



A discussion on the phases, semantics and syntax of aspect in the translation of “Transformation structurelle, Intégration régionale et Mobilisation des Ressources”

Servais AKPACA^z
Université Polytechnique d'Abomey

Summary - This paper analyses the notion of aspect in the translation of a brief economic report publicised by a labour organisation called ITUC-Africa. Indeed, aspect plays an important role in translation. For example, it dictates the choice of tense(s) in the target language. In other words, the choice of a tense in a target language depends on the aspect described by the verb in the source language. Several examples are given to illustrate this finding. The paper also notes that aspect is not simply a grammatical notion because in Slavic languages like Russian, it is marked by mere prefixes. In addition, aspect involves not only the verb but also the action described by it. Action plays an important role in the study of aspect. Aspect structures the action described by the verb in phases. Indeed, the paper gives several examples of phases including the inceptive phase, the progressive phase, the phase of completion, the durative phase. Furthermore, aspect is presented as a category which has syntactic and semantic constituents. The view of aspect presented in this paper is broad and sheds light on the importance and scope of this notion in translation studies.

1. Introduction

The Greeks were the first to discuss aspect, as in the case of tense. The earliest Greek grammarians seemed to have been aware that alongside tense their language marked a second type of distinction, i.e. aspect.

The purpose of this paper is to present a broad view of aspect and to show its importance and scope in translation. Indeed, aspect is more than a grammatical category marked on the verb. It is marked by lexical items as well, as in the case of Slavic languages. The action described by the verb(s) is also critically important in the study of aspect because it unfolds and goes through various phases. The paper makes the point that in translation, the choice of a tense in a target language depends on the aspect described by the verb in the source language.

Aspect is presented in this paper as a category which has its own syntax and semantic constituents. Therefore, it plays a central role in translation and needs to be approached in a structural and systematic way.

2. Definition of the notion of Aspect

^z akpacasm@yahoo.fr

In Semantics, Saeed (2009: 129) notes that:

Aspect systems allow speakers to relate situations and time, but instead of fixing situations in time relative to the act of speaking, like tense does, aspect allows speakers to view an event in various ways: as complete or incomplete, as so short as to involve almost no time, as something stretched over a perceptible period, or as something repeated over time.

This definition echoes another definition given by the Academy Grammar in *Time and the Verb* as follows:

The category of aspect indicates that the action expressed by the verb is presented: (a) in its course, in process of its performance, consequently in its duration or repetition (imperfective); (b) as something restricted, concentrated at some limit of its performance, be it the moment of origin or beginning of the action or the moment of its completion or result (perfective) (Binnick, 1991: 155).

These two definitions present aspect as a system structured in phases (inception, progression and result). It can be short or durative; repetitive or semelfactive (i.e. occurring only once); complete or incomplete, etc. These definitions of aspect also echo the Stoics' view of aspect which is "a matter of completed or noncompleted action (or alternatively, or resultant state vs. no resultant state)."

The classic definition of aspect, often quoted in the literature, is that of Comrie: "Aspects are different ways of viewing the internal temporal constituency of a situation." This is based on the definition by Holt: "*Les manières diverses de concevoir l'écoulement du procès même*", which Comrie translates as "different ways of conceiving the flow of the process itself" (Binnick, 1991: 208). Friedrich's (1974:52) translation makes aspect "a way of conceiving the passage of action." Lyons (1977: 705) says that aspect "is extended to cover a variety of other oppositions, in so far as they are grammaticalised in the structure of particular languages - oppositions based upon the notions of duration, instantaneity, frequency, initiation, completion, etc." A very similar treatment could be read in Freed's (1979: 29) statement that aspect "deals with the internal temporal structuring, e.g. the relative duration, inception, and completion of verbal activities."

Bybee (1985: 21) says that "aspect... refers exclusively to the action or state described by the verb." This means that aspect is not only a dynamic process but it can also be stative. The notion of aspect has been the subject of considerable attention from its inception in the Slavic languages.

2.1. *Aspect in Slavic languages*

Binnick notes in *Time and the Verb - A Guide to Tense & Aspect* that as in the case of tense, aspect was first discussed by the Greeks. The earliest Greek grammarians seem to have been aware that alongside tense their language marked a second type of distinction, the one which we call aspect. *Varro* is

usually understood to have arrived at something like the modern conception of aspect: the Latin imperfect represents an action which is incomplete (*imperfectus*), while the perfect represents one which is complete (*perfectus*).

