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SEMANTIC FIELD AND COMPONENTIAL SEMANTIC STRUCTURE OF TERMS OF INEBRIETY IN FRENCH

The article considers the problem of systemic studies of the vocabulary in terms of the theory of semantic fields and componential semantic structure of its units. Componential analysis makes it possible to describe the meanings of terms denoting inebriety by means of differential semes representing the sememes of this semantic field. A sememe is constituted by combining some integral seme with a number of differential semes represented by a system of oppositions of semantic components as alternate units of a certain semantic field.

Key words: category, meaning, significance, semantic component, semantic field, seme.

1. The study of semantic fields. According to the theory of semantic fields, an empirical study of any block of words and word equivalents joined together by their meanings aims at examining the most essential parameter of such a field, i.e. its semantic structure. A systematic analysis of a certain semantic field primarily provides for analyzing denotative meanings of its units – *sememes*.

The most rigorous scientific way to analyze the denotative component of lexical meaning may be effectuated by applying the method of componential semantics. This method suggests segmenting denotative meaning into *diagnostic*, i.e. “sufficient and indispensable” semantic components, or *semes*. Due to an amalgamation of semes which characterize any semantic field the method of componential semantic analysis may be regarded quite literally a crowning accomplishment of the system-and-structure approach to language, liable to analysis of lexical systems of all languages of the world.

Prior to a case study of semantic components of alcoholic inebriety it is necessary to identify the notion that underlies the given semantic field and

functions as its integral seme. The explanatory dictionary of the English language identifies this notion through the verb *to drink* defined as follows: “take alcohol, esp. to excess” [The Oxford Dictionary and Thesaurus 1997]. In a similar way this notion is defined in French explanatory dictionaries: “qui n’ est pas dans son état normal, pour avoir trop bu d’alcool; qui est saisi d’ivresse” [Encyclopédie Universelle Larousse 2021]; “qui a l’esprit troublé par le vin ou une liqueur alcoolique” [Dictionnaire de la langue française, par É. Littré 2021]; “qui a le cerveau troublé par l’effet des boissons fermentées, par l’alcool, etc [Dictionnaire de l’Académie Française 2021].

The case study is based on French lexical and phrasal units related to “taking alcohol, esp. to excess” and grammatically reduced to predicates and attributes.

This notion has been constantly filling, and will probably fill for a long time in the future, a highly important place in the human communicative activities no matter what nation the human being belongs to. In this sense a linguistic description of this phenomenon will always remain relevant.

It is noteworthy that this notion overlaps some other notions, such as “mood”, “insanity”, “bad physical condition”, etc. The connection of these notions with the notion of taking alcohol can be easily verified in dictionary definitions, namely in the definitions of adjectives denoting “drunk” in French with their derived meaning based on metaphor: “crazy”: “fou” [*brindezingue, pété*]; “exhausted”: “épuisé” [*rétamé*]; “frozen”: “très froid” [*gelé, pris*], “round”: “rond” [*rond, bourré*], “gloomy”: “plus sombre” [*noir, gris*] [Le Robert – dico en ligne 2021].

2. Componential semantics of the units of a semantic field. The method of componential semantics in linguistics reflects a more general *principle of discreetness* that characterizes the way of perceiving the world by the human mind [Шафиков 1999: 52]. Under all latitudes the human thinking displays its universal character by presuming the discreet structure of any object of perception, at least in some of its parts. Paradoxically enough, such an assumption allows the human mind to categorize fragments of the world as objects of perception, on the other hand, the boundaries between the resultant categories turn out to be fuzzy, which evokes doubt about reliability of the principle of categorization as such. Componential semantics may be considered as a structural theory of lexical semantics which, in its most rigorous form, describes the prototypical

object of a category, i.e. *the prototypical denotatum*. Such a denotatum corresponds to the “mental model” that, according to Ph.N.Johnson-Laird, represents “the ideal situation” with stereotype conditions of using lexical units, though this model may admit some variation of the typical conditions of a category, as there is no perfect knowledge [Johnson-Laird 1986].

A creative mind would consider it challenging and perspective to combine such *prima facie* antagonistic theories, as the theory of semantic components and the theory of prototypes. On closer examination this combination would look as natural as the interaction of theory and practice, or as the principle of dialectic thinking. More so, the theory of prototypes serves to develop the doctrine that maintains the componential structure of lexical meaning. The point is that a category may be lexicalized on the assumption of two principles, one of which, the more rigorous one, serves for the nucleus of the category, while the other one is handy for its periphery, due to the fuzzy boundaries between categories [Biggs 1982: 116].

