Beyond linguistic languages.
Glossematics and connotation

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Abstract. *The paper investigates the notion of "connotation" situating it in both the theoretical framework of glossematics and the historical context of its development, namely the correspondence between the two glossematicians Louis Hjelmlsev and Hans Jørgen Uldall. It is maintained that connotation was Hjelmslev's answer to Uldall's broader-minded approach to language that eventually led them to elaborate two different glossematics within an overarching general framework. The role of Urban's "Language and Reality" (1939) is also analyzed as a source for both glossematicians in respect to the role connotation was supposed to play within the theory: to root linguistic structures in reality.*

"Pokkers, at det stadig er så svært at bruge det, man selv har lavet"[257] (Hjelmslev 1940b, 3)

"Alt hvad jeg her siger og skriver i Løbet af mit Liv vil, naar mit Liv engang ikke mere er, staa som solidariske med mig som sprogligt Fysiognomi"[258] (Hjelmslev [1942–43], 23.3.1942)

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257. "For heck's sake, how is it still so difficult to use what you have made yourself".
258. "One day my life will be over, and everything I say and write here in my lifetime will stand in solidarity with me as a linguistic physiognomy".

1. Introduction

Few theories represent the formalistic soul of structuralism better than glossematics, and few glossematic concepts represent the effort toward a unified theory of language better than the notion of 'connotation'.

At the time of its introduction to glossematics, the notion was not particularly new, as it had been circulating in the philosophy of language for at least a century, serving as the basis of John Stuart Mill's distinction between 'names' designating their respective *realia* through direct reference *vs.* names designating them indirectly, by referring to their attributes or predicates (Mills 1843). And despite common belief, it was not Louis Hjelmslev who introduced the term to linguistics: such a notion is already codified in Marouzeau's *Lexique de la terminologie linguistique* (1933), where it denotes the secondary meanings (emotional or stylistic nuances) attached to the primary notion of a word or lexeme. The term also occurs in Leonard Bloomfield's *Language* (1933) in a technical sense, within a variational framework and in open reaction to normative approaches:

> The second important way in which meanings show instability, is the presence of supplementary values which we call *connotations* (Bloomfield 1933, 151).
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> The normal speaker faces a linguistic problem whenever he knows variant forms which differ only in connotation [...]. In most cases he has no difficulty, because the social connotations are obvious, and the speaker knows that some of the variants [...] have an undesirable connotation and lead people to deal unkindly with the use. We express this traditionally by saying that the undesirable variant is 'incorrect' or 'bad English', or even 'not English' at all. These statements, of course, are untrue: the undesirable variants are not foreigner's errors, but perfectly good English; only, they are not used in the speech of socially more privileged groups, and accordingly have failed to get into the repertory of standard speech-forms (Bloomfield 1933, 496; passim).

For Bloomfield, however

> The varieties of connotation are countless and indefinable and, as
> a whole, cannot be clearly distinguished from denotative meanings
> (Bloomfield 1933, 155).

Even if Hjelmslev wasn't the one to introduce the notion of conno-
tation into linguistics, he certainly was responsible for its dissem-
ination – not just in linguistics but also in semiotics, endorsing a
completely symmetrical claim: connotation *can* be distinguished
from denotation, although sharing with it a common functional
structure. However, besides the idiosyncratic treatment of the term
received in glossematics, the three aforementioned features also
recur in his own approach: *technicality* (as connotation is intro-
duced as a technical term), *variational framework* (as connotation is
introduced to give account of dialectal and idiolectal forms) and
descriptivism (since thanks to connotation the whole spectrum of
linguistic forms is included, not just those that are considered 'cor-
rect' by the speakers' epilinguistic feeling).

It is certainly due to the recurrence of these features that the
literature was prone to focus almost entirely on these general fea-
tures rather than investigating the specificities of the glossematic
framework. The following reception was then characterised by a
back and forth of positions, from receptive readings to recalibrating
interpretations,[259] yet the issue was rarely tackled in its entirety.
And, to some extent, it never could have been: Hjelmslev himself
did not offer much of a solid foothold for the implementation or
further elaboration of his own model, and the connotative analysis
outlined in the *Omkring Sprogteoriens Grundlæggelse* (1943; 1961b) was
more a programmatic manifesto than a proper part of the procedure.

Our aim is to approach the issue at stake from the perspective
disclosed by the scrutiny of the correspondence between Hjelmslev
and Uldall. Such scrutiny, carried out within the project *Infrastruc-
turalism* (Aarhus-Copenhagen), allows one to take a peek at the

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259. For a critical examination of various misinterpretations in receiving literature,
cf. Di Girolamo (1976), Sonesson (1988), Trabant (1970), Badir (2014).

process through which the notion of connotation, among many others, was elaborated on and incorporated into the theory. This perspective will perhaps shed some light on the conditions of usage of such an important concept for a general theory of language.

In what follows we will describe the context in which connotation made its first appearance in glossematics, by presenting the dialogue between the two linguists (§ 2), in connection to the link between language and reality, discussed in the wake of Wilbur Marshall Urban's work (*Language and Reality*, 1939), which turned out to be a possible source for their takes on the topic (§ 3). Such discussion resulted in both linguists envisaging an opening up of the theory beyond linguistic hierarchies (§ 4). We will outline 'connotation' as Hjelmslev's answer to such an issue (§ 5) and discuss the way in which this notion was incorporated into early glossematics and later works (§§ 6–7), before drawing our conclusions (§ 8).

2. The collaboration between Uldall and Hjelmslev

'Connotation' entered the framework of glossematics in the forties, thus at a fairly late stage in the development of the theory, when this was still aiming towards the description of natural languages. The idea was developed during the dense correspondence between Hjelmslev and Uldall, which characterised almost the entirety of their collaboration during the thirties.

When the two linguists first met, in early 1934, Hjelmslev was about to deliver his lectures in Aarhus about linguistic system and linguistic change (*Sprogsystem og sprogforandring* [1934] (1972), thus having a personal picture of a theory of languages already in his mind, while Uldall had just returned from a research stay in America doing phonetic and anthropologic field work mostly carried out under Franz Boas, puzzled by the fact that Maidu, the Californian language he was supposed to describe, kept defying any existing linguistic model (Uldall [1942], 6).

