

1. Record Nr.	UNINA9910822455403321
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Titolo	The cognitive system of the French verb // John Hewson
Pubbl/distr/stampa	Amsterdam ; ; Philadelphia : , : J. Benjamins, , 1997
ISBN	1-283-31243-3 9786613312433 90-272-7595-5
Descrizione fisica	1 online resource (199 pages)
Collana	Amsterdam studies in the theory and history of linguistic science. Series IV, Current issues in linguistic theory ; ; v. 147
Disciplina	445
Soggetti	French language - Verb Cognitive grammar
Lingua di pubblicazione	Inglese
Formato	Materiale a stampa
Livello bibliografico	Monografia
Nota di bibliografia	Includes bibliographical references and indexes.
Nota di contenuto	THE COGNITIVE SYSTEM OF THE FRENCH VERB; Editorial page; Title page; Copyright page; Dedication; PREFACE; Table of contents; CHAPTER ONE. THE NATURE OF CONTENT SYSTEMS; CHAPTER TWO. VERBAL PARADIGMS AND THEIR CONTENT; CHAPTER THREE. CHRONOGENESIS; CHAPTER FOUR. ASPECT; CHAPTER FIVE. VOICE; CHAPTER SIX. TENSE; CHAPTER SEVEN. MOOD; CHAPTER EIGHT. PRESENT AND PRESENT PERFECT; PART TWO. THE EXPRESSION SYSTEM; CHAPTER NINE. SEMIOLOGY, THE SYSTEM OF SIGNS; CHAPTER TEN. VERBAL PARADIGMS; BIBLIOGRAPHY OF WORKS REFERRED TO OR CONSULTED; GENERAL INDEX; LIST OF FRENCH VERB FORMS
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.