

Titel: Categories of conjugational morphemes, [whitfield] 015-0240

Citation: "Categories of conjugational morphemes, [whitfield] 015-0240", i *Louis Hjelmslev og hans kreds*, s. 3. Onlineudgave fra Louis Hjelmslev og hans kreds:  
[https://tekster.kb.dk/catalog/lh-texts-kapsel\\_015-shoot-wacc-2014\\_0144\\_015\\_whitfield\\_0240\\_p3\\_bP2\\_TB00004/facsimile.pdf](https://tekster.kb.dk/catalog/lh-texts-kapsel_015-shoot-wacc-2014_0144_015_whitfield_0240_p3_bP2_TB00004/facsimile.pdf) (tilgået 27. juli 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.

Professor Whitfield opened his talk on a felicitous note occasioned by Meillet's flirtation with the English verb "to love". It was up to us to determine what should be the (doxastic) attitude towards "love", he said. The text of Meillet's discussion on the characteristics of the verb is as follows:

A. Meillet, *Linguistique historique et linguistique générale*, p. 180  
 ... the same word can serve both as a noun and as a verb in languages where the rôle of the word in the sentence is not to be ascertained from its form (morphological form): the English word love gives an idea of procedure and demonstrates at the same time that the identity of form does not cause confusion between the category of the noun and that of the verb, the same radical elements form nouns and verbs in languages whose words have complex formation. One and the same Indo-European or Semitic root is a common element to verbal and nominal forms; in such cases one may speak of verbal roots because such a root as the Latin *ag-* forms the Latin verb *agere*, likewise such nouns as *agricola* or *actio* which evoke the notion of process can be found, (because this notion is retained) by associating them with their (verbal) forms. These roots, however, are neither verbal nor nominal; they form part of the word which indicates the element of meaning common to both the verb and the noun. In this way we can visualise how the same linguistic unit can appear under its nominal and its verbal aspect just as in the case of the words which can be either nouns or verbs. A "verbal root" in the languages which use morphological flexion is capable of being both a noun and a verb just as in the languages which are free of all flexion. Naturally this can not be said to have definite consequences for the way in which Indo-European or Semitic roots have been historically constituted but at least it is probable that roots are the remains of words which were capable of being nouns or verbs according to use such as occurs in the case of the English word love or as in many Chinese words...

The following points were raised by Professor Whitfield:

Meillet is not clear as to whether one word "love" can serve as a verb or a noun. In these cases "love" is not the same word. It is noteworthy that he states that a word may play a rôle, but in isolation it is considered a vain abstraction by the author. Meillet views words rather as building blocks. One word may have various forms and it is by their forms that they are known. *amorem* is taken as the form of a noun and *amabam* has in consequence the form of a verb. Meillet would never make errors as to form (he would never subtract the word "love" from the English word "lovely").

For Meillet "word" means expression word. The past participle of the characteristic word and form leads to a difference in the language described of *amatus*, *amator*, *amari*, however *amatus avum est* is considered as composed of two expression words and not one. It is difficult to find consistency since each of these words divided denotes a thing or a process and may form nominal forms or denote process. The words which have nominal forms or denote process may fit such languages which use them but the process by which they are described is called morphology and differs very sharply from terminology and viewpoint from syntax. The latter considers allowable combinations and uses terms such as subject, predicate, sentence, simple subject, simple predicate, etc. that forms a predicate is not stated. He are expected to build sentences from use-able blocs or units but how these are formed is not clear. The connexions made between these units are frequently neither necessary nor generalizable even in the original language for which they were intended (although allowances for fringe cases must be made). The problem of the passive, *amatus est* and the active *amavit* are small problems when we compare the problem of the rôle of love with them. In Meillet's study the central problem is that of conflicting criteria. In the end function wins out over form and form plays the rôle of a verb, consequently the "word" is a vain abstraction.

If we consider the above in the context of Hjelmslev's essay *La Structure Morphologique* (1939) (*Travaux...* XII, p. 122 sec. 1.2) we can clearly understand the cause of the confusion of criteria. The Greek functions were not universal, since semantic criteria seemed more constant they were considered universal, but ontological facts could give no precise definition of the categories. Psychological and/or logical attempts were doomed from the start. Form or substance objects, morphemes, contain elements of content or meaning or expression. ~~For the sake of consistency and clarity the terms~~ Substitution of one for the other can involve some elements of the expression.