



# A Systemic Analysis of Translation of Case-Grammar in the French Translation of Chinua Achebe's *Arrow of God*

Gbadegesin Olusegun Adegboye

Department of French, Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria

**Email address:**

gbadegesinsegun1971@gmail.com

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**Abstract:** Literary critics, prose analysts, literary theorists, translation scholars, comparative linguists and stylists have till now viewed Chinua Achebe's *Arrow of God* in the spirit of culture, history, comparative language and racial discourse. Analyzing translation of case-grammar in the French translation of the novel has not received any noticeable attention. This study centers on the systemic analysis of case-grammar in the French translation of *Arrow of God (La fleche de Dieu)*. The objectives are to: (i) identify various case-gaps in *Arrow of God* and examine how their translations affect the meaning of the original message, (ii) assess the role of grammar in the reproduction of social and cultural meanings in the French translation of the text, (iii) analyze the translation of case-gaps using systemic grammar of Michael Halliday to appraise the translator's liberty of the literature. Working through types of case-gaps by Peter Newmark, the study draws about ten examples from the original text and its French translation. Systemic Functional Grammar of Michael Halliday is adopted to x-ray how the language of Chinua Achebe in *Arrow of God* is treated as systems and not as rules in the translation of the novel into French. The study views case-grammar as a "meaning potential" in translation studies. Grammatical systems play a major role in the construal of meanings of meanings at cultural, stylistic and linguistic levels of a sociological literature such as Achebe's *Arrow of God* and its French translation. The study concludes that grammar is nothing but a transmitter of meaning in translation and that transmission is contingent upon proper understanding of different levels of use of language in literature, case-gaps inclusive.

**Keywords:** Case-Gaps, Systemic Grammar, Literature, Translation, Literary Style

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## 1. Introduction

The author conceives his work. He is influenced by such factors as the epoch of his writing, his society, the bitter and sweet experiences, his imagination, emotions, history, family and others. Chinua Achebe is a celebrated novelist in Nigeria. He hailed from the Eastern part of Nigeria. The faceoff between the colonial power and African culture, the natives enslavement by the White in the execution of road projects and construction of public buildings for hospitals, district offices, courts and schools; the advent of Christianity which led to erosion and desecration of priesthood office constitute major issues that dictate the language of Achebe in the novel. The triumph of Christianity over paganism is a testimony to how the Ibos voluntarily reduced their culture to second nature. Today those still engaging in the worship of deities are considered enemies of God who need the light of the

gospel. It is striking however to know that these people resort to appeasing the same deities whenever there is a feeling of witchcraft attack. One wonders in whom they put their trust: in the God of Christianity or in their deities? This is a common practice in Africa.

Achebe is renowned for his identity with his people. This is reflected in his style. His appropriate use of proverbs, his domestication of social stratification, the age-group system, the land tenure system, the yam festival, the market days, sighting of the moon, taboos, marriage and chieftaincy customs, etc. constitute major themes and peculiarities of Achebe's writings. Achebe writes in clear English but his native language structure is prevalent in his works. His dialect betrays his source. His thought process is equally in the spirit of his culture and sociological point of view of his people.

*Arrow of God* is the third novel of Chinua Achebe. The

first two being *Things Fall Apart* published in 1958 and *No Longer at Ease* in 1960. *Arrow of God* was first published in 1964. The novel is a story of village life. It centers on the struggle for authority of Ezeulu, chief priest of Ulu, the traditional god of his Umuaro people, against the two rivals in his own tribe and district officers and Christian missionaries.

To translators, literary translators in particular, grammar are a language tool through which meaning of conceived message is fetched. Many at times, grammatical structures of the language of the original text are sacrificed for meaning. This is common with a literary text with cultural lodes. Chinua Achebe has a unique style of using clauses or verbless compound or words with verbal force to present his narration in a way to create and sustain in his reader the interest in his story. As translation is a process that makes texts produced in one language accessible to people who do not speak that language [1], the power force of message re-expression by translation should serve the purpose of making the message of the original accessible to target readers.

