analogous and, at the final depths, common principles of being. Here the Universalist position (cf. Chomsky 1986) touches closely on the mystical intuition of a lost primal or paradigmatic speech." (1975: 73).

The present paper has aimed at suggesting both a theoretic and practical treatment of the Shakespearean texts translation into Romanian by overlapping grammar and meaning through a bunch of suggested strategies and procedures.

## References

Abbot, E. A. (1999) *A Shakespearean Grammar*, available at <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.03.0080>.

- Baker, M. (1998) *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*. London & New York: Routledge.
- Baker, M. (2006) *Translation and Conflict*, London and New York: Routledge.
- Chomsky, N. (1965) *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Chomsky, N. (1986). *Knowledge of Language: Its nature, Origin and Use*, New York: Praeger.
- Croitoru, E. (2007). "Explicitation and Deletion from the Perspective of Teaching LSP" in D. Gálová (ed.) *Translation Languages for Specific Purposes: Searching for Common Solutions*, Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Croitoru, E., and A. Dumitrascu (2006) *Modulation – A Translation Strategy*, in *Studii de traducere: Retrospectiva si perspective*, Galați: Editura Fundației Universitare "Dunărea de Jos" Galați.
- Dima, G. (2003) *Outlines of English Syntax*, Galați: Editura Fundației Universitare "Dunărea de Jos" din Galați.
- Dima, G. (2009a) *The Translation Potential of Verba Sentienti in English and Romanian with Special Reference to Verbs of Hearing* in F. Popescu (ed.) *Perspectives in Translation Studies*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing: Cambridge.
- Dima, G. (2009b) *Theorising about Translation through Parallel Corpora*, in the Volume of the Conference on British and American Studies, 7<sup>th</sup> Edition, Brasov: Transilvania University Press.
- Dumitrașcu, A. (2007) Patterns of Idiomacity, in *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, vol. 3, nr. 1, pp. 1-10, available at <http://www.jlls.org/current.htm>.
- Jaaskelainen, R. (2005) *Translation Studies, What are they?* retrieved November 11, 2006 from <http://www.hum.expertise.workshop>.
- Johnson, S. (1765) Preface to his Edition of Shakespeare's Plays, Full text, University of Toronto (2009) <http://rpo.library.utoronto.ca/display/displayprose.cfm?prosenum=9>
- Krings, H. P. (1986) "Translation Problems and Translation Strategies of Advanced German Learners of French" in J. House, & S. Blum-Kulka (eds.), *Interlingual and intercultural communication*, Tübingen: Gunter Narr.
- Levițchi, L. (1994) *Manualul traducătorului de limba engleză*, București : Teora.
- Loescher, W. (1991) *Translation Performance, Translation Process and Translation Strategies*. Tuebingen: Guten Narr.
- Newmark, P. (1988a) *A Textbook of Translation*. Hertfordshire: Prentice Hall.
- Newmark, P. (1988b) *Approaches to Translation*. Hertfordshire: Prentice Hall.
- Newmark, P. (1993) *Paragraphs on translation*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Nida, E. A. (1964) *Towards a science of translation, with special reference to principles and procedures involved in Bible translating*. Leiden: Brill Richards.
- Steiner, G.(1975) *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation*, Oxford University Press.
- Venuti, L. (1998) Strategies of translation. In M. Baker (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of translation studies* (pp. 240-244). London and New York: Routledge.

### Corpus

- Gheorghiu, M. (1959) *A douăsprezecea noapte sau Ce doriți ?* in William Shakespeare, *Opere*, vol.7, București: Editura de stat pentru literatură și artă.
- Shakespeare, W. (1935) *The Twelfth Night or What You Will*, *The Oxford and Cambridge Edition*, S. Wood (ed), London: George Gill& Sons, Ltd.