However ancient the concept, the term "aspect" is recent; according to the Oxford English Dictionary, it appeared in English for the first time in 1853. Imported early in the nineteenth century into the Western grammatical tradition from the study of Slavic grammar, it fully became part of the tradition only at the end of that century. (Binnick, 1991: 135)

Binnick explains that the term "aspect" is a loan translation from the Slavic (e.g. Russian *vid*). *Vid* is etymologically cognate with the words *view* and *vision*, while the etymological root of aspect is *spect-*, which means 'see, look (at), view' (cf. *prospect*, *inspect*, *spectacle*, etc.).

The meaning of the term "aspect" (*vid*) in the grammar of the Slavic languages is relatively clear and precise, since aspect in Slavic is overtly and morphologically marked. With few exceptions, all verbs in Russian (to take one Slavic language as an example) have two complete sets of tense forms, called respectively *imperfective* and *perfective* (*the perfective focuses on the end points of a situation while the imperfective does not, producing a distinction between complete and incomplete action*) (Saeed, 2009: 134-135). For example, 'she read' may be translated by either *čitala* (*imperfective*) or the nonsynonymous *pročitala* (*perfective*). The difference of meaning between the two aspects may be seen clearly in an example from Dostoevski:

Oh, rest assured that Columbus was happy not when he discovered (*otkril*, *perfective*) America, but while he was discovering (*otkry-val*, *imperfective*) it; rest assured that the greatest moment of his happiness was, perhaps, exactly three days before the discovery of the New World. (Rassudova, 1984: 14)

Unlike Slavic languages which have two aspects (*perfective* and *imperfective*), Greek has three aspects (*imperfect*, *pluperfect* and *aorist*). In Russian e.g. some verbs change aspect through stress shift alone, as in the case of the *imperfective srezat'* 'to cut', with stress on the second syllable; the corresponding *perfective* has stress on the first. These various devices are, however, the exception, and prefixation the rule.

Although there are a fairly large number of prefixes which may be used to form *perfectives*, Binnick (1991:137) explains that the most common are:

Na- : *pisat* 'to write' : *napisat'*
o- : *slepnut* 'to go blind' : *oslepnut'*
po- : *stroit* 'to build' : *postroit'*
pro- : *čitat* 'to read' : *pročitat'*
raz- : *delit* 'to divide' : *razdelit'*
s- : *delat* 'to do' : *sdelat'*

Although the commonly used perfectivising prefixes originally were meaningful elements, most of them corresponding to prepositions or adverbs (e.g. *na* 'on', *s'*'with'), today generally they are semantically empty, serving merely to mark aspect.

Aspect is important to Slavic grammar not only because the distinction between imperfective and perfective is an obligatorily marked category of the verb, but also because aspect interacts in important ways with tense. The grammaticisation of aspect is an important difference between Slavic and most other European languages.

2.2. *The grammaticisation of Aspect*

English has various devices for indicating aspectual distinctions of completion (e.g. the participles up and through as in *eat up*, *read through*), but their use is not obligatory, nor can such distinctions be marked simply by altering the form of the verb itself.

Although aspect is a sentential feature, in Indo-European languages, it is marked on verbs. The following examples illustrate this statement: '*Je viens de lire*' (I have just read) and '*Je suis en train de lire*' (I am in the course of reading) do not describe the same situation. Obviously the first statement describes the process as completed (I have just read), while the second describes it as on-going and incomplete (I am in the course of reading).

In *Living English Structure*, Allen (1974: 75) says under the heading *Aspect of General Time* that:

English has three main time divisions, Past, Present and Future, expressed by the simple tenses. They should be shown as forming three main blocks of tenses, each being subdivided so as to express other aspects within its general time.

It emerges from this quotation that within each time division in English, there are tenses which are subdivided to express aspects.

Unlike aspect which is a grammatical category in Western European languages, *Aktionsarten* as well as Aristotelian aspect are lexical, pertaining to classes of verbs or larger expressions.