So, the contradiction of the two basic theories of meaning from the position of the classic theory of categories and the position of the theory of prototypes seems to be far-fetched. Any description of a semantic object representing a fragment of the real world requires a certain degree of decomposition into ingredients. This perfectly conforms to the process of thinking that includes *analysis*, i.e. breaking a whole into constituent parts, on the one hand, and *synthesis*, i.e. integration of parts into a whole by means of contrasting their more relevant and less relevant qualities, as well as the qualities of objects themselves.

The veritable character of componential semantics may be argued by the assumption that the condition of verity must be non-contradictory. Thus, the componential semantic structure of the French phrasal verb *boire à ventre déboutonné* “drink alcohol to excess” may be expressed as follows: [X] “to drink” [Y] “an excessive quantity of alcohol” → X “inebriety”. Such a structure asserts its veritable character in sentences which contain contradiction:

- 1) “X drank Y (alcohol), но X did not get drunk”,
- 2) “X drank Y (alcohol), но Y was not the cause of inebriation of X”.

Thus, verification of a statement as veritable is based on a syntactic structure, as distinct from the structure of lexical meaning; in other words, the meaning of a sentence prevails over the meaning of a word as its component part [Leech 1983: 105].

The case study of the semantic field “inebriety” in French is conducted in two stages. The first stage accounts for dividing a category, such as the category of inebriety, into subcategories [Ломтев 1976: 399]. The second stage is necessary to work out a definite number of differential semes. The following table displays the lexical set of inebriety into corresponding subsets.

The French lexical set of inebriety fragmented into subsets

number of framen- -tions	rank of fragmenting	set fragmented (S)	resultant subsets of fragmentation
1	I	S. INEBRIETY	1) inebriety as a process 2) inebriety as a state
2	I	S. INEBRIETY	1) excessive inebriety 2) moderate inebriety 3) mellow inebriety
3	II	S 1. inebriety as a process	1) constant inebriety * 2) periodic inebriety
4	II	S 1. inebriety as a process	1) usual way of drinking alcohol * 2) special way of drinking alcohol
5		S 1.1. special way of	1) drink alcohol before leave-taking

	III	drinking alcohol	2) drink a loving cup 3) drink somebody's health 4) drink a toast 5) drink alcohol on the rocks 6) drink alcohol by sipping 7) drink alcohol without pausing for breath 8) drink alcohol slowly savoring 9) drink alcohol at a gulp
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Comment: the sign * denotes neutralization of the opposition.

A sememe combines a differential seme (or a number of such semes) with the idiosyncratic integral seme “inebriety”; and each seme as an invariant forms an opposition of semantic components (SC): 1) seme “inebriety” = SC “inebriety as a process” : SC “inebriety as a state” : SC “excessive inebriety” : SC “moderate inebriety” : SC “mellow inebriety”; 2) seme “inebriety as a process” = SC “constant inebriety” : SC “periodic inebriety” : SC “usual way of drinking alcohol” : SC “special way of drinking alcohol”; 3) seme “special way of drinking alcohol” = SC “drink alcohol before leave-taking” : SC “drink a loving cup” : SC “drink somebody's health” : SC “drink a toast” : SC “drink alcohol on the rocks” : SC “drink by sipping” : SC “drink alcohol without pausing for breath” : SC “drink alcohol slowly savoring” : SC “drink alcohol at a gulp”.

Thus, logically, 15 variant semantic components represent 3 invariant semes, but semantically some components account for no sememes due to neutralization of two oppositions (see above). The lexical units in French which represent the final list of sememes may be divided into three sets:

- 1) verbs of action in the form of simple and phrasal verbs;
- 2) verbs of state in the form of compound nominal predicates (link-verb + adjective);
- 3) adjectives which function as attributes to the noun or as predicatives in a compound nominal predicate.

Each such a set may be considered as a subfield in the semantic field of inebriety. Variants of such lexical units which function as absolute synonyms are not taken stock of in the final count of lexemes and phrasemes.

