

Titel: BREV TIL: Charles Ernest Bazell FRA: unsure (1955-02-06)

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Anvendt udgave: Louis Hjelmslev og hans kreds

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Dear professor Bazell,

It is time that I write to you, it is even high time, since I should be glad to have an answer before February 15> (!) to solve of my questions. We have a meeting in the Linguistic 'Circle that day, and I am giving a short comote rendu of your article about the "Choice of Criteria". - I thin! this is-- one of the best article you have ever written, if not the best, and h.er.efore I wish to draw the-attention of our members to it. Your attempt at distin- g hi siting various pxixs things which have been confused with form- substance is very interesting and. helpful, but> although this article is much clearer than, most of. the others you have written, there are a few points where I am not sure to. have understood you right. (i)In the beginning you talk of the difference, between intrin- sic similarity end distributional similarity . 'Later you talk of the .difference between distribution and composition as if this was. something different from the first distinction. But this must be the same thing, only in the first case you speak of identification , in, the second of . definition. (ii)p. 129 : the functional- andn non-functional. That do you mean by function here-? In. your book Linguisti<m Form"functions 1 relationerneafis subordination, coordination etc.' - As far as I ' can. understand .you, "functional" means in this artic le Ywhat has communicative relevance", i.Q. paradigmatic function, for this would explain that you talk of allophones in the following. I KMMifegK think the following argument makes sense : Bake the Danish sdundsff æ ajf(hæve, hav° hare) Between £ and s there isa a paradigmatic function, the difference has communicative re- levance. Between æ and a there is sxyi a different function, they have different distribution,they are allophones of the same phoneme, but both the function between £ and æ. and that between g&editin.formal terms, the fi:st howéver is one s.m4 there are two different invariants

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and. thxoggh this function the linguistic system 'in 'the -narrower sens is established. I'he difference variant- invariant is not'.the same- as that between substance and form.

itxxsxHstxxxdiffgxsngxfsxmxxxxfexkxHC e.

By the way . njelmslev has often under- ined that the variants belong! to the formal system just as the - invariants, but. at the same time he says that b the commutation- test one finds the form of the language , and is the latter case he means : the relevant differences.

(iii)What do you mean by form and substance ??? You talk of all the ttiK distinctions with which the distinction form-substance should not he confuse,d, but you do not say positively what the dis- atinctiofi- is, and I have read you Linguistic Form through without finding any indication of what. Linguistic i'Eiemi&x&i Form isl 1 This is really typical of you. And a definition is not superfluous, for I think you use the terms''in -a sense which differs slightly from Sa.ussure's and Hjelmslev's - and ever their .use is unclear. Do you mean something like this :? If we consider the world around us it is pos'sible to distinguish different areas or subjects of description ^ sxg.which must be described in different terme and are described by different, sciences or branches of sciences h.g. xasiagyjxfexfeaHiKS, acoustics, physiology,0or (narrower) zoology, botanies etf. The subjects of these various sciences are different substances. These subjects can be described e.g. by relations be.

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tween their perts, these relations are stated in substantial terms, if they apply to this subject only, but they are stated in formal terms, if they are stated in abstract terms applicable to other subjects or substances (this would explain your example with JaHobsons compact .diffuse - and your txxMxxktxhxbtxaxtdxstib statement that the distributions of "abstract terms" are formal). Sims and your example of 'before -after-

about both space and time). Formal then should mean "applicable on various "subjects" or scientific areas', or in other words "abstract". This gives sense, but it may be difficult to say exactly when a statement is formal, since there is a gradual change from concrete to abstract, and since the world is not very clearly divided into various substances in this sense or "purport", Every science can use formal descriptions and definitions, and the so-called substance in linguistics (e.g. sounds) can of course also be described biologically. But of view of linguistics, e.g. through linguistic form, and in this case "function" in the sense of communicative relevance is taken into account, because the function between content and expression is what marks a language. —

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"function"