As they started working together, Hjelmslev's interest was set on grammar and morphology, while Uldall mostly focused on the expression side of language, where his specialism lay. The discovery that the two sides of languages (the signifier or 'expression', and the

signified or 'content') were amenable to parallel analysis, achieved around 1936, also led to the realisation that the basic principle behind traditionally conceived functional phenomena, such as morphosyntactic government or accord, could not only be applied to the phonetic domain, but could also be extrapolated and defined *in abstracto*, providing a non-biased foundation for cross-linguistic comparative description. The basic feature behind government, i.e. dependence, was generalised as unilateral determination (or 'selection') and combined with other logical possibilities, namely bilateral determination (later called 'solidarity') and non-determination ('constellation'):

> Her har vi siddet og sagt, at noget til styrelse svarende findes ikke i kenematikken. De husker sikkert dette omkvæd. Men det er aldeles forbavsende, at vi ikke har indset, at kombination og styrelse er ét og det samme. Naar vi ikke forlængst har indset det, er det, fordi vi hele tiden har overset, at udtrykket er irrelevant i plerematikken [...] (Hjelmslev 1936, 1).[260]
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> Styrelse (ensidig kombination, dominans) foreligger i kenematikken lige så vel som i plerematikken ved implikationer, f. ex. *s* impliceret i *z* foran stemt lyd dvs. den stemte lyd *styrer* kommutationsserien *s*; *z* og bevirker derved synkretismen. Er vi ikke søde, at vi ikke har indset det før (Hjelmslev 1936, 3).[261]

The functional apparatus was first established in 1937 (cf. Fischer-Jørgensen 1967, v), much to the excitement of both Hjelmslev and Uldall:

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260. "Here we sat and said that nothing similar to government existed in cenematics. You surely remember this refrain. But it is absolutely astonishing that we didn't realize that combination and government are one and the same. That we have realized it not long ago, it is because we have constantly overlooked the fact that expression is immaterial in plerematics".

261. "Government (unilateral combination, dominance) exists in cenematics as well as in plerematics, in implications: e.g. s implicated in z before a stressed sound, so that the voiced sound governs the commutation series s; z and thereby causes syncretism. Are we not sweet that we have not realized it before".

> Kære Uldall, min hjerne har kogt siden sidst, og jeg mener nu at have nogle resultater, som hermed forelægges til overvejelse [...] (Hjelmlev 1937, 1).[262]

Despite appearing later on, 'connotation', too, stemmed from the same functional mind-set. If functions were how linguistic phenomena were to be conceived, it was only reasonable to expect more complicated cases of functional entanglement, and since language was conceived as a structure, the interaction of units belonging to different parts of that structure had to be analysed in terms of recursive functions, i.e. 'functions on functions' (*funktionsfunktioner*, cf. Hjelmslev 1940b, 1). This was a mere consequence of the way in which linguistic structure was formalised: since a function (A) is said to bind two elements X and Y into a totality (B), then any other functions contracted by the totality as such would actually tether to the function A, as its *constituting* factor. Trivial as it may seem, such a perspective was first clarified in *La structure morphologique* (Hjelmslev [1939] (1970), 113–115) with the introduction of the distinction between 'dependent dependences' and 'independent dependences'.

The idea of nesting-functions is indeed a primary requirement for connotation, whose structure was defined in terms of a sign-function of second degree, as shown in a series of letters sent between January and April 1940. It was in those years that glossematics first gained semiotic reach.

3. The influence of Urban's Language and Reality

In the early forties, the collaboration between the two linguists had become progressively more difficult due to the onset of the Second World War. From 1939 Uldall was forced to stay abroad, mostly in Athens, working for the British Council. Their separation led them to develop autonomous perspectives on glossematics and, eventually, two quite different models. When he wasn't teaching glossematics and English, Uldall devoted himself to the reading of

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262. "Dear Uldall, my brain has been boiling since last time and I believe I have reached some results, which are hereby submitted to your consideration".

classics in philosophy such as Cassirer's *Philosophie der symbolischen Formen* (1923–1929), Russell's *Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy* (1919, deemed as "naïve") and Wilbur Marshall Urban's *Language and Reality* (1939), while challenging some tenets of glossematics, such as Hjelmslev's system of correlative categories or his assumption on the centrality of language for thought. Why – asks Uldall – should a pure thought-system (a system of content without the corresponding system of expression) not be conceivable? Why shouldn't it be possible to think of a system in which sensorial impressions are immediately combined with purely content categories, for instance things themselves? In such a case, it should be possible to conceive of, and thus to deal with, a referential system of communication, bypassing the symbolic medium of language.[263]

In Copenhagen, Hjelmslev was more concerned with consolidating glossematics into a definitive, stable form ("vigtigst for os begge er det jo, som du siger, at få teorien fastlagt" [most important

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263. "Saavidt jeg nu kan se, maa det være saadan at sproget ikke er en nødvendig forudsætning for tænkning: med andre ord, det maa være muligt at have en plerematik uden en kenematik, saaledes at man blot henfører sine sanseindtryk til et sæt kategorier der ikke har noget udtryk. Man kan forestille sig en prælingvistisk tilstand hvor det kun var muligt at meddele sig til andre ved at fremvise tingene selv (som hos bierne, der melder om blomster ved at lade deres kolleger lugte til lidt blomsterstøv) – altsaa meddelelse uden symbol. Symbolet – udtrykket – er nu, tænker jeg mig, medlem af kategorien paa linie med dens andre medlemmer: fx kategorien 'træ' har som medlemmer samtlige træer i verden og tillige ordet 'træ', hvilket naturligvis ikke betyder andet end at et hvilketsomhelst træ og ordet 'træ' har funktion til samme reaktion [typography corrected from an original without any Danish letters, HJU was writing from Athens]" (Uldall 1940a, 2). "As far as I can see, now, it must be the case that language is not a necessary precondition for thought: in other words, it must be possible to have a plerematics without a cenematics, so that one merely attributes one's sensory impressions to such categories which have no expression. One can imagine a pre-linguistic state where it was only possible to communicate to others by presenting things themselves (as in the case of bees reporting information about the flowers by letting their colleagues smell a little floral dust) – that is, a message without symbol. The symbol – the expression – is now, I think, a member of the category on the same line with its other members: for instance, 'tree' contains all the trees in the world as members, and also the word 'tree' itself, which of course means nothing else that any tree, as well as the word 'tree', contracts function with the same reaction".