2.3. *Aktionsarten or Kinds of Aspect*

Writing in 1940, Goedsche observed that aspect occasioned great confusion when it entered the Western grammatical tradition. The concept was not firmly established until the work of Jakobson (1932). N. Greč in his '*Practical Russian Grammar* (1827, second ed., 1834) said that:

The times are limited in nature to three: the present, past, and future, but in grammatical tenses, that is in the forms of language by which times are expressed, there can be expressed accessory circumstances by which are more closely defined the signification and the extent of the action... the forms serving to express these circumstances of the action are called aspects. (Binnick, 1991: 140)

L. Boldyrev in *Rassuzdenie o glagolax* (Reflection on verbs) in 1812 started a tradition by distinguishing five semantic classes of verbs:

- Inchoatives: *belet'* 'pale, blanche, whiten, fade'
- Indeterminate duratives : *delat'* 'do'
- Frequentatives: *delyva'* 'do (repeatedly)'
- Semelfactives: *dermut'* 'pull (once)'
- Unitary completives: *scrubit'* 'cut down (in one action).' (Binnick, 1991, 140)

Golian gave two examples showing that aspect is a lexical phenomenon. Indeed, he added the terminative (or effective) aspect, e.g. *discrediter* 'discredit' as opposed to the inchoative *accrediter* 'accredit'. As a result, it is possible to say that words do express aspect.

Steitberg is interested in the meanings which derive from verbs in particular contexts. In languages lacking explicitly iterative forms, verbs may either be inherently iterative (chatter) or may be given iterativity by a tense form (be hitting) or some contextual feature (all day he fell asleep).

Some Russian prefixes mark aspect:

- Inceptive: *zaplakat*, 'to burst into tears'
- Attenuative: *poyest'*, 'to have something to eat'
- Terminative: *dagoreli*, 'have burned out'
- Resultative: *dobudils' a*, 'succeeded in walking'
- Durative: *pospal*, 'had a (little) sleep'
- Intermittent action: *pokašlival* 'kept on coughing'
- Semelfactive: *stuknut'*, 'to knock once' (Forsyth, 1970: 20ff)

In *Bon Usage* by Maurice Grevisse, the definition of aspect introduces the important notion of "phase" or "stage":

The aspect of the verb is the character of the action considered in its development, the particular angle under which the progress (the "process") of that action is viewed, the indication of the stage at which this "process" is in its progress; it is, in sum, the way in which the action is situated in the duration or the parts of the duration." (Golian, 1979: 64f.)

In this definition, the notion of stage (of the action) sheds new light on the notion of aspect. Every stage of an action marks an aspect. Therefore, the various stages such as the inception, the continuation, the termination, the culmination, etc., of an action mark different aspects of the same.

Apart from this view of aspect which includes several kinds and stages, there is also the Aristotelian aspect which is presented below.

2.4. Aristotelian Aspect

Aristotelian aspect has to do with the structure of events. The Aristotelian categorisation is not identical either with aspect or the Aktionsarten.

Aspect markers serve to distinguish such things as whether the beginning, middle or end of an event is being referred to, whether the event is a single one or a repeated one, and whether the event is completed or possibly left incomplete." (Dowty, 1979: 52)

The Aristotelian categories are like the Aktionsarten in that they are purely lexical and nongrammatical, and also unsystematic. The question is how the aspects, Aktionsarten, and Aristotelian classes interrelate. Are they three facets of one phenomenon, three linguistic means for expressing the same sort of thing? Or do they represent three different phenomena which nonetheless somehow interrelate?

Of the attempts at a definitive Aristotelian classification, Vendler distinguishes four categories:

Activities

Run
Walk
Swim
Push a cart
Drive a car

Accomplishments

run a mile
walk to school
paint a picture
grow up
recover from illness

Achievements

Recognise
Find
Win the race
Stop
Be born/die

States

desire
want
love
hate
know/believe (Vendler, 1957, 1967: 97ff.)

On the basis of the behaviour of verbs with the aspectual verbs, Freed is led to conclude that there is a fifth Aristotelian category, which she calls the "series" and identifies as a "special type of state." Series, unlike states, allow keep VERB-ing:

- Series: John kept being ill.
- State: John was ill.

To understand the Aristotelian categories, we require an ontology, a set of models of situations, states of affairs, events, courses of events. To this end, a number of scholars have attempted a classificatory taxonomy of situations.