For literary elegance and liberty, Achebe omits verbs in some cases. In other cases, grammatical categories are twisted for cultural reasons. The syntactical, stylistic and pragmatic treatments of case-grammar are presented in the expression of his parole which English, the language of his writing, fairly brings to the understanding of his audience. The French translators of the novel: Irene Assiba d'Almedia and Olga Mahougbé Simpson keep in view their target audience. The concern for the French audience accounts for why they standardize the language of Achebe in French. Meanwhile the author's style to a large extent is not as a result of deficiency in English but for esthetic reasons.

Taking liberty in translating literature is a factor originating from the absence of one cultural element of the original language into the culture of another language. Since grammar is the conveyance of message and the grammatical structures of two languages are rarely the same, the translator becomes the mediator of the languages involved. His liberty of choice of words, the structure of grammar, finding corresponding cultural elements has eyes not only on what the grammar expresses but also on what it implies in the culture of the original writer. Indeed as affirmed in *Functional Approaches to Culture and Translation* edited by Dirk Delabastia et al, "the internalization and continuous redefinition of societies are profoundly indebted to translation and communication" [2]. Such societal redefinition and internalization are accessed through language use both in the original text and its translation. This is profoundly evident in the language structure of Chinua Achebe and the language reproduction of the translators of *Arrow of God* in French. The purpose of this study therefore is to foreground the role that case gaps play in meaning transfer of messages from literature written in English to French. The research problem which centers on how case gaps in the original text influence the meaning of the messages reproduced in French forms basic issue in the translation of literature.

The study attempts to answer such questions as: What do case gaps imply? What is systemic grammar? Of what relevance is systemic grammar to translation in general and translation of literature in particular? What are the roles of case gaps in the process of translating *Arrow of God* into French as *La flèche de Dieu*? What is the implication of systemic analysis of case grammar to literary translation?

## 2. Case-Grammar in Translation: Definition Description and Role

The whole system and structure of a language or languages in general, usually taken as consisting of syntax and morphology (including inflection) and sometimes also phonology and semantics is grammar (*Oxford Languages and Google*) [3]. It is often described as rules of a language; but in fact no language has rules. Languages started by people making sounds which evolved into words, phrases and sentences. No commonly spoken language is fixed. Thus grammar is the study of the way the sentences of a language are constructed; phonology and syntax. For *Britannica* [4], grammar contains rules of a language governing the sounds, words, sentences and other elements. But again no mother has established rules for a child born or about to be born on how s/he should produce sounds of any sort. To Merian Webster, grammar is the study of the classes of words, their inflections and their functions and relations in the language. This scholarly view is an investigation into how words are, what they do and what comes out of their relationship with other words in the language. According to *Wikipedia* [5], in linguistics, the grammar of a natural language is its set of structural constraints on speaker's or writer's composition of a text. It is a system of rules and principles for speaking or writing.

Case-grammar is a method of analyzing a sentence, a clause or a verbless compound in a manner that demonstrates the central position of the verb or the word that has verbal force within the word sequence [6]. Grammar is pivotal in the transfer of meaning. In literary translation, the meaning of meaning of cultural lodes and linguistic loads of a message of the original text is often determined by its original language structure of the text as a prelude to meaning transfer. The submission of M. A. K Halliday that grammar is made up of systems and not rules is very important here and of relevance to translation in general. Authors of translation choose from describable set of options to express their conception of a situation and context of their writings. This choice dictates the grammatical structure with which they make their audience understand their intention. So grammar in translation can be described as a meaning potential at cultural, pragmatic and linguistic levels. Since human beings do not think or view a situation the same way, their unconscious ways of meaning reflect their significant manifestation of their culture. Chinua Achebe in *Arrow of God* proves this explicitly in the ideational functions of the presentation of his experience with his people and the White

at the wake of colonization of Eastern region of Nigeria in the novel. The translation has to rely on the surface structure of the writing in the construal of meanings of meanings of different kinds.

Society is central in the text conception of Chinua Achebe and he sees English language as a way of selling such a society to the English world. His resources of language showcase the social life of his people. The conflict between the traditional culture and the imposed culture of the British is presented in cluster of language features that grammar helps in deciphering the intention of the writer. Thus lexico-grammar which describes grammar structure and words plays a major role in adequate transfer of meaning from the original text into the language of the translation.

