

The Verb Aspect Issue in English-French Translation Classes in a Francophone context

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ABSTRACT : Walzing back and forth between English and French texts does make one have a story about verb aspects to tell, especially when it is about a teacher who also wears the professional translator's hat. This paper strengthens the idea that verb aspects do make a difference in translation through parallel examples. All languages have particular features that make them singular. But they all have in common the intricacy of verb aspects. While English focuses on two main aspects: simple and continuous, among others, French has many more. Our experience and practice in classes have proven that students often misuse tenses whether they translate from English to French or vice versa. Their attitudes during translation exercises even shows an incapacity to tell the difference between the "présent simple" in French and the *simplepresent* in English wrongly thinking that both tenses are perfect matches. In the framework of the teaching of translation both as a simple school or university subject and a major study field for future professional translators, this paper highlights the universal translation principle consisting in understanding the message the verb itself conveys before saying it in another language.

KEY WORDS: *Context, polysemy, semantics, "thème," tenses, "version", verb aspects.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Translating is not only transcoding, moving from one language to another converting signs to other signs in order to find out the correspondence in the other language. Translating is determining the relevant signification of those signs in order to discover the correspondence in the other language. Therefore, the first task is to eliminate the polysemy (characteristics of a word that has several meanings) and ambiguity of words before translating them (Seleskovitch & Lederer, 2014, p. 9). This involves the translation of verb aspects from English to French and vice versa. The verb aspect is the manner in which an action expressed by a verb or a noun is situated in time; it also indicates the particular point of view from which the course of an action or a specific phase during the course of an action is considered (Delisle, Lee-Jahnke H. & Cormier, Eds., 1999, p. 119). In order to understand the tense to use when translating a text, it is very important to know the subject's or author's point of view first. According to Thornbury (2006, p. 17), the verb aspect is concerned with the internal nature of the event and this includes its duration, completion, repetition, and whether it is connected to the time of speaking, etc.

The scientific relevance of this topic falls within the scope of solutions to surmount the teaching or learning difficulty that lies in the correct translation of verb tenses in class and which students encounter while translating a text whether in English or French. So this paper evinces considerable interest to both translation teachers and students in study fields that have translation as part of their curriculum. When translating a text, it is not good for students to hesitate between the right tenses to use. We have chosen to work on this topic in order to furnish students with the keys that tell them the right tenses to use being mindful that translation goes beyond transcoding signs and words.

Students do know the different tenses and moods that exist in French and they are aware of the English tenses as well. The problem they are confronted with is the use of those tenses and the understanding of the actions the meanings of which verbs convey. So, two questions immediately arise: Is it possible to separate verb aspect from semantics (word meaning in context) and polysemy? What are the different verb aspects students need to know? A verb cannot be correctly translated if its unique meaning is not isolated from semantics and polysemy in order to be connected to its intrinsic context. There are an important number of verb aspects among which fifteen really deserve consideration because of their relevancy. This study aims to demonstrate first that the verb aspect must be dissociated from semantics, polysemy and its different meanings in a sentence according

to the context through the medium of examples. Next to the simple and continuous aspects that are basically specific in English, the second point of the study will describe verb aspects in detail.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The notion of aspect enables to use one tense instead of another. It refers to the author’s intention, the voice (passive or active) and other insinuations, but it also pertains to both: English tenses (*simple present, simple past, past perfect, simple future, past conditional, etc.*), French tenses (“présent,” “futur,” “imparfait,” “passé simple,” “conditionnel présent,” “plus-que-parfait,” etc.); and especially French moods (“indicatif,” “conditionnel,” “subjonctif” and “impératif”), and so forth. For Berland-Delépine (2000, p. 111) and Grellet (2009, p. 58), the tense indicates the period in which the action is situated by the verb (past, present or future) while the aspect envisages the action under the angle of its realization: duration, completeness, repetition, etc. While the tense shows the moment when the action is carried out, the aspect describes how it is carried out. Let us examine these three following examples:

Source text	Target text
A) They played hide-and-peek yesterday.	<i>Ils ont joué à cache-cache hier.</i>
B) They were playing hide-and-peek yesterday.	<i>Ils jouaient à cache-cache hier.</i>
C) They used to play hide-and-peek every morning.	<i>Ils jouaient à cache-cache chaque matin.</i>

In these three sentences, there is one tense changed in French but there are three different verb aspects even if these are isolated sentences. English shows the exact difference between sentences through different verb forms whereas in French one verb is in the “passé composé” and two in the “imparfait de l’indicatif”. Sentence A suggests that the action is finished and has no link with the present. English uses the *preterit* or *simple past* to show the completeness of the action. Sentence B demonstrates that the action was in progress in the past. English uses the *past continuous* to express the action in progress. And sentence C shows that the action was a past habit with the modal phrase *used to*. Keeping the same thread of argument, Berland-Delépine (2000) asserts that *used to* insistently marks a startling contrast between the past and the present and the action or state described, which only belongs to the past, is bygone.

Here then it is more challenging to translate the sentences from French to English than vice versa for a lay student who does not understand that he should concentrate on the meaning of each sentence. So the action an English or French verb describes varies according to the view one adopts. A good translation takes into account all verb aspects (Carel, 2000, p. 32).