Two important notions have emerged from the descriptions of aspect in the various definitions, namely the notion of phase and that of structure. At this stage it is possible to talk about the phasic structure of an action or a situation.

The notion of aspect as involving phases or stages of the action is present in the paper under review.

3. Various aspects found in the paper

3.1. Completion

Allen (1974: 77) indicates that:

The three Perfect tenses (present, past and future) express the completion or ‘perfection’ of an action by a given time; not an act done AT a given time. The Present Perfect therefore expresses the completion of an action by now.

The following examples of *completion* have been found in the English translation of the report:

1st example:

<p>The various policies implemented in Africa after independence till today <u>have</u> only <u>contributed</u> to keep the continent in a situation of dependence and marginalisation vis-à-vis other continents.</p>	<p>Les différentes politiques mises en œuvre en Afrique au lendemain des indépendances jusqu’à nos jours n’ont contribué qu’à maintenir le continent dans une situation de dépendance et de marginalisation vis-à-vis des autres continents.</p>
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This is an example of literal translation. Going by Allen’s definition of the aspect expressed by the present perfect, the action described by the verb ‘have contributed’ is completed by now. The present perfect shares this aspect of ‘completion’ with the *passé composé* (*ont contribué*) which is also used to express the completion of an action by now. The use of the present perfect is proper because the action described by the verb started at the time of independence and has continued till now. It would not be proper to use the simple past to translate the *passé composé* because the simple past describes most of the time an action which has no connection with the present.

2nd example of completion :

<p>This paradigm is the cause of the African political economy which <u>has</u> <u>confined</u> the former colonies, which have now become states, into an economic system based on the production of cheap mineral and agricultural resources meant for the industries of the colonial masters in a liberal system.</p>	<p>Ce modèle est à l’origine de l’économie politique africaine qui a confiné les colonies aujourd’hui Etats dans un système économique basé sur la production de ressources minérales et agricoles à bon marché, destinées aux industries des puissances colonisatrices dans un système libéral.</p>
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As discussed in the previous example, 'completion' is a phase or a stage of the action described by the verb 'has confined' (in this instance). It is worth mentioning that 'completion' as an aspect is often expressed by the present perfect.

Apart from this aspect of completion, another aspect found in the paper is the durative aspect.

3.2. *Durative*

1st example:

In fact, between 2009 and 2013, economic growth in Africa more than <u>doubled</u> , going from about 2.7% in 2009 to over 5.5% in 2013.	En effet, entre 2009 et 2013, la croissance économique a plus que doublé en Afrique, passant d'environ 2,7% en 2009 à plus de 5,5% en 2013.
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The English sentence expresses the durative aspect. It is understandably so because the action described by the verb 'doubled' is stretched over a relatively long period of time (i.e. between 2009 and 2013). It is important to note that the past tense (i.e. the tense of the verb) is the translation of the passé composé '*a doublé*' which is normally associated with the aspect of completion. In this example, the English translation has led to a change of tense and aspect. The past tense is used instead of the *passé composé*.

2nd example:

The issue of regional integration is central in the development strategies recommended in the continent insofar as the regional agenda <u>has been there for quite some time</u> .	La question de l'intégration régionale est l'axe central des stratégies de développement préconisées au niveau du continent dans la mesure où l'idéal régional ne date pas d'aujourd'hui.
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In this example, the durative aspect is expressed by the syntagm '*has been there for quite some time*'. In this syntagm, there is a conflation of present perfect and the aspectual markers 'for quite some time'. Aspect in this particular case is not simply a grammatical phenomenon because it also involves lexical items. The durative aspect has led to a change of tense (from the *présent simple* in French to the present perfect). It is not possible to say 'the regional agenda is there for quite some time.' The use of the simple present in this context is simply not possible.

3rd example:

With the CAADP, significant progress <u>has been made in the past few years</u> in some countries but others are struggling to draw up and implement this programme.	Avec le PDDAA, des progrès notables ont été réalisés ces dernières années au niveau de certains pays, mais d'autres peinent à élaborer et réaliser ce programme.
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This is another example of durative aspect. The action described by the verb has lasted quite a few years.

