Anaphora and deixis as cohesive devices in lexicography

Carla Marello

Anaphoric and deictic elements are often present in lexicographic microstructure since the special language of lexicography, in order to avoid redundancy, tends to be rich in proforms and other reference devices. I use the two terms *anaphora* and *deixis* as Lyons does (1977: 637, 673): "The term 'deixis' . . . refers to the function of personal and demonstrative pronouns, of tense and of a variety of other grammatical and lexical features which relate utterances to the spatio-temporal co-ordinates of the act of utterance". Anaphora, though making use of almost the same grammatical and lexical features as deixis, "presupposes that the referent should already have its place in the universe-of-discourse".

Ellipsis, for instance, can be deictic or anaphoric. In lexicographic microstructures it is often used, mainly with anaphoric functions. In:

(1) **abbacchio e abacchio,** agnello morto per vendre; vivo in Roma, a Lucca, Firenze (Corazzini 1885: 704),

drawn from an Italian defining thesaurus of the last century, we notice the ridiculous effects resulting from ellipsis, technical jargon and shift from referent to sign. Probably a modern lexicographer would not like an entry in which *abbacchio*, which means 'dead lamb', is said "to live in Rome, Lucca and Florence" (Corazzini actually meant that the word *abbacchio* was used in those towns).

Even though modern lexicographers are more careful in phrasing their glosses, they make very free use of elliptical comparative forms. In:

(2) **terrazza** sf. . . . *T. alp.* una cengia più larga (Palazzi 1974)

the compiler means that a terrace, on a mountain, is something similar to a ledge, but wider than a ledge. In:

(3) **bello**   agg. 1. *(di una bellezza piuttosto intensa, gener, visiva)* beautiful 2. *(rif. a persone: meno intenso)* a) di ragazza graziosa: pretty b) di uomini e donne: good-looking (Borrelli-Chinol-Frank 1981 2nd ed.)

it is the 'weaker' meaning of *bello* which is translated by *pretty,* while in:

(4) **vecchio**   s.m. 4a) sing. fam.: padre: old man, *(più cortese)* father (Borrelli-Chinol-Frank 1981 2nd ed.)

it is the word *father* which is 'more polite' than *old man.* The example:

(5) **realizzare**   v.tr. 3 fig. Comprendere esattamente, in tutta la *sua* portata (Zingarelli 1983)

is an instance of ungrammatical ellipsis in Italian: it is a case of 'missing antecedent', since *sua* refers to a discourse, a reasoning or argumentation which was in the mind of the compiler but is not, as it happens, in the definition.

Further on we shall meet with reference devices such as *qui, en* in example (8), *lui, son* in example (13) and *whose, its* in (9): they appear in monolingual dictionary definitions but cannot be considered as specific features of lexicographic texts. They pose almost the same problems of interpretation posed by any instance of anaphora, except for the fact that they occur in a short, non-redundant text containing different typographic types, many conventional abbreviations and continuous shifts from the signifier to the signified. Such devices do not simplify the microstructure. On the other hand, they do not constitute the most serious obstacle to comprehension; moreover, they are cohesive ties for the defining parts of the microstructure and therefore they contribute towards making the gloss into a text.

Such proforms and linking devices ought to be used in dictionaries according to the comprehension skills of the users, following the same criteria adopted in grading texts in language-teaching material. Learners' dictionaries ought to take account of the difficulties met by foreign students in learning how to interpret certain anaphoric proforms or deictic elements.

1. Deixis and lexicography: a discontinuous awareness

The study of deixis has mainly developed in pragmatics, in the philosophy of language and in discourse analysis: fields rather remote from the concerns of traditional lexicography. In the last two decades the lexicographical treatment of the most recurrent deictic elements (personal pronouns and time or local adverbs) has improved: strange definitions of *I* or *yesterday* are now superseded by correct references to the utterer, but if you look at the entry *ago* in OALD:

(6) **ago**   adv. (used to indicate time measured back to a point in the past; always placed after the word or words it modifies; used with the simple pt)

or at the entry *tra* as dealt with in:

(7) **tra**   prep. 4. Compl. di quantità (indica la distanza che *ci* separa da un luogo, da un punto) . . . 5. compl. di tempo (indica il limite di tempo entro il quale si svolgerà un'azione, oppure l'intervallo di tempo che può intercorrere in un'azione) . . . (Zingarelli 1983),

you will notice that their time deixis values are not clearly stated. On the contrary, the local deixis value of *tra* is somehow better signalled by the deictic *ci*, conveying the suggestion of the zero point 'place of utterance' from where distance is calculated.