The notion of aspect concerns language learning and teaching. In the context of teaching translation, there are two types of translation that have two different goals: professional translation and pedagogic translation (also read Sambou, 2013). Unlike professional translation that encompasses all text types and most often technical ones, pedagogic translation mostly deals with literary and journalistic texts. The target audience of pedagogic translation is students majoring in language study fields such as foreign languages applied to business, and literary studies that both include translation in the curriculum and also middle high school and high school students. Professional translation instead involves students majoring in translation aspiring to become professional translators. These students study for a Master’s degree in translation attending lecture courses and doing tutorial work. In this case, professional translation covers all text types and cannot be confined in any specific sphere. But literary and journalistic text types are more challenging than any other as they not only offer a large variety of pedagogic translation opportunities to both teachers and students but they also clearly outline the multifaceted linguistic and semantic issue of the translation of verbs. Figure 1 below shows the difference.

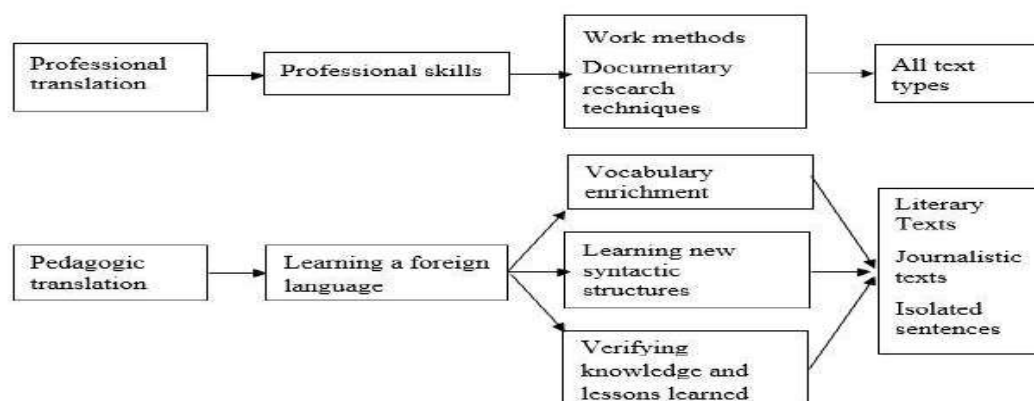


Figure 1: The two translation teaching goals

Delmotte (2007) shares the same opinion as in *Réussir le thème en anglais* he focuses first on grammatical translation from French to English with pedagogic themes on tenses and aspects, modals, infinitives and gerunds, causative forms, countable nouns and uncountable nouns, association of two nouns, determination of the noun, relative pronouns, prepositions and phrasal verbs. In the tenses and aspects chapter, he has translated forty sentences in English and commented each one to demonstrate how important the verb aspect is in translation. The following is an example (Delmotte, 2007):

Source text	Target text
Il a vécu à Londres pendant vingt ans puis s'est installé sur la Côte d'Azur quand il apris sa retraite .	He lived in London for twenty years and then settled on the French Riviera when he retired .
There is no obligation to have a <i>present perfect</i> with <i>for</i> as one can see here. As it is used to introduce a tense, <i>for</i> means "pendant" and can be perfectly associated with a <i>preterit</i> if the duration is past. Here, the twenty years of life in London are spent with no "consequence" in the <i>present</i> . The verb <i>live</i> is in the <i>preterit</i> . The actions in <i>settle</i> and <i>retire</i> are past and bygone as well. They are in <i>preterit</i> too. Putting the verb <i>live</i> in the <i>past perfect</i> would be tantamount to assessing a situation that does not exist here.	

In another context, "a vécu" could have been translated as *has lived* to mark the current situation of a person who remembers the number of years lived in a flat or a house in which they are still living. "S'est installé" also could have been translated as *has settled* if the subject wants to say that they have just settled in a flat or a house because the recent action would prevail over the past action. We have learned two lessons here: first, translation is not matching one tense to its corresponding tense; second, the action expressed by the verb should be considered as of paramount importance to direct the translator to the right tense to use.

In Carel's opinion (2000), the same English verb can take several aspects. As far as Rafroidi, Plaisant and Shott are concerned (1986, p. 12), the rule applies in French, too. For instance, the French verb "porter" has a lexical particularization when translated differently according to context in *to bear* (a load, weapons), *to carry* (with hand), *to convey* (to transport) and *to wear* (clothes). So it is crystal clear that the polysemy of "porter" deserves consideration when translating it in French. Statistically, the English lexicon is much larger than the French one. In fact, English has indigenous, French (popular) and Latin (scholarly) origins whereas French has one major origin (Rafroidi, Plaisant & Shott, 1986).

The analyses of Delmotte (2007), Carel (2000), Rafroidi, Plaisant and Shott (1986) support each other as long as the verb aspect must be dissociated from semantics and polysemy. Below are examples of verbs that might have several different meanings according to context: *to be*, *to have* and *to share*.

Source text	Target text
I am the police officer who shot him dead.	Je suis le policier qui l'a abattu.
This is a real advance on traditional methods.	Il s'agit là d'un progrès décisif par rapport aux méthodes traditionnelles.
The country is faced with major economic problems.	Le pays se trouve confronté à de grosses difficultés économiques.
The budget deficit is 10 billion.	Le déficit du budget s'élève à 10 milliards.
The climber is on top of the mountain now after trying several times.	L'alpiniste vient d' atteindre le sommet de la montagne après plusieurs tentatives.
Public opinion is divided on this question.	L'opinion publique reste divisée sur cette question.
The government's actions are an attack on the principles of unionism.	Les actes posés par le gouvernement constituent une attaque contre les principes du syndicalisme.
The company is among the leading exporters of oil.	La compagnie figure au premier rang des exportateurs de pétrole.
The deficit is more than 3% of the gross national product.	Le déficit représente plus de 3 % du produit national brut.