for both of us it is, as you say, to stabilize the theory], Hjelmslev 1940d), as his dream of publishing the *Outline of Glossematics*, promised for 1936, was progressively fading. His reaction to Uldall's theoretical solicitations was somewhat aloof, rarely reacting to them as he used to do before. At that time he was indeed fighting his own way across the early corpus of glossematic definitions, trying to avoid Uldall's intricate systems of categories that ultimately relied on a different take on the role played by language in respect to thought (cf. Hjelmslev [1938] (1970), 164; [1941] (1973), 106–107). He did however receive some suggestions, mostly concerning the possibility of finding non-linguistic hierarchies beside the linguistic one, and the possibility for signs to include concrete instantiations. Such ideas constitute an important background for connotation and were put forward by Uldall in connection to his reading of Urban's *Language and Reality*.

One of Wilbur Marshall Urban's (1873–1952) main works, *Language and Reality*, is a long and densely argued compendium of his theses about the role played by language in science and philosophy, and particularly about the relationship between language, logic and knowledge or cognition. One of Urban's main tenets is that if "all knowledge, including what we know as science, is, in the last analysis, discourse" (Urban 1939, 14–15), then the only tenable metaphysics for science is the inbuilt "natural metaphysics of human mind", plotted by language in the subject-predicate/substance-attribute structure. In Urban's mind, a general theory of symbolism (in terms of a conscious connection between sign or symbol and the thing signified and symbolised) thus becomes an indispensable requisite for both epistemology and gnoseology. Overall, Urban tries to discuss, from a single comprehensive perspective, different issues and problems, some of which, such as those concerning 'linguistic validity' or the theory of truth, were quite remote from both Uldall's and Hjelmslev's focus, or were too traditionally outlined, such as the notion of 'symbol'. Yet others, such as the claims concerning the analytical nature of thought, the linguistic nature of knowledge and science, the denial of 'pure experience' as uncommunicable, the identity with intuition and expression, connotation itself – discussed extensively by Urban (1939) in connection to non-linguistic

languages – must certainly have resonated with the *Problemstellung* of early glossematics.

4. Towards a semiotic turn

Uldall refers to Urban's work in a letter dated 12th February 1940 in connection with the possibility of a pre-linguistic (in Urban's terms, pre-symbolic) form of knowledge: a symbol or expression – Uldall suggests – could be understood as a member of a category along with many others: the category of 'tree', for instance, includes all the real trees in the world and the word 'tree' itself, since those elements equally trigger, and thus are functionally connected to, the same reaction in the speaker (cf. here, n. 8). The choice of which member to actualise – the concrete or the symbolic one – would depend on the context: if the speaker needs some heat from the stove, he will realise the concrete instantiation, by selecting a tree from which to take a lump of wood ("*a fitting beech*"); in a discursive context, he will realise the symbolic instantiation (Uldall 1940a, 2–3). In the same way, adds Uldall, a cow and a check for its sale may have the same function with regard to a farmer's credit (Uldall 1940a, 3). Such a view was supported by Whitehead, whose perspective is quoted (and criticised) in Urban's work:

> both the word itself and trees themselves enter into experience on equal terms; and it would be just as sensible, viewing the question abstractly, for trees to symbolize the word tree as for the word to symbolize the trees (Whitehead 1927, § I, 7; quoted in Urban 1939, 113–114).

Uldall is here exploring the possibility of conceiving biplanar structures that do not require any 'abstract' content such as 'meaning'. To foresee the existence of structures endowed with a purely concrete content would necessarily mean to extend the domain of structural analysis beyond natural languages. Moreover, from a formal point of view there could be no intrinsic difference between structures displaying abstract content and those displaying concrete content, so that the only way to differentiate them would be through context:

> Man tvinges til at tænke over dette videre forhold mellem 'ting' og sprog ved problemet om afgrænsning af den specifikt sproglige kontekst [...]. Og hvordan skelner man mellem sproglig og ikke-sproglig kontekst? (Uldall 1940a, 3).[264]

Uldall proposes to assume situational context[265] as a starting totality for the analysis. Such totality would then pack together speech, furniture, attire, gesture, weather, time, etc.[266] as parts, or sub-totalities, to be analysed on their own account from a functional perspective. In other terms, linguistic-language and non-linguistic language could be singled out – or deduced – from an 'absolute totality' (later called 'the world', cf below, section 6), just as single idioms could be deduced from linguistic-language itself.[267] Such a theory would fit well with glossematics – said Uldall – since it does not entail any significant change: "den er blot et supplement [it is only a supplement]" (Uldall 1940a, 3). He did not realise that this 'supplement' was semiotics in its entirety.

Actually, he was pushing to the extreme a view sketched by Hjelmslev in his *Principes de grammaire générale* (1928), where there was said to be no need for the content of a linguistic sign to be purely conceptual or 'intellectual'; on the contrary, the content of consciousness in general[268] could equally constitute the counterpart of expression in a linguistic sign. The same insight was further

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264. "One is forced to think about this wider relationship between 'thing' and language in connection to the problem of delimiting the specific linguistic context [...]. And how to distinguish between linguistic and non-linguistic context?".
265. Cf. "simple behaviour situation" (Hjelmslev 1961a, 63).
266. "Saa vidt jeg kan se, maa man begynde med hele situationer (fx talefilm) hvor alt, tale, møbler, dragt, gestus, vejr, tid osv. tages i betragtning og analyseres under eet fra et funktionelt synspunkt" (Uldall 1940a, 3).
267. "Teoretisk må glossematikken, som alle andre videnskaber, tage hele verden som sit materiale, beynde [begynde, eds.] et beliebigt sted, og blive ved indtil der i længere tid ikke er forekommet noget nyt: Sproget må deduceres fra verden, og de enkelte sprog fra Sproget, ikke alene paradigmatisk, men også syntagmatisk" (Uldall 1940a).
268. "[le] contenu de la conscience en général, non seulement de la conscience intellectuelle, mais aussi bien de la conscience affective, l'émotion et la volition" (Hjelmslev 1928, 23–24, n. 6).

maintained in *La catégorie des cas* (1935, 1937) through the localistic thesis,[269] according to which the content of morphemes (*in casu*: case-morphemes) is intuitive or schematic, *i.e.* not exclusively related to conceptual or abstract meanings but also directed towards non-conceptual spatial representations, which could then find their legitimate place within language. With this, a barrier between different kinds of content (meanings) had crumbled. Uldall intended to undermine the foundations of the next barrier, between meanings and *realia*, without giving up the bilateral structure of signs.

