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**A LEXICOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS OF SPORT UNITS FROM A
DICTIONARY OF FRENCH ARGOT**

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Abstract

The article deals with linguistic criticism of a fundamental dictionary of French argot, i.e. “Dictionnaire de l’argot”, published by Larousse in the late XX cent. The criticism focuses on the lexicographic treatment of 83 sport-related units so as to find out principles, instruments, and tools forming the basis for the unit description. The research represents a consecutive analysis of all the elements of the dictionary entry: lemmas, labels, markers, definitions, illustrative examples, sources, references and other lexicographic instruments. All of them are applied by the authors of the dictionary to provide a maximum and comprehensive treatment of the units, aimed to uncover derivation, grammatical, phonetic, semantic, sociolinguistic, spelling, and stylistic information. Some of these information types are specified by a further subdivision. Grammatical information encompasses parts-of-speech references of a few varieties and conversion references. Sociolinguistic information encompasses references to sports and sport milieus, chronological frames, and historic labels. Semantic information encompasses principles and varieties of meaning distinctions and types of definitions, as well as additional semantization that consists of special markers, symbols, and illustrative examples. The study describes the patterns in which the units are located in the entry and touches on polygraphic design, namely type face, of the entry elements.

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1. Introduction

The general task of any defining dictionary is to provide the most complete description of a language unit, i.e. to embrace the maximum number of its properties, meanings, and relations. The same concerns with no exception to the rule the dictionaries of substandard vocabulary, which aim to represent units of argot, cant, slang, and other social dialects from the standpoint of both extralinguistic and intralinguistic relationships. The former means disclosing the relationships between a unit and the reality, for instance, pointing at the domain, sphere, walk of life etc. which the substandard unit refers to; the latter means disclosing internal systematic relationships between language units per se, as well as their innate qualities. All in all, authors (or compilers) need to inject as many as possible features of a language unit into its description, which apply to phonetic, accentual, grammatical, derivation, semantic, social, chronological, and some other treatment of a vocabulary unit, i.e. a lemma. Only then the general task of a defining substandard dictionary could be regarded as fulfilled.

2. Problem Statement

It cannot be claimed that French argot and its lexicography has been out of linguists' sight in the recent years. On the contrary there is a rather impressive number of linguistic works on different aspects of French argot. They concern:

- α) lexicographic issues (Merczalov, 2017);
- β) functional issues (Belova, 2017; Kasumova, 2019), including those in colloquial speech (Apezova, 2014);
- γ) argot connotations (Bary`shnikova, 2016; Kopy`tina, 2016);
- δ) domains of argot usage (Ajrapetyan & Kostina, 2018; Belicheva & Koryabina, 2016; Efremova, 2016; Ovchinnikova, 2017; Ovchinnikova, 2018; Retinskaya, 2016);
- ε) features of formation (Bogaty`reva, & Nepsha, 2014; Kuz`mina, 2019);
- φ) stylistic issues (Merczalov, 2016; Retinskaya, 2012);
- γ) borrowings (Ovchinnikova, 2016).

Nevertheless, all of these and some other works leave out the complete lexicographic treatment of argot units, namely that of lemmas and respective dictionary entries, with some exception to the rule as in the work on dictionary review by Zuraeva (1992). The study of sport argot units has not been conducted in this respect yet. Thus, the paper intends to fill this gap.

3. Research Questions

The research question therefore is as follows: (1) What is the way of treatment of an argot unit in an authoritative dictionary of French argot in terms of principles, tools, and instruments?

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to disclose lexicographic principles, tools, and instruments in an authoritative dictionary of French argot. The study focuses on sport argot units to form a foundation for their further comparison with analogous substandard units from other dictionaries.

In order to achieve this purpose we need to solve the next problems:

- to examine theoretical and practical works on social lexicography and lexicology;
- to make a complete selection of sport argot units from a dictionary of French argot;
- to elaborate on meanings and definitions of the selected argot units;
- to apply the examined theoretical and practical principles and tools of lexicography to the analysis of the sport argot units.

5. Research Methods

The study is based on methods of lexicographic and sociolexicographic analysis, as well as attendant terms and concepts: entry, lemma, definition, lemma-list, microstructure, label, reference, and some others units of lexicography and general linguistics. These methods are applied to eighty-three sport argot units and their respective entries selected from the fundamental dictionary of French argot “Dictionnaire de l’argot” (Colin, Mével, & Leclère, 1994).

Before going into the findings we consider it necessary to make the following clarifying remarks:

- the lemma-list of the dictionary is arranged in accordance with alphabetic ordering, which makes page references redundant;
- the research deals with an analysis of the dictionary microstructure only. The dictionary macrostructure remains out of focus as it does not correspond with the research problems;
- the dictionary entries selected as illustrations have been reduced for space considerations;
- the dictionary entry begins in a standard way, with a black semi-bold lemma;
- the ideas, schemes, and principles of the analysis are found in the works by Karpova (2010) and Ryabichkina (2009).

