



Scan to know paper details and
author's profile

Validation of the Concept of Structural Semantics in the Field of Translation Studies

Servais Martial Alpaca

Université d'Abomey-Calavi

ABSTRACT

This paper aims to illustrate and validate the concept of structural semantics in translation studies. Indeed, in linguistic description, semantics is not autonomous. It is an outcome of the combination of lexical items in a particular manner. It hinges on syntax. Therefore, syntax and semantics are inseparable, especially in a contrastive linguistic perspective. The methodology is both theoretical and analytical. Authors like Chomsky, Halliday, Nida, etc., are cited to support the arguments brought forward. As a result, syntax influences semantics in many ways. The function of each lexical item in a sentence influences the meaning of the sentence. The meaning of a particular word can change depending on its syntactic environment. Poor sentence structuring in translation entails conflicting statements compared to the source language text. An analysis of surface structure and deep structure in a source language enables translators to properly restructure sentences in a target language to produce a meaning that is similar to the source language meaning.

Keywords: structural semantics, translation studies, syntax, source language, target language.

Classification: FOR CODE: 200323

Language: English



London
Journals Press

LJP Copyright ID: 573333
Print ISSN: 2515-5784
Online ISSN: 2515-5792

London Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Sciences

Volume 22 | Issue 2 | Compilation 1.0



Validation of the Concept of Structural Semantics in the Field of Translation Studies

Servais Martial Alpaca

ABSTRACT

This paper aims to illustrate and validate the concept of structural semantics in translation studies. Indeed, in linguistic description, semantics is not autonomous. It is an outcome of the combination of lexical items in a particular manner. It hinges on syntax. Therefore, syntax and semantics are inseparable, especially in a contrastive linguistic perspective. The methodology is both theoretical and analytical. Authors like Chomsky, Halliday, Nida, etc., are cited to support the arguments brought forward. As a result, syntax influences semantics in many ways. The function of each lexical item in a sentence influences the meaning of the sentence. The meaning of a particular word can change depending on its syntactic environment. Poor sentence structuring in translation entails conflicting statements compared to the source language text. An analysis of surface structure and deep structure in a source language enables translators to properly restructure sentences in a target language to produce a meaning that is similar to the source language meaning.

Keywords: structural semantics, translation studies, syntax, source language, target language.

Author: Department of English Faculty of Arts and Communication: FLLAC Université d'Abomey-Calavi (UAC) Republic of Benin.

RÉSUMÉ

L'objectif du présent article est d'illustrer et de valider le concept de sémantique structurale en traductologie. En effet, dans la description linguistique, la sémantique n'est pas autonome. Elle est le résultat de la combinaison d'éléments lexicaux d'une manière particulière. Elle dépend

de la syntaxe. Par conséquent, la syntaxe et la sémantique sont inséparables, en particulier dans une perspective de linguistique contrastive. La méthodologie est à la fois théorique et analytique. Les auteurs tels que Chomsky, Halliday, Nida, etc., sont cités pour appuyer les arguments développés. En conséquence, la syntaxe influence la sémantique de plusieurs façons. La fonction de chaque item lexical dans une phrase influence le sens de la phrase. Le sens d'un mot particulier peut changer en fonction de son environnement syntaxique. Une mauvaise structuration des phrases en traduction implique des déclarations contradictoires par rapport au texte de la langue source. Une analyse de la surface structure et de la deep structure dans une langue source permet aux traducteurs de restructurer correctement les phrases dans une langue cible pour produire un sens similaire à celui de la langue source.

Mots-clés: sémantique structurale, traductologie, syntaxe, langue source, langue cible

I. INTRODUCTION

I begin this discussion of the concept of Structural Semantics in Translation Studies by quoting Saussure who states that: « *La grammaire étudie la langue en tant que système de moyens d'expression ; qui dit grammatical dit synchronique et significatif...* » (2005, p. 144). This means that any grammatical statement is supposed to be synchronic and meaningful.

This statement is an important point in this paper which attempts to analyse the points of connection between syntax and semantics in a contrastive linguistics perspective. However, the contrastive perspective will be dealt with after a

few more remarks on syntax and semantics in English linguistics.

Indeed, in *Syntax and Semantics Lexical Functional Grammar*, Dalrymple M. (2001) evokes the concept of compositionality which notes that there is a close relation between the rules of syntax and the rules of semantics.