4th example:

ILO statistics also show that since 2005, more than 77% of the working population in sub-Saharan Africa <u>has been doing</u> vulnerable jobs, and the projections for the year 2018 are not good, with women being the most affected.	Les statistiques du BIT indiquent que depuis 2005, plus de 77% de la population active en Afrique subsaharienne sont dans des emplois vulnérables et les projections pour l'année 2018 ne sont pas bonnes, les femmes étant les plus touchées.
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The durative aspect in this case is expressed by the tense of the verb ‘has been doing’, which implies a notion of duration, as well as by ‘since’ which marks the beginning and the continuation of the process until now.

It is clear that aspect under this heading (durative aspect) is generated by the past tense as well as by the present perfect and the present perfect continuous. This is an indication that aspect is a category that is distinct from tense. The choice of the right tense depends on aspectual elements. You can choose the tense of a sentence but you cannot choose its aspect. The aspect of a sentence can only be inferred.

When aspect is not properly inferred, the choice of the tense becomes confusing. Let us change the tense of the first example given under this heading to justify this point. “In fact, between 2009 and 2013, economic growth in Africa **was** more than **doubling**, going from about 2.7% in 2009 to over 5.5% in 2013.” The aspect expressed by the verb ‘was doubling’ is the progressive aspect, which is awkward in this context.

As noted earlier, the aspect of a sentence can only be inferred. Let us see whether the aspect of the sentence below can be inferred.

3.3. *Progressive aspect*

1st example:

More than fifty years after independence, Africa <u>has been looking</u>	Plus de cinquante ans après les indépendances, l'Afrique est à la
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for a suitable model to drive effectively economic growth and social progress, the basis of the development of every country.	recherche d'un modèle approprié pour impulser une réelle croissance économique et le progrès social, bases du développement de tout pays.
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The progressive aspect is justified because the action expressed by the verb '*has been looking for*' is on-going. It would be wrong to use the simple present in this case. This confirms a previous statement that when aspect is not properly inferred, choosing the tense becomes confusing.

It needs to be pointed out that the progressive aspect is expressed in French by lexical items such as '*est à la recherche de...*' This confirms a previous statement that aspect is not only marked by the verb.

There are other examples of progressive aspect in the paper. In the following example, the progressive aspect is expressed by the tense of the verb 'to experience'. The phase of the action described by the verb is on-going.

2nd example:

The continent <u>is also experiencing</u> a shortage of infrastructures in the energy as well as transport and communication sectors, which can contribute to the expansion of activities in the various sectors and to the creation of decent and productive work that can generate substantial incomes.	Le continent connaît également un déficit d'infrastructures aussi bien énergétiques que de transport et de communication capables de contribuer à l'expansion des activités dans les différents secteurs et à la création d'emplois décents, productifs et générateurs de revenus substantiels.
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While the progressive aspect is expressed by grammatical items in this example, in the following example, it is expressed not only by grammatical items but also by lexical items.

3rd example:

The context of integration in Africa is marked by a two-fold phenomenon, i.e. the process of globalisation in which other continents <u>are emerging</u> and the <u>process of gradual marginalisation</u> of the continent.	Le contexte de l'intégration en Afrique est marqué par un double phénomène, le processus de mondialisation dans lequel d'autres continents émergent et le processus de marginalisation progressive du continent.
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The progressive aspect is expressed by the phase of the action expressed by the verb ‘are emerging’. The lexical items ‘process of gradual marginalisation’ also express the progressive aspect.

As indicated earlier, aspect structures the action described by the verb in phases. So far mention has made of the phases such as completion, durative, progressive. The next phase that is going to be discussed is the inceptive.

3.4. *Inceptive aspect*

It was for this ultimate goal that the African Mining Vision (AMV) <u>was initiated</u> in 2008.	C’est pour ce but ultime que la Vision africaine des mines a été initiée en 2008.
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The inceptive aspect is justified by two items, namely a lexical item (*i.e. initiate*) and a time factor (given that 2008 marked the beginning of the African Mining Vision).

Another example of aspect found in the paper is the resultative aspect.