Jenny Williams [7], in the use of a cluster concept to define the concept of translation by Tymoczko, emphasizes that "every text that claims to be based in any way on previous text is simply a translation". This conceptualization, according to him, is capable of breaking the dichotomy discussion between translation and adaptation, versions and imitations. All this points to the fact that translating is not carried out in the emptiness. Whatever form a translation takes, words are indispensable and grammar is a central process in the passage of one language into another.

### 3. Systemic Functional Grammar and the Translation of *Arrow of God*

It is worth discussing what Systemic Functional Grammar is before our analysis of the general functionality of systemic approach implied in the translation of various types of case-grammar in *Arrow of God* into French. Michael Halliday evolved Systemic Functional Grammar. It is a form of grammatical description based on social semiotic approach to language. 'Systemic' refers to the conception of language as a network of systems, or interrelated sets of options for making meanings. 'Functional' refers to 'multi dimensional' nature of human experience and interpersonal relations. This has in a great deal, influenced how grammar is arranged to make a message convey meaning to the hearer or reader. The translator of any literary text is confronted with how to delve into this multi dimensional nature of the author's experience and how his interpersonal relationship with the agents of communication in his society bears on the general understanding of the message. Here, the action transcends the issue of semantics as semantics in translation many at times looks at the meaning in a given context. It may accommodate phonology because variation in articulation of words equally gives pragmatic meaning which has meta functions both in the literary text and its translation.

In English, Halliday describes mood, type process, agency and theme as grammatical systems. These systems portend a great weight in meaning discovery from the original text to the translation. For example, 'mood' relates to interpersonal meaning. This is prevalent in the diction of Chinua Achebe in *Arrow of God* as various events; good and bad are mood

oriented in presentation. The translators are obliged to wear the various moods in the story to elicit his reader's reaction analogous to that of the original text. The process type relates the expression of experiential meanings, and 'theme' to the expression of textual meaning. In other words, Systemic Functional Grammar analyses language in three strata: semantics, phonology and lexico-grammar.

Halliday's claim that language is meta-functionally organized is clear. The essence of language of any kind is meaning in social life. Three kinds of semantic components advocated by Halliday have relevance to the process of translation of case-grammar from one language to another. For example the ideational component has resources for construing experience; the interpersonal component embraces resources for enacting human's diverse and complex social reactions. The proper understanding of this component enables a literary translator to appreciate the role of case-grammar and give credence to its importance in the reproduction of message. The third component is the textual function. It has resources for enabling ideational component and interpersonal component experience coherence in textual presentation. In other words what makes a text assumes a status of text is the level of intelligibility powered by coherent arrangement and presentation of ideas. In translating literature therefore, what makes the translation looks like a text with clear message to its reader is its ability to bring all the parts of the message together in a meaningful arrangement.

### 4. A Systemic Analysis of Case-Grammar in *La Fleche De Dieu*

Irene Assiba d'Almeida and Olga Mahoungbe Simpson translated *Arrow of God* into French as *La Fleche de Dieu* in 1978, four years after the publication of the second edition of the novel in English. The social life of the players in the place and time settings of the story influence the case-gaps of the case-grammar deployed in the novel. From the mandatory case-gaps of the case-grammar to the referential level of the grammatical structures, the translators are driven in their choice of terms by the thematic factors of the story. The fact that the story is primarily that of village life, having to do with the power struggle of Ezeulu; chief priest of Ulu, the traditional god of his Umuaro people against both rivals in his own tribe, district officers and Christian missionaries accounts for various grammar twists in the novel. These grammatical variations between English and French will be examined based on the general functions of systemic grammar with the view to looking into the implications of their translation to literary translation.

Meaning is the nucleus of every communication. Interlingua communication such as translation is a product of meaning transfer. Sonia Vandepitte in *Translation and Meaning Part 9* 2013: 61 [8] affirms that 'a core activity of every translator and translation scholar is to reflect on meaning in texts across languages'. He went further to state

that ‘when we read or write down a sentence, we intuitively construe or convey various meanings about the cumulative state of affairs (the observable situations in which the act of reading and writing takes place) and the symbolized state of affairs (the one in which the sentence refers to)’. It is imperative to define who does the writing or reading or writing and reading the more; the writer of the source text or the translator? The response helps in accounting for the cases of case-grammar in *Arrow of God* and the general functions of their translation in the systemic spirit into French.