An adequate treatment of linguistic meaning requires, then, a theory of the meanings of the most basic units of a sentence, together with a theory of how these meanings are put together. A commonly accepted version of the Principle of Compositionality is the rule-to-rule hypothesis, which states that "a very close relation is supposed to exist between the rules of the syntax and the rules of the semantics" (Bach 1989). This means that each syntactic rule for combining syntactic units to form a larger syntactic unit corresponds to a semantic rule that tells how to put the meanings of those units together to form the meaning of the larger unit. (2001, pp. 217-218).

The issue raised in this quotation is interesting because it not only underlines the relation between syntax and semantics but it also calls for the need to come up with a theory of meaning bringing together syntactic rules and semantic rules.

To start this discussion in the perspective of contrastive linguistics, there is a need to mention the ideas developed by Nida in *The Theory and Practise of Translation* (1982) and in *Towards a science of translation* (1964). Actually, Nida's theory of structure is based on several key concepts including Surface Structure, Deep Structure, Transforms, Kernels, Restructuring, Formal Correspondence, Dynamic Equivalence. Some of the main ideas developed by this American Bible translator suggest that to produce meaning in a target language, the translator needs to restructure the sentence. In other words, the structure of a source language text should not be transferred unchanged to the target language because there is a risk of confusion and of inappropriate combination of words.

In the light of the points made so far, this paper reviews some of the theories relating to the interface between syntax and semantics. Furthermore, it analyses some translated sentences and shows the lack of formal correspondence between the English version and the French version.

At this stage, it is useful to indicate that in Nida's and Catford's theories, formal correspondence means correspondence of forms or structure. In living English structure, there are five ranks, namely sentence, clause, group/phrase, word and morphemes. There is formal correspondence between a translation and a source language text when a clause is translated by a clause; a phrase is translated by a phrase; a word is translated by a word, and so on. At times, a clause can be translated by a group, which is a lower rank. A group can also be translated by a word. In this case, Catford says that there is a rank shift.

Finally, the paper draws important conclusions to justify the idea that syntax is both a meaning carrier and a meaning trigger in a contrastive linguistic perspective.

II. METHODOLOGY AND THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Two approaches are used to conduct this research, namely the theoretical approach and the analytical approach.

1.1 Theoretical Approach and Theoretical Background

This approach reviews some of the theories of prominent authors who have discussed the interface between syntax and semantics.

1.1.1 What is syntax?

Halliday has given the following definition:

"There is another reason for using the term 'syntax'. This word suggests proceeding in a particular direction, such that a language is interpreted as a system of forms, to which meanings are then attached. In the history of western linguistics, from its beginning in ancient Greece, this was the direction that was taken: first

the forms of words were studied (morphology); then in order to explain the forms of words, grammarians explored the forms of sentences (syntax); and once the forms had been established, the question was then posed: “what do these forms mean?” In a functional grammar, on the other hand, the direction is reversed. A language is interpreted as a system of meanings, accompanied by forms through which the meanings can be realized. The question is rather: “How are these meanings expressed?” (1985, p.).

This definition seems to be insufficient because syntax is simply defined as “the forms of sentences”. Nothing is said about the grammatical functions of words in sentences. In another definition of syntax, Saussure insists on the grammatical function of words.

La morphologie traite des diverses catégories de mots (verbes, noms, adjectifs, pronoms, etc.) et des différentes formes de la flexion (conjugaison, déclinaison). Pour séparer cette étude de la syntaxe, on allègue que cette dernière, a pour objet les fonctions attachées aux unités linguistiques tandis que la morphologie n’envisage que leur forme. [...] La syntaxe renseigne sur l’emploi de ces deux formes. (Saussure, 2005, p. 144).

In this quotation, Saussure explains that the object of syntax is to study the functions of linguistic units whereas morphology only studies their form. As a consequence, syntax not only deals with the combination of words in a sentence but it also analyses their functions.

1.1.2 The notion of syntagm

Another salient point in the description of syntax by Saussure is the way he has explained the notion of syntagm:

[...] La notion de syntagme s’applique non seulement aux mots, mais aux groupes de mots, aux unités complexes de toute dimension et de toute espèce (mots composés, dérivés, membres de phrase, phrases entières). Il ne suffit pas de considérer le rapport qui unit les diverses parties d’un syntagme entre elles (par exemple contre et tous dans contre tous, contre et maître dans contremaître) ; il faut tenir compte aussi de celui

qui relie le tout à ses parties (par exemple contre tous opposé d’une part à contre, de l’autre à tous, ou contremaître opposé à contre et à maître). (op. cit. 133).

