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Sommario/riassunto	This study is based on the writings and teaching of Gustave Guillaume (1883-1960), one of the earliest proponents of what is today called Cognitive Linguistics. It offers (1) a much needed presentation in English of Guillaume's view of the French system, (2) the clarifications added by his successors, and (3) much empirical detail added by the author from his own extensive experience with the material. The word system in this work, as explained in the very first chapter, is intended in the Saussurian sense of a closed set of contrasts.