The author construes his work. The construal process is borne out of his intuitive experience with his world- the society he lives in and the plight of his people. The transfer of his thoughts into writing must have experienced some losses in the process before he opted for the ones he expressed in writing. The translators on their part “tend to pay any price to eliminate misunderstandings and to guarantee a successful communication between the original author and target language readers” [9]. This effort many at times becomes gain or loss to the target readers of the transferred message as we shall see in our analysis.

The first form of case-gaps we are studying is mandatory case-gaps. Mandatory case-gap is basically syntactical. Here the translators of *Arrow of God* are obliged to fill in the gaps: (1) because it is required by the syntax of French language and (2) because a sentence in the source language is ambiguous or defective linguistically to the understanding of the reader of the target text. The following example illustrates a case of structural ambiguity of syntax of the source text though it may be of insignificant problem to the understanding of its reader. The target reader will definitely be subjected to self interpretation should the case-gap be directly transferred to the language of the target text.

Example 1: ‘We do not want *Okperi* to choose war; nobody *eats war*. If they choose peace, we shall rejoice’ (*Arrow of God* p. 17).

‘Nous ne voulons pas que *ceux* d’*Okperi* choisissent la guerre. Personne ne *se nourrit de guerre*. S’ils choisissent la paix, nous *en* réjouissons (*La flèche de Dieu* p. 31).

A close look at the sentence of the original, the word *Okperi* does not talk about the village but its people and the direct complement adopted in the simple sentence part (nobody eats war) of the complex sentence of the original is capable of presenting the word *war* as a meal that is forbidden. The translation has in view how intelligible these cases would be to the target reader who has never read the original should literal translation be employed. *Okperi* represents the people of *Okperi* and so the addition of *pronom démonstratif* “*ceux*” to determine the people of the village. It is often affirmed that no two words mean same thing be it in grammar or in translation. The advocacy of close natural equivalence in translation by Eugene Nida is workable and very useful in the translation of cultural lodes but where there are gaps of grammar that are likely to create confusion for a reader of the target text, opting for a synonym does but a little in clearing the confusion. Such is the case of the translation of the sentence: *Nobody eats war* as *Personne*

*ne se nourrit de guerre*. The choice of *se nourrir* for *manger* to translate *eat* has not done much in bringing out the intended meaning of the original message as the two closely depict the same. Metaphorically the original and the translation may be faulty in that some people benefit from outbreak of wars. To clear this ambiguity, explicitation should have been a way out. *War is not food we eat* is what the author intends saying. When the translation is viewed in this light, the translation becomes *la guerre n’est pas un plat or un repas que l’on mange*.

The author to his style but the essence of any style is to convey meaning of his message to the audience. The use of nouns in apposition in the following example is a case that elicits mandatory case-gap.

Example 2: On the day, five years ago, when the leaders of *Umuaro* decided to send an emissary to *Okperi* with *white clay* for peace or new palm frond for war, *Ezeulu* spoke in vain. He told the men of *Umuaro* that *Ulu* would not fight an unjust war (*Arrow of God* p. 15).

Il y a cinq ans de cela, le jour où les chefs d’*Umuaro* décidèrent d’envoyer un émissaire à *Okperi* avec de la craie blanche *en signe* de paix ou une jeune branche de palmier *en signe* de guerre, *Ezeulu* parla en vain. Il dit aux hommes d’*Umuaro* qu’*Ulu* ne défendait pas une guerre injuste (*la flèche de Dieu* p. 28).

The reader of the original text relies on the progression of the story and on his subconscious mind to decode the message. The phrase in implied aside (on the day) is not syntactically well placed in the original and it is capable of affecting the free flow of the understanding of the story. This gap is filled by the French translation thus: *Il y a cinq ans de cela, le jour où les chefs d’Umuaro décidèrent...* This translation has resources for ideational metafunction, most especially the logical metafunction in that the grammatical resources for building up grammatical units into complexes which seem to be awkwardly presented in English give experiential meaning in French. Since meaning is the basis of every translation the reader of the target text should be able to have the experience of sense that the units of the clauses convey.