However, Uldall's ideas diverge significantly from the perspective adopted by Urban. In his letter, he endorses a behaviouristic approach which Urban deemed completely untenable within the framework of the philosophy of language:

> human nature simply does not work that way. The tree is not the sign or symbol for the word for the poet in the same way that the word is the sign or symbol for the tree (Urban 1939, 114).

In Urban's view, linguistic signs ('symbols')[270] display two specific and interdependent features things do not have: *mobility* and *asymmetry*. *Mobility* implies the susceptibility of signs to have multiple functions: in functional terms, the relation between expression and content is free enough so that they may be wired to different referents or reactions without being bound to any specific one, not even to a particular class. Asymmetry describes the fact that signs can stand for things in a way in which things cannot: while "the actual tree is at most a stimulus for association and imaginative description", being incommunicable in itself (Urban 1939, 114), a tree (as a perceptual element) can become a referent or an object

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269. The hypothesis of the so-called 'relation à double face', according to which the category of case encodes at the same time topic (spatial, concrete) and logic (conceptual, abstract) relations (cf. Hjelmslev 1935, 36 ff; 62 ff.). The originality of Hjelmslev's principle, formulated in the wake of Wilhelm Wundt, consists in denying any priority to a single pole of this relation, logic or topic – a detail often overlooked by receiving literature.

270. Urban speaks of 'signs' in terms of indices and of 'symbols' in terms of proper linguistic signs.

of knowledge only within language (cf. Urban 1939, 91, 338).[271] Urban's conclusion is that allegedly pre-symbolic content is a mere cue for action, bound to *hic & nunc*, and cannot account for objects and things: for these to be constituted as such, the intervention of linguistic meaning is required (cf. Urban 1939, 109).

While Uldall's behaviouristic take might pose some problems in relation to mobility (maybe it is not by chance that the defining feature of Hjelmslev's notion of 'symbolic system' is *fixity*), asymmetry is not completely disregarded. As we have seen, the removal of the difference between *abstracta* and *concreta* is not posed as absolute, but rather deferred to the level of context, which, in Uldall's eyes, is not something completely external. Moreover, as it transpires from the continuation of his letter, context is conceived in scalar terms, i.e. in relation to the different 'size' of the entities (periods, clauses, words, etc.) at each rank of analysis:

> saalænge der er tale om større enheder, kan det ikke lade sig gøre at skelne mellem sprog og ikke-sprog (en nexi og fx en borddækning kan meget vel forekomme saaledes at de er ombyttelige – med eller uden forskel i betydning); først naar man kommer til mindre enheder kan helheden spaltes op i flere inkommensurable udtrykssystemer (en gaffel og en konsonant vil vise sig ikke at være mutable paa samme plads) (Uldall 1940a, 3).[272]

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271. Of course, asymmetry is not complete: one cannot burn the word 'tree' in order to produce warmth as he would have done with a concrete instantiation. Yet it is also true that precisely this idea lies at the root of the symbolic system of magical thinking. Such asymmetry is then also best suited to explain this kind of system.

272. "As long as it is a matter of large units, it is impossible to distinguish between language and non-language (a nexia and, for instance, a table setting may well occur in such a way that they are interchangeable – with or without difference in meaning); only when one comes to smaller units the totality can be divided into incommensurable systems of expression (a fork and a consonant will turn out not to be mutable in the same place".

Figure 3. The dimensional mapping of connotators (Hjelmslev 1940e, 127)

5. Hjelmslev's stance: manifestation and connotation

A first reaction from Hjelmslev came a month later, in a letter dated 3rd March 1940 (Hjelmslev 1940c). The occasion was a report concerning the annual business meeting of the Linguistic Circle of Copenhagen in which Brøndal proposed to review some important works discussing the relationship between logics and linguistics. Given the influence Urban's book had had on Uldall's speculations, it is remarkable to find his name popping up again here, mentioned by Hjelmslev as the most important ("den allervigtigste") among the works he intended to review (Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic* (1936); Britten, *Communication*;[273] Morris, *Foundations of the Theory of Signs* (1938), and Bloomfield, *Linguistic Aspects of Science* (1939)) – a clear sign that he had indeed become acquainted with Urban's work and that something was stirring in his mind. And despite still not directly challenging Uldall's ideas, he feeds him a quotation by William James[274] to back him up while wondering whether such view is correct: "Jeg skal vende tilbage til sagen [I will return to this matter]" – he promised. And he did, in his own way.

After a gap of another month, on 2nd April 1940, Hjelmslev sent two long letters to Uldall, announcing that he had been through the whole theory, not to turn it upside down but to introduce some important details. 'Manifestation' and 'connotation' both make their first appearance here. The main concern of the first letter is to define the function that links the linguistic 'system' to 'norm' and 'usage'. While 'system' was already conceived as the core-layer, and the other two as the peripheral domains, their functional interpretation in terms of *constant* (necessary, determined condition) and *variable* (non-necessary, determining condition) occurs here for the first

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273. Probably Karl Britton's *Communication: A philosophical study of language*. London, 1939.
274. "Just so, I maintain, does a given undivided portion of experience, taken in one context of associates, play the part of a knower, of a state of mind, of 'consciousness'; while in a different context the same undivided bit of experience plays the part of a thing known, of an objective 'content'. In a word, in one group it figures as a thought, in another group as a thing" (cf. James 1904, 480).

time. In the same sense, a semiological hierarchy, as form, must be said to be determined by a non-semiological hierarchy, as substance (Hjelmslev 1940a, 2).

