VERBS OF SENSORY COGNITION: 
A SEMANTIC ANALYSIS OF A LEXICAL FIELD 
IN THE LEXICON OF ME

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1. Our analysis of verbs of sensory cognition (henceforth: VSC) in the lexicon of ME is based on the claims of componential analysis and the thesis of restricted linguistic universalism (cf. Lyons 1977: 331) as well as the projection principle of “core grammar” (cf. Chomsky 1981). In our version of componential analysis and the thesis of restricted linguistic universalism we adhere to the view that the meanings of particular lexicence may be decomposed into sense components (the minimal distinctive features of meaning) to represent the structure of a lexical field in terms of various kinds of opposition.

Accordingly, we propose an analysis of the VSC involving 1) the decomposition of predicates; 2) significant syntacto-semantic generalizations. The heterogeneous class of VSC contains verbs referring to the five senses employed in the process of human sensory cognition i.e. sight, hearing, smell, feeling and taste). The term used above (i.e. heterogeneous semantic class) will refer to a class of verbs that has been established rather arbitrarily on semantic grounds to provide the framework and data for further linguistic analysis. The task of such an analysis would consist, among other things, in the discovery of some homogeneous classes of verbs within the heterogeneous class, for example a natural syntacto-semantic class (NSSC), (cf. Kopytko 1983), i.e., a class of verbs whose syntacto-semantic behavior at a certain level of linguistic analysis will be exactly the same for each member of the class.

2. The class of VSC in ME contains the following lexical items: beholten, felen, gapin, guen, heren, listen, loken, savoren, scudlen, sen, senten, smellen, souven, starin, stinken, take, tochen, wacchen.
To analyze the meanings (in terms of sense-components) of the particular classes of the VSC we postulate the formulation of semantic representations (SRs) in terms of parameters characteristic of human sensory cognition. That is:

1) **MANNER** of PERCEPTION characterized by the feature [+ACTIVE] and/or [+INTENSIVE]
2) **RESULT** /SUCCESS/ of PERCEPTION characterized by the feature [+RESULT]
3) **VOLITION** of PERCEPTION characterized by the feature [+INTENT]
4) **ATTITUDE** of the PERCEIVER to the OBJECT of PERCEPTION characterized by the feature [+NEGATIVE]
5) **STATE** of AFFAIRS EXHIBITED by the OBJECT of PERCEPTION characterized by the feature [+STATE]

The three sense-components [+ACTIVE], [+RESULT] and [+INTENT] account for the differences in meaning between the following sentences:

1) I saw the hill as. I looked at the hill

The use of verb **see** in the first sentence implies that the non-intentional act of perception (represented by the sense component [+INTENT] by an [-ACTIVE] act of perception was cognitively successful by producing a result [+RESULT]). i.e., a perception or image of the object of perception in the mind of the “speaker-perceiver”. In the case of the second sentence the result of the act of perception is irrelevant. It is the intention on the part of the perceiver that comes to the focus. To account for the meaning of verbs like **smell** in the sentence: *The flowers smell nice* (which may be paraphrased as **X SENSES (Y BE Z)**) the feature [+STATE] has to be introduced into the SR of smell. Furthermore, the feature [+STATE] has to be represented in the SRs of VSC (marked negatively) to account on semantic grounds for the ungrammaticality of the following sentences:

2) *I saw she was pretty*
   *He saw John had a book in his hand*
   *He looked at Mary smalls nice*
   *She looked at John is tall etc.

or

*The flowers see nice (to me)*
*The soup see good (to me) etc.