Here, by the way, I come into doubts;

You may use in a somewhat wider sense: paradigmatic and syntagmatic function, which must be at the basis of statements of linguistic form. These functions are described formally, if they are described in general terms applicable to other subjects, - The sounds may also be described formally from the point of view of acoustics. In both cases it is possible to distinguish between form and substance, but there is furthermore a difference between acoustic form, and linguistic form, the latter taking the relations specific for a particular language into account. It is a linguistic phenomenon that is commutable with ^ , and also that, æ and a have different environment, but it is not linguistic form., when we describe the relations between, formants irrespective of their use in a particular

language« still

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But your example when you talked, of function fSfd bo indicate tbatyou thought of paradigmatic func- C« .)
Lew I would be glad to'know whether this is approximately what you mean, or whether you mean something
quite different ?

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I partly agree in what you say'about the commutation test. Of course it is one phenomenon that a difference
in expression corresponds to a difference in content. But it is nevertheless possible to approach this
difference from two sides, e.g. you may recognise a phonic difference between hat fend cat, without knowing
whether it is relevant in the language in question, and then state that the' two sequences are used in
different situations ,thus having different c ntent. Or. you might like to know w'oe-ther the language in
question has different' expressions for the two phenomena 2hat" and 2cat," , and point to these and ask for
their names. What you start from are simply sounds and thing's (or situations). I do no say that the latter
phenomena are "substance of content" , hut you pass from these through "meanings" to expression in
this,case. Of course it is a vicious circle if you start from (formally)different contents, but not if you start from
phenomena which are distinguished in some other way (dr? a different language, in some s cienoe etc)
inves- tigtigsting whether these phenomena are .distinguished linguistically« Normally this is not a very
practical way of investigation ,but by the way, children often felixi .their linguisticexperience inxby asking
"What is that?".

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Ih.ave also read your "Linguistic Form". It is not always easy to understand, because often one does not
know what you mean by the terms you use. One must know from other article of yours to which you do not
refer, or simply guess. So some- times I gave it up. - But I like the last chapters (from p. Q2). The comparison
between linguistic description and maps is good, "and might perhaps even, be improved by comparing the
political frontiers with phonemic frontiers and the "natural frontiers"

se^may c oincide, but are'more stable when

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with phonetic frontier; do not necessarily coincide, but they do. -

I completely agree with your criticism of Jskobson. But I think that the phonemic features are useful for describing many forms of neutralisation (against, what you say (just in the beginning of the book/1.

. I am

I am preparing an article on the commutation test going to talk about it in the Circle in March. Among other things I will demonstrate the difficulties by involved in "instrumental commutation" or tape 1) phonemes overlap, so that a "cutting" is impossible, 2) if you take sounds and put them in surroundings where they do not belong, you will get an answer which often does not coincide with the analysis which has been found practical from, other points of view. This is evident when one has recognised overlapping manifestation, . finaler]put in front of the vowel gives (13 etc, Stamsua- Result: you may change words, but not sounds in this literal way. It is a better method to analyse word-expressions phonetically, and compare with commutable words (or "morphs" or what you like.).

e.g

As for Marchand's address: thank you for your information. I have left it on to Hjelmslev. You are not just to Hjelmslev's secretary, who is all right (I do not know whether it is the same who sent our proofs to Istanbul), she has the only fault that she only does what she is asked to do, but this is not a fault if she wants to be Hjelmslev's secretary, for this is the way he wants a secretary to behave. And it turned out that she had given Marchand's proofs to Hjelmslev, who has promised to take care of them., I am working hard on my book on Danish stops, and at the moment combining this work with the preparation, of the article on commutation. (if I change the explosion of Danish p and b, nothing happens, but if I change the aspiration of p with the first part of the vowel after b I get a fair! y good result. If I put the aspiration before the unchanged vowel following b, I do not get p, but still b with some 1 2 levant noise before : etc.)

Best Wishes

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