This was, in itself, quite a change, since, until then, 'form' and 'substance' had still been seen respectively as an "entity that has derivates" and an "entity that has no derivates" (Hjelmslev 1940a, 2). In fact, linguistic theory was early on conceived as a single, long analysis leading from linguistic elements to their concrete instantiations, such as sounds and semes,[275] defined as "derivates of highest order" (*derivater af højeste grad*), which couldn't, in themselves, be divided further. Yet both Uldall and Hjelmslev must have been slowly realising that this was only true from a linguistic perspective, as sounds and semes *are in fact* susceptible to further analysis, once observed from other points of view. Other hierarchies must then exist alongside the linguistic one and entities that turn out to be 'substances' within linguistic deduction are taken over and conceived as 'forms' within other deductions: sounds and semes could, for instance, be structurally studied by acoustics, articulatory phonetics and physiology (for the sounds), or by sociology, psychology and physics (for the semes). In other words, Hjelmslev realises here that form and substance can only be relative terms (Hjelmslev 1940a, 4), as he only goes on to explain fourteen years later, in *La stratification du langage* (1954).

And what is even more interesting is that such an approach shows to just what an extent Hjelmslev and Uldall were struggling to conquer new territory, beyond purely linguistic phenomena, which could be interpreted from their functional perspective:

vi tænkte os vel, at substans kun kunde bruges, hvor der var mening i at tale om 'ting', 'konkrete genstande', som har en vis funktion. Men 'ting' og 'konkrete genstande' existerer jo overhovedet ikke; der existerer

275. In Danish, lyd and tyd (the latter a cleverly used form that stands for betydning and denotes the semantic, substantial aspect of meaning).

foruden funktionerne kun funktiver, definerede blot som funktionernes tankenødvendige endepunkter (Hjelmslev 1940a, 3).[276]

On this point, Hjelmslev does join Uldall: the distinction between what is abstract (formal) and what is concrete (substantial) is not intrinsic, but only pertains to the chosen hierarchy, i.e. within a specific analysis; yet many more could exist and be required, as linguistic forms may receive different manifestations. Moreover, the boundary between internal linguistics and external linguistics in itself seems not always to be so clear: must norm and usage be counted solely among the external factors, or is a more nuanced view possible?

Hjelmslev addresses this problem in his second letter, sent on the evening of the very same day of first one (Hjelmslev 1940b). The issue at stake is how to account for factors that 'interfere' with the standard relations of manifestation – such as prescriptive influences, variational contexts or even the death of a language following the extinction of a whole community of speakers. We can interpret all those cases, explains Hjelmslev, in terms of a progressive nesting of functions, that is through *funktionsfunktioner*: for instance, a manifestation of second degree, such as a prescriptive orthographical reform, may intervene in the manifestation of first degree existing between linguistic forms and the systems of writing and/or of pronunciation:
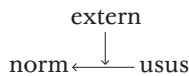
$$\text{extern}$$
$$\text{norm} \longleftarrow \ \downarrow \ \text{—} \ \text{usus}$$

Figure 1 (Hjelmslev 1940b, 1)

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276. "We thought that substance could only be used where it made sense to speak about 'things', 'concrete objects' which have a certain function. But 'things and 'concrete objects' do not exist at all; aside from functions, only functives exist, simply defined as necessary endpoints of functions".

In the case of the death of a language, the second-degree manifestation, connecting a first-degree manifestation to a given speaking community, may dissolve, causing the language in question to become latent (since the first relation still subsists, cf. Hjelmslev 1940b, 1).[277]

By projecting the same view on to the solidarity between expression and content (denotation of first degree or denotation *tout court*), multiple levels of nesting denotations might be obtained: a denotation of second degree may contract a further one, namely a denotation of third degree. In this way, a given linguistic structure can be said to refer (to express or to *connote*) a specific set of norms or constraints, such as styles, or specific pronunciations (second denotation), through a label which symbolises such reference in the analysis. Those norms refer in turn to a specific set of material circumstances (third denotation: a given community of speakers, a given chronological or geographical context, or even a particular individual). Now, those degrees of nesting denotations are called 'connotation', and the specific elements which trigger them are known as 'connotators'. Accordingly, a second-degree denotation is called 'internal connotation' and the third-degree denotation 'external connotation', suggesting a progressively centrifugal perspective:
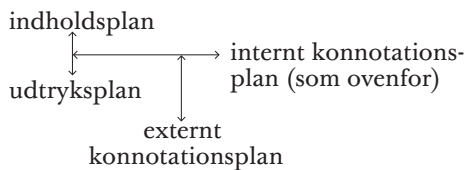

Figure 2 (Hjelmslev 1940b, 2)

Overall, the extreme heterogeneity of connotators is acknowledged as a fact to be accounted for, especially since, from Hjelmslev's perspective, there is no need for connotators (as content) to always be synchronous or even chronologically aligned with their expres-

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277. Oh to die a glossematic death!

sion (the class of signs they correspond to), as they have their own diachrony ('har deres diakroni'). The evolution of connotators of Latin is sampled by Hjelmslev as follows:

> 'bønderstammes sprog' > 'statssprog' > 'imperiumssprog' > 'verdenssprog' > 'lærd sprog' > 'klassiske filologers sprog' og til dels 'lægers sprog' (Hjelmslev 1940b, 2).[278]

In the same way,

> Medens den interne behandling (den, vi hidtil har nøjedes med) er udtømt med at en klasse (et sprog) erkendes som havende konnotativet 'litauisk', saa skal den externe glossematik erkende dette konnotativs funktion til de externe konnotationsplaner. Hvis det var i det 19. aarhundrede, vilde 'litauisk's externe konnotativ være 'bondeproletariat'; nu dærimod vil det være 'stat(ssprog)' (Hjelmslev 1940b, 2).[279]

One thing is clear, however, even if not yet clearly stated: *precisely* because connotators are uncountable, heterogeneous and unavoidable, the only means by which the analysis might reach a uniform terrain from which to compare and treat different languages is to *subtract* those connotators, keeping record of them, in order to analyse them at a later stage, so that they can be reconnected with their connoted elements as described entities. In fact, once subtracted – and here lays Hjelmslev's most original contribution – two elements connoted in different ways become homogeneous, and thus comparable.

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278. "'peasants' language' > 'state language' > 'empire language' > 'world language' > 'erudite language' > 'philologists' language' and partially 'medical language'".
279. "While the internal treatment (what we have been content with so far) is exhausted by recognizing a class (a language) as having the connotator 'Lithuanian', the external glossematics must recognize the function of this connotator as connected with the external connotation plans. If it were in the 19th century, the external connotator of 'Lithuanian' would be 'peasant proletariat'; now, on the other hand, it will be 'state (language)'.