As a result of our analysis we arrived at three subclasses of the VSC:

A) RESULTATIVE — VSC
B) INTENTIONAL — VSC
C) EXISTENTIAL — VSC

The VSC analyzed in terms of the five human senses to which they refer, i.e. sight, hearing, smell and touch, will yield the following subclasses of verbs:

(a) **RESULTATIVE VERBS OF SEEING** — (RVS)
(b) **INTENTIONAL VERBS OF SEEING** — (IVS)
(c) **EXISTENTIAL VERBS OF SEEING** — (EVIS)

On the basis of the ME attested data the three subclasses of verbs contain the following lexical items:

**ME-EVIS:** Loken R, Savoren, Senten, Smellen, Sounen, Stinken R.

The paraphrase **[X SENSES (Y BE Z)]** stands for a general SR for the lexical field of sensory cognition. The predicate **sense** is a composite one and may be analyzed as follows:

**SENSE** → **[PERCEIVE BY A HUMAN SENSE]**

In other words, the perceiver uses one of his senses in the process (act) of sensory cognition.

3. On the basis of the ME attested data the three subclasses of VSC in (3) contain the following lexical items respectively:

**ME-EVIS:** Loken R, Savoren, Senten, Smellen, Sounen, Stinken R.
1. Rebecca, Isaac bikhode, descendide of the camel. 1382, Wydli, Gen. 64
2. He see, Jesus erist in a sad Roode. 1375, Joseph Arim. 258
3. The maiden hym beheide moche and he her. 1450 Merkin 225
4. On hire gepede alday muche folde... 1290, S. Eng. Leg. 108/66
5. The peple gezyl vp and down. For they were glad...
   To han a newe lady. 1386, Chaucer Clerk’s T. 1003
6. On oue he lokieth with love. 1393, Langl. P. Pl. 164
7. Devels sal... raumpe on him and skoueth and stare.
   1340 Hampde. Pr. Consc. 2225
8. Comce ye and seoth the place. 1382, Wydli Matt. 6
10. That made him for to waite and wache. Be al ye weis how it ferde. 1390,
    Gover Conf. 163.
11. So hungritiche and holwe sire Henry him loketh.
    1377, Langl. P. Pl. 189

The ME-Verbs of Seeing may be analyzed into three (homogeneous) Natural
Syntactic-Semantic classes (NSSC) (i.e. classes of verbs which exhibit
the same syntactic and semantic behavior):

ME-Verbs of Seeing: NSSC-1: (Beholden, Son)
NSSC-2: (Locen, Wachen)
NSSC-3: (Gupen, Gesen, Starine)

The ME-Verbs of Hearing contain the following lexical items:

ME-RVH: Herein
ME-VIH: Herein, Listen
ME-EVH: Soumen

12. He hurdet angles synge an hey. R. Glouc. (1724) 279
13. He...lystenyn full entenly... 1375, Barbour Bruce 72
14. Spelt, Lord, for thy servent herithi Wydli, Som. 9
15. I non other place... I feele no wynde that souveth so lyke peyne... 1374,
    Chaucer, Troyles 678

The verbs Heren and Listen belong to the same NSSC:

ME-Verbs of Hearing: NSSC-1: (Herein, Listen)

The ME-Verbs of Feeling contain the following lexical items:

ME-RVF: Felon
ME-IVF: Felon, Tasten, Touchen
ME-EVF: Ø

16. The dethe he feoleth thurgh his herte smite. 1386, Chaucer, Knt. T. 362
17. Whanne he hade feoldi him, Isaue saide... 1388, Wydli, Gen. 22
18. Who shall toucher peche, shall be defould of it. 1382, Wydli, Ecc.
19. He tasted his pons... He seide he new his medeycin. 1390 Brumne Chron.
    Wace 904

The verbs Felon, Tasten, and Touchen belong to the same NSSC:

ME-Verbs of Feeling: NSSC-1: (Felon, Tasten, Touchen)

The ME-Verbs of Smelling contain the following lexical items:

ME-RVSm: Smellen
ME-IVSm: Smellen, Senten
ME-EVSm: Sauoren, Senten, Smellen, Stinken-1, Stinken-2