A syntagm is made up of words as well as of groups of words, complex units including compound words, portions of sentences, whole sentences, etc. It is not enough to take into consideration the link between the various parts of a syntagm; it is equally important to take into account the link between the whole syntagm and its various parts.

A syntagm suggests the idea of an orderly succession of definite elements or items. Of paramount importance is the idea of order. That is what Saussure suggests in the following statement:

Tandis qu’un syntagme appelle tout de suite l’idée d’un ordre de succession et d’un nombre déterminé d’éléments, les termes d’une famille associative ne se présentent ni en nombre défini, ni dans un ordre déterminé. (Ibid, p. 135).

To sum up, the structuralist view of syntagm encompasses the grammatical functions of words, groups of words, etc., in a sentence as well as their orderly arrangement. In addition, the relations between the various parts of a syntagm and the relation between a whole syntagm and its various parts are equally important.

1.1.3 The notion of genitive in Latin

In an effort to illustrate the point made by Saussure on the importance of the functions of words in a syntagm, an example is given hereafter. In the following syntagm, the knowledge of the function of each word is important to understand the meaning of the syntagm: « *La critique de Skinner de Chomsky* » which can be translated either as “Chomsky’s criticism of Skinner” or “Skinner’s criticism of Chomsky”.

In the first translation, i.e. “*Chomsky’s criticism of Skinner*”, Skinner is the object, while Chomsky is the agent/subject; in the second translation, “*Skinner’s criticism of Chomsky*”, Skinner is the agent/subject, while Chomsky is the object.

In the languages like Latin (in which there are genitives), the knowledge of the genitive is important to tell ‘who does what’ in a sentence. For example, *Petri* is the genitive in the syntagm *liber Petri*. In explaining this point, Dubois et al. (1994, p. 217) indicate that Dans “*Le livre de Pierre*, Pierre est au génitif dans les langues casuelles (en latin *liber Petri*)

1.1.4 The points of connection between syntax and semantics

In describing the points of connection between syntax and semantics, Chomsky (2000, p. 93) states that:

In proposing that syntactic structure can provide a certain insight into problems of meaning and understanding we have entered onto dangerous ground. There is no aspect of linguistic study more subject to confusion and more in need of clear and careful formulation than that which deals with the points of connection between syntax and semantics.

In *Syntactic Structures* (2000), Chomsky has discussed this issue at length by giving arguments refuting and supporting claims of connection between syntax and semantics. He has presented a list of six assertions supporting the dependence of grammar on meaning and has subsequently provided counterexamples. The assertions include the following: (117) (i) Two utterances are phonemically distinct if and only if they differ in meaning; (ii) morphemes are the smallest elements that have meaning; (iii) grammatical sentences are those that have semantic significance.

Particularly striking in this list is the constant reference to syntactic elements and their relation with semantic features which are perceived as their defining characteristics. However, in a subsequent section, Chomsky has given counterexamples to restrict the validity of these assertions.

Thus we have counterexamples to the suggestion (117ii) that morphemes be defined as minimal meaning bearing elements. In §2 we have given grounds for rejecting “semantic significance” as a

general criterion for grammaticality, as proposed in (117iii). (Ibid, p. 100).

In another section, Chomsky rightly says that to understand a sentence, it is necessary to know more than the analysis of this sentence on each linguistic level. The knowledge of the reference and meaning of the morphemes and words used in the sentence is equally important.

1.1.5 The syntactic framework's influence on word meaning

Chomsky notes that in describing the meaning of a word, it is quite useful to take into account the syntactic framework in which it is used. For example, in describing the meaning of “hit”, the description of the agent and object of the action in terms of the notions ‘subject’ and ‘object’ would be useful. This remark is critically important in the perspective of contrastive linguistics.

A similar remark has been made by Gross (2010) in a paper titled « *Sur la notion de contexte* » published in *Meta*. However, it is important to indicate that the paper by Gross has listed some synonyms of the verb *casser* depending on the context in which it is found. Therefore, he has not made this point in the perspective of contrastive linguistics. This quotation by Gross provides the synonyms of the verb *casser*:

On verrait ainsi que *casser* signifie briser avec des compléments comme verre, vaisselle ; fracturer avec un complément désignant un membre comme jambe ou bras; et annuler si l’objet fait partie de la classe des contrats ou des actes juridiques... : c’est le contexte qui détermine le sens d’un terme (Gross 1994a)... Il est donc acquis que pour comprendre le sens d’un mot, il faut prendre en considération son environnement. Gross (2010, p. 188).

