

DIALECT SHIFT AS A PRAGMATIC MECHANISM IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK POETRY: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

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Abstract

This study investigates deictic shift as a pragmatic mechanism in English and Uzbek poetic texts through a comparative-typological approach. Drawing on pragmalinguistic theory — particularly Bühler's origo model, Levinson's five-category taxonomy of deixis, and Stockwell's deictic shift theory — the article analyses how person, place, time, discourse, and social deixis function in selected poems by W.B. Yeats, T.S. Eliot, Philip Larkin, and the Uzbek poet Usmon Azim. The results demonstrate that while origo shift operates as a universal poetic device in both languages, its realisation differs significantly due to typological contrasts: English relies on pronominal and tense systems, whereas Uzbek exploits agglutinative morphology and the social deixis opposition *sen/siz*. The study contributes to the field of pragmapoetics and cross-linguistic deixis research by establishing a *tertium comparationis* for English–Uzbek poetic deixis.

Keywords: deixis, deictic shift, pragma poetics, English poetry, Uzbek poetry, origo, comparative linguistics

1. Introduction

Since the second half of the twentieth century, linguistics has undergone a profound methodological reorientation: the object of inquiry shifted from the language system as an abstract construct to the human being who creates and uses it — what has been termed the anthropocentric turn. Within this paradigm, pragmatics emerged as a discipline concerned with meaning in context, placing the speaker, the interlocutor, and the speech situation at the center of analysis.

Deixis — from Greek *deixis* 'pointing, showing' — constitutes one of the core phenomena of pragmatics. Deictic elements (personal pronouns, demonstratives, spatial and temporal adverbs) anchor an utterance to its speech situation by encoding the coordinates of person, place, and time relative to the speaker's position. In poetic discourse, however, these coordinates are systematically displaced, ambiguated, or multiplied, creating what Stockwell calls a *deictic shift*: the reader is transported to an internal vantage point within the text world.

Despite a growing body of literature on poetic deixis in individual languages, cross-linguistic studies comparing typologically distinct languages remain scarce. English and Uzbek present a particularly revealing contrast: English is an analytic language that expresses grammatical relations largely through word order and auxiliary elements, while Uzbek is a synthetic-agglutinative language that encodes multiple grammatical meanings within a single word form through suffixation. This typological difference has direct consequences for how deictic meaning is realized in poetry.

The present article addresses this gap by examining how deictic shift functions as a pragmatic device in selected English and Uzbek poems. The study is guided by three research questions: 1. Which types of deixis are most actively exploited in each poetic tradition? 2. How does origo shift manifest differently across the two languages? 3. What universal and language-specific features characterize poetic deixis in English and Uzbek?

2. Materials and Methods

The study adopts a comparative-typological method within the framework of pragmatic and cognitive poetics. The theoretical foundation integrates three complementary models: Bühler's *origo* theory, which posits a three-dimensional coordinate system (person–place–time) anchored in the deictic centre *ich–jetzt–hier* ('I–now–here'); Levinson's five-category taxonomy of deixis (person, place, time, discourse, and social deixis); and Stockwell's deictic shift theory, which accounts for the reader's cognitive displacement into a text-internal vantage point.

The corpus comprises eight poems selected purposively for their documented engagement with deictic complexity. From the English tradition: W.B. Yeats's *The Second Coming* and *Sailing to Byzantium*; T.S. Eliot's *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* and *Burnt Norton* from *Four Quartets*; Philip *Aubade* and *The Whitsun Weddings*. From the Uzbek tradition: two poems by Usmon Azim drawn from his collected works, selected for their typologically representative deictic structures as documented in Sarbarova.

Each poem was subjected to deictic annotation identifying: (a) type of deictic element according to Levinson's taxonomy; (b) the referent of the *origo* and its stability across the poem; (c) instances of *origo* shift, deictic expansion, or deictic ambiguity; and (d) the grammatical means by which deixis is encoded (pronoun, tense form, demonstrative, suffix). Qualitative interpretation of functional effects was grounded in close reading informed by cognitive poetics. The typological comparison foregrounded morphosyntactic differences between the two languages following the framework of Mengliyev for Uzbek grammar.

3. Results

3.1 *Origo* Shift and the Instability of the Deictic Centre

Analysis across all eight poems confirmed that *origo* shift is the primary mechanism through which both English and Uzbek poets create lyric effect. However, the means of realizing this shift diverge systematically along typological lines.

In Eliot's *The Waste Land*, the *origo* migrates across five sections, each populated by a different speaking subject. The pronoun *I* appears in each section but refers to distinct entities, producing what may be termed *pronominal polyphony*: a single deictic form encodes multiple vantage points. Yeats's *The Second Coming* achieves *origo* neutralization by suppressing the first-person pronoun entirely in the opening stanza: 'Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold' presents processes without an anchoring speaker, shifting the *origo* from the individual to a universal, prophetic voice.

In Usmon Azim's poetry, *origo* shift exploits the morphological optionality of the Uzbek first-person pronoun. Because the verb suffix alone marks person and number (e.g., *ketaman* 'I go/I will go'), the pronoun *men* (I) can be omitted without loss of referential clarity. This omission produces a distinctive *deictic ambivalence*: the form is simultaneously singular-specific and potentially universal. English, where the subject pronoun is obligatory, cannot replicate this effect without restructuring the sentence.