Table 1: A non-exhaustive semantic field list of *to be*.

Source text	Target text
Dudu has a new translation book.	Dudu a un nouveau livre de traduction.
Mrs. Sarr says that she has evidence.	Mme Sarr affirme détenir des preuves.
The minister is having difficulty convincing the public of the benefits of this policy.	Le ministre éprouve des difficultés à convaincre le public des avantages de cette politique.
The government has several options for solving the problem.	Le gouvernement dispose de plusieurs options pour résoudre le problème.
The museum has all the artist's best paintings.	Le musée recueille tous les meilleurs tableaux de l'artiste.

The new system has many advantages.	<i>Le nouveau système présente plusieurs avantages.</i>
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Table 2: A non-exhaustive semantic field list of *to have*.

Source text	Target text
I do not like polygamy because I will not share my husband.	<i>Je n'aime pas la polygamie parce que je refuse de partager mon mari.</i>
I will share the attached file with you.	<i>Je vous transférerai la pièce jointe.</i>
Sharing food is part of my culture.	<i>Manger avec les autres fait partie de ma culture.</i>
Why don't you share your sweets with your brother?	<i>Mais donne donc quelques bonbons à ton frère!</i>
We should all share in the profits.	<i>Il serait juste que chacun de nous touche unepart des bénéfices.</i>
John and I shared an office for years.	<i>John et moi avonsoccupé le même bureau pendant des années.</i>
I created a LAN network and shared it with my students.	<i>J'ai créé un réseau local, que j'ai mis à la disposition de mes élèves.</i>
My daughter finds it hard to share her computer.	<i>Ma fille n'aime pas qu'on utilise son ordinateur.</i>
We have shared a long and painful journey.	<i>Nous avonsparcouru ensemble un chemin long et pénible.</i>
We shared the driving.	<i>Nous avons pris le volant à tour de rôle.</i>
It seems we share the same feelings about murders.	<i>Il me semble que nous ressentons la même chose à propos des meurtres.</i>
I share your decision.	<i>J'adhère à votre décision.</i>
He does not like sharing his private life.	<i>Il n'aime pas parler de sa vie privée.</i>
You can share your problems with the priest.	<i>Tu peux te confier au prêtre.</i>
I want to share two stories that relate to peace.	<i>Je vais vous raconter deux anecdotes qui parlent de paix.</i>

Table 3: A non-exhaustive semantic field list of *to share*.

Source: My own observations and Dominique Jonkers' in "Quelques mots usuels".

The three comparative tables above on *to be*, *to have* and *to share* whose translations in French are successful because of the capacity to dissociate aspect from semantics are evidence that words alone are not translated but the meaning that is hidden behind is as well. All things considered, a word does not have meaning in itself only: it has meaning only in and by a context (Vinay & Darbelnet, 1958, p. 45). Here are other examples with the French indefinite pronoun "on" translated in English differently. Besides, two prepositions, *for* and *with*, Francophone students tend to automatically and literally translate as "pour" and "avec" without looking up all their current meanings linking them to context are also presented in the tables that come after.

Source text	Target text
On l'a violée.	<i>She was raped.</i> <i>Someone/somebody raped her.</i>
On aime beaucoup Sonko.	<i>People love Sonko a lot.</i>
On boit beaucoup de café Touba au Sénégal.	<i>They drink a lot of coffee Touba in Senegal.</i> <i>We drink a lot of coffee Touba in Senegal.</i> <i>You drink a lot of coffee Touba in Senegal.</i>
On ne sait jamais.	<i>One never knows.</i> <i>You never know.</i> <i>We never know.</i>
On applaudit à tout rompre.	<i>There was a burst of applause.</i>

Table 4: A non-exhaustive semantic field list of "on".

Source: My own observations and Serge Berland-Delépine's (2000).

Source text	Target text
I will do this for you.	<i>Je le ferai pour toi.</i>
I will bring an action for reparation.	<i>Je vais engager une action pourobtenir réparation.</i>
For working equids.	<i>Au service des animaux de trait.</i>
For all the president promised, they didn't believe him.	<i>Malgré toutes les promesses du président, ils ne l'ont pas cru.</i>
A road lined with trees for 3 km.	<i>Une route bordée d'arbres sur 3 km.</i>

I walked for 2 km before reaching Palmarin.	<i>J'ai marché pendant 2 km avant d'atteindre Palmarin.</i>
I love this village. I have been living here for 10 years.	<i>J'adore ce village. Cela fait 10 ans que je vis ici.</i>
Astu is going to Djiffer for three months.	<i>Astu va à Djiffer pour trois mois.</i>
Action for damages.	<i>Action en dommages-intérêts.</i>
Action for libel.	<i>Action en diffamation.</i>

Table 5: A non-exhaustive semantic field list of *for*.