6. Plotting connotation into the theory

Let us return to the correspondence. It is, in fact, curious to note that, despite asking for Uldall's approval, Hjelmslev is not really 'discussing' his ideas, he is presenting them. Manifestation and connotation are quoted as if they were already a common topic of discussion. The paper in which they were meant to make their first appearance – a short paper in honour of Otto Jespersen (cf. Hjelmslev 1941) – was already prepared, and the theory already retouched. From that point onwards, these ideas were plotted into Hjelmslev's version of glossematics, while not a single reference is made in Uldall's *Outline of Glossematics*, published twenty years later, and possibly with a full grasp of their centrality. It seems plausible that these two interconnected ideas, manifestation and connotation, lay at the root of the theoretical divergence between Uldall and Hjelmslev – a gap which, starting in the forties, was bound to become progressively more unbridgeable (cf. Hjelmslev [1958] (1970), 76; Uldall [1942], 8).

As we have seen, Uldall endorsed a far-reaching deduction that started from an overarching totality ('the whole world' or 'the universe', cf. resp. Uldall 1940c, 3; Uldall 1941, 1), from which semiological- and non-semiological hierarchies could be progressively singled out as parts and analysed accordingly:

> Det vilde være interessant engang at tage et primitivt samfund og behandle det hele, sprog, økonomisk struktur, ceremonier, dragt osv i een procedure, saaledes at alle funktioner mellem de semiologiske systemer og mellem disse og saadanne ikke-semiologiske som maatte forefindes (fx det biologiske) kunde blive behandlet paa deres plads i helheden" (Uldall 1940b, 3).[280]

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280. "It would be interesting someday to take a primitive society and treat it completely – language, economic structure, rituals, attire, etc. – in a single procedure, so that all functions between the semiological systems and between these and the non-semiological systems that may be found (e.g. the biological) could be treated on the basis of their place in the totality".

Only later on, in 1941, would Uldall acknowledge Hjelmslev's position on functions[281] and on form and substance,[282] still remaining sceptical about his definition of manifestation as determination between semiological and non-semiological hierarchies. In Uldall's eyes, to assume such determination would be a ventured move, "fordi vi endnu kun ved saa lidt om hvilke semiologiske og andre hierarkier der findes og følgelig endnu mindre om deres indbyrdes relationer" (Uldall 1941, 3).[283]

Hjelmslev's take on the topic was different, as his route to deduction was via the general definition of language or 'semiotic'. The multifariousness of linguistic and non-linguistic phenomena is thus attained by projection (*ved projektion*, cf. Hjelmslev 1940a, 2), through recursion of the basic structure of denotation. It is on this basis that Hjelmslev sees the possibility of comprehending all human and cultural problems in terms of language (cf. Coseriu [1954] (1973), 175), knowledge included. After all, endorsing Urban's claim, science is a language and knowledge is intrinsically linguistic (cf. Hjelmslev [1941]).

Nothing more is said in the correspondence, yet, as early as 1940, connotation already displays four main features serving as cornerstones for further development.

6.1 Extralinguistic reality as language

Connotation involves a progressive opening-up of the perspective on the external reality connected to language in the strict sense on a double level: as first-degree connotations ('internal connotations',

281. "It now seems to me that there are only three possible functions mentioned in the definitions, and that all the complications come from the possibility of each functive having a number of different functions of different degrees [...]. The fifteen functions and the beautiful four-dimensional diagram of last spring are hereby solemnly declared null and void, though it hurts me grievously to have to give them up" (Uldall 1941, 1; letter in English).
282. "Din artikel om form og substans forekommer mig fortrinlig, og jeg er ganske enig med dig [...]" (Uldall 1940b, 1).
283. "because we still know so little about which semiological and other hierarchies can be found, and consequently even less about their mutual relations".

most strictly connected to a given system of signs) and second-degree connotations (also called 'external', representing the extralinguistic reality properly speaking). On this point, glossematics seems to reinterpret the theory of 'reference' – a traditional province of analytical *Problemstellung* – with one major difference: in a referential perspective, the world of *realia* is pointed to by linguistic signs, whereas in a structural perspective such as the one endorsed by Hjelmslev *realia* are situated *within* language in the broadest sense, as functives of a nested structure (called 'projection'). This means that glossematic 'connotation' does not force us to leave language (cf. Badir 2014, 42; *pace* Traini 2001, Kerbrat-Orecchioni 1977), simultaneously preventing us to reduce connotations to secondary or metaphorical meanings (*Nebenbedeutungen*).

6.2 The various and heteroclite

Connotation is not limited to any specific domain, such as dialectal or stylistic variations, metaphoric meanings, literary *genres* and so forth; moreover, connotators cannot be established *a priori*, neither in terms of number nor of nature. Classes of signs of any size connote different extralinguistic 'contents', and possibly many 'contents' at the same time: whole classes of signs (languages) are connected to the historical, geographical and cultural circumstances of their manifestation; specific sets of conventions – such as orality or writing – represent different connotations of a given language, each having its own structure, and others may be added (cf. the so-called 'whistled languages'); specific sets of lexemes may refer to specific styles and registers, and specific pronunciations may even be connected to particular individuals (or 'physiognomies' – a notion apparently borrowed from Gabelentz).

6.3 Connotative content

All these specimens or 'connotators' are conceived as *content* belonging to a sign-function of the 2nd+ degree. Precisely because connotators represent concrete, material contextes (albeit on different extensions), the very idea of 'connotative content' requires

such content not to be *a priori* restricted to conceptual substance: physical instantiations and single individuals must be accounted for in the theory (cf. Trabant 1987, 95). And they are, through the articulation of variants and the levels of substance (cf. Hjelmslev 1954), a chair is 'high-degree derivate' of the content-side of the very sign *chair*, manifesting it (cf. here § 7.5). In fact, the ontological barrier between *abstracta* and *concreta* had already been lifted by Uldall: if a sign is also a thing, things can be signs too.