The contextual value of the nature of the social process in which the expressions such as: with *white clay for peace* or *new palm frond for war* in the clauses: *to send an emissary to Okperi with white clay for peace or new palm frond for war* contain the grammatical system which reflects the social life of the *Ezeulu* people. “White clay” and “palm frond” are symbols or signs representing important issues in the life of the people. This is made clearer in the translation making its reader know that *white clay* and *palm frond* represent peace and war respectively thanks to the use of the phrase *en signe*. (avec de la craie blanche *en signe* de paix ou une jeune branche de palmier *en signe* de guerre). The addition of this phrase is important as *palme* in another culture such as the French means victory. So the omission of such a phrase may likely create obscurity to the reader of the translation. That notwithstanding, the use of *la craie blanche* for *white clay* is a circumstance type of grammatical system of transitivity.

The choice of this phrase is definitely an adaptation of the translators which do not connote the same thing as *clay*. While *chalk* (la craie) is a type of soft white stone [10] clay is a type of heavy, sticky earth that becomes hard when it is baked.... (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary 2001: 199). Thus *la craie blanche* is nothing but what looks like white clay and not *l'argile blanche* which the original connotes.

Close to mandatory case-gaps is implied case-gap. Peter Newmark describes this as a semantic category. However he quickly adds that there is often a syntactic compulsion to fill in the gap. This is evident in the translation of the example below.

Example 3: "In the five years since the white man broke the guns of Umuaro the enmity between Ezeulu and Nwaka of Umunneora grew and grew until they were at the point which Umuaro people called *kill and take the head*" (*Arrow of God* p. 38).

"Pendant les cinq années, qui suivirent celle où l'homme blanc brisa les fusils d'Umuaro, l'inimité qui existait entre Ezeulu et Nwaka d'Umunneora s'accrut à un tel point que les gens d'Umuaro décidèrent de *trancher dans le vif* » (*La Flèche de Dieu* P. 57).

At a point in history, the two communities: Umuaro and Umunneora engaged in counter uprisings that were affecting the flow of British administration of the Eastern region. To put a stop to these disturbances, guns used in the conflicts were gathered and destroyed by the British district officers. This aggravated the enmity that has been on between the two communities. The noun phrase: *the enmity between Ezeulu and Nwaka...* implies *the enmity that has been in existence between....* The verb in perfect tense: *has existed* or the prepositional phrase *in existence* is implied in the message though not expressive in the writing. This syntactical gap is filled in by the translators thus: *l'inimité qui existait entre...* This case removes the ambiguity that could come along with the grammatical interpretation of the conjunction: *between* and the pragmatic implication of the word. It is the enmity that has existed between the two communities and not enmity as a personality that stands between the two. Though the original does not pose serious problem to the understanding of the message to its reader, the implied case-gap is necessary for clarity in the translation.

The phrase: *kill and take the head* is the creation of Chinua Achebe. It looks metaphorical and one is tempted to think it is rooted in the culture of the author. Whichever way it goes, it is understood that when *a head is taken*, the victim is killed and when one is killed, the head may be taken. The expression: *skin him alive* should be the intended message of the author. This semantic vacuum is supplied by the translators as *trancher dans le vif*. Though the meaning category of the two expressions differs, the implied case-gap is supplied. The translators rely on their instinct and the progression of the story to elicit meaning for the translation. This is an issue of translating a peculiar diction of the author by what the potential audience of the translation would understand in his language to keep the flow of the story of the original in literary translation. The expression: *trancher*

*dans le vif* is the same as *employer les grands moyens, agir de façon énergique* [11]. The dictionary interpretation of the equivalence proposed by the translation does not evoke taking life but the energetic display of important tools to deal with the situation. This is the intended understanding (le vouloir comprendre) of the translators as against the intended communication (le vouloir dire) of the author. It is clear that the readers of the original and the translation may not react the same way to the message as the creativity of the translators is based on their subjectivity while that of the author is on his thoughts.

Example 4: "Those are very large and healthy seed-yams. Do they come from your own barn or from the market?" (*Arrow of God* p. 110).

« Tu as là des semences grosses et vigoureuses. Viennent-elles de ton grenier ou les as-tu achetées au marché ? »

The semantic category of the sentence: *Those are very large and healthy seed-yams* should be clear enough to understand by the audience of the original text. The target reader of the translation would need clearer presentation of the message in his language to be able to decode the message the way the reader of the original does. This demands a syntactic compulsion to be filled in so as to be able to identify the ownership of *those seed-yams*. The use of the personal pronoun *Tu* in the sentence *Tu as là des semences grosses et vigoureuses* removes possible ambiguity that may be associated with this sentence most especially when it is taken in isolation. The supply of this detail is the function of the implied case-gap. The product of this literary translation becomes rich grammatically though many at times ambiguity in literature is part of its author's style. However grammatical ambiguity may hurt the overall message intention and presentation of the original author.