Source text	Target text
I will travel with you.	<i>Je voyagerai avec toi.</i>
Students with an average will be promoted to next year.	<i>Les élèves ayant la moyenne iront en classe supérieure.</i>
People with an academic background.	<i>Les universitaires.</i>
You are just a selfish man with a cowardly character.	<i>Vous n'êtes qu'un égoïste doublé d'un lâche.</i>
A house with a large number of squirrels.	<i>Une maison infestée d'écureuils.</i>
A shotgun with a telescope.	<i>Un fusil de chasse muni d'un télescope.</i>
A man with a scientific background.	<i>Un homme de formation scientifique.</i>
He sought popularity with strong positions on rape.	<i>Il s'efforçait de se rendre populaire en criant haro sur le viol.</i>
I give history classes with a civic bias.	<i>Les cours d'histoire que je donne ont une finalité civique.</i>
The house with the green shutters.	<i>La maison aux volets verts.</i>
Passengers with tickets are asked to get on board.	<i>Les voyageurs en possession de billets sont priés de monter à bord.</i>
Patients with cancer should take these pills.	<i>Les personnes atteintes d'un cancer sont censées prendre ces pilules.</i>
I own a car with the latest features.	<i>J'ai une voiture équipée des derniers perfectionnements techniques.</i>

Table 6: A non-exhaustive semantic field list of *with*.

Table 4 listing the translation of “on” in English has three similar sentences in French translated differently in English. As a reminder, they are presented as follows:

Source text	Target text
On boit beaucoup de café Touba au Sénégal.	<i>They drink a lot of coffee Touba in Senegal.</i>
	<i>We drink a lot of coffee Touba in Senegal.</i>
	<i>You drink a lot of coffee Touba in Senegal.</i>
In the context of a dialog, the first translation of “on” as <i>they</i> shows that neither of the two people discussing are concerned. They do not live in Senegal and talk about it as a foreign country. The second translation of “on” as <i>we</i> indicates that both of the two people discussing are concerned. They live in Senegal and talk about it as their country. The third translation of “on” as <i>you</i> clarifies that only one of the two people discussing is concerned. These examples on semantics and word polysemy reinforces our first hypothesis on the importance for the translator to be able to separate the meaning of a verb in context from its semantics and polysemy.	

2. Verb aspects

Walker and Elsworth (2000, p. 27) assert that verb forms can use either the simple aspect or the continuous (progressive) aspect. Unlike French tenses, English tenses are always used in the simple or continuous aspect describing a punctual or progressive action. The list of tenses are approximately identical in both languages but the tenses function differently. The fact that English puts any tense in the continuous aspect evidences that the two languages have different orientations pertaining to the expression of tenses. Figure 2 below details the role of the simple and continuous aspects.

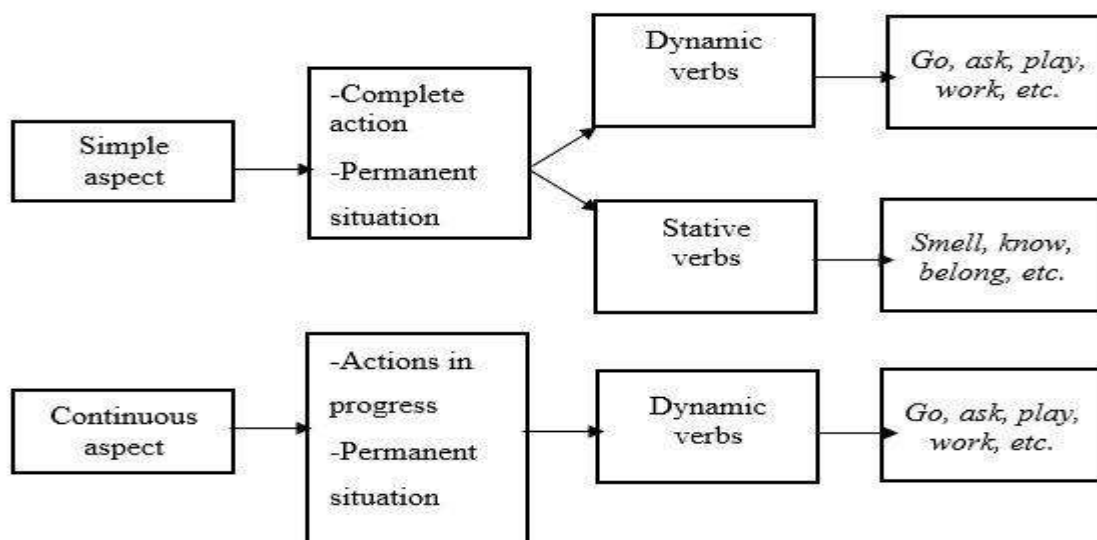


Figure 2: The two major English tense aspects

Unlike English, French does have a repertoire full of verb aspects. In the following lines, we will focus on fifteen relevant verb aspects backed with examples translated in English or French and commented.

2.1. Perfect aspect

Source text	Target text
J' ai lu ce livre.	I read this book.
Il avait déjà acheté du lait.	He had already bought milk.
The actions are complete. Nothing would relate to the past if the English verb were in the <i>present perfect</i> . The French “passé simple” has a perfect or punctual aspect.	

2.2. Imperfect or progressive aspect

Source text	Target text
Ils jouaient au football.	They were playing football.
Il est en train de se battre avec Salif.	He is fighting with Salif.
Both sentences declare the incompleteness of an action. The verb “jouaient” in the “imparfait de l’indicatif” and “est en train de se battre” in the “présent simple” describe actions in progress.	

2.3. Descriptive aspect

Source text	Target text
Le soldat s’était appuyé au char de combat.	The soldier was leaning on the tank.
Les enfants sont assis sur l’herbe.	The children are sitting on the grass.
Le pervers s’était penché sur la fille.	The pervert was bending on the girl.
Le vieillard est couché sur le lit de paille.	The old man is lying on the straw bed.
Les élèves s’étaient agenouillés .	The students were kneeling down.
The <i>present continuous</i> or <i>past continuous</i> used to describe the imperfect or progressive aspects are also used to describe a person, their position, attitude and the clothes they are wearing. To French expressions formed with “être” + “participe passé” correspond English progressive forms constructed with <i>be + verb + ing</i> .	

