



**GLOSSEMATIC
VS
GLOSSEMATIC**

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AIM OF THE LECTURE

- The point of departure: Our recent reanalysis of the Danish stop consonants
- The Standard analysis up to now continues ideas that originated in the Glossematic discussion in the 1930'ies
- Points of discussion:
- What was insufficient in these analyses?
- Was it the Glossematic theory that led Hjelmslev and Uldall astray in their efforts, or did the error occur at a less general level of the theory?
- The answer: Minor dogmas caused the insufficient analyses, but in many ways, the general dogmas of the theory are not affected

PAST AND PRESENT IN LINGUISTIC THEORY

- Today, language in general is situated in a cognitive framework.
- Predecessors of a psychological approach: Ferdinand de Saussure, Otto Jespersen
- To the first generations of structuralists, it was important to define language as a field of investigation separated from psychology and sociology.
- In general, language was seen as an institution in society, free from the actual speakers and their mental capacities. Metaphorically speaking, language was not in the heads, but between the bodies of the members of society.

WHAT COUNTS AS LINGUISTIC EVIDENCE?

- The consequence of the non-cognitive approach is that certain types of fact could not count as ‘linguistic evidence’ in those days:
- Facts about language acquisition simply were irrelevant in this perspective.
- When a certain structure could be proved to exist in the material, its presence could not be questioned and it did not depend on facts collected from individual users.

THE EMPIRI PRINCIPLE

- Hjelmslev's three necessary evaluation criteria for a scientific explanation: it must be
 - 1) non-contradictory,
 - 2) exhaustive and
 - 3) as simple as possible

(Hjelmslev 1943: 11)

THE DANISH STOPS IN A GLOSSEMATIC PERSPECTIVE

- Glossematic discussions of the Danish consonants: Uldall 1936 and Hjelmslev 1951.
- The 1936 paper is in fact a collective effort; it was presented at the London Conference by Uldall alone, but in reality, it was based on a draft by Hjelmslev, later reorganized and supplemented by Uldall and Paul Lier, and of course by Hjelmslev himself.
- The letters further show that some of the ideas for the 1951 paper had originated during the preparation of the 1936 paper.
- For the ease of reference, we will stick to the conventional names: Uldall 1936 and Hjelmslev 1951.

ULDALL 1936 : VOWELS AND CONSONANTS

| [Unrounded front vowels] | [Rounded back vowels] | [Rounded front vowels] |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| /a/ /a:/ /ɛ/ /ɛ:/ /e/ /e:/ /i/ /i:/ | /ɔ/ /ɔ:/ /o/ /o:/ /u/ /u:/ | /œ/ /œ:/ /ø/ /ø:/ /y/ /y:/ |

Consonants

/b/ /d/ /f/ /g/ /j/ /k/ /l/ /m/ /n/ /p/ /r/ /s/ /t/ /v/

The phonetic signs are adjusted according to Ruben Schachtenhaufen's notational standards.

FURTHER PHONEMIC ELEMENTS

| INTONATIONS (MARGINAL PROSODIES) | | ACCENTS (SUPERIMPOSED PROSODIES) | |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------|
| T1 | Glottal stop (Dan. 'stød') | A1 | Strong stress |
| T2 | Lack of glottal stop | A2 | Half stress |
| T3 | <i>h</i> | A3 | Weak stress |
| T4 | Lack of <i>h</i> | | |

PROBLEMS IN THE ANALYSIS

The question mark designates
The following sound as a ‘pre-phoneme’,
i.e. a possible phoneme.

- Central dogma 1: The pre-nucleus and the post-nucleus inventory of consonants must be symmetric
- This dogma is in heavy contrast with the apparent inventory of Danish
- Certain sounds are only found in initial position:
 - ? p^h ?ts ?k^h ?h ?v ?j ?ʁ
- Others are only found in final position:
 - ?ɣ ?l ?ʊ ?e ?ŋ

ULDALL'S CONSONANTS

| <i>Phoneme</i> | /p/ | /t/ | /k/ | /b/ | /d/ | /g/ | /f/ | /s/ | /j/ | /r/ | /v/ | /m/ | /n/ | /l/ |
|-----------------------------------|----------------|-----|----------------|-----|---------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| <i>Initial manifestation</i> | p ^h | ts | k ^h | p | t | k | f | s | j | ɣ | v | m | n | l |
| <i>Post-vocalic manifestation</i> | p | t | k | p | ɣ [= ð] | ɣ | f | s | ɪ̣ | ɛ̣ | ʊ̣ | m | n | l |