Similar implied case-gap is observable in the following example:

Example 5: Their mothers had told them that they were *born within three days of each other* (*Arrow of God* p. 40).

Leurs mères leur avait dit qu'ils étaient *nés à trois jours d'intervalle* (*La flèche de Dieu* P. 59).

The italicized phrase of the original is capable of presenting defective semantic category. Of course, one wonders how the reader of the original text would understand that the author is talking about the gap in the ages of the two characters being addressed in the novel. This loss is gained in the translation as the translators do not only go beyond the words but also delve into the implicit implication of the phrase. The translation: *nés à trois jours d'intervalle* removes the semantic confusion that may come along the interpretation of the phrase. One of the characters was born three days after the birth of the other. This is well captured in the translation. In literary translation, it becomes imperative that the translators of culture-based text such as *Arrow of God* decode the linguistic reasoning of the culture involved as well as the culture of the characters in the place setting of the work of arts.

Optional case-partners are a factor in case-grammar and their translation is an issue for discussion in literary

translation. Optional case-partners are both semantic and stylistic. The translators' decision is partly pragmatic and partly a decision dictated by reasons of exhaustiveness or style. The following example alludes to this remark.

Example 6: For a deity who chose a moment such as this to chastise his priest or abandon him before his enemies was inciting people to take liberties; and Umuaro was just ripe to do so... *Arrow of God* p. 230.

En effet, il fallait vraiment qu'il veuille inciter les gens à prendre des libertés, le dieu qui choisissait un moment tel que celui-ci pour châtier son prêtre ou l'abandonner à ses ennemis (*La flèche de Dieu* p. 299).

Here, the grammatical system of mood is expressed in the original. It is a protest by the people of Umuaro against the silence of gods to rescue their priest (Ezeulu), avert the death of his son (Obika) and prove its superior power over God of Christianity. The action of the deity to be mute in the face of the adversity of his people is seen as chastisement and consequently a call to Umuaro people not to rely on the god any longer for defense.

The translators choose between literality and reformulation to reproduce the message of the original in French. This choice is informed by the pragmatic effect the style of the author in the construction of the sentence would have on the reader of the translation. Sentence inversion adopted in the original is rearranged using the optional case-partners. The approach does not view the sentence structure of the original as the meaning determinant of the message but how the reader of the translation would best be communicated with the construed message.

The referential approach to translating literature is one important way of explicating the content-based message of the original. This is supplementary information case-gap. It consists of additional information, not given in the text, but which the translator chooses to supply from his knowledge of the situation and the cultural context. To some scholars, the approach is writing another text from the existing text but in reality, it is a way of reducing losses that could emerge as a result of ambiguity or cultural polarity between the original and target texts. The following example affirms this notion:

Example 6: 'I shall go over and tell the man that if he has no medicine to give to the sick man, he should at least spare the *gunpowder they will use for his funeral*'. (*Arrow of God* p. 113).

Je vais dire à cet homme que, s'il n'a aucun remède à donner au malade, il économise au moins la poudre qui sera utile *pour faire retentir les fusils* lors des funérailles. (*La flèche de Dieu* P. 153).

It is a common practice in Iboland that when a man dies, several gun salutes are fired to honour him. This action shows how important the deceased is to the entire family and the community. Local guns are normally used and gunpowder is needed to load and reload the guns. Local hunters are usually in charge of this exercise after they must have been adequately taken care of in terms of feeding and supply of local drinks. The use of gunpowder for funeral is not the cultural practice of the French. Its translation into

French demands supplementary information to give detail of the clause: *the gunpowder they will use for his funeral* for the purpose of clarity. This informs the employment of the additional expression: *pour faire retentir les fusils*. The supplementary information gives the understanding that the gunpowder is not to bury the death with but to use as part of the funeral rites for the man when he dies.

