

MODERN LINGUISTICS:

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1. JUSTIFICATION

In recent years, programs, circulars, extension articles, specialized works, recommendations of the Body Inspectorate brief, everything that is said or written about the methodology of the mother tongue insist on the The need to integrate, in a new pedagogical practice, the data of modern linguistics.

But this deemed integration necessary does not go without creating a number of difficulties that one can very schematically group into two categories:

- Methodological difficulties;

-Technical difficulties

The first ones, on which it is not appropriate to insist here, are linked to the same innovation. From the moment when we want to give the mother tongue school activities a new status and a completely redesigned purpose, all the problems arise at the same time. How to promote language as a communication tool? How to Organize Learning with a view to greater fluency in oral and written language? What standard should be targeted? How can we reconcile free expression and respect for these norms? What place should be assigned to spelling throughout the process? Is it appropriate to ban systematic exercises?

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To these truly fundamental problems are superposed for teachers of the pitfalls of another nature: it is the technical difficulties that arise from the introduction of modern linguistics in the debate.

For non-specialists, these difficulties themselves are at least three-tiered:

- Difficulties associated with understanding the goals pursued by the majority of contemporary linguists;
- Difficulties due to the abstract and formal nature of the procedures developed to try to achieve these goals;
- Difficulties in terminology inherent in the recent constitution of a true "language technology".

However, from this set of difficulties, those related to terminology seem to be of greatest concern to teachers. This is a usual "rejection phenomenon", understandable, if not excusable. Indeed, in US sectors of human activity, it is common ground that a terminology used is the first and most opaque of a series of screens that interpose between the reader and the writing deemed unusual, often approached with a vaguely prevention Worried or annoyed. About this screen, which they claim to play a particular blocking role, Annie DELAVEAU Françoise KERLEROUX point out: A biology student is sympathetically willing to learn new terms; A student in linguistics, No. This is for a main reason, which is most often stated in either of the following two forms: Language and reflections on language and language are the most shared thing in the world. Why a special vocabulary to talk about it? Thus linguistics is a disputed discipline, while the merits of research in physics, for example, are not being questioned.

- Why talk about MORPHEME, EXPANSION, segmentation, when we could just as well say: word, complement, analysis? »⁽¹⁾ And it is John LYONS who, in a brief paragraph at the top of his book devoted to general linguistics, responds in advance to these questions so often heard:

According to some, terminology, "jargon", modern linguistics would be more complex than it is necessary: it is an irrelevant criticism that we will not retain. Every science, in fact, has a technical vocabulary of its own:⁽²⁾ and it is because the layman accepts without

discussion the well-established sciences, especially the sciences of nature, that it does not reproach them with their specialized vocabulary. The technical terms used by linguists have been imposed as the progress of their work has been achieved: they can easily be understood when we approach this discipline with sympathy and without prejudice. Let's not lose sight of the words that the non-linguist uses when speaking about the language (word, syllable, letter, sentence, noun, verb, etc.) were originally part of the technical terminology of traditional grammar and are no less " ' abstract ' in their preference as the recent neologisms of linguists⁽³⁾. They need new terms that add to, and sometimes replace, non-specialist knowledge, in part because the use of many traditional terms in everyday language has made them insufficiently precise to serve obsolete goals and partly because the progress of modern linguistics has, in some respects, surpassed traditional grammar in its attempt to construct a theory of linguistic structure ⁽⁴⁾.

¹DELAVAUX A. and KERLEROUX F., Linguistic terminology, definition of some terms, "French language" magazine, Larousse, Paris, May 1970, N ° 6, devoted to Apprenticeship of French, mother tongue (p.102).

²François Xavier K, Specialty French Course, G1, G2, G3, L1 and L2 Languages and Business, Fac. of Letters and Human Sciences, 2004-2005 until 2011-2012 (unpublished).

³MAURICE MUYAYA W. French Linguistics Course, G2 Languages and Business, Fac. of Letters and Human Sciences, 2005-2006 (unpublished).

⁴J. LYONS, General Linguistics, Introduction to Theoretical Linguistics, Larousse, collection. "Language and Language", Paris, 1970 (pp.5-6).