THE PROSODIES

- Uldall classifies *?h* and the glottal stop as ‘prosodies’
- ‘Prosodies are defined as consolidating either one syllable, accents, or a string of syllables, intonations.’ (Uldall 1936: 54)
- According to Uldall and Hjelmslev, the glottal stop in certain words may occur at different positions in the sound chain, like *vid* ‘wide’ [*ˈviʔ*] or [*ˈvi:ʔ*].
- The placement of the glottal stop is distinctive in cases like *brom* ‘bromine’ [*ˈpʁoʔm*] | *brum* ‘hum’ [*ˈpʁomʔ*] or *Hven* {name of an island} [*ˈveʔn*] | *vind* {wind} [*ˈvenʔ*] , or *føn* ‘hot wind’ [*ˈføʔn*] | *fynd* ‘concise style’ [*ˈfønʔ*].

?h AS A PROSODIC ELEMENT?

- The *?h* shares all features with conventional phonological segments:
it has a fixed place in the sound chain unlike the glottal stop,
it functions in any conceivable way as a segmental element, in no way conditioned by the structure of the syllable.
- Thus, the symmetry dogma leads to a rather awkward analysis.
- As we shall see, Hjelmslev later tried to save the phonematic status of [h] through a rather hazardous maneuver.

HJELMSLEV'S REINTERPRETATION OF STOPS

- Only in absolute initial position, Danish has a contrast between an aspirated and an unaspirated stop series: *taske* / *daske* ('bag | slap'), *torsk* / *dorsk* ('codfish | lazy'), *pas* / *bas* ('passport | bass voice'), *plade* / *blade* (plate | leaves), *krus* / *grus* (mug | shovel), *kram* / *gram* (caress | gramme),
- This commutation is reinterpreted as a +/- *h* contrast: *hd/d*, *hb/b*, *hg/g*.
- Next, final stop manifestations as aspirated phonemes. In this position, stops may be aspirated in Danish, but there is no commutation between aspirated and unaspirated stops: Dan. *stop* 'stop' ['sdɔb] and ['sdɔbh]

THE PROBLEMS OF THE INTERPRETATION

- The main problem: the manifestation of /g/
- In the 1930'ies, the semivocalic manifestations of /g/, [ɟ] and [ɠ], still alternated with [j].
- Since this alternation is now long gone, the most obvious solution is to interpret all semivowels as /j/ and /v/, leaving /g/ without manifestation.

THE GLOTTAL STOP

- Our analysis does not deal with the glottal stop.
- Hjelmslev eliminates the glottal stop, seeing it as a consequence of the structure of the syllable.
- Hjelmslev's solution may be compatible with the more basic levels of recent theory, like Hans Basbøll's.
- On the other hand, the complex interaction with the morphological aspects demonstrated by Basbøll might mean that the elimination of the glottal stop is not justified.

TOYING AROUND THE IDEAS

- Hjelmslev's ideas were not new in 1951. Both methods to eliminate the category of prosodies in Danish actually had been drafted by Uldall some 15 years earlier.
- In the months before the London congress in 1935, Uldall was doing fieldwork on Jutland dialects northeast of Randers, and Hjelmslev travelled through England.
- Most of the preparatory discussions for the account of the Danish phonemic system presented under Uldall's name is therefore preserved in the letters that they exchanged.

ULDALL'S ANTICIPATIONS IN THE LETTERS

- On July 4, Uldall suggests that the glottal stop is redundant and may be deduced from the syllable structure.
- Hjelmslev's answer to this letter, dated July 11, is an attempt to demonstrate that the Glottal stop actually has independent phonemic status.
- The idea to interpret the aspiration of /ptk/ as /h/ is not worked out to the same degree of detail.
- The day after one of the few meetings in person that they had, on March 17, Uldall writes to Hjelmslev in a victorious tone that their meeting should be celebrated as the Death Day of *h* and *ng*. This probably only means that these two sounds were eliminated as phonemes.