2.4. Punctual aspect

Source text	Target text
Il entra dans la chambre, sortit son pistolet, tira trois coups, s’essuya le visage et partit sur la pointe des pieds .	He entered the room, took out his handgun, shot three times, wiped his face and tiptoed away.
The action becomes a point one looks at retrospectively. The action ends as soon as it has started. In French, it is the “passé simple” that describes it best.	

2.5. Permanent aspect

Source text	Target text
Muslims pray at the mosque on Fridays.	Les musulmans prayed à la mosquée le vendredi.
Water boils at 100° Celsius.	L’eau boils à 100° Celsius.
The earth revolves around the sun.	La terre turns autour du soleil.
It envisages the action according to its time limits and not its duration. It is the case of general, scientific,	

religious or permanent truths.

2.6. Frequentative aspect

Source text	Target text
La prostituée allait à l'hôtel chaque lundi soir.	<i>On Monday evenings, the prostitute would go to the hotel.</i>
He will talk out of turn.	<i>Il faut toujours qu'il parle quand on ne lui demande rien.</i>
Il ne fait que nous interrompre.	<i>He keeps butting in.</i>
Le jus de mangue se boit frais.	<i>Mango juice is drunk cold.</i>
La soupe se mange chaude.	<i>Soup is eaten hot.</i>
The frequentative action is characterized by several words or phrases, including <i>will, would, used to, frequency adverbs (always, occasionally, rarely, often, etc.) and keep + verb + ing.</i>	

2.7. Repetitive aspect

Source text	Target text
They remade the film.	<i>Ils ont fait une nouvelle version du film.</i>
Faty n'a pas réussi à rendormir son bébé.	<i>Faty could not put the baby back to sleep.</i>
Il faut le réadapter à la vie sociale.	<i>He must be readapted to social life.</i>
Tafa a rebudu lait.	<i>Tafa drank milk again.</i>
Even if it is close to the frequentative aspect, the repetition of the action in the aspect context is also recognized by the English and French prefix "re" and the English adverb <i>again</i> . Therefore, the repetitive aspect refers to the renewal of the action unlike the frequentative aspect which puts emphasis on the renewal of the action obsessively.	

2.8. Insistent aspect

Source text	Target text
You dare!	<i>Ose un peu, pour voir!</i>
Do be careful!	<i>Surtout faites bien attention!</i>
He did answer .	<i>Il a répondu tout de même.</i>
I saw a cat, I did see a cat.	<i>J'ai vu un chat, j'ai bien vu un chat.</i>
It is the highlighted action expressed by the verb. If English mostly uses <i>do</i> to insist on the action, French resorts to diverse equivalents. The insistence can also concern other components of the sentence. For instance, "Mon frère, je l'ai vu" instead of "J'ai vu mon frère." This easy and simple way in French to use several equivalents for <i>do</i> as an auxiliary of insistence reminds of the French equivalents for the English <i>tag questions</i> . Even though, "n'est-ce pas" is more currently used, a variety of other words are used too (see Berland-Delépine, 2000).	

2.9. Durative aspect

Source text	Target text
Keep waiting.	<i>Continuez à attendre.</i>
Keep smiling.	<i>Gardez le sourire.</i>
Keep fighting.	<i>Ne baisse pas les bras.</i>
I will keep denouncing corruption.	<i>Je n'arrêterai pas de dénoncer la corruption.</i>
It shows that the action continues and insists on the absence of interruption. The English verb <i>to keep</i> is frequently used to express it.	

2.10. Inchoative aspect

Source text	Target text
Le bébé s'assoupissait sur le matelas.	<i>The baby was dozing off on the mattress.</i>
Beaucoup d'oiseaux s'envolèrent , effrayés.	<i>Lots of birds flew away as they were frightened.</i>
My father was growing old .	<i>Mon père was getting old.</i>
Tout à coup, il se mit à pleuvoir .	<i>All of a sudden, it started raining.</i>
Son visage devient de plus en plus renfrogné.	<i>His face is increasingly becoming sullen.</i>
It marks the beginning of the action in progress. In French, in addition to inchoative verbs, verbs such as "commencer à," "se mettre à" and "devenir" followed by an infinitive, prefixes "en", "a" and the suffix "ir" are indicative of the inchoative aspect.	

The table below shows a comparative stylistics between the two languages.

FRENCH		ENGLISH	
Verbs prefixed in "EN" or "A"	S'envoler	Addition of "AWAY"	Fly away
	S'énamourer de	and "OFF"	
	S'encanailler	Turn + Verb	Become enamored of

	S'enrichir S'appauvrir S'apaiser, etc.	Get + Verb Become + Verb Grow + Verb Go + Verb	Become vulgar Get rich Grow poorer
Verbs suffixed in "IR"	Affaiblir Rougir, etc.	Verb suffixed in "EN"	Weaken Redden
Commencer à Se mettre à Devenir + adjective	Commencer à dire, etc.	Start to + Verb Begin to + Verb	Start saying
Inceptive verbs	Rougir Blêmir Pâleur Eclorre Bleuir, etc.	Inceptive verbs Go + Verb Turn + Verb	Redden, Blush Flush Go red Go pale Go/Turn pale Hatch Turn blue

Table 6: Inchoative aspect markers in French and English

2.11. Terminative aspect

Source text	Target text
Eat up your meal before going.	Finis de manger avant de partir.
She has drunken up the juice.	Elle a bu tout le jus.
I waited until the firemen put out the fire.	J'attendis jusqu'à ce que les pompiers éteignissent le feu.
It indicates that the action is completely finished. English expresses this aspect with the postpositions <i>up</i> and <i>out</i> .	