⁵PEYTARD J. and GENOUVRIER E., Linguistics and teaching of French,

Linguistics has become a science. However, as Jean PEYTARD and Emile GENOUVRIER write, "All science needs to enclose its own conceptual tools in an unambiguous

vocabulary" ⁽⁵⁾. Getting acquainted with the keywords used by today's linguists is to access the key concepts that base their new approach. It is also to give itself the possibility to establish a renovated methodology of the mother tongue on more rigorous data, to say everything: more scientific.

2. DEVELOPED...

But before we isolate some of these new terms, some ambiguities must be overcome which, at the outset, obscure the data of the problem. More specifically, it is important to be aware of a number of sometimes poorly perceived facts.

2.1. MODERN LINGUISTICS

It's something other than just a transient mode:

In recent decades, it has been the will of some specialists to form the study of language and the phenomenon of language in autonomous science.

For centuries, and until recently, this study was only undertaken to the extent that it was in the service of more prestigious disciplines. Thus, according to the Times, it was subordinated in particular to:

- **Philosophy:** For example one wondered whether word represented "the thing" or "the image of the thing";
- **Theology:** To study the language, it was, for example, to be able to understand the biblical phrase "in the beginning was the verb";
- **History:** Have all the peoples of Europe or the world, at one time, spoken the same language?
- **Psychology:** The parts of the speech were supposed to cover the term the definitively stopped list of the "categories of thought". A certain technique of grammatical analysis allowed to discover these categories...
- **Logic:** The language was conceived as a kind of logical creation. Elucidate the functioning of language it was in this context to understand what was believed to be the logical organization of the universe.

Without claiming that these approaches were ridiculous or false, the linguists of the last generations wanted to narrow down and precisely define the scope of their study. They wanted deliberately and temporarily to put aside all the questions that most of their predecessors asked themselves to consider language only as a system of signs whose internal functioning should be observed without a priori. To do this, they have developed original methods of analysis. And if these revolutionary methods have made, and still do, so much noise as to be perceived by some as a true fashion, it is first of all because they upset the secular conception that we had of the phenomenon language. But it is also and above all because they have been, rightly, considered exemplary by specialists in other disciplines. Thus, under the label of structuralism in particular, the different sectors of research in the field of the human sciences have largely been inspired by the procedures developed by contemporary linguistics.

2.2. As a whole, contemporary linguists do not work for pedagogues!

Predominantly concerned with researching the internal laws of language functioning, modern linguistics only very incidentally address the problems that are of concern to teachers. It leaves to other disciplines the care to study, for example, the question of language learning (Psycholinguistics), that of the different speak according to the regions and types of users (socio-linguistic), that of the use " "Correct" (normative grammar), vocabulary (lexicology).

The specialists in these particular disciplines work quite often in close collaboration, while taking great care to define independently the limits of their study and their methods of research. Applied Linguistics brings together a number of these complementary although distinct branches. Of relatively recent creation, she is interested in practical applications that can be drawn from theoretical discoveries. In recent years, it has shown a clear tendency to devote an increasing part of its activity to the study of the problems posed by the teaching of foreign languages. It has only recently been that it has included the pedagogy of the mother tongue among its concerns. But there is still a lot to be done in this area...

It is therefore up to the teacher, in the current state of affairs, the task of developing self-theory of applied linguistics.

It is helped, continually more effectively, by multidisciplinary teams including a majority of teachers. They develop provisional syntheses that, taking into account the recent achievements of linguistics and other related disciplines, attempt to meet the specific needs of methodological renovation.

2.3 Linguistics is not one and indivisible!

Although starting from a structuralist conception of the language (the language is a system of signs, i.e. a STRUCTURE) and aiming roughly the same purpose (to determine the laws of functioning of the language), contemporary linguists have developed Theories and methods of investigation very different according to the "schools" (sometimes according to the "chapels"...). Some will therefore proclaim themselves "functionalist", "Distributionnalistes", "généralistes"... depending on whether they adopt the theoretical viewpoint of prestigious leaders such as Swift, BLOOM-FIELD or CHOMSKY...

The near future may select, among all these "schools", those whose work will be most useful to teachers, the ones whose discoveries will be most directly transferable in the course of French.

However, in the current state of affairs and given the fact that this research is all more and more formal and abstract

abstract it would be unreasonable, and probably impossible, to opt for one or more theories and to subordinate the pedagogy of the mother tongue.

In this case, wisdom dictates a more cautious and realistic approach: that of identifying concepts that, common to all trends or specific to a few, or even one, seem to be able to underlie a new methodology. more rigorous and more effective.