3.5. *Resultative aspect*

Nevertheless, integration seems to be a solution that <u>will hopefully propel</u> Africa into the global economy and enable it to strengthen its position in international trade and ensure effective development of African states in the interest of their people.	Néanmoins, l’intégration apparaît toujours comme une solution porteuse d’espoir pour propulser l’Afrique dans l’économie globalisée, lui permettre de renforcer sa position sur le plan des échanges internationaux et assurer le développement réel des Etats africains dans l’intérêt de leurs populations.
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The resultative aspect is expressed by the syntagm ‘will hopefully propel’. Aspect in this case is marked by the verb and by a lexical item (*i.e. the adverb ‘hopefully’*). The point this sentence is making is that integration will result in propelling Africa into the global economy.

This example shows that aspect can involve various stages. Let us examine an example of iterative aspect.

3.6. *Iterative aspect*

The integration agenda was <u>reiterated</u> in the Lagos Plan, in NEPAD and at the time of the creation of the African Union which replaced the OAU.	Les idéaux de l’intégration ont été réaffirmés à travers le Plan de Lagos, le Nepad et lors de la création de l’Union Africaine qui a remplacé
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l'OUA.

The iterative aspect is expressed by a lexical item ('reiterate') and by the repetition of the action because the integration agenda was expressed at two levels, i.e. in the Lagos Plan and at the time of the creation of the African Union. Aspect can also be habitual.

3.7. *Habitual aspect*

Why do thousands of young Africans in search of employment opportunities and better life <u>migrate every day</u> , putting down their lives sometimes?	Comment expliquer le fait que chaque jour, des millions de jeunes Africains, en quête d'opportunités d'emploi et de bien-être, empruntent le chemin de l'immigration parfois au risque de leur vie ?
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In English, habitual aspect is expressed by the simple present. The tense of the verb 'migrate' is dictated by the aspectual marker 'every day'. It would not be grammatically correct to use the present continuous and say for example 'Why do thousands of young Africans in search of employment opportunities and better life **are migrating** every day?' However, in the absence of the aspectual marker 'every day', it would be quite correct to use the present continuous. At this stage, it is correct to say that aspect influences the tense of the verb.

The last example of aspect that is going to be given to show that aspect may entail several phases is the stative aspect. Indeed, some verbs express a state. The following is an example of stative aspect.

3.8. *Stative aspect*

The issue of regional integration <u>is</u> central in the development strategies recommended in the continent...	La question de l'intégration régionale est au centre des stratégies de développement recommandées au niveau du continent...
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The stative aspect is expressed by 'is' which is a state verb. This example is interesting in the sense that it includes no action.

So far several stages of aspect have been discussed, namely inceptive aspect, progressive aspect, completion, durative aspect, resultative aspect, habitual aspect, etc.

This chapter has dealt with various kinds of aspect found in the paper. In other words, it has dealt with the notion of aspect through several phases. Aspect is not only marked by phases but it is also expressed through syntactic and semantic constituents.

4. Syntactic and semantic constituents of Aspect

4.1. Syntactic constituents of aspect

Syntax deals with the way words are combined in a sentence to make sense. When words are not properly combined, they make no sense or make many different senses. It is correct to write ‘Peter is going to the market with his daughter’ but it is not correct to write ‘Peter with his daughter the market is going to.’ Sometimes when translation softwares are used, they produce strange sentences like the latter. Let us examine another example which shows that the same sentence can produce different meanings when the words that it is made up of are combined in different ways. What do we understand when our mobile phone displays these two messages? ‘John calling’ and ‘calling John.’ When we read ‘John calling’, we know that John is calling us, however when we read ‘calling John’, we know that our mobile phone is implementing the instructions given to it.

Now let us examine a specific example in which aspect is expressed through a particular syntax.

As a matter of fact, these policies and strategies <u>have only emphasised</u> to some extent the partitioning of the continent at the Berlin Conference with the view of siphoning its resources.	En effet, ces différentes politiques et stratégies <u>n’ont fait qu’accentuer</u> dans une certaine mesure la balkanisation du continent lors de la Conférence de Berlin et ceci dans l’optique de siphonner ses ressources.
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The English version has introduced the aspectual marker ‘only’ which is not appearing in the French version. The aspect of completion is expressed in both versions but the items which combine to express it are different. The form of the main verb is also different because in the English version, the present perfect ‘have emphasised’ is used, whereas in the French version the main verb ‘accentuer’ is in the infinitive. The aspect of completion in French is expressed through the intermediacy of another verb ‘ont fait’. It is clear that in English, the form of the main verb and the aspectual marker express the aspect of completion whereas in French, the main verb does not express the aspect of completion. In conclusion, the syntax of aspect in this particular example is different from French to English. That is what Binnick (1991: 148) explains in the

following quotation: “The difficulty here is that neither the semantics nor the morphology and syntax of aspect seem to transport well from one language to another.”

