

Titel: BREV TIL: Eli Fischer-Jørgensen FRA: unsure (1956-04-26)

Citation: "BREV TIL: Eli Fischer-Jørgensen FRA: unsure (1956-04-26)", i *Louis Hjelmslev og hans kreds*, s. 1. Onlineudgave fra Louis Hjelmslev og hans kreds:
https://tekster.kb.dk/catalog/lh-texts-kapsel_004-shoot-workidacc-2005_0099_004_EFJ-Bazell_0120/facsimile.pdf (tilgået 02. maj 2024)

Anvendt udgave: Louis Hjelmslev og hans kreds

Ophavsret: Materialet kan være ophavsretligt beskyttet, og så må du kun bruge det til personlig brug. Hvis ophavsmanden er død for mere end 70 år siden, er værket fri af ophavsret (public domain), og så kan du bruge værket frit. Hvis der er flere ophavsmænd, gælder den længstlevendes dødsår. Husk altid at kreditere ophavsmanden.

Istanbul 26/4/56

Dear Fischer-Jørgensen,

No of course I have not cited Hjelmslev's letter. I consider that permission should always be asked to cite an author's private communications, with only one or two exceptions. One exception is of course, when one wishes to attribute priority to him. (Thus I allowed myself to mention that a point against Hjelmslev had already been made by you and Diédrichsen at a meeting, in my paper on the sememe; though even here I don't think I said I'd had it from a letter of yours.)

But your revelation (which of course I shan't cite either!) that though the example is mistaken it has been used more than once, has a consequence you strangely do not anticipate. This wrong example is a good example of "incompatibility", the relation that Hjelmslev told Biersema was "improfitable to seek". But Hjelmslev found it without seeking; and has been citing since long an example of the very thing he assures us is of no importance!

It is not true, by the way, that syntagmatic relations must always be involved in the examples of paradigmatic relations, if the term "paradigmatic" is used in a manner logically parallel to "syntagmatic". For then it will not be used to mean "the paradigmatic relations of units in the same paradigm"; the notion of paradigmatics should not appear twice in the definition. There is paradigmatic ~~selection~~ determination whenever A may ~~also~~ be commuted with B, but not vice-versa (e.g. German t and d.). There is no need to mention any syntagmatic relation; and there would not be even in the case of Latin genders given by Hjelmslev, if gender occurred only with substantives. But the extreme case is that of the fourth relation that Hjelmslev wished to admit, namely paradigmatic incompatibility, of which the relation of verb and noun would be an example (with the paradigmatic relation here by definition excludes the units being members of the same syntagmatic relations. even Hjelmslev's example illustrates this in a less gross way; since if noun-genders are not invariably commutable, they are not members having exactly the same syntagmatic relations to other units.

Since what Hjelmslev does in his example, is to bundle the genders into one paradigmatic class, on the grounds that they have similar syntagmatic relations to other units, and then classify the cases according to their success, partial success, and even (if one loads him with the necessary fourth relation) also zero-success, in fulfilling the conditions within the limits of a certain syntagmatic type. In other words he uses the paradigmatic criterion twice, once for putting the units together, and once for separating the cases. There is nothing parallel to this in syntagmatics.

I considered Whitfield's review very unfair. No doubt he was angry at a rather silly criticism Biersema made of his translation. It is a very unequal book, and it is easy to pick out things which are just nonsense. The worst of all is the ridiculous preface. But the author is certainly more capable of independent thought than the good Whitfield. You will doubtless give a sympathetic though critical review. Unfortunately you were so kind to Cohen that it will be difficult for you now to make clear that S. is better!

I have no doubt the quarrel with Lotz had something to do with Martinet's leaving Columbia. But I am surprised to hear that a Frenchman has to believe in Jakobson's binarity in order to find America tolerable; or was it J. who brought M. to the States? Anyway the break with J. means that M. is now able to express his disapproval of J.'s binarity without beating about the bush. I am personally quite in agreement with M. here, and so I believe are you. And what a dull theory it is!

Yours sincerely