6.4 Connotation and temporality

There is no need for the different parts that constitute a language to be mutually synchronous nor to connote extra-linguistic contexts, which evolve at the same pace, as connotative contents are said to have their own temporal regimen ('diachrony' in the letter): for instance, there is no necessity for a language to globally connote a synchronous mentality, since possible subsystems may reflect different 'thinking styles' of a culture or a civilisation. This is a decisive aspect in the conceptualisation of a language as a dynamic organism instead of as a static conglomerate.

7. From 1940 onwards

All the aspects discussed so far were so to speak early achievements, carried out by Hjelmslev in a constant dialogue with Uldall, while all subsequent elaboration was exclusively Hjelmslev's, as no further discussion with Uldall on this topic can be found in their later correspondence. However, their early exchange was bound to bear fruit in the long run: Hjelmslev's takes on Uldall's ideas are indeed taken up at various points in his later work (cf. here § 7.5). In what follows, we will reconsider the main tenets of connotation found in both published and unpublished material, illustrating such dissemination and showing to what extent Uldall's idea of the hierarchy of substances and Hjelmslev's notion of 'connotation' are intertwined.

7.1 Omkring Sprogteoriens Grundlæggelse

Held together by the definitions already collected in the early version (1941) of the *Résumé of a Theory of Language* (1975), the *Omkring Sprogteoriens Grundlæggelse* (1943; 1961b) mostly discusses connotation by contrasting it to metalanguage (Hjelmslev 1943, § 22), both types of structure which need to be foreseen in the calculus. A provisional list of stylistic connotators (properly a group of categories) is put forward, with the sole pedagogical intent of showing the multifariousness of the phenomenon: a concrete text – i.e. a limited segment of an unlimited, productive semiotic chain – is never uniform in the first place, but assumed to be heteroclite:

> In preparing the analysis we have proceeded on the tacit assumption that the datum is a text composed in one definite semiotic, not in a mixture of two or more semiotics.
>
> In other words, in order to establish a simple model situation we have worked with the premiss that the given text displays structural homogeneity, that we are justified in encatalyzing one and only one semiotic system to the text. This premiss, however, does not hold good in practice. On the contrary, any text that is not of so small extension that it fails to yield a sufficient basis for deducing a system generalizable to other texts usually contains derivates that rest on different systems (Hjelmslev 1961b, 115; cf. Jensen 2012, 159).

Thus, the uniformity postulated for linguistic 'objects' must be understood as a constructive factor, a condition for their description that has to be recreated experimentally, as it were, and does not belong to concrete material. Such uniformity can be attained by subtracting the connotators (cf. Hjelmslev 1961b, § 22; Hjelmslev (1942) (1970), 98, point n. 7). The initial heterogeneity of texts also means that their components (periods, clauses, words, word-parts, etc.) can be characterised by many connotators at the same time, depending on which 'context' is considered: a single sentence may be connoted simultaneously as 'modern Danish', reflecting the corresponding diachronic variation of such language; as 'vulgar', if some of its parts are expressed in a low register; as 'oral', consid-

ering the diamesic dimension; as 'youth slang', if the pace of its delivery or some lexemes reflect a specific diastratic variation; or it may even connote a single individual, if some elements of that text mark a specific idiosyncratic physiognomy. All these connotators are not necessarily separate entities, as they may combine in all manner of ways. A specific 'style', to stay within the frame of the pedagogical example, is often a combination of parameters or 'dimensions' (register, medium, tone, specific vocabulary, and so on) on to which linguistic elements can be simultaneously mapped. It is up to the theory, then, to provide the means to describe such an entanglement.

7.2 Structure générale des corrélations linguistiques

In the paper *Structure générale des corrélations linguistiques* [1933] (1973), connotation is again addressed as an unavoidable condition for analysis:

> Les états de langue sont de diverses espèces (anciens et modernes, communs et régionaux, neutres ou non au point de vue stylistique, etc.) ; toutes sortes d'états intéressent indifféremment notre recherche. Signalons une fois pour toutes que, sauf indication contraire ni spécification ultérieure, le nom d'une langue (telle que français, allemand, etc.) sert á indiquer la *langue commune* à l'*état moderne*. D'une façon générale *chacune de nos analyses n'est valide que pour les matériaux linguistiques décrits ou compris dans les sources indiquées* ; pour les états de langues qui sont cités sans indication de sources notre analyse est prétendue valide pour les matériaux exposés dans les traités courants et communément connus. Ces remarques ne sont pas d'ordre pratique seulement ; elles visent à énoncer un principe : c'est une illusion trop répandue qu'on peut décrire un état de langue dans son ensemble et sous une forme absolue ; on ne décrit que *ce qui a été observé*, et les généralisations hâtives [...] sont non seulement dangereuses mais nettement injustifiables. Une proposition énoncée en parlant tout court d'une 'langue' ou d'un 'état de langue' ne vaut que pour la fraction de la langue ou de l'état de langue qui est comprise dans l'objectif de l'observateur. Un savant est responsable de ses engagements, et la bonne méthode veut qu'on circonscrive d'une

façon exacte l'objet qui a été étudié. Cet objet n'est jamais une langue dans sa totalité (Hjelmslev [1933] (1973), 63, § 85).[284]

As trivial a lecture on research ethics as it may appear, this section serves Hjelmslev in the making of a theoretical point: while glossematics postulates that a language is never defined by its external functions, these nevertheless circumscribe it from the outside. As a consequence, a description of a linguistic state is bound to refer the set of cultural, historical, geographical … conditions it refers to – all the rest has to be supplied by what Hjelmslev calls 'catalysis' (cf. Hjelmslev [1942] (1970), 97).

7.3 Forelæsninger over Sprogteori [Lectures on the Theory of Language]

Along with the example of the diachronic evolution of the 'Latin' connotator mentioned in the correspondence, the same consideration also recurs in the *Forelæsninger over Sprogteori*, the cycle of lectures held in Copenhagen in 1942–1943. In the text, connotation is discussed in greater detail and the provisional taxonomy of stylistic connotators proposed in *OSG* (which include *stylistic forms*, *styles*, *value-styles*, *media*, *tones*, *vernaculars*, *national languages, regional languages* and *physiognomies*, cf. *Prolegomena*, § 22) is taken up with a more optimistic stance: the list is said to reasonably exhaust "all possibilities that are traditionally and vaguely called *style*",[285] and since connotators often overlap and intertwine, a "dimensional analysis"[286]

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284. The section was possibly added to the original manuscript in 1942, when Brøndal's grip on Bulletin du Cercle Linguistique de Copenhague faded away and Hjelmslev glimpsed a possibility to finally publish the paper, taken up in correspondence of a speech given at the Circle on the category of comparison.