It is these concepts and their translation in the form of technical terms which, chosen in this spirit, are repeated in the elementary lexicon below.

3. SOME CONCEPTS, SOME TERMS⁶...

3.1. BASIC OPPOSITION COUPLES

Several important distinctions introduced by modern linguistics are organized in pairs whose elements are in opposition relationship.

3.1.1 LANGUAGE/SPEECH

Language, considered as a human-specific faculty and common to all men, consists of two components:

THE LANGUAGE

Set of necessary conversations adopted by a given community, it is essentially a social product. It consists of all the means of expression available to individuals belonging to the same linguistic community. So the language is a code.

THE WORD

Speech is the individual way to use this code. In other words, the word updates the language that is only virtual. If the language is an external given to the individual, the word, on the contrary, is relatively free and personal creation.

Note well:

- For many linguists, the term speech is synonymous with word. It refers to any statement more important than the sentence. This is a reaction against the tendency to regard the sentence as the maximum analytical unit.

-Word and speech do not, as one might think reference to a purely oral approach. The word as the speech can be made in writings.

⁶DUBOIS J. and ALII, Linguistics Dictionary, Ed Larousse, Paris, 1973

3.1.2. MEANING/SIGNIFIED

THE SIGNIFIER

When the word "hat" is pronounced, a sequence of four different sounds is emitted: when the same word is written, it is represented by seven small separate graphic elements (the letters). All of these four sounds or seven graphs, that is, the whole of what the ear hears or what the eye sees, constitutes the signifier of the word.

IT MEANS

But, in this "acoustic image" or "virtual image", the French speaker associates a sense, a kind of mental image, a concept. This mental representation is the signified.

Note well: One of the fathers of modern linguistics, F. De SAUSSURE, claimed that a linguistic sign (e.g. a word) results from the combination of a signifier and a signifier. One and the other, he said, are inseparable like the front and the back of the same sheet of paper.

3.1.3. SYNTAGMATIC AXIS/PARADIGMATIC AXIS

This is again a fundamental opposition. More than the previous two, it is proving fruitful in pedagogical terms.

THE PARADIGMATIC AXIS

In order to define this expression, the meaning of the word phrase should first be clarified. This will be discussed in a later paragraph on the units.

It is sufficient, for now, to know that the syntagmatic axis could be called horizontal axis (as opposed to another that would be vertical) and that is related to the linearity of the discourse. It falls in the sense, indeed, that the one who speaks emits successive sounds that chain each other on the timeline. Contrary to what happens in a musical symphony or in the lobby of a noisy

train station, the one who speaks can not say at the same time for example the words "bike" and "motorcycle" or the words "I", "eat", "des" and "plums". The speech in natural language (**Note well.** the word "natural" here contrasts language in the sense that it is usually heard in these other "languages" artificially constructed by man that would be music, Telegraph code, Mathematics, etc.) is Characterized by its linearity, linked itself to the obligatory SUCCESSIVITE of the linguistic signs. This is why linguists talk about a talking channel, an image that illustrates the two concepts of successivité and solidarity of the elements.

It should be noted that what is true for the oral speech is also for the written discourse that is subject to the same characteristics of linearity and successivité (unlike, for example, the "language" of modern mathematics which can translate into a single Graph of information that the language should stretch in long lines of Scripture!).

In this regard, it should be pointed out that to express itself is to organize a number of linguistic signs on a strictly linear axis to translate "what one wants to say", or, "what one wants to say" for example, describe a landscape and the feelings that its contemplation arouses is not beforehand structured according to this principle of linearity. As you cannot tell everything at the same time when you see and feel a lot of things simultaneously, you have to do some sort of drawing operation. This is not without difficulty, especially for young children.

The syntagmatic axis is therefore the right-hand segment on which the linguistic signs follow each other.

It is sometimes referred to as the **constraint axis**. In fact, in a given language, linguistic signs must obey a number of organisational rules called syntagmatic laws. This is the way it is not possible to say in French:

The of the Briefcase factor was very heavy.

This sentence is AGRAMMATICALE because it transgresses syntagmatic French twice.

It should be noted that syntagmatic laws are not the only rules governing the linear organization of discourse.

So the sentence:

Green Colorless ideas sleep furiously (7)

is fully in line with the French syntagmatic rules. So it's perfectly grammatical. But it is perceived as meaningless. It is said to be unacceptable. In fact, other laws semantic, that is to say, linked to problems such as the place of words but to questions of significance, are also involved.