2.12. Static aspect

Source text	Target text
The tower rises to 1000 meters.	La tour s'élève à 1000 mètres.
She nageait , mais s'arrêta net à l'apparition du caïman.	She was swimming but stopped short on seeing the cayman.
L'athlète courut 520 mètres.	The athlete ran 520 meters.
It characterizes motion verbs when their meaning infers a direction and an event when the movement is interrupted. This might seem irrelevant but its relevancy could influence a whole passage if used in a larger context.	

2.13. Vectorial or ambivalent aspect

The Vectorial aspect refers to verbs with one determined direction whereas the ambivalent aspect relates to verbs with a double direction. In order to have a better understanding of the Vectorial and ambivalent aspects out of the verb yoke, digressions can be made to examine the following examples of animal nouns before coming back to the topic with figurative examples with verbs:

Source text	Target text
Le mouton est délicieux.	Mutton is delicious.
Les moutons sont partis paître.	The sheep have gone to graze.
Les cochons ne sont pas dans la ferme.	The pigs are not in the farm.
Les musulmans ne mangent pas de cochon .	Muslims do not eat pork .
Le bœuf n'est pas aussi bon que le poulet.	Beef is not so good as chicken.
Les bœufs sont au champ.	The oxen are in the field.
Ils n'aiment pas le veau .	They do not like veal .
Ce veau est né le mois dernier.	This calf was born last month.

For a better understanding of these opposing aspects, the two figures below describe *topass* and "entrer".

“To pass” in English



X - - -

Stop! You **have passed** the bank.

*Arrête-toi ! Tu **as dépassé** la banque.*

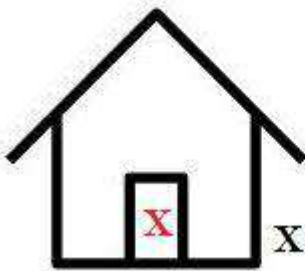
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They **passed** each other on the way.

*Ils **se sont croisés** en chemin.*

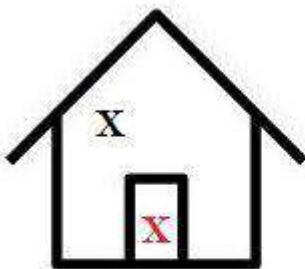
Figure 3: Vectorial or ambivalent aspect from English to French

“Entrer” in French



Faty est **entrée** dans la maison.

*Faty **went in** the house.*



Faty est **entrée** dans la maison.

*Faty **came in** the house.*

Figure 4: Vectorial or ambivalent aspect from French to English

2.14. Occasional aspect

Source text	Target text
The dancing girl looked at me.	<i>La fille qui dansait me regarda.</i>
The landing plane was an Airbus A380.	<i>L'avion qui atterrissait était un Airbus A380.</i>
I was standing in the middle of a pushing, hurrying crowd.	<i>Je me trouvai au milieu d'une foule de gens pressés qui me bousculaient.</i>

The brave soldier could not escape the incoming missile.	<i>Le brave soldat ne pouvait pas échapper au missile en approche.</i>
It intervenes when English uses a gerund translated in French by the relative pronoun “qui” followed by a verb in the “présent simple” or the “imparfait de l’indicatif”. The action described here has happened sporadically and randomly. It can also be translated by a <i>past participle</i> or otherwise.	

2.15. Intensive aspect

Source text	Target text
He splashed paint on the floor.	<i>Il a fait des éclaboussures de peinture par terre.</i>
Ngor ran away as he heard a snake hiss .	<i>Ngor fuit aussitôt qu’il entendit un serpent siffler.</i>
The police officer banged on the door.	<i>Le policier donna de grands coups dans la porte.</i>
The crowd roared when the player missed the penalty goal.	<i>La foule de supporters hurlèrent quand le joueur rata le penalty.</i>
I’ve smashed my watch.	<i>J’ai cassé ma montre.</i>
President Sallwas howled down by the crowd.	<i>Le président Salla été hué par la foule.</i>
Greg, ce n’est pas bien de tchiper .	<i>Tu-tut, Greg; that’s not a very nice thing to do.</i>
It recognizes the intensity a verb expresses and enables to make a difference between synonyms. This intensity often refers to verbs with the meaning of an onomatopoeia, a verb imitating the sound made by a being or a thing.	

III. DISCUSSIONS

Of all the documents we have consulted in the framework of this study, Vinay’s and Darbelnet’s *Stylistique comparée du français et de l’anglais*(1958) offers the most elaborate information on verb aspects. Most authors in the translation literature do not dissect the topic as deep as Vinay and Darbelnet (1958) but their contributions remain relevant and are worth being consulted. It is the case of Berland-Delépine (2000). His elaborate and well-documented grammar book commands authority. The same considerations involve Carel (2000) and Grellet (2009). Both authors propose translation exercises supported with convincing explanations and give credit to verb aspects in a separate lesson. As for Delmotte (2007), Guitard and Gaughan(1973), their work present interest as they propose commented translations for Francophone students laying emphasis on tenses and aspects. A verb is a semanteme, a unit of meanings, that involves and explains its inherent tense (Mellet, 1981). A verb itself becomes hybrid when it is conjugated, which makes its understanding challenging, let alone its translation.