20. Of al et ich abbe... with nose ismelled. 1240 Ureasim in OE Hom. 153
21. To pule a rose of al that route... And smellen to it wher I wente. Rom.
    Rose 1609
22. Whan hares be ygete with the kynde of a conyng... the houndes lust nor
    siniti hem nought so wel. 1400 Master of Game
23. Hore herbes smullere swete. 1300, Lyric P. 88
24. This gardeyn is... ful of may floris... the which been so redolent and
    sentyn to aboate. 1400, Beryn. 2765
25. To strawwen gode gressen per, at stunkniven-1 swipe swete. Ormin. 8194
26. How his brethre stinkety-1. 1450 Mrik’s Festial 84
27. As a medue hyt was grene... and saverys swete as specycye. 1303 R.
    Brunne Hand Synne 1396

The ME verbs Smellen and Senten as well as Smellen, Senten, Sauoren and
Stinken-1, belong to the same NSSC:

ME-Verbs of Smelling: NSSC-1: (Senten, Smellen)
NSSC-2: (Sauoren, Senten, Smellen, Stinken-1, Stinken-2)

The ME-Verbs of Tasting contain the following lexical items:

ME-RVT: Tasten
ME-VIT: Sauoren, Tasten
ME-EVT: Sauoren

28. ... In tendre toucheinge of ping and tastenge of swete. 1340 Alex and
    Dind. 952
29. pat bitter drine... He tasted it bot nighte drine. Cursor Maudit 16773
30. And j shulde nevere be at ese if j sauoredes swete thing.
    1430 Pilgr. Lyf Manhode (1669)
31. For soothe, there is no thyng that sauoret so well to a child as the Milk
    of his Nornice 1386, Chaucer, Pars. T. 48.
The verbs *Savoren* and *Tasen* belong to the same NSSC:

ME-Verbs of Tasting: NSSC-1: (*Savoren*, *Tasen*).

The Natural Syntacto-Semantic Classes (NSSC) in the lexical field of sensory cognition in ME may be summarized as follows:

ME-VSC: NSSC-1: (*Beholden*, *Sen*)

NSSC-2: (*Loken*, *Waccchen*)

NSSC-3: (*Gapen*, *Gasen*, *Starin*)

NSSC-4: (*Heren*, *Listen*)

NSSC-5: (*Teren*, *Tasen*, *Touchen*)

NSSC-6: (*Senten*, *Smellen*)

NSSC-7: (*Savoren*, *Sentens*, *Smellen*, *Stinkem*)

NSSC-8: (*Savoren*, *Tasen*)

As can be seen from the summary given above the VSC belonging to the subclass of the RVSC do not form any NSSC. That is, they are not substitutable by any syntacto-semantic synonyms as is the case with the IVSC and EVSC. The semantic behavior of the ME-VSC may be summarized in the following way:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>ME-VSC</th>
<th>RVSC</th>
<th>IVSC</th>
<th>EVSC</th>
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<tr>
<td>Beholden</td>
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4. If we adhere to the thesis that the Lexicon (of a TGG) consists of a number of lexical fields as for instance that of VSC, it should be stipulated that the lexical entry will assume the following general form:

| PR | i.e. it will consist of (1) PR — Phonological Representation. |
| V | (2) the Category Symbol, (3) Syntactic Structure, (4) Thematic Syn. Str. Structure, (5) SR — Semantic Representation, (6) RRs — Redundancy Rules, (7) NSSCs — Natural Syntacto-Semantic Classes |
| RR | |
| SR | |
| NSSC | |

(other semantic phenomena could be added to the list if necessary).

The ME-VSC *Loken* and *Loken* will assume the following general forms, respectively:

A) [(Loken)]

B) [(Loken)]

That is, they will exhibit different syntactic structures, thematic structures, SRs, RRs, and NSSCs. Thus, a lexical entry for ME-Loken would be the following:

C) [(Loken)]

\[NP_1 \rightarrow (NP')\]

\[\rightarrow \text{ACTIVE}\]

\[\rightarrow \text{INTENT}\]

\[\rightarrow \text{RESULT}\]

\[\rightarrow \text{STATE}\]

The variables X and Y in SR assume the values represented in 0-structure i.e. A and O respectively. A structure like the one in (C) would be projected from the Lexicon to the categorial component by means of the Projection Principle (cf. Chomsky 1981); where the lexical insertion would take place.
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**REFERENCES**

