

Titel: BREV TIL: Charles Ernest Bazell FRA: unsure (1953-09-11)

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Anvendt udgave: Louis Hjelmslev og hans kreds

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Dear Mr. Hjelmslev,

Thank you for your various letters from May - August. - I had forgiven your "waspyish letter" long ago, or - better-not thought of the necessity of "forgiving". - I do not take your various invectives seriously, I enjoy them. - (But I do not show your letters to Hjelmslev, - who, by the way, thinks that you might well have sent him what you wrote on "glossematic definitions" and other things about glossematics. He supposes that you have given him up because he never answers ~~xxx~~ letters.)

I agree almost completely with everything in your letters from this summer. I also find the commutation between cases very doubtful. I have said a few words about it in one of the disappeared-but-let-it-appear ~~xxxxxxx~~ which, by the way, will appear ~~xxxxxxx~~ in the course of the next year, but they are almost hopelessly out of date now, although some of the contributions have been changed. -

Of course I did not mean "ascertain", but, as you ~~xxxxxxx~~ say, I meant whether the interpretation was profitable. -

I did not like Martinet's review either. He is what in Danish would be called "fribet" (you too, by the way). - Perhaps my review of Cohen was too kind, but I have so often been accused of being too severe when writing reviews, that now I try to be gentle. Moreover it is the first work of a young man, and in any case he has a broader outlook than common in Holland. And then I enjoyed his clear demonstration of the absurdity to which one is led by a consistent use of the experimental commutation and ~~xxxxxxx~~ so-called disregard of substance. He did not mean it that way, of course, but it was so clear. I had a rather long correspondence with him. He was ~~xxxx~~ somewhat worried at my transcription. His analysis was not meant for that purpose, he said, but of course every analysis may be used for a transcription, and I thought that in that way I might give some sense to the silly idea of writing in phonetic transcription.

Your description of Morris Halle is very good. He is a kind of very easy-going chap, but not too deep. - I did not have much opportunity of discussing with him at Mil, because I was partly ill and partly working too hard, and he was busy with his own studies. -

Thank you for your critique about the "Correspondence ~~xxxxx~~ Fallacy". - I enjoyed very much your description of Hjelmslev and Hjelmslev-Jakobson. But I think you were too hard in characterizing Hjelmslev, he is a nice man, and not arrogant. -

Perhaps you are right in maintaining that it is necessary to combine various criteria. But I think that this can only be the final stage of the analysis, not the start. In the beginning of an analysis I would be inclined to choose what you call the "complementary fallacy" i.e. keep the various types of criteria apart -- e.g. physiological and physical description etc. - and then afterwards see how they may profitably be combined. - ~~xxxx~~ When they are combined the description will always be nearer to our intuitive linguistic feeling because our perception is conditioned by all criteria at a time. -

In chapter II you talk about morphological criteria in phonetic analysis and say that the Prague school does not pretend to dispel

to dispense with semantics and the Yale school does no more than pretend why then dispense with specific morphologic criteria?

Your argument is quite the same as that used by Fiske in Word (against Bloch), but I do not see the logic of this argument. On the contrary it seems to me that it should lead to the opposite result. -- In all phonemic schools two phonemes are considered as different if they are combined with a different content semantic content (commutation), in the Prague school and in Glossematics explicitly, in the Yale school implicitly. Now, if this lexical meaning and morphological meaning are to be treated in the same way, this means that a phonetic difference conveying a morphological difference should be considered as phonemically relevant just as a phonetic difference conveying a lexical difference. The argument is exactly the opposite. Fiske, in Tone Languages counts different tones when they involve lexical difference, but if the difference of content is morphological he speaks of "perturbations" of the same tone under morphological conditions, that is: morphological conditions are put on a line with phonetic conditions, they are treated not as content but as expression. And this is what Fiske almost always is meant by using morphologic criteria. Lexical criteria are used for the distinction of phonemes, morphological criteria are used for identifying sounds as being members of the same phoneme but varying under different morphological "conditions". If this point of view was used consistently, all phonemic differences could be regarded as "morphologically or lexically conditioned variants."

I agree to a large extent with what you say about the substance of content.

Thank you also for your very stimulating article about structural semantics in dialogues. -- But I was somewhat disappointed at finding that you were not the author of "La forme, est-elle un structuralisme?" -- which was really a much more interesting title than "Structural semantics". This whole question of structural semantics is very difficult, but I think there were many good ideas in your article, and I liked your terminology (whereas Fogarty has mixed everything up terminologically in his last article for Acta Linguistica -- to appear in a couple of months.).

Yours sincerely

PS The permanent council for phonetic congresses (which are never held) prepare a handbook of phonetics. I have been asked to give a phonetic description of "the germanic languages" in 5 pages (I hope other chapters will be somewhat better organized (I), but I am somewhat in doubt. The book is meant to treat all possible aspects of phonetics in 500 pages, this is too big for students and too small for specialists. -- By the way I am thinking of having my mimeographed textbook of general phonetics printed, and perhaps in mime because it might be used in America, and perhaps in English, me to do it), and it will be cheaper for the students (because in that case it is possible to print a 2eater number, - but I am much in doubt about the possibility of writing a textbook suitable for Danes and English-speaking people at the same time.