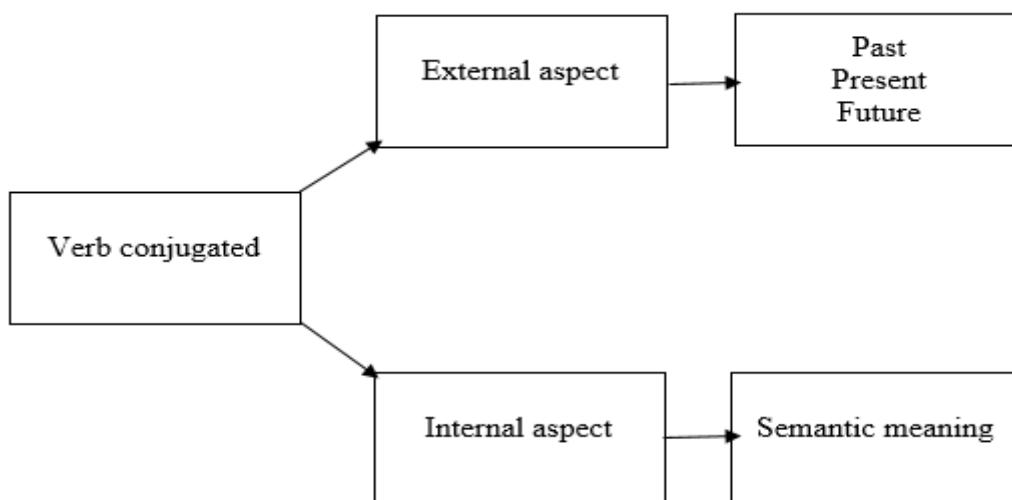


Figure 5: Hybrid characteristics of conjugated verbs

This is the case with some French pronominal (reflexive) verbs that are translated in English differently according to their voluntary meaning or actions that happened to their subjects. For example, “Il s’est noyé” can be translated as *He drowned himself* (suicide) or *He was drowned* (accident or crime) (Rafroidi, Plaisant, & Shott, 1986).

When learning languages, young primary students face the prototype aspect contrast between what are you doing (“Qu’est-ce que tu fais ?”) and what do you do (“Que faites-vous dans la vie ?”), which presents two types of present: *present continuous* and *present simple*. And yet, things become more complicated for students when

they must differentiate the *preterit* and the *present perfect* (Taous, 2017). The same complication occurs with modals like *would rather*, modal phrases and their functions.

Put the verbs in the right tenses and then translate them in French.
 A) Binta was sick. I **would rather** she _____ (**go**) to hospital and see a doctor.
 B) I **would rather** you _____ (**call**) the police. Do not beat him.

In sentence A, *would rather* expresses regret and plays the same role as the verb *to wish*. In sentence B, *would rather* expresses preference between two options. Grammatically analyzed, when *would rather* is followed by a second subject and the action is situated in the present, the verb should be in the *simple past modal*. But when *would rather* is followed by a second subject and the action is situated in the past, the verb should be in the *past perfect modal*. In sentence B, the past does not refer to a finished action but expresses a personal feeling. English grammar imposes the use of the past because the language functions in this way. But as for sentence A, the past refers to both a finished action and a personal feeling (Berland-Delépine, 2000).

In the two cases, the idea expressed by the modal phrase *would rather* prevails over the time when the action happened hence the precision of *simple past modal* and *past perfect modal*. The same rule applies in French, too. In French, the “*imparfait de l’indicatif*” loses its time value in a conditional system because it will be used to express a possible or impossible fact according to the contexts. In this case, the “*imparfait de l’indicatif*” will have a modal value (Delaunay & Laurent, 2012).

Correction	
A) Binta was sick. I would rather she had gone to hospital and see a doctor.	Binta était malade . Je préfèrerais qu’elle soit allée à l’hôpital consulter un médecin.
B) I would rather you called the police. Do not beat him.	Je préfèrerais que vous appeliez la police. Ne le frappez pas .

In both sentences French grammar wields authority. Unlike English whose use of the *simple past modal* and the *past perfect modal* sound weird, French shows unreal conditions with the “*subjonctif présent*” and the “*subjonctif imparfait*”.

In terms of pedagogy, students would learn more actively the notion of aspect when teachers focus on aspect contrasts, e.g. perfect/imperfect; simple/progressive, etc. (Taous, 2017). By pinpointing the morphological, syntactic and lexical obstacles, Okiwelu (1991) did an outstanding work on the French verb aspect translated in Igbo, Nigeria’s third national language after Hausa and Yoruba. Taous’s (2017) advocacy of contrasting verb aspects to foster students’ faster understanding supports the need to contrast verb tenses, including *present perfect (continuous)* / “*présent simple*” and “*imparfait*” / “*passé simple*” in “*version*” exercises. Let us analyze and comment the following examples:

Examples: “*Imparfait*” / “*passé simple*”

Source text	Target text
Dr. Mbaye drank beer from time to time and ruminated his murderous plan. As he never drove out of precaution after a couple of glasses, he decided to take a taxi. The weapon he hid in the left pocket of his black jacket looked like a big handkerchief used to wipe sweat after walking under a scorching sun from dawn to twilight. As soon as he arrived , he entered the room, took out his handgun, shot three times, wiped his face and tiptoed away . (My own production)	Dr. Mbaye buvait de la bière, de temps en temps et ruminait son plan meurtrier. Comme il ne conduisait jamais par précaution après avoir pris deux verres, il décida de prendre un taxi. L’arme qu’il cachait dans la poche gauche de sa veste noire ressemblait à un mouchoir servant à essuyer la sueur après avoir marché sous un soleil ardent, de l’aube au crépuscule. Aussitôt arrivé , Il entra dans la chambre, sortit son pistolet, tira trois coups, s’essuya le visage et partit sur la pointe des pieds .