The next sentence is another example of aspect whose translation generates a different syntax in the English language:

Africa <u>is finding</u> it very difficult to develop, and the gap between this continent and other regions of the planet <u>is becoming wider and wider</u> .	L’Afrique a beaucoup de mal à se développer et l’écart continue davantage de se creuser entre le continent et les autres régions de la planète.
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In this sentence, the progressive aspect is expressed through the syntagm ...‘*is becoming wider and wider*.’ The French version has a different syntax: ...‘*continue davantage de se creuser*.’ The syntax of aspect in French is made up of two verbs (*continue de se creuser*) and an adverb (*davantage*) which serves as an aspectual marker, while the syntax of the English sentence is made up of the verb (in the present continuous) and an adjective (*wider and wider*) which also expresses the progressive aspect. In both cases, the progressive aspect is expressed not only by the tense of the verbs but also by lexical items.

There are more examples in the paper, which illustrate the notion of syntax of aspect however the next section is going to focus on semantic constituents of aspect.

4.2. *Semantic constituents of aspect*

Semantic constituents refer to elements of aspect, which carry meaning. In the following example, a state verb is translated into English by an action verb:

The continent <u>is</u> also <u>experiencing</u> a shortage of infrastructures in the energy as well as transport and communication sectors ...	Le continent connaît également un déficit d’infrastructures aussi bien dans le domaine énergétique que dans le domaine du transport et de la communication ...
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In this example, the verb ‘*connaître*’ is translated into English by the verb ‘to experience’ which is in the present continuous. How can this be justified? *Connaître* is a state verb, whereas ‘to experience’ is an action verb. The translation has introduced two things: (1) the French verb *connaître* in this context does not imply a cognitive process. It simply presents a fact or a situation of lack of infrastructures. This justifies the use of the verb to experience which does not imply a cognitive process either. It would be wrong

to say that the continent ‘*knows*’ a shortage of infrastructures. (2) The verb ‘to experience’ is in the present continuous because this tense presents the lack of infrastructures as an on-going situation. The use of the present continuous in this case accounts for the currency of the situation.

In the following example, the choice of the tense is also influenced by aspectual elements.

This agenda was promoted by the first African leaders, the proponents of pan-Africanism before and at the time of independence.	Cet idéal a été promu par les premiers leaders africains, les chantres du panafricanisme avant et au moment des indépendances.
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The *passé composé* is translated by the simple past because the present perfect, which is closer in meaning to the *passé composé*, cannot be used to refer to a past event which has no connection with the present. Only a past tense can be used to describe the time being referred to in this sentence. Having said that, not any past tense would do. It may not even be acceptable to use the past continuous tense instead of the simple past. Imagine a sentence like the following: ‘This agenda was being promoted by the first African leaders, the proponents of pan-Africanism before and at the time of independence.’ The use of the simple past in this case seems to be more natural. The choice of this tense is dictated by the inherent aspect of the situation described here. This example also confirms that neither the syntax nor the semantics of aspect transport well from one language to another one.

5. Conclusion

This paper has discussed the concept of aspect in the translation of a brief economic report. It begins with the observation that aspect was first discovered by the Greeks. In Slavic languages (e.g. Russian), aspect is a lexical item which is used as a prefix. When it entered the Western grammatical tradition in the 19th century, it became a grammatical category marked on the verb. The concept was the subject of further explorations and its scope became wider. As a result, aspect also focuses on various phases of the action described by the verb. Aristotle also contributed to widen the scope of the notion of aspect through his ontology of situations.

The paper has given several examples of aspect, including inceptive, progressive, resultative, habitual aspects.

The semantics and syntax of aspect have also been discussed in this paper which has given some examples to illustrate the link between aspect and these linguistic concepts.

It is clear that aspect is an important linguistic category which plays a major role in translation. Aspectual elements determine the choice of the tense of a sentence in the target language. There is no perfect fit between the syntax and the semantics of aspect in two languages.

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