ULDALL'S ANTICIPATIONS, SEQUEL

- On June 12, Uldall toys around with the possibility that the aspiration of *ptk* could be *h*, until he returns to the interpretation of *h* as a prosody.
- In the answer to this letter, Hjelmslev gets back to the idea of returning *h* to phonemic status.
- Details like the assumption of the possible /h/ as part of the final stops are never discussed in detail.
- In spite of the insufficient status of the category of prosodies, the elimination was not attempted until the next foray into the field.

CONCLUSION PART I

- In spite of our critique, there is still a number of striking parallels between the glossematicians and us.
- In spite of everything that we know today, a structural approach is still needed in order to frame the psychological experiments that linguists wish to make.
- Questions of simplicity and economy of explanation today also function as a kind of axioms when we try to imagine how the brain works. In this sense, many core aspects of the Glossematic approach still seem to preserve their importance to present-day research.

CONCLUSION PART II

- Unlike the general approach, the assumption of symmetry in the manifestation of consonants is a thesis coined to analyze the actual dependent sounds, and as a thesis on actual matters, it may be falsified.
- In a letter from March 19, 1935, Hjelmslev discusses the sound system of Gamilaraay, a Pama-Nyungan language of Australia, in which, according to Hjelmslev, only /m/ and /n/ have true phonemic status. All other apparent consonants have defective distribution and are therefore included in the category of prosodies.
- Since a well-attested language like Mandarin Chinese appears to be a close parallel to Gamilaraay, some kind of reservation seems justified.

VARIATIONAL
FACTS

Udby



GLOSSEMATICIAN AT THE COUNTRYSIDE I

(From one of Uldall's letters:) Rougsøsk er meget mærkeligt mht præfonemerne *v*, *w*, og *b*. Forholdet er det, at i forlyd forholder *v* og *w* sig eksklusivt overfor hinanden, saadan at *w* forekommer foran bagtungevokaler og som anden initial, *v* som første initial foran fortungevok. og *r*; der er yderligere et smukt skifte i *ven: wan'* (*vinde: vandt*) etc, saa her er der ingen vanskeligheder. Finalt forekommer *v* efter lang vokal, *w* kun efter kort, men *v* forekommer yderligere efter nogle korte vokaler i ord, hvor rigssproget har *b* (B). Hvis man nu bare kunde finde en alternation *b: v*, vilde det hele være klaret: saa havde man fonemet *v* (som vist forresten kan identificeres med *u*) realiseret /v/ efter lang vokal, og /v/ efter kort vokal kunde opstilles som realisation af *b* svarende til "blødt" *d* og *g*, hvorved B,D,G vilde komme paa linie.

GLOSSEMATICIAN AT THE COUNTRYSIDE II

Jeg er ikke i tvivl om, at dette er sandheden, men det er ikke til at faa det bevist, fordi det næsten ikke er muligt at faa en final konsonant gjort til initial i en følgende stavelse paa dansk. Det skulde virkelig glæde mig at være i stand til at fortælle dialektforskerne, at den berømte udvikling *b* til *v* faktisk ikke har fundet sted endnu!

En af vanskelighederne er, at undernormen er halvdød: fremmedord optages for en stor del i rigssprogets form, saa at vore gamle redningsplanker *gruppe:gruppere* osv ikke kan hjælpe mig her. Et ord som "skæbne" udtales /sgjɛ:bën/ skønt det burde have haft /v/, jfr /ɔvën/ "aaben"; /hɔ'b, hɔ:b/ "haab, haabe" er sikkert heller ikke oprindelige, de skulde have været /ho'v, ho:v/, jf. /dro:v/ "draabe".

GLOSSEMATICIAN AT THE COUNTRYSIDE III

Det hænger naturligvis sammen med opfattelsen af dialekten som noget hverdagsagtigt og simpelt, det synes bespotteligt at assimilere ord, der tilhører det højtidelige sprog. Der skal en haarfin balance til at tale jysk, for man maa heller ikke blive for "fin", saa /sgɔ:vër/ man sig. Som følge af alt dette bør en fonematiker tillige være uddannet sociolog. Jeg føler som sædvanlig nødvendigheden af at have en hel expedition under mig med masser af fagfolk af forskellig art, men den slags haves kun i Asien og, lately, paa Island. Imidlertid glæder jeg mig meget til at skrive min disputats, jeg tror, den skal hedde "Decline and Fall of the Danish Dialects".