The sentence:

If I knew, I wouldn't have come.

Is therefore:

-ACCEPTABLE (It is semantically correct, it has meaning; it is perfectly intelligible).

- AGRAMMATICALE (It beings are unaware syntagmatic rules of French).

In addition, the elements that take place on the spoken channel are linked by some reports: These are the SYNTAGMATISUES **reports**. Some language units have with others what might be called solidarity relationships.

In the sentence:

The crane lifts the planks.

The group "The Crane" is linked to the verb "raises" by a type of report differ from that which binds "the planks" to that same verb.

Similarly in the sentence

In the village, Great was the animation,

"Grande" is in relation with animation and not with "village" yet closer.

These are constraints of the type syntagmatic which make that when someone starts a simple sentence by "Yesterday" it is forced to use a verb conjugated to the past to the rigour of the present to the exclusion of any verb in the future. Similarly, to start a simple sentence of the type **subject-verb** by the article "the" rather than by the article "the" will condition the form that it will have to choose, not only for the name but also for the verb which has yet the reputation of "having nothing to do with the Article»....

THE PARADIGMATIC AXIS

The term **paradigm** has existed for a long time in the scholarly terminology of traditional grammar. To combine, for example, the verb **sings** to the six persons of the present indicative active so that a column arrangement will appear the sequence of the invariable radicals (CHANT-) and the succession of the endings (suffixes – e,-ES,-e,-ONS, etc.) is to build a paradigm.

In modern linguistics, the word and the adjective that he spawned have taken on a rather different meaning.

As opposed to **the syntagmatic** axis (horizontal axis of constraints), **the paradigmatic axis** can be considered the vertical axis of the freedom of choice.

Indeed, when a person expresses himself, everything happens as if (this is only a view of the mind, all theoretical, but fruitful...) At each moment of his speech, she selected an element or a set of elements available in a "stock" organized in a very special way that she would have in memory.

So in the sentence:

The neighbor's son buys a new car.

One could have chosen, instead of "the"

- A
- This
- the youngest;

But not:

- I
 - Book
- } ...who would transgress certain laws syntagmatic

-The... that would not take into account a "downstream" syntagmatic constraint ("Son" and "buys" = singular) instead of "son".

- Brother
- Mari
- Boss

But not:

- fast
- Sister (syntagmatic constraint "upstream": "the" = masculine) instead of "The neighbor's sons".
- The President of the Republic
- Pierre
- The old gentleman who touched a legacy
- His but not:-My brother and I!...
- When the hens will have teeth!... instead of "buys"
- Buy
- Bought
- Bought

But not:

- Buy!...
- Rent A
- Damaged

-Delivered

But not : -Try but not:-tasted!... ("Downstream" semantic constraint)

Each of these lists is a **paradigm**.

A paradigm is not necessarily made up of words or groups of words. We can imagine a paradigm of smaller elements. So in the word "sings"

One could replace CHANT-by

Jou

- march -

Stop

- demand -

- **Note Well**: Wide and open list.

It could be replaced by

-ES

-Ons

-EZ

- Note Well. Short and closed list in the word "chants"

We could replace – I – by-er – (sing)

-Ø – (Let's Sing).

Note well : – The Sign Ø notes the absence of an element. This very absence is "bearer of meaning" here it indicates that it is a present indicative. Similarly, the absence of "S" in the final of the noun "book" indicates that the word is singular.

At the outset of these few examples, one can define the paradigm as the set of terms of the same **functional class**. In particular, these are all units which, in a structure governed by syntagmatic rules, will be able to assume the same function.⁽⁸⁾

As PEYTARD and GENOUVRIER write (cited in P. 105):

"The language operates on two axes: **the syntagmatic axis** which governs the possible clash of different linguistic signs, and the **paradigmatic axis** which reflects the relationship between the signs capable of providing the same function".

3.2. THE UNITS

All contemporary linguists are unanimous in considering that the traditional division in "parts of the discourse" does not allow the isolation of satisfactory language units. They proved that to consider the word as the smallest unit to be considered was a method error. Thus, in the past, the "I" of "changing" in the phrase "We sang popular airs" did not enter a grammatical class in the same way as the name "airs", the pronoun "we" or the qualifier "popular". However, this "I" of insignificant appearance plays a very important role in the sentence: alone it situates the action in time. And it is because of him that we could not complete the statement by "next week"...