Even a dictionary which pays considerable attention to linguistic theory, the DFC, shows little concern for deictic values different from personal pronoun, *hier, là, ici,* etc. The preposition *dans,* is said to introduce time complements, and such a function is represented by four examples in which *dans* has a deictic value which is left totally unnoticed. For *il y a,* in the sense corresponding to English *ago* and Italian *fa,* (e.g. *Il y a trois ans Mr. X n'était pas encore mort*) there is no mention of deictic value, neither under *il,* nor under *avoir,* where the "locution verbale" *il y a* is only considered a "formule d'introduction et de présentation" and no example of its *ago* use is given.

It may be that lexicographers, even though they are aware of deixis, prefer not to deal with it explicitly because its full explanation is space consuming. This may be true but one can take deixis into account without going into fine details. For instance, defining the English verb *to come* OALD at acceptation 2. says: "move into the place where the speaker is". LONGMAN LEXICON 1981, defining the same verb, says under acceptation 1. "to move towards the speaker or a particular place" and under acceptation 2. "to arrive where the speaker is or at a particular place". The Italian monolingual dictionary Palazzi 1974 defines the corresponding Italian verb *venire* as follows: "recarsi nel luogo dove è o va *quello con cui si parla* . . . o nel luogo dove è o va *quello che parla*".

Recent grammars (I mean school grammars) have begun to explain deixis, therefore dictionaries do not have to explain it at length; they just have to warn readers that the use of a certain word has some limitations, i.e. it is anchored to the time and place of utterance.

My approach, far from being exhaustive, is mainly concerned with the practical consequences of using anaphoric and deictic expressions in dictionary microstructures, therefore I shall not insist in this sampling on lexicographic awareness or unawareness of the deictic value of certain entries, preferring to deal with some problems deriving from building microstructures with anaphors and deictic elements.

2. A further step: textual deixis

In the following two microstructures:

(8) 1 **enceinte** |ɑ̃sɛt| *s.f.* 1 [*clôture qui entoure un espace pour en défendre l'accès*] recinto *m.,* recinzione; cinta: *une enceinte de pieux* un recinto, una recinzione di pali → ceinture || *le mur d'enceinte d'une place forte* il muro di cinta di una piazzaforte → rempart 2 [*cet espace*] recinto: *animaux vivant dans l'enceinte d'un parc* animali che vivono nel recinto di un parco; *enceinte réservée aux personnages officiels* recinto, spazio riservato alle autorità . . . Robert/Signorelli

(9) **er-mine** /^{1} ɜ:min/ *n* 1 small animal whose fur is brown in summer and white (except for its black-pointed tail) in winter. 2 [U] its fur; garment made of this fur: *dressed in ~; a gown trimmed with ~.*OALD

the expressions *cet espace* and *this fur* have a deictic function much more diffi-
cult to understand than normal deixis, since they also imply a good knowledge
of lexicographic conventions and not, simply, of the rules governing the language
in which the definitions are written. I am not saying, I stress it again, that deixis
in lexicographic texts is in general more difficult to understand than anaphora;
in:

> (10) S diciassettesima lettera del *nostro* alfabeto . . . la *s* ha suono sordo
> quando . . .; ha suono sonoro davanti . . .; *noi* abbiamo sempre
> distinti i due suoni, indicando con una *s* lunga il suono dolce (Palazzi
> 1974)

we find two elements of personal deixis. The former, *nostro* 'our', means 'of the
Italian alphabet' which is common to the lexicographer and to his audience; the
latter, *noi* 'we', indicates the editorial team. Though different in interpretation
and confusingly near, these two instances of personal deixis are not very difficult
for the reader. *Cet espace* and *this fur*, in (8) and (9) respectively, on the other
hand, are forms of local deixis used for pointing to parts of the microstructure.
They are two cases of textual deixis. According to Conte's definition (1981: 41,
43), they are text-deictic elements because:

1) the lexicographer refers to the ongoing discourse in which deictic expressions
   occur,
2) deixis is obtained by local deixis, as usually happens in written discourse
   (time-deictic elements for textual deixis are used mainly in oral discourse),
3) linguistic elements have a metatextual function, they lead the reader through
   the text, teaching him how to link parts of the microstructure.