The main conclusion reached by Gross is that in order to understand the meaning of a word, it is necessary to take into account its environment (including its complement). Furthermore, this conclusion has the following theoretical consequences:

Conséquences théoriques - Les constatations que l'on peut faire à partir de cet exercice sont les suivantes: – Le lexique ne peut pas être séparé de la syntaxe, c'est-à-dire de la combinatoire des mots (Gross 1975); – La sémantique n'est pas autonome non plus: elle est le résultat de la combinaison des éléments lexicaux organisés d'une certaine façon (distribution, Gross 1981); – On ne peut postuler sérieusement qu'il existe trois niveaux indépendants dans la description linguistique, celui du lexique, de la syntaxe et de la sémantique, car on ne voit pas comment ils pourraient être articulés, s'ils étaient indépendants. (Ibid).

The point made by Gross in the quotation above is that words cannot be separated from syntax. Semantics is not autonomous either. It is an outcome of the combination of lexical items in a particular manner. It is not possible to seriously argue that there are three independent levels in linguistic description, namely the lexical level, the syntactic level and the semantic level. This is understandably so because any form of articulation of these three levels would be difficult if they were independent.

At this stage, there is a need to note that while Chomsky and Gross describe the points of connection between syntax and semantics in the context of English and/or French linguistics, this paper aims to discuss this issue in the perspective of contrastive linguistics.

In this perspective, the paper aims to prove that the concept of *structural semantics* is valid in the field of translation studies.

In connection with this, in a paper titled *An Assessment of the Influence of Syntagm and Context on Lexical Semantics in Translation Studies*, Akpaca (2016, p. 57) says that:

The aim of this paper is to show that words only have meaning in context...However, to contribute meaning words need to be used in sentences where they contract syntagmatic relations with other words. Further, the context in which a word is used can change its meaning. Different contexts

can activate different word meanings. The verb 'Consider', for example, has taken ten different meanings in the examples provided below. As a result, word meaning is in the field.

The ten different meanings taken by the verb 'Consider' have been revealed by Chevalier et al. in a scientific publication on the TAUM/AVIATION system of machine aided translation. The TAUM/AVIATION translates information on the maintenance of an aircraft manufactured in Canada. This system follows the instructions given by a translation analyst. *Some examples of instructions given by the translation analyst* are given below.

- Si l'objet indirect de Consider est une proposition gérondive introduite par As, traduire Consider par « Supposer que » et transformer l'objet direct de Consider (Damage) en sujet de la gérondive (Extend).

Translation of this instruction into English: If the indirect object of the verb Consider is a gerund introduced by as, translate Consider by « suppose that » and turn the direct object of Consider (Damage) into subject of the gerund (Extend).

Below is the machine assisted translation of the instruction:

(6A) Consider The Damage As Extending To The Wing Tip.

(6F) *Supposer que les dommages s'étendent jusqu'au saumon d'aile.*

- Si l'objet indirect est un groupe nominal, il peut être introduit par As ou For :

(a) *Si le groupe nominal est introduit par As, traduire Consider par « Considérer » :*

Translation of this second instruction into English: If the indirect object is a nominal group, it can be translated by As or For.

Below is the machine assisted translation of the instruction:

(7A) Accuracy Is Considered As The Most Important Criterion.

(7F) *La précision est considérée comme le critère le plus important.*

The examples given in the scientific publication illustrate the direct relation between syntax and semantics in translation. Indeed, the position and/or the grammatical function of a word or a group of words changes the meaning of the verb *Consider* in ten sentences translated into French. The conclusion of this section is that word meaning is dictated by context and syntax. Therefore, syntax is both a meaning carrier and a meaning trigger in translation.

1.1.6 The use of algorithm in selecting word meaning

The instructions given by the translator specialist are called algorithms by J.C. Catford. In *A Linguistic Theory of Translation*, Catford (1965, p. 31) explains that:

For the purpose of machine translation, translation rules may be operational instructions for co-textual search for items marked in the machine glossary by particular diacritics, with instructions to print out the particular conditioned equivalent in each case. Such operational instructions, which if followed, can be guaranteed with a high degree of probability to produce a ‘correct’ result, are known as algorithms.