But these same linguists differ deeply, according to the "schools", on how to repeat, define and name the types of units that a new approach to the language mechanism encourages them to discern.

There is therefore no universally accepted terminology in this area. Only the terms that are the subject of a fairly broad agreement are retained here.

THE UNITY NOTION

When linguists speak of language units, they refer to what they call relevant units (also called with some nuances of meaning, **distinctive** units or **discriminative**).

In simplifying, it can be said that a unit, considered from a functional point of view, is an element of the discourse (from the simple letter to the whole sentence) whose presence, absence or replacement by an element belonging to the same functional class, to a Determined place of the spoken chain, affects the meaning of the whole. In a structured ensemble, a relevant unit is therefore always a bearer of meaning.

As well:

- the "I" of "chanting" is a distinctive unit (relevant, discriminative) because, even if "I" alone does not mean anything, it affects the whole word of the meaning "imperfect". Its absence, i.e. its replacement by \emptyset , would alter the overall meaning of the verb;
- In the phrase "I stay at home because it rains", the group "because it Rains" is a relevant unit. Its deletion, or its replacement by "because I have toothache", affects the meaning of the whole.

But...

- ... in the sentence "Suddenly it began to scream", "everything" is not a unit discriminative extricable as such. It cannot be replaced by " \emptyset " or by another "unit" which would belong to the same functional class;
- ... in the word "well", the "s" is not a relevant unit, while it becomes one in the word "books";
- ... the "I" of the word "truck" is not a distinguishing unit because if it was removed or replaced, for example, by another vowel, one would create a word... meaningless.

Note well: Further analysis would help to understand that the initial "ramp" letter is a small, relevant unit. In fact, replacing "R" with "L" would be tantamount to forming a word with a different meaning. This is because "R" differs from "L" as the two words "ramp" and "lamp" have distinct senses.

As we can see, a distinctive unit must therefore be able to fit into a paradigm, that is, in a functional class.

3.2.2. MONÈMES AND PHONEMES – LEXEMES AND MORPHEMES

An example of this functional approach which consists, in particular, of locating discriminative units is provided by the work of the French linguist MARTINET. The theory and terminology that he has developed, even if they are not admitted by all his colleagues, open up methodological perspectives full of wealth.

It will be remembered first of all that a phrase like "I eat an apple" or part of that phrase, such as "I Eat" or "an apple," are linguistic signs. Whoever hears them or reads them recognizes them as carriers of meaning. Each linguistic **sign** thus perceived has two sides: the **signified** (meaning, the value) and the mean (simple material reality hearing or visual). A linguistic sign "in its own right" and which, therefore, possesses as such a mean and a signified, is called MONÈME, so it is the significant elemental unity.

Thus, in the sentence below, four monèmes "I", "eat", "one" and "apple" are distinguished. Here the four monèmes are to coincide with the four words.

But in the phrase "We ate an apple" we can isolate six monèmes: "We", "Mang –", "-I" (bearer of the meaning "imperfect"), "-ons" (bearer of the meaning "first person plural in the same way as" we "), "one" and "Apple".

Each of these monèmes belongs to a functional class formed by the paradigm where it can settle.

If the analysis is refined, the monèmes can be divided into two types each with a specific label: the Lexemes and the morphemes. The linguistic sign "chant" will include two parts: "Chant-" and "-ons".

- CHANT-is a unit with the signified "full" belonging to a wide and open paradigmatic series (the language always has the possibility to create new ones). This type of monème is called LEXÈME.
- ONS is a more restricted, less net-served unit belonging to a limited and closed paradigmatic series. This monème, a true grammatical tool, bears the name of morpheme.

Another example: The linguistic sign "my duties" comprises three monèmes. "Mes", "Duty-" and "-S". The first and third are morphemes, the second is a LEXÈME.

IMPORTANT NOTE

Many linguists do not use this terminology, even if they agree with the principles it translates. This is how the term morpheme used with the meaning of MONÈME will very often be encountered. In this case, the distinction between LEXÈME and MONÈME (very discussed distinction!) within the MONÈME category falls, of course!

In turn the MONÈME (the morpheme for some...) can be divided into its first elements: then we obtain smaller units called phonemes. Phonemes are the constituent elements of the mean of Monèmes. They are not bearer of meaning.

