

Titel: draft of a review of Knud Togeby's book, [EFJ-Bazell] 004-0400

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Anvendt udgave: Louis Hjelmslev og hans kreds

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Copy of preliminary note to a review of W.T.'s book  
which you comment. Not a letter, so you owe no reply.  
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(p.22) Toegby adopts Diderichsen's perfectly correct comparison between Hjelmslev's selection, solidarity and combination on the one hand (which belong to the morpho-syntactic level), and the relations of subordination, interordination (my term) and co-ordination on the other hand.  
But why not extend this scheme to paradigmatic relations? Again 3 alternatives:  
(i) A may always be commuted with B (not vice-versa)--paradigmatic selection  
(ii) A and B are always mutually commutable -- paradigmatic solidarity  
(iii) Neither A nor B are always (though they are sometimes) commutable with the other. --paradigmatic combination.  
Examples: (i) late Greek dual-plural; (ii) Russian present-past; (iii) French present-past.  
Hjelmslev speaks of paradigmatic functions in another sense; Toegby does not speak of them at all. Of course, the facts involved are used (e.g. (i) as the criterion of intensive and extensive status.)  
I have elsewhere given reasons for not operating with the systems of Diderichsen and Hjelmslev (at least, in the systems known to us). But the glossematic scheme has one real virtue, its interior logic. It has not even this virtue if it is not consistently applied. The trouble about glossematics is, that it is not even glossematic.  
The above example illustrates how glossematics chooses, half-heartedly and in strong dependence on traditional grammar, these relations which happen to suit "natural" languages. This will not do at all. One may construct an aprioristic system, or an aposterioristic system. Both have their values. A mixed system has none.

(p.66) "Un seul couple d'opposition par ailleurs identique est nécessaire et suffisant". That medieval barbarity, the necessary and sufficient criterion! It is evident that, once the whole system has been constructed, a single pair in opposition is necessary and sufficient. But this is a mere tautology. In the construction of the system, on the other hand, the linguist will be led by the principle of simplicity to avoid a scheme by which an opposition is only once exemplified. And there are no necessary or sufficient criteria of what constitutes simplicity.  
It is curious how the notion of necessary and sufficient criteria tends to re-appear in each new science. It was, for instance, a feature of logical positivism in its earlier stages. It now dominates the whole of glossematic writing. Objectivity is attainable, not by the arbitrary choice of a single sufficient and necessary criterion, but by the establishment of convergences between a hundred in themselves unnecessary and insufficient criteria.  
It is for this reason that all the discussions on whether the English diphthongs are one phoneme or two, lack an objective basis. When multiple criteria are taken, it is easily seen that these phones form an indiscrete series between the terminal points of "definitely one phoneme" and "definitely a sequence". They are marginal as between one phoneme and two. There will never be any agreement between phonologists, until there is agreement on marginality.

(p. 186) "En faveur de cette théorie parle aussi que -ment apparaît avec presque tous les adjectifs". Presumably then, it would speak gradually less in favour of the theory as the number of adjectives allowing the termination diminished. What has happened to the necessary and sufficient criteria here? And once one allows gradual differences, why not allow that -ment is quasi-derivational and quasi-inflectional? There is no sharp dividing-line between categories, and the attempt to find one gives rise to innumerable pseudo-questions, in this work as in almost all works of structural linguists.

(passim) The exclusion of the substance is carried out in quite different ways in the expression-and in the content-chapters. In the former it disappears by a sort of conjuror's trick; to anybody who can see behind the scenes, it is there all the time. In the content it is excluded .. by the exclusion of the content itself. We are left with signifiant-tactics alone.