

Titel: BREV TIL: Louis Hjelmslev FRA: Charles Ernest Bazell (1956-02-20)

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Anvendt udgave: Louis Hjelmslev og hans kreds

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20/2/56

Dear Hjelmslev,

In case you replied already to the letter and did so by ordinary post, this was not revealed on account of the floods in Thrace which have held up all land-mail, for the last two or three weeks. Only air-mail is now received. We shall expect the land-mail ultimately to come through, but if there has been any correspondence it would be safer to send a copy by air-mail (if one exists; personally I don't keep copies of my letters but imagine that you do.)

Meanwhile another point which your letter raised. Before, I had imagined that permutation was regarded on the same level as computation, perhaps even as a special case of computation (commutability of AB and BA where A and B are not individually inter-commutable). But from your letter it seems that permutation stands to syntagmatics as computation stands to paradigmatics.

I only half understand this. Of course, the permutable units may occur together in a text, so there is a both-and relation between them, not an either-or relation as with computation. But when one permutes A and B in AB, to obtain BA, one is surely doing something analogous to computing A and B; with this difference, that in the former case one shifts the relations (of sequence) between the terms, while in the latter case one shifts the terms themselves. The distinction would seem one between relations and relata rather than between syntagmatics and paradigmatics.

But the main point remains as before-- why there is an asymmetry between the syntagmatic and the paradigmatic relations. I can understand why you should exclude the relation of incompatibility from the syntagmatic relations; once the three relations have been given, the fourth (A selects non-B -- incompatibility of A and B) is left as a residue, and nothing further is added by including it. But then, why not exclude the corresponding paradigmatic relation ('not both A and B in the same paradigm'), rather than a different relation?

But perhaps an answer on this point lies buried in the Thracian floods!

Yours sincerely

Handwritten signature

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