

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

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Anvendt udgave: Louis Hjelmslev og hans kreds

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## SUMMARY.

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Whitfield began by summarizing the different conflicting bases of word definition which cause difficulty in Meillet's exposition: the word defined as an expr. form, as being defined by its meaning, and as being defined by its function. Difficulties also arise from the fact that when inflected (conjugated) one expression word may become two, as in compound forms like 'amatus est' from 'amare'.

At this point W asked for further information about the difference between Danish passive with -s and compound passive. Some discussion arose at this point, and Thiesen was asked to state next time which differences of function or style may be said to distinguish the two forms from each other.

With regard to Meillet's attempt to anchor the difference between word-classes in the content substance, defining nouns as words referring to things, and verbs as words referring to processes, W mentioned Holger Stoen Sørensen's approach to the same problem in 'Word-Classes in Modern English', which he thought might be considered a last attempt to anchor this difference in the content substance.

St. S. talks of signs consisting of a designator and a designatum linked together by a relation of designation. These signs are normally denotators of denotata, and the relation between the sign (being a denotator) and its denotatum is of the same sort as that between the two relatives of the sign.

Furthermore denotators may be either 'autocategorematic' or 'syncategorematic'. Only the former are able to denote independently, and to them belong nominals (I, Peter, the wounded) and sentences. The denotata of nominals are entities, the denotata of sentences are facts. (Syncategorematic denotators being f.inst. adverbs and propositions ('there is no such thing as very, pretty, or with')). So this distinction between (autocategorematic) signs denoting entities ('in its wide epistemological sense') and those denoting facts is what W would consider a last attempt at defining word-classes by reference to content substance. The same objections may be raised to it as to Meillet's approach: Is 'education' an entity or a fact?

Thus no general criteria of word-class distinction seem to hold good, and we may conclude that such classes must be defined for each language specifically. This attitude, however, makes language comparison impossible.

The other alternative is to continue our search for such criteria.

W now returned to Hjelmslev's main example in 'Le verbe et la phrase nominale' *Omnia praeclara rara*. W wanted to discuss the procedure of finding by the commutation test an 'inflectum', a 'present tense', and so forth in this phrase without an explicit verb, by opposing it to other phrases having an explicit verb in the perfect, the past tense, and so on. Could this be compared with the procedure of finding an adjective in a phrase like 'the man' by commutating this phrase with such phrases as 'the good man', 'the bad man' etc.?

Rischel suggested that this might have to do with the distinction between constituents and exponents.

Spang-Thomsen thought it possible in principle to state the presence of an adjective in any syntagm, if it proved to be pertinent to the description of the language analysed. W thought that introducing an element for the convenience of description, and then to prove its presence was a vicious circle. S-T thought that for Hj. this is not a vicious circle, since the units found by analysis are created by the analysis itself (they are not claimed to have any existence previous to or independent of the analysis).

Thiesen remarked that in Hj's example 'sunt' may be added, and present tense, and the other content elements would still be there, whereas a similar process could hardly be thought of in the case of 'a man' without any adjective. Hendriksen thought that the commutation test was primarily a question of identifying the different units.

Rischel thought that one point in Hj's argument would be that '*Omnia praeclara rara*' is a sentence (to which you may add, say, 'sunt') whereas '*Omnia praeclara rara*' might be found as, say, the subject of a sentence, where the two adjectives might be replaced by other adjectives, or omitted, but 'sunt' could certainly not be added.