Conte says that textual deixis is metatextual and not metalinguistic because it
makes reference to tokens, to *parole* elements and not to types, to elements be-
longing to *langue*; because textual deixis makes reference to a message and not
to a code. Yet, as our instances of textual deixis in (8) and (9) show, in lexico-
graphic microstructure textual deixis is both metatextual and metalinguistic, be-
cause *cet espace* and *this fur* do refer to tokens previously mentioned in their
respective glosses, but also refer to classes, of *enceintes* and of *ermine furs*, as
dictionary definitions always do.

In connection with the metalinguistic value of textual referents in the defin-
ing parts of lexicographic microstructures, another interesting feature can be ob-
served. We do not find the existential presupposition implied by the use of defi-
nite noun phrases (outside the scope of modal, implicative, factitive verbs and
other predicates, see Karttunen 1969). *Cet espace* in (8) and *its/this fur* in (9) by
no means refer to a well-determined existing space or fur in the real world. Even
though they are definite NPs, they occur in generic utterances. The generic inter-
pretation of the utterance depends on the predicate, and a lexicographic micro-
structure in its defining parts is a generic text.

3. Cohesive links between examples and their explanations

The *origo*, the zero point of textual deixis in lexicographic microstructure, is the first part of the definition. Forward textual deixis is obviously avoided in lexicographic language, since it involves an unnecessary mise-en-relief and can be space-consuming. However, if we accept that there are three types of anaphora, syntactic, semantic and pragmatic, we can consider the relationship between an explanation and an example as a form of forward semantic anaphora. Syntactic anaphora is generally obtained by using proforms and is ruled by *grammar*; pragmatic anaphora involves *encyclopaedia* and is obtained through axionyms and definite descriptions (e.g. Jupiter / the king of Greek gods); semantic anaphora usually consists of the relationship between a word in a sentence and its synonym or hyperonym in another sentence, and it involves *dictionary* knowledge. (See Conte 1981: 45–51; Braunmüller 1977; Marello 1981.)

In the example:

(11)   abbassare   tr. . . . . muovere e portare dall'alto in basso . . . chinare volgere
in giù . . . deprimere, umiliare: *Dio abbassa i superbi* (Palaz-
zi 1974),

between *deprimere, umiliare* and the *abbassa* in the example *Dio abbassa i superbi*, 'God humbles the proud', one finds a precise instance of synonymic relationship. It is an instance of forward semantic anaphora, which avoids the use of proforms. Moreover, you will notice that the punctuation mark connecting the synonymic explanation and the example is a colon, the mark typical of forward anaphora or cataphora, as it is also called (see Halliday and Hasan 1976: 17).

In the example:

(12)   seal   vt. 1. . . . . *seal sth in,* keep it in by sealing: *Our special can-
ning process seals the flavour in. Seal sth off,* block it: *seal
off an area of land,* block all means of entering it, e.g. one
where, after military use, there may be unexploded shells,
etc. (OALD),

since the phrasal verb and the example precede their respective explanations, the lexicographer is obliged to use anaphoric proforms *(it, one)* which link different levels of language, i.e. the language of examples and the metalanguage of explanations. In:

(13)   approuver   . . . v. tr. 1° *Approuver quelqu'un de* (et l'infin.), lui donner
raison, être de son avis: *Je vous approuve d'avoir refusé de
céder aux menaces* (DFC)

we find *quelqu'un* as antecedent of *lui* and *son: approuver quelqu'un de* is a sentence pattern, while 'lui donner raison, être de son avis' are explanations; we have the same case as in (12).

It can be debated whether there is a cataphoric link in (12) between the *sth.* of *seal sth. in* and the *it* of the explanation 'keep it in by sealing' or between the

sth. of seal sth. off and the expression *an area of land* present in the example. The same cataphoric link can be detected in (13) between *quelqu'un* and *vous* in the example *Je vous approuve d'avoir refusé* etc . . . In my opinion such a cataphoric link holds, and it is even a kind of cataphora peculiar to lexicographic and grammatical texts. Perhaps, by juxtaposing the example and the sentence pattern with indefinite proforms, lexicographers mean to show that personal proforms (*vous*) and NPs (*an area of land*) occupy a place in the sentence structure different from the place in which indefinite pronouns occur.

Foreign dictionary users often do not grasp this cataphora and construct utterances like:

*J'approuve vous d'avoir, etc.