The lexical composition of the semantic field of inebriation in French may be presented in the following way:

Subset of verbs of action:

1) [**inebriety + inebriety as a process + periodic inebriety**]: *aller un peu fort sur la bouteille, caresser la bouteille, cultiver la bouteille, donner des accolades à une bouteille, être voué au bleu, être un ami de la dive bouteille, ne pas cracher sur la bouteille* (altogether 7);

2) [**inebriety + inebriety as a process + excessive inebriety**]: *boire à ventre déboutonné, boire d'autant, boire un bon coup, boire un coup (un verre) de trop, boire à sa soif (sans soif), boire sec, boire comme un chanfre, boire comme un évier, boire comme une éponge, boire comme un grenadier, boire comme un Polonais, boire comme un pompier, boire comme un sonneur, boire comme un templier, boire comme un tonneau, boire comme un trou, boire comme un trouper, boire jusqu'à plus soif, boire rasades sur rasades, en tenir (une), en tenir une musette, mettre son nez dans le bleu, mettre pinte sur chopine, ne pas dessoûler, s'adonner à la boisson, prendre son lit en marche, s'arroser le jabot, se donner une belle couche, s'empêguer, s'en donner dans le casque, s'enivrer, se mouiller le canayon, se pocharder, se soûler comme une bourrique (comme une grive / comme un Polonais), tenir une bonne cuite* (altogether 35);

3) [**inebriety + inebriety as a process + moderate inebriety**]: *boire chopine, boire un coup, boire un litre, boire un pot, boire raisonnablement* (altogether 5);

4) [**inebriety + inebriety as a process + mellow inebriety**]: *boire la goutte, boire un canon, boire un doigt de vin* (altogether 3);

5) [**inebriety + inebriety as a process + special way of drinking alcohol**]: СК «пить на прощанье» *boire le coup de l'étrier* : СК «пить круговую» *boire à la ronde* : СК «пить за чье-то здоровье» *boire à la santé, boire aux anges* : СК «пить с тостом» *boire des brindes* : СК «пить со льдом» *boire à la glace* : СК «пить маленькими глотками» *boire à petites gorgées* : СК «пить долго и не отрываясь» *boire à grands traits* : СК «пить медленно и смакуя» *boire à longs traits* : СК «пить залпом»

boire à la régالade, boire d'une seule traite (tout d'un trait), boire à plein bouche : (altogether 9).

Subset of verbs of state:

1) [**inebriety + inebriety as a state + excessive inebriety**]: avoir l'air poivre, avoir le nez de chien, avoir mis ses souliers à bascule, avoir les dents mêlées, avoir sa prune, être ivre mort (à mourir), être ivre à rouler sous la table, en avoir une pochetée, être adonné (porté) à la boisson, être bien bu, être brindezingue, être plein comme un boudin, être chargé comme une bourrique, être dans les brindes, être dans le coma, être dans la vigne, être gris jusqu'à la troisième capucine, être imbibé comme une éponge, être plein comme une outre, être pris de boisson, être rond comme une boule, être soûl, être soûl comme une grive, plein comme un œuf, se griser, se mettre dans les brindezingues, se prendre de vin, prendre (avoir / tenir) une cuite (altogether 28);

2) [**inebriety + inebriety as a state + moderate inebriety**]: avoir sa pointe (de vin), avoir un coup dans le nez, avoir le casque (de pompier), avoir chaud aux oreilles, être éméché, être entre deux vins (altogether 6).

Subset of adjectives:

1) [**inebriety + inebriety as a state + excessive inebriety**]: aviné, bourré (gelé) à zéro, bourré comme une valise, bourré comme un coing, fin saoul, gris comme un cordelier, gris comme un Polonais, H.S. (hors service), ivre comme des tiques, ivre comme une vache, ivre mort, ivre comme un porc, pinté, plein comme un boudin, plein comme une cantine, plein (soûl) (rond) comme un oeuf (bourrique), plein comme la bourrique à Robespierre, plein comme un sac, plein comme une vache, soûl (ivre) comme une grive, plein comme un tonneau, plein comme une outre, plein comme un fût, plein comme un cartable, plein comme une bombe, plein comme un âne, plein comme un bourrin, raide défoncé, rond comme une bille, rond comme une balle, rond comme une soucoupe, rond comme une queue de pelle, soûl jusqu'à la troisième capucine, torchon, trop ivre (trop bourré) (altogether 35);

2) [**inebriety + inebriety as a state + moderate inebriety**]: assommé, beurré, beurré comme un petit beurre, dans le sirop, asphyxié, bille, blindé, brindezingue, bourré, bout de bois, bu, cané, cuit вареный, défoncé, déglingué, enjuponné, fadé, fait, gelé, givré заиндевевший,

hourdé (ourdé), imbibé, ivre, mûr, nase, noir, paf , pété, pion, poivre, pochard, plein, plein de vin (pris de vin), pris, rétamé, raide, rond, rond comme une soucoupe, schlass, soûl (saoul), soûlographe, viande saoule, tordu (всего 44);

3) [**inebriety + inebriety as a state + mellow inebriety**]: *chaud aux oreilles, éméché, entre deux vins, gris, pompette, un peu fort bourré* (altogether 6).

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