Catford says that the looser instructions for human translators are called *translation rules*.

The principle of algorithm described by Catford and the algorithms used by the Canadian researchers mentioned above share some similarities. Catford calls it conditioned or unconditioned equivalence probability. The probability is conditioned when the translation analyst gives instructions to a machine to translate a particular word in a particular manner in a particular context or syntagm.

Taking into account the information provided above on algorithm and translation equivalence, it is obvious yet again that the meaning of a word can be inferred or deducted on the basis of the syntagmatic framework in which the word is found.

1.1.7 Nida's views on syntax and semantics

Another prominent translation theorist who has written extensively on syntax problems in translation is Eugene Nida. Indeed, in *Theory and Practice of Translation* (1969), Nida gives the following examples to show how a poor handling of syntax can make a message confusing and unclear in the target language.

In addition to being quite misleading, a translation may also be so stylistically heavy as to make comprehension almost impossible. For example, in the American Standard Version (1901), 2 Corinthians 3 :10 reads, “For verily that which hath been made glorious hath not been made glorious in this respect, by reason of the glory that surpasseth.” The words are all English but the sentence structure is essentially Greek. The New English Bible quite rightly restructures this passage to read, “Indeed, the splendour that once was is now no splendour at all; it is outshone by a splendour greater still.” (Nida & Taber, 1969, p. 2).

The problem with the rendering of this biblical verse from Greek into English is that the sentence structure is Greek while the words are English. This is a main problem in translation. When the translator is not experienced enough to restructure the message in the target language, s/he conveys a message which is incomprehensible.

Nida has given other examples that are quoted below. Rom. 3 :21-22.

But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested,	But, in these days, God's way of justification has at last been brought to light; one which was	But now God's way of putting men right with himself has been revealed, and it has nothing
-----------------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

idées naturellement en français. Les exemples suivants montrent clairement ces transformations.” (p.72)

1st example:

To do so requires one to resort to instinct and gut feelings, not just rational analysis. (p.72)	Pour ce faire, il faut recourir à l’instinct et à l’intuition, pas seulement à l’analyse rationnelle. (p.72)
--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Biao explains that in translating the sentence above into French, she has restructured it. In the English version, ‘to do so’ is the subject of ‘requires’, whereas in the French version, the syntax is different. Given that the phrase ‘to do so’ is inanimate, in French it is not appropriate to use an inanimate subject for an action verb. That is why she has restructured the translated sentence which reads as follows: « pour ce faire, il faut recourir... ». The point is that while ‘to do so’ is an actor in the English sentence, its equivalent ‘*pour ce faire*’ is not. The French translation has restructured the sentence in a way that turns the subject of the verb into a mere prepositional phrase.

The issue of syntactic transformation has been discussed by Nida who was inspired by Chomsky’s works on Generative Grammar. Nida has said that:

The deep structure is understood as the underlying feature of communication that contains all the semantic meaning in a given text. It is subject to transformational rules that are applied by a translator in order for it to be transferred across languages and when the transfer is complete, a set of phonological and morphemic rules are then applied in order to generate a surface structure (Nida 1964:57-69).

Nida has given further explanations on the process through which a translator decodes and encodes a message and then reconstructs sentences in the target language.

The source text is analysed at the surface level so that the deep structure can be identified before being transferred and restructured semantically and stylistically in an appropriate source language

surface structure. The first important factor is that the procedure must produce "a translation in which the message of the original text has been transported into the receptor language in such a way that the RESPONSE of the RECEPTOR is essentially that of the original readers" (Nida and Taber 1969:200).

In the following sentence, the English structure is different from the French one.

2nd example:

The Ashoka community’s ability to help its members succeed and also to entrepreneur together major pattern changes en route to an “Everyone a Change maker™” future depends on its continuing to select only the new ideas and entrepreneurs that together will change the world. (p. 50)	La capacité de la communauté Ashoka à aider ses membres à réussir et à opérer ensemble des changements majeurs en vue d’un avenir où tout le monde sera un acteur du changement dépend du fait qu’elle continue à sélectionner uniquement les nouvelles idées et les entrepreneurs qui changeront ensemble le monde. (p50)
-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Biao indicates that the phrase “*en route to an everyone a changemaker future*” is translated as follows: « en vue d’un avenir où tout le monde sera un acteur du changement ». In the translation of this phrase, the place of the equivalent of the word ‘future’ (i.e. *avenir*) has changed. Furthermore, there is no equivalent of the lexical item ‘où’ in the English sentence. There is a verb (i.e. *sera*) in the French syntagm, unlike the English syntagm.