3.2 Social Deixis and the Addressee

Social deixis revealed the sharpest typological contrast between the two languages. English possesses a single second-person pronoun *you*, which is neutral with respect to formality and social distance. Uzbek maintains a grammaticalized opposition between *sen* (familiar, informal) and *siz* (formal, respectful), and this opposition constitutes a deictic resource unavailable in English.

Larkin's *Aubade* presents the extreme case of social deixis erasure: the poem contains no second-person pronoun at all. The lyric subject addresses no interlocutor, constructing what Benveniste would identify as a deficient *I* — one that lacks the complementary *you* required for genuine dialogism. This grammatical isolation enacts the poem's existential theme: before death, communication itself becomes impossible.

By contrast, Usmon Azim's apostrophic poems addressing the homeland or nature employ *siz* rather than *sen* — a grammatical choice that simultaneously marks respect, distance, and sanctity. Where an English poet wishing to convey reverence for an addressee must resort to lexical or prosodic means, the Uzbek poet achieves part of this effect through a single morphological choice in the pronoun system.

3.3 Temporal Deixis and the Paradox of Poetic 'Now'

Temporal deixis in poetry generates what Derrida calls the *iterable now*: each reading re-instantiates the deictic present, making the poetic 'now' permanently renewable rather than historically fixed. Both corpora evidence this paradox, but the grammatical mechanisms differ.

Eliot's *Burnt Norton* exploits tense ambiguity through the double meaning of *present* 'now' and 'existing', so that the phrase 'which is always present' collapses temporal deixis into ontological assertion. Yeats's *The Second Coming* uses a past-tense form in a future context (its hour come round at last) to present inevitable futurity as already accomplished — a temporal deictic inversion that encodes prophetic certainty.

Uzbek offers a structurally distinct resource: the *hozirgi-kelasi zamon* (present-future tense) form collapses the English distinction between simple present and 'will + infinitive' into a single suffix. A form such as *ketaman* can mean 'I go' (habitual present), 'I am going' (immediate present), or 'I will go' (future). In Usmon Azim's poetry this temporal ambiguity is exploited to express cyclical or eternal processes: 'Tun kelaman, kunduz ketaman' (I come at night, I leave by day) renders individual action and cosmic rhythm simultaneously, a meaning English can only approximate through lexical elaboration.

4. Discussion

The comparative analysis yields five principal findings that advance understanding of poetic deixis across typologically distinct languages.

First, *origo shift is a cross-linguistic universal of poetic discourse*. All four poets displace, multiply, or suppress the deictic centre as a primary lyric strategy — confirming that the instability of the origo is not a language-specific phenomenon but a fundamental feature of literary language use.

Second, *the realization of origo shift is language-specific*. English poets rely predominantly on pronoun selection, tense form manipulation, and syntactic subject suppression. Uzbek poets can additionally exploit the morphological optionality of the subject pronoun and the formal ambiguity of the present-future verb form — resources structurally unavailable in English analytic grammar.

Third, *social deixis constitutes an asymmetric resource*. The Uzbek *sen/siz* opposition provides a grammaticalised channel for encoding social distance, respect, and intimacy that English must express through lexical, prosodic, or contextual means. This asymmetry has direct consequences for translation: any Uzbek poem using *siz* in apostrophe undergoes pragmatic attenuation when rendered into English, since the respectful-deictic layer is not recoverable in the target language without paraphrase.

Fourth, *temporal deixis in both traditions generates an iterable present*, but through different grammatical configurations. The Uzbek present-future form offers a morphologically compact means of encoding temporal ambiguity that English requires periphrastic constructions to approximate. This finding extends Levinson's taxonomy by showing that the category of 'time deixis' subsumes significantly different grammatical implementations across languages.

Fifth, the present study has implications for *translation theory and linguodidactics*. Deictic effects that rely on structural features of the source language — pronoun optionality in Uzbek, tense ambiguity in English — resist equivalent rendering in the target language. Translator training and advanced foreign language pedagogy should foreground these structural mismatches as sites of pragmatic loss and creative compensation.

5. Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that deictic shift operates as a universal pragmatic mechanism in both English and Uzbek poetic discourse, while its grammatical realisation is shaped by the typological properties of each language. Person deixis, place deixis, temporal deixis, and social deixis all participate in the construction of the lyric world, but the resources available to poets — agglutinative morphology in Uzbek versus analytic syntax in English — determine which effects can be achieved with grammatical economy and which require lexical or prosodic elaboration.

The findings contribute to three fields: (1) pragmapoetics, by extending deictic shift theory to a non-European, agglutinative language context; (2) comparative linguistics, by establishing a principled *tertium comparationis* for English–Uzbek poetic deixis; and (3) linguodidactics and translation studies, by identifying structural asymmetries that affect the translatability of poetic deictic effects. Future research should broaden the corpus to include contemporary Uzbek poetry and examine deictic phenomena in oral poetic traditions.

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