6. Findings

6.1. Spelling Variation Information

The information about the argot unit’s spelling variations is represented with a word following the lemma and separated with the conjunction *ou* (“or”), e.g. **picot** *ou* **piquot** n.m. Individu qui, dans les manifestations sportives ou autres, accroche d’autorité au revers des vestons des badges qu’il se fait payer. In addition, the dictionary entry to the alternative lemma refers to the main lemma by means of the label *V.* ‘voir’ (“See”). Cf.: **piquot** n.m. *V.* picot.

If there are several spelling variations, then only the last alternative lemma is separated with the conjunction *ou*, the others are detached with a comma. The rarity of the alternative form is defined in two ways: a) with the marker *rare*, cf. **oignon, oigne** *ou* (*rare*) **oignedé**. n.m. Mauvais cheval de course, b) by mentioning less frequent spelling variations in a separate section of the entry after the label VAR. ‘variante’ (Colin, 1994) and highlighting them with small semi-bold-faced italics.

6.2. Phonetic Information

The information about the argot unit’s phonetic properties is conveyed by transcription in square brackets and in extremely exceptional cases due to phonetic predictability of the most French vocabulary. The extracted material contains but one example of this sort: **fan** [*fan*] *ou* **fana** adj. et n. Admirateur passionné d’une vedette; adepte intransigeant d’un mode de loisir, d’un sport, etc.

6.3. Grammatical Information

This type of information includes 1) part-of-speech references, 2) part-of-speech references to lexical and grammatical properties, 3) references to conversion, 4) part-of-speech references to lexical properties, as in the example, references to proper nouns (labeled as *n. pr.* ‘nom propre’), e.g. **Tonkin** (*le*). *n. pr.* Nom d’une des pelouses du champ de courses d’Auteuil.

6.4. Sociolinguistic Information

Social and Professional Information

There is no separate zone of social and professional references in the microstructure. This type of information is introduced into the entry without any printing markers and is sometimes isolated with a comma or round brackets.

References to Sports

a) *references to sports in general*. In this case definitions include the word *sport* and its derivatives *sportif/sportive*, as well as expressions *d’un sport, dans les vocabulaires des sports, a un sport* and the like, e.g. **balai**. Dernier véhicule (*sport, métro, etc.*) qui recupère les retardataires.

b) *references to sport games*. In this case definitions include the word *jeu* and collocations *au jeu, a un jeu, a certains jeux* and the like, e.g. **faucher**. Ruiner (*surtout au jeu*).

c) *references to a particular entity of some sports*. Definitions (represented by a solitary instance) include the collocation *dans un sport d’équipe*, e.g.: **perso** adv. et adj. **Jouer perso**, *dans un sport d’équipe*, jouer tout seul sans faire intervenir les équipiers.

d) *indirect references to sports*. They are represented with words and collocations which are notionally related to sport and about-sport milieux, e.g. **Se tirer la bourre**, *se concurrencer vigoureusement, disputer un match avec âpreté*.

e) *direct and indirect references to a particular sport*, e.g. references to equestrian sport, as in **Madagascar** n.pr. Pelouse du *champ de courses* d’Auteuil.

Chronological Information

Historical frames of all of the argot units in the dictionary begin with the late XVIII cent. (Colin, 1994). The detailed date is found in the entry section that goes after the etymological zone and includes the information on the argot unit's chronology. The precise dates of the argot units are determined in accordance with the following schemes.

1. Introduction of the first year of the argot unit fixation and, after a comma, a reference to a written, non-lexicographic source of the first registration
2. Introduction of the first year of the argot unit fixation and a reference to a lexicographic source in square brackets.
3. Introduction of the first year of the argot unit fixation, a reference to the source of the first registration and, in square brackets, to a dictionary from which the first source has been extracted
4. The chronological frames of an argot unit are set via vague time references based upon the intuition or memory of the authors of the dictionary (Colin, 1994), e.g. **se doper** v. pr. Se droguer, en partic. pour se stimuler, améliorer ses performances <...> *vers 1980*. Here the preposition *vers* ("by") means that the argot unit had come into use approximately by 1980.

Thus, the chronology of the argot units is restricted a) by the date of their first registration implying that the argot unit had already come into use by the time the dictionary was compiled, b) by vague periods of their functioning.

Historical Information

The information on the argot unit falling out of use is demonstrated with the labels *Vx.* 'vieux' ("obsolete") and *Vieilli.* ("obsolescent"), e.g. **coq** n.m. *Vx.* Chef; champion; **médor** n.m. *Vieilli.* Cheval de course.

6.5. Derivation Information

The information about the derivatives of the argot unit (if they are present) is disclosed with small bold-faced italics in a special – the final – section of the entry after the label DÉR. 'dérivé' only if the derivatives have fallen or are falling out of use (Colin, 1994), e.g. **courtines** n.f.pl. Courses de chevaux. <...> DÉR. **courtineur** n.m. *Chauffeur de taxi qui a essentiellement la clientèle des turfistes : 1935.*

In the other cases the derivative is given a full lexicographic description in a separate dictionary entry.