285. "Selvom vor oversigt over konnotatorerne er foreløbig og uden formaldefinitioner, kunde jeg tænke mig, at den kunde udtømme alle de muligheder, som man med traditionel vag betegnelse kalder stil" (Hjelmslev [1942–1943], lecture of 25th October 1943).

286. Dimensional analysis was originally conceived by Hjelmslev (1933, 1935) for the description of grammatical categories. In the Forelæsninger, the treatment of

(Hjelmslev [1933] (1973), 81, § 48) is proposed to describe their en-
tanglement, in which the different connotators figure as participative
correlates (cf. also Hjelmslev 1975, 221 ff.; Badir 2014, 215, n. 143):

> Disse ni kategorier er indbyrdes solidariske, således at ethvert funktiv
> i et denotationssprog på én gang må bestemmes i forhold til dem alle.
> Her foreligger altså et 9-dimensionalt system, og ved at kombinere et
> led i en af disse kategorier med led i andre, opstår der krydsninger,
> som er de konkrete konnotatorgrupper, som foreligger i praxis. Disse
> forskellige krydsninger kan man give særbetegnelser, og det gør man
> meget ofte i praxis. Skønlitterær stil er en højere værdistil, som samtidig
> er en kreativ stilart. Slang mener jeg at kunne definere som en værdistil,
> der på én gang anses for at være højere og lavere, og som samtidig er
> en kreativ stilart. Hvis vi har en værdistil, som er neutral, og samtidig
> kreativ stilart, har vi jargon og kode [...]. Alle de ubegrænset mange stil-
> artsbestemmelser, man lejlighedsvis har opstillet i den hidtidige stilistik,
> og som man aldrig har systematiseret, lader sig betragte som komplexer
> af disse faktorer (Hjelmslev [1942–1943], lecture of 20th October 1943,
> orthography modernized).[287]

The basic insight behind such treatment is that any stylistic variation
is to be classified simultaneously according to all the parameters
considered (cf. Figure 3, below; cf. Figure 4 in Appendix) – as for
the morphemes of case in *La catégorie des cas* – so that even newly dis-

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connotators is presented as an extension in the applicability of such a method,
supported by a series of definitions that were already provided in the first draft of
the Résumé (1941).

287. "These 9 categories are mutually solidary, so that every function in a denotative
language is determined at once in relation to all of them. In other words, we have a
9-dimensional system here, and by combining a member in one of these categories
with members in others, there arise crosses: the concrete connotator-groups that
we find in practice. These operational crosses can be given special designations, as
it is quite often done in practice. 'Belletristic style' is a higher value-style, which is
also a creative style. I believe 'slang' could be defined as a value-style considered to
be at the same time higher and lower, and which is also a creative style. If we have
a value-style that is neutral and at the same time a creative style, we have jargon
and code [...]. All the infinite style designations, which might have been set up by
traditional stylistics and which have never been systematised, can be regarded as
combinations of these factors".

covered or freshly invented connotators can find their place within such a framework, even those that seem external to the respective category, like 'non-coloured' or 'neutral' style.[288]

Despite the high degree of cohesion of the method, however, a number of questions are left unanswered. Some of them, like the relation between connotation and the syntagmatic vs. paradigmatic nature of analysis, have been tackled in Badir (2014, § V, notably, 225 ff.). Others, like the issue concerning how intrinsically open classes (like national and regional varieties) are supposed to be reduced to closed systems – and thus whether they should be conceived as systems in the first place – still need to be discussed.

7.4 The Résumé of a Theory of Language

One of the tasks, outlined in the *Résumé of a Theory of Language*,[289] is to establish the nature and the place of a language (semiotics) within a whole typology of structures, including a 'connotative semiotic'. The originality of the *Résumé* consists in stating that, as opposed to metasemiotics and denotative semiotics, connotative semiotics cannot build up an operation, and thus cannot be considered scientific semiotics (Df 44); in other terms, a connotative semiotics is conceived as a merely described, non-describing structure (Almeida 1997). And, while the extraction of connotators is prescribed to be carried out syntagmatically throughout the denotative analysis, the *Résumé* also prescribes a dimensional treatment of connotators, an operation which is conceived as both syntagmatic

288. In the same way, "un son, dans une langue donnée, n'est pas a priori nécessairement ou sourd ou sonore ; il peut être sourd et sonore (que ce soit alternativement ou à force d'un glissement au cours de son émission), et il peut (du moins théoriquement) recevoir la définition 'ni sourd ni sonore', laquelle représente la case neutre de la catégorie ; même dans le dernier cas, la catégorie est donc représentée" (Hjelmslev [1954] (1970), 59–60, n. 3).

289. The original text, dated 1943–45 (Whitfield 1975, xvi) knew a very limited circulation as a typescript, and was collated and published thirty years later (1975). It is only insofar as it was conceived in the Forties that we include the Résumé in my inquiry.

and paradigmatic, and this, "although the basis of analysis is relation and although the given object is viewed in the first instance as a syntagmatic" (Df 138 ff.; *contra* Badir 2014, 217, 225–226). In fact, once extracted, the connotators need to be mapped on to dimensions (i.e. relational entities) and investigated through their mutual correlations[290]. In order to do so, the *Résumé* in fact *extends* the applicability of the dimensional treatment, as it can now deal with 'open classes' to be mapped through an unlimited number of dimensions (Df 124). On the other hand, however, such dimensional treatment is still only concerned with connotators viewed as purely relational forms, while their usage is deferred to the stage called 'external linguistics' (technically: 'external semiology', Df 49), as Hjelmslev suggested in 1942:

> Ici encore, les facteurs enregistrés restent sans dénomination: 'danois' ou 'archaïque' sont des formes dont l'usage (ou la substance) n'est pas décrit(e) par la théorie des connotations, mais seulement par la métalinguistique analysant les facteurs sociaux, psychologiques et autres qui manifestent les connotatifs ; cette analyse est appelée ordinairement 'linguistique externe' (Hjelmslev [1942] (1970), 98).

7.5 Sproget. En Introduktion [Language. An introduction]