Thus the monème "Boy" is composed of five PHONEMES. Of all the foregoing it can be concluded that this is a two-tiered analysis:

-First level of analysis

The speech is divided into minimum units carrying meaning (the MONÈMES).

-Second level of analysis

Each monème is analyzed in its constituent parts, without meaning (**phonemes**).

These two levels base what Martinet calls the DOUBLE articulation of language: The MONÈMES are the units of first articulation; Phonemes are the units of second articulation.

3.2.3. THE PHRASES

The phrase is a combination of monèmes forming a broader unit in a hierarchical organization. It is therefore always made up of a sequence of elements and is itself constituting a unit of higher rank. So it's a sort of middle tier unit.

In the phrase "the husband of the neighbor bought a new car" two phrases are distinguished:

- A NOMINAL phrase (sequence of monèmes ordered around a noun):

The neighbor's husband;

- A VERBAL phrase (continuation of monèmes organized around a verb):

Bought a new car

Each of these two phrases can be analyzed in turn in units of lower rank. This is how:

- The nominal phrase is divided into

- A nominal phrase

The husband

- A prepositional phrase

of the Neighbor

- The verbal phrase is divided into

- A verb

Purchased

- A nominal phrase

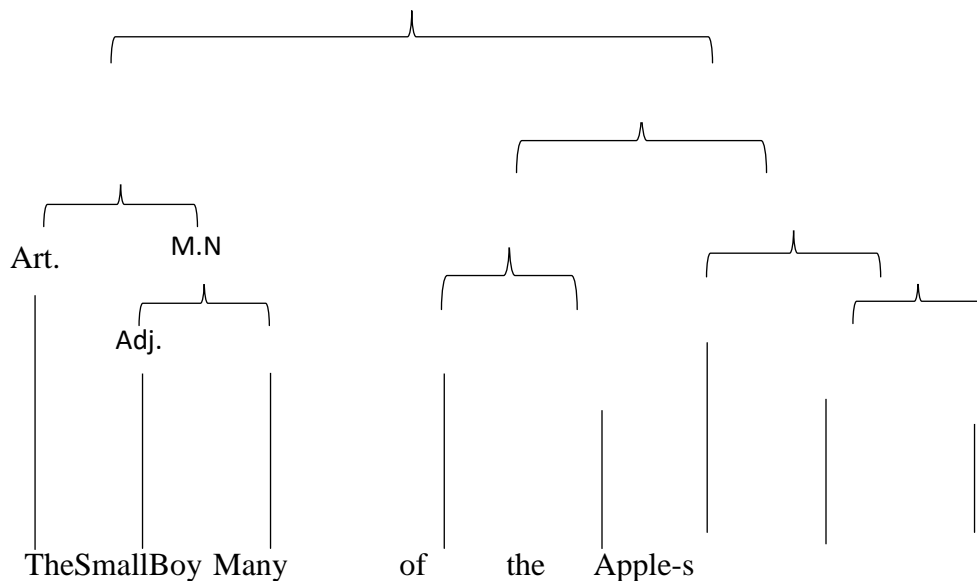
In pursuing the analysis, we are able to isolate these minimum units that are the Monèmes.

3.3.3. THE CONSTITUENTS AND THEIR GRAPHICAL REPRESENTATION

To represent suggestively the hierarchical organization of the phrases storied at various levels of a kind of pyramid, linguists have used various graphic processes (set of parentheses, system of squares...). However, they are increasingly inclined to prefer the reorientation in the form of a **tree graph** called also **syntagmatic indicator**.

Thus, if one wants to translate in a clear and speaking form the various stages through which the analysis of a sentence is used as "The Little Boy Ate apples", the following graph in which P = sentence, S.N. = Nominal phrase, S.V. = Verbal, Art. = Article, M. N = Nominal member (= nominal phrase rendered "incomplete" by the absence of the article), V. = Verb, Adj. = adjective, N = noun.

Note Well. It should be recalled once again that the graph uses the Swift terminology presented above. Other authors (such as RUWET to which the example is partly borrowed) would not use either the LEXEME label or the MORPHEME label. However, they would keep exactly the same graphic organization.



The units released at level A are called immediate constituents of the sentence (P). The units of level B are also immediate constituents but this time in relation to the units of level A and not in relation to the level P (= sentence).

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