In this narrative text, *drank*, *ruminated*, *drove*, *hid* and *looked* are translated in the “*imparfait de l’indicatif*” used to evoke the secondary circumstances, and to describe the character, the place and the objects. On another thing, the other verbs *decided*, *arrived*, *entered*, *took out*, *shot*, *wiped* and *tiptoed away* are translated in the “*passé simple*”. The “*passé simple*” has a pure past time value. When an event or a state of being are evoked in the past, there is no link with the present. In French, it is the right tense of the written narration (Delaunay & Laurent, 2012). The difficulties students face when asked to translate a narrative text from English to French arise if nearly all the verbs are in the *preterit*. Students’ knowledge gap of tenses often incites them to automatically translate the *preterit* into the “*passé composé*” which sounds simpler neglecting that verb aspects should determine the tenses.

Examples: *Present perfect (continuous)* / “*présent simple*”

Source text	Target text
Alimatu has been suffering from this nightmare since she was twenty. Her husband and she have known each other and become friends at middle high school.	Alimatu souffre de ce cauchemar depuis ses vingt ans. Elle et son mari se connaissent et sont devenus amis au collège.

Being Francophones, students are prone to confuse the compound tenses such as “passé composé” or “plus-que-parfait” conjugated with “être” or “avoir” and the *present perfect (continuous)* conjugated with *to have*. When doing so, the same issues with verb aspects developed above arise because they do not take time to understand the meaning of verbs before finding the right tenses in which to put them. The *present perfect continuous* refers to an activity which has been taking place in the recent period up to the present. The activity may have finished shortly before the moment of speaking or finish at the moment of speaking in the present. It also refers to an activity which started in the past and continues up to the present and possibly in the future (Walker & Elsworth, 2000). The “présent de l’indicatif” in which “souffrir” and “se connaître” are conjugated indicates that the action or event is happening at the moment of speaking, a habit, a permanent truth, the recent past or near future; but it also shows a distant past called the “présent de narration” (Delaunay & Laurent, 2012). English prefers using the preterit to relate past actions (Berland-Delépine, 2000, p. 115).

All the authors converge on the principal role verb aspects play in determining the translation of verbs in another language. However consulting several translation books on “thème” and “version” helped us decide on which verb aspects to work on and share with teachers but especially students who are in the center of the pedagogy. The figure below sums up all the fifteen verb aspects developed and exemplified on the above lines.

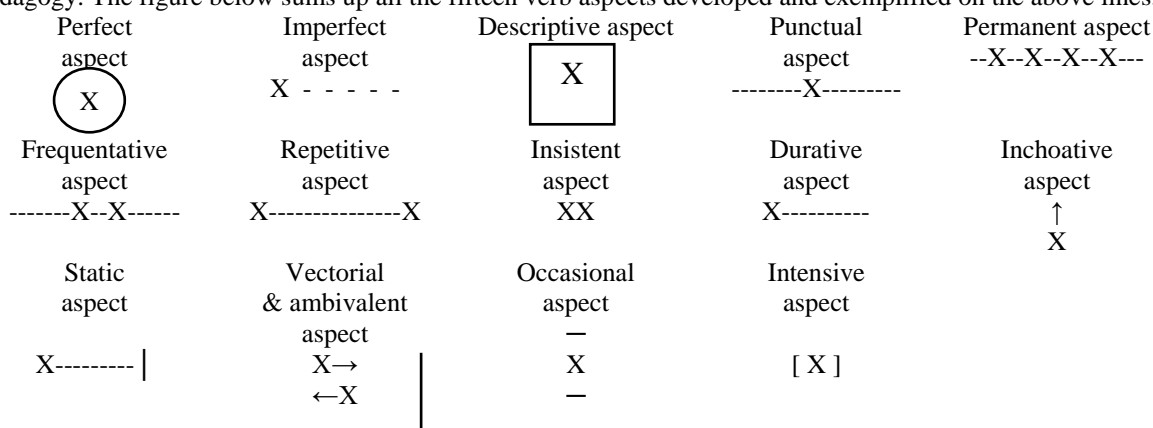


Figure 6: Figurative representations of the fifteen verb aspects

IV. CONCLUSION

Students generally tend to opt for the easiest way when they have to translate from one language to another. The translation exercise goes beyond the perfect command of languages as the practice consists in an exercise of understanding carried out beforehand and of re-expression carried out as a last step of a given text using translation techniques (Nimessi, 2014). For some students, using translation techniques such as borrowing, loan translation and literal translation seem to make life simpler. For others, using a bilingual dictionary solves the problem. But when it is wrongly used, the dictionary can be the first enemy because the right word can only be known after understanding the meaning (Guierre, 1959). The same principle applies to verb aspects. In order to be able to translate a sentence with the right tenses, it is fundamental to separate semantics and polysemy from meaning in context, and only then the equivalent of the right verb in the target language could be found and put in its right tense.

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