Naive dictionary users even take literally suggestions such as the one in:

(14) **presumere** v.i. to presume; to rely too much (on); . . . *presumere della propria autorità*, to rely too much on one's authority (Ragazzini 1984)

and produce written utterances such as:

*Mrs. Smith relied too much on one's authority.

This kind of mistake is not so rare for Italian students of English, because their mother tongue is not provided with dummy proforms such as *one, oneself* and uses the same forms both in the pattern with the verb in the infinitive and in the example with a singular subject:

predispor*si*: to prepare oneself
Giovanni *si* predispone a partire: John prepares himself to leave

presumere della *propria* autorità: to rely too much on one's authority
Giovanni presume della *propria* autorità: John relies too much on his authority.

One might take the view that the treatment adopted in (11), which does not involve proforms, is less dangerous than the strategy adopted in (12) and (13): unfortunately, it is also less informative, since the reader has the task of deriving the syntactic pattern (in 11 one with the direct object) from the example.

Since patterns with indefinite pronouns, definitions with anaphoric proforms and examples with proforms or NPs with different occurrences in the sentence structure appear well rooted in lexicographic tradition, it seems sensible:

a) to recommend lexicographers to use proforms wisely,
b) to train dictionary users to derive all the information they can get from the various types of referential links which were discussed earlier.

When I speak of 'wise use' of proforms and deictic elements, I mean a use justified not only by lexicographic tradition, but also by a true explanatory function. In this regard, *cet espace* in (8), *this fur* in (9), *nostro* and *noi* in (10) ought to be

avoided; instances such as the ellipsis in (1) and the missing antecedent in (5) are true mistakes. Comparatives such as the ones in (2), (3) and (4) seem less misleading than proforms.

I shall not deal here with the advisability of including anaphoric proforms and deictic elements in examples. This problem implies a different perspective, because it is difficult to find realistic examples which do not involve proforms and explicit deictic expressions.

References

Cited dictionaries

DIZIONARIO INGLESE-ITALIANO ITALIANO-INGLESE
A. Borelli, E. Chinol, T. Frank, Novara: De Agostini (1974/1981).
LA CITTÀ E LO STATO. LA CASA E LA FAMIGLIA. DIZIONARIO METO-DICO
F. Corazzini, Torino: Loescher (1885).
DICTIONNAIRE DU FRANÇAIS CONTEMPORAIN (DFC)
J. Dubois, R. Lagane et al., Paris: Larousse (1971/1981).
NUOVISSIMO DIZIONARIO DELLA LINGUA ITALIANA
R. Palazzi, edizione a cura di G. Folena, Milano: Fabbri (1974).
OXFORD ADVANCED LEARNER'S DICTIONARY OF CURRENT ENGLISH (OALD)
A.S. Hornby with A.P. Cowie, A.C. Gimson, Oxford: Oxford U.P. (1980).
DICTIONNAIRE FRANÇAIS-ITALIEN ITALIEN-FRANÇAIS. DIZIONARIO FRANCESE-ITALIANO ITALIANO-FRANCESE
Robert/Signorelli, Paris: Société du Nouveau Littré, Milano: Signorelli (1981).
IL NUOVO ZINGARELLI. VOCABOLARIO DELLA LINGUA ITALIANA
N. Zingarelli, XI edizione a cura di M. Dogliotti e L. Rosiello, Bologna: Zanichelli (1983).

Other literature

Braunmüller, Kurt (1977), *Referenz und Pronominalisierung. Zu den Deiktika und Proformen des Deutschen,* Tübingen: Niemeyer.

Conte, Maria-Elisabeth (1981), "Deissi testuale e anafora", in: *Sull'anafora* (1981), 37–54.

Halliday, Michael A.K./Hasan, Ruqaiya (1976), *Cohesion in English,* London: Longman.

Karttunen, Lauri (1969), *Discourse Referents,* Preprint No. 70 International Conference on Computational Linguistics, Sanga-Säby – Stockholm 1–4 September 1969.

Lyons, John (1977), *Semantics,* Cambridge: Cambridge U.P.

Marello, Carla (1981), "Il ruolo dell'anafora in alcune teorie testuali", in: *Sull' anafora* (1981), 13–36.

Sull'anafora (1981): Studi di grammatica italiana pubblicati dall'Accademia della Crusca, *Sull'anafora. Atti del seminario,* Accademia della Crusca 14–16 dicembre 1978, Firenze: presso l'Accademia della Crusca.