The supplementary information has the principal goal of making the message of the original which ordinarily appears obscure if translated literally clearer to the reader of the translation. Where the translator loses this focus and resorts to imitating the style of the author by adopting lexical correspondence, the result becomes ambiguous. This is the case of the following example:

Example 7: I told them this morning that had I been there when they took the decision I would have told them to go straight to Anita. There is a doctor there *who nips sickness off between his thumb and finger* p. 112.

Je leur ai dit ce matin que si j'avais été là lorsqu'ils prirent cette décision, je leur ai conseillé d'aller à Anita sur le champ. Il y a là- bas un guérisseur *qui sait étouffer la maladie entre le pouce et l'indexe*. P. 152.

The clause: *who nips sickness off between his thumb and finger* is self-explanatory as the sequence of events which unfold the seriousness of the sickness of Ogbuefi Amalu points to several efforts of the native doctor to cure him without positive results. The concern of the chief priest, Ezeulu, for the dying Ogbuefi is in the fact that he does not have confidence in this charlatan doctor. A doctor in a village called Anita is his preference as he trusts the man is capable of curing Ogbuefi's sickness effortlessly. Nipping off sickness between one's thumb and finger is exaggeration. The translators should have chosen between direct view to this trope and simple adaptation. *Etouffer une maladie* has the sense of smothering a sickness. This would sound a slight departure from the intention of the author as his thought is in the ability of the native doctor at Anita to cure the sickness with ease without resorting to shooting local guns in the name of chasing out the evil spirits believed to be responsible for the sickness. The decision of the translators of this message into French to substitute *thumb and finger* for *entre le pouce et l'indexe* is a demonstration of their playing down the supplementary information required to render the message into French.

Literary translation is a field of translation of its own and the approach adoptable in the discipline is not as unidirectional as some other forms of translation. Literature appeals to human sense. It treats the whole lot of experiences a man goes through, learns about or imagines in life. Since every literature draws its resources from the society, the cultural materials usable in one society differ from those of another society. This poses challenges to translator as he fights to equate a culture of the language of the original cultural text to that of another that must also look cultural to its reader. How this will be understood in the cultural parlance of the reader of the target text depends on the reader's interest in learning about the culture of another

people where cultural correspondence is not achievable. Except for anthropologists, historians, tourists, missionaries, etc. it is very difficult for French people, for example, just like any other Europeans, to believe human beings would take animals such as reptiles as their fathers and venerate them. This is the case of the following example where the people of Umunearo see snake (python) as their Father.

Example 8: If we are Christians, we must be ready to die for the faith; he said. You must be ready to kill the python as the people of the rivers killed Iguana. You address the python as Father. It is nothing but a snake, the snake that deceived our first mother, Eve. (*Arrow of God* P. 47).

Si nous sommes chrétiens, nous devons être prêts à mourir pour la foi, dit-il. Vous devez être prêts à tuer le python comme les gens des rivières tuèrent l'Iguane. Vous vous adressez au python comme à votre père. Ce n'est rien d'autre qu'un serpent, le serpent qui a trompé notre première mère, Eve. (*La flèche de Dieu* p. 67).

The sentence: *Vous vous adressez au python comme à votre père* plays down the cultural sentiment the devotees and the villagers attach to the snake. The worship of snake as a father of some African people has historical undertone. The history could be mystical or mythic. Indeed just like the people of Idiko-Ile in Iwajowa Local Government of Oyo State in Nigeria where a special kind of python is venerated, a house built for and celebrated every year, it is the African belief that the snake is not an ordinary snake. It was a man; a man powerful in magical practice mostly a great hunter that founded such a community, who eventually transformed into snake for different reasons. For example, in the case of Idiko-Ile, a man called Oluopo, the founder of the town was a powerful man who won so many wars for his people during 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century's wars. He repelled external Fulani aggressions of 1804. He grew very old but at old age, his children refused to give him adequate care. In fury he took a broom and a staff in his hand and went to a rock. He turned into a python, crawled into a cave with marks of broom and staff at the entrance of the cave. Ifa deity revealed to the ruler that except yearly sacrifices would be offered to him, the family would not be at rest. A priest was chosen for the man-turned snake and renamed Oba nla (a great king). Since then the people have been worshipping that snake. Children born to the family of the man-turned snake have special kind of hair at the centre of their heads till today and they dare not eat snake. The snake or its off springs visit at times the homes of those children that believe in the power of that snake. Sometimes when rain is delayed in the land, Oba-nla is consulted for abundance of rain and for peace in the land. Such a people would never equate the snake with the One *that deceived our first mother, Eve*. This is a similar case of the people of Umunearo. Killing the snake, to them, is killing their forefather; the one they believe has been giving them all they desire in the village. If the belief of the people is interpreted in this sense, then the translation would not be that the people address the snake as their father but that they believe the snake is their father. Therefore *vous vous adressez au python comme à votre père* may become *vous*