It is obvious that the syntactic features of the two sentences are not similar. As a result, there is no formal correspondence between these two sentences. Indeed, the phrase:

“En route to a everyone a Changemaker future” has the following structure: Prepositional phrase + noun phrase + noun phrase

While the French phrase has the following structure:

« en vue d'un avenir où tout le monde sera un acteur du changement » : prepositional phrase + noun phrase + adverb phrase + noun phrase + verb phrase + noun phrase

3rd example:

Version anglaise	Traduction française
Of Ashoka's five criteria, this has the most narrowly filtering mesh. (p. 61)	Parmi les cinq critères d'Ashoka, celui-ci est le critère le plus exigeant qui permet de tamiser. (p. 61)

The structure of the English sentence is as follows: Prepositional phrase + verb phrase + adverb phrase

The structure of the French sentence is as follows: Prepositional phrase + noun phrase + verb phrase + noun phrase + verb phrase

II. RESULTS

The following results spring from the theories and analyses of the points of connection between syntax and semantics.

- Syntax is not just the combination of words in a sentence or in a text. It deals with the functions of the words as well. The orderly succession of words in a sentence is equally important in the definition of syntax.
- While some authors like Chomsky have some reservations about the points of connection between syntax and semantics, others like Nida, Catford and Gross make it clear that syntax and semantics are inseparable and that syntax is a meaning carrier, especially in a contrastive linguistic perspective.
- The syntactic framework in which a word is used influences its meaning.
- Algorithms are used in machines to deduct word meaning taking into account the context and the syntactic environment.
- A Source Language (SL) text needs to be restructured in the Target Language to produce meaningful sentences.
- There is rarely formal correspondence between a SL text and a TL text.

III. DISCUSSION

3.1 Syntax as a vehicle

There is no denying that syntax plays a major role in semantics. One is tempted to say that it is a vehicle that carries meaning from a source language to a target language. To stick to this metaphor, it is important to stress that drivers (i.e. translators) need to learn how to drive this vehicle effectively.

As a matter of fact, foreign language students know a lot of foreign words but they do not know how to put them together to construct meaningful sentences and to express their ideas accurately. Some English teachers, for example, spend a lot of time teaching vocabulary out of any context instead of teaching students how to use words in sentences and in specific contexts. At the end of the day, foreign language teachers spend a lot of time correcting syntactic errors.

Translation students also write sentences that are meaningless in the target language. Then, when you ask them whether the sentences they have written make any sense to them, they say 'no'. The next question you ask them is: 'why do you keep these sentences in your translation while you know that they do not make any sense'? They tend to reply that it is because of the translation. If they were to write naturally in their official working language, they would not write meaningless sentences.

It emerges from the situation described above that students are 'tied' by syntax because they do not know how to 'distance themselves from it' and to restructure the text in the target language. In foreign languages schools as well as in the schools of translators, a special emphasis should be laid on the teaching of syntactic rules and on the process of restructuring.

This issue highlights another aspect of translation studies, which is related to translation procedures. On this score, Catford explains in *A Linguistic Theory of Translation* (1965) that there are three types of translation, namely word-for-word translation, literal translation and free translation. Free translation is a type of translation which

makes it possible for the translator to recreate a totally new style and structure in the target language.

3.2 Syntax as a path

Translation can also be compared to a path. Indeed, when a path is well designed and constructed, it makes the flow of traffick easier and smoother. The same applies to syntax. When it is well constructed, it makes the flow of ideas easier and smoother. Readers enjoy reading texts whose syntactic elements are in order.

To stick to the metaphor of path, imagine that you are driving from France to England. As soon as you cross the border, you must stop keeping right. In England, drivers keep left. If you continue keeping right, you will cause accidents. The same applies to syntax. In the process of transferring ideas from French to English, you must make sure that you switch code (i.e. you decode and encode). In the words of Nida, you *analyse, transfer and restructure*.

3.3 Syntax is not just a combination of words in a sentence

As Saussure has rightly put it, syntax implies not only an orderly succession of words in a sentence but it also includes the functions of the words. As indicated above, in the languages using the genitive, you need to know the function of every word in a sentence to interpret or translate it properly. Regarding this issue, Nida's notion of semantic categories should be taken into account. Indeed, the semantic categories are events (represented by verbs), objects (represented by persons or nouns in a sentence), relationals (i.e. adjectives and adverbs) and prepositions. Nida suggests that all events and processes should be expressed by verbs in a translation into English; all qualities should be expressed by adjectives or adverbs in a sentence, etc. This procedure changes the syntax in the target language (which is in this case English). All Nida's semantic categories happen to be syntactic elements.

Concerning the points of connection between syntax and semantics, Gross has given convincing examples. It is difficult to separate words, syntax

and semantics. These notions operate together to produce meaning. They contribute meaning individually and jointly.

Another significant finding is the notion of syntactic framework and its influence on word meaning. In discussing this linguistic aspect, some authors like Sue Atkin conclude that words do not have meaning. Rather, they have meaning potentials which are activated in various contexts. This approach to word meaning emancipates lexical items. Indeed, word meaning becomes a dynamic notion. It is only in a particular context that you can tell the meaning of a word.

Last but not least, formal correspondence between a SL text and a TL text is rarely achieved in translation. It is not the purpose of translation anyway. English and French have the same number of ranks (i.e. five ranks as mentioned earlier), however there are languages that have fewer or more number of ranks.

IV. CONCLUSION

This paper has demonstrated by means of theoretical and practical examples that the concept of structural semantics should be validated in translation studies. Indeed, phrase structure and/or sentence structure plays a significant role in translation. Translators' competence is revealed not only through their word power and their ability to apply translation strategies but it is also revealed through their ability to restructure the source language text in the target language.

As shown in the examples above, syntax has caused many translators to go astray. Consequently, it is not enough to understand a message in a source language to translate it effectively. It is not enough to know the equivalents of all the source language words to do competent translation. The ability to restructure the message and to create an original structure in the target language is essential to convey meaning. This is the domain of structural semantics. The ability to interpret word meaning in a novel syntactic framework is also the domain of structural semantics. The ability to bring out a

new word meaning through syntagmatic solidarities is the domain of structural semantics.

It is our hope that the ideas and examples given in this paper to validate the concept of structural semantics will make an impact and emancipate the concept in translation studies.

REFERENCES

1. Akpaca, S. M. (2016). An Assessment of the Influence of Syntagm and Context on Lexical Semantics in Translation Studies. *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, Vol. 21, Issue 10, Ver. 3, pp. 57-64.
2. Biao, K. A. (2018). *Evaluation de la sémantique lexicale, des transformations syntaxiques, des procédés de traduction et de la logique modale dans la traduction d'un manuel intitulé Selecting Leading Social Entrepreneurs*. Mémoire de Master de Traduction spécialisée, Université d'Abomey-Calavi (unpublished).
3. Catford, J.C. (1965). *A Linguistic Theory of Translation*. Oxford University Press, Walton Street, Oxford.
4. Chevalier, M., Isabelle, P. Labelle, F., Lainé, C. (1981). La traductologie appliquée à la traduction automatique. *Meta* (Translators' Journal), Vol. 26, N°1. Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal.
5. Chomsky, N. (2002). *Syntactic Structures*. Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co. KG, 10785 Berlin.
6. Dalrymple M. (2001). *Syntax and Semantics Lexical Functional Grammar*. Academic Press, The Ohio State University, Ohio, USA
7. Dubois, J. et al. (1994). *Dictionnaire de linguistique*, Larousse-Bordas
8. Gross, G. (2010). « Sur la notion de contexte », *Meta*, 55 (1), 187-197
9. Halliday, M. A. K. (1985). *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*. London: Edward Arnold (Publishers) Ltd, 41 Bedford Square, WC1B 3 DQ.
10. Halliday, M. A. K. and Yallop, C. (2007). *Lexicology*. Townbridge, Wiltshire: Cromwell Press.
11. Jakobson P. (2014). *Compositional Semantics An Introduction to the Semantics/Syntax Interface*. Oxford University Press.
12. Nida, E. & Taber, C. (1969). *The Theory and Practise of Translation*. E.J. Brill, Leiden, The Netherlands
13. Nida, E. & Taber, C. (1982). *The Theory and Practise of Translation*. E.J. Brill, Leiden, The Netherlands
14. Nida, E. A. (1964). *Towards a science of translation, with special reference to principles and procedures involved in Bible translating*. Leiden: Brill.
15. Saussure, F. (2005). *Cours de linguistique générale*. Arbre d'Or, Genève <http://www.arbredor.com>