Derivation Information in the Etymological Reference

This type of information is found in a compulsory section of the entry and is labeled ÉTYM. 'étymologie'. The study of the selected materials shows that etymological problems are solved by pointing to the etymon and derivational methods that lay a foundation for the formation of the argot unit.

The source of the etymon can be an external borrowing, e.g. from English: **walk-over** <...> ÉTYM. *mot angl., "victoire facile", se réfère à une course dans laquelle il n'y a plus qu'un participant.* The etymon itself is not given as it is duplicated by the lemma but the semantic evolution of the argot unit is defined: its original meaning was that of "easy victory".

The reference also sheds lights upon derivational methods, particularly, morphologic derivation, e.g. **dégueuler** <...> ÉTYM. *du préfixe dé- et de gueule*. It says here that this argot verb has been built with the prefix *dé-* and the noun *gueule*.

In some cases the reference points to particular methods of semantic or morphologic derivation, including apheresis, as in the example: **cipale** <...> ÉTYM. *aphérèse de municipale*.

6.6. Ethical and Stylistic Information

The information about the ethical and stylistic properties of the argot unit is only occasionally included in the etymological reference, e.g. **charge** <...> ÉTYM. *spécialisation ou euphémisme*. The example contains an assumption that the word is a euphemism (labeled as *euphémisme*), i.e. it is neutral both stylistically and emotionally.

6.7. Semantization

The semantization of all the lemmas in the dictionary is fulfilled by a standard lexicographic procedure which encompasses a) meaning distinction with bold-faced numerals (Arabic and Roman) and letters; b) meaning description with a definition; c) additional semantization by means of reference symbols, markers, illustrative examples, and citations.

1. Meaning Distinction

There are the following types of meaning distinction in the dictionary: 1) standard meaning distinction, 2) grammatical meaning distinction, 3) meaning distinction of set expressions, 4) meaning distinction of polysemantic set expressions, 5) meaning distinction of homonyms. See the example of the meaning distinction of a polysemantic set expression. If a set expression has two and more meanings, then its meaning is discriminated with small semi-bold letters in round brackets, e.g. **rouge** n. m. **Mettre le rouge I. a)** afficher le signal rouge, sur un champ de courses <...>; **b)** interrompre une activité <...>; **c)** rompre les relations <...>; **d)** semer la perturbation, faire du scandale <...>. Here the meaning after the letter **a)** refers to the equestrian argot.

2. Types of Definitions

The sociolexicographic analysis of the entries shows the next general types of definitions of the registered sport argot units: 1) a standard language synonym; 2) a series of standard language synonyms; 3) a non-standard language synonym; 4) a detailed linguistic definition; 5) a philological-and-encyclopedic definition. See the example of a detailed linguistic definition: **Fileur de gagnant**, celui qui cherche à obtenir des renseignements auprès des turfistes chanceux <...>.

3. Additional Semantization

Additional Semantization By Means of Reference Symbols and Markers

Semantics of some sport argot units is uncovered via additional semantization. It means introducing into the entry explanations and references to grammatical (morphological and syntactical) features of the lemma usage, including details of their semantic combinability and syntactical subordination. This optional semantic information is introduced as a label, sometimes bracketed, near the lemma; it is also introduced with words and phrases *au, dans, en parlant de* and the like. So the argot unit is given a thorough description

which helps a reader to understand its properties and features better. See, for example, the following entry, the additional semantizing elements of which are lightly italicized for illustrative purposes: **toucher** v.t. Gagner (*une course*).

Additional Semantization By Means of Illustrative Examples

The front matter of the dictionary informs that the list of the citation sources is situated in the back of the book. The list encompasses documentary evidence, fiction, samples of written and oral speech, literature and mass media. When the authors fail to find an illustrative example, they come up with their own (Colin, 1994). In some cases the argot unit is accompanied with two and more illustrative examples. At the same time the introduction of illustrative materials in the entry is optional, so the entry sometimes has no illustrations. The reference to the illustrative example goes in a standard way – following the definition after the colon, the illustration itself is more bold-faced than the definition; then goes the name of the source in round brackets and small pale letters. There are the next sources of the illustrations in the entry for the sport argot unit: 1) magazines, 2) books, 3) the authors' citations, e.g. **prendre** v.t. Défier qqn (à un jeu, un sport) : *Je te prends quand tu veux au bras de fer !*

7. Conclusion

Thus, the dictionary of French argot under study provides a full and exhaustive description of the sport argot units, which discloses the information about spelling, phonetic, grammatical, derivational, etymological, sociolinguistic, semantic, and stylistic properties of the argot unit one way or the other by means of specific lexicographic principles, tools, and instruments. This thorough, detailed and comprehensive unit treatment marks the dictionary as the summit of French social lexicography of the late XX century.

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