*croyez que le python est votre père*. Cultural knowledge of the people whose story is being related is very important to literary translator. All efforts must be geared towards getting this knowledge. Where prints do not help, consultation of people versatile in the culture must be sought for in order to find adequate correspondence to the message of the original.

From the interpersonal Meta function point of view, Achebe seems to have neutral attitude through his language on traditional religious belief. Indeed his preference for Christian religion is evident in the concluding part of the novel and the translator goes deep in the understanding of the thought and drive of the author. The following example can be again examined:

Example 9:

For a deity who chose a moment such as this to chastise his priest or abandon him before his enemies was inciting people to take liberties; and Umuario was just ripe to do so..... p. 230.

*En effet*, il fallait vraiment qu'il veuille inciter les gens à prendre des libertés, le dieu qui choisissait un moment tel que celui-ci pour châtier son prêtre ou l'abandonner à ses ennemis p. 299.

By the use of the adverb *En effet* (indeed) to begin the reproduction of the message, the emphasis is placed on the author's conception of his intention. The neutral language employed by the author attempts to create a gap but the translators bring such to limelight. The priest and his people are rubbished by the enemies according to the original message because the god; the deity in form of the python fails to arrest the situation. The translation asserts the inevitability of rejection of the deity by the people as it is the one that incites people against it and encourages them to free themselves from its cloak. This remark and the translation represent the triumph of Christianity over the traditional religion of Ibo people.

"Since we learn our culture from those around us, we may assume that we share it with them, so this kind of knowledge is likely to play a major role when we communicate with them, and in particular when we use language" [12]. As culture affects the way we deploy language, translators many at times use more standardized linguistic devices than the authors of the source texts. In other words what we are left with in that circumstance are traces of source texts. This is not unconnected with the cultural challenges that come along the translation of cultural nuances from one language into another.

Interlingua communication is a matter of relation. Lucjal Biel identifies two types of relations that are of interest in genre analysis. These are intertextuality and interdiscursivity. "intertextuality shows the relationship of a text to other texts while interdiscursivity analyses embeddings of text in other genres [13]. In the case of the texts under study, case grammar seems to be a strong determinant factor in deciphering the meaning of certain messages at intertextual and interdiscursive levels of the French translation of the novel.

## 5. Conclusion

Grammar is very important in translation as it transmits meaning. Author of literature is always at liberty to use language as he considers suitable for his writing. For the beauty of style he may transgress grammatical “rules” and expand semantic scope. These manipulations become issues to tackle for translators in their search for meaning. Michael Halliday’s Systemic Functional Grammar throws light into social semiotic approach of language, its network of systems and interrelated sets of options for making meaning.

Since meaning is the major preoccupation of translation and language is the vehicle of culture, the cultural exigencies in literature are veered from grammatical direction to semantic direction by grammatical manipulations of the author and the translator. Meaning is obtainable from different levels of lexico-grammar, semantic and phonology. Language is meaning potential. It plays a major role in divulging the message (implicit or otherwise) of the original in the translation. Where ambiguity is noticeable as a result of case grammar which ordinarily may not pose serious problem to the reading of the original, it becomes imperative to translators to fill in the gap appropriately to transmit the meaning of the entire message to the target readers.

The analysis of the translation of Case-grammar in Chinua Achebe’s *Arrow of God* into French affirms the experiential functions the grammatical resources have in the transmission of various structures of grammar from English into French. In cultural lodes that possess both historical and faith beliefs, the translators are obliged to delve into such. This is very important as one of the reasons of writing is to sell to the outside world the cultural and language behaviors of people. Literary translation scholars and critics are open to multi-dimensional approaches to translating case-gaps. The models explored in this study could be applied in the translation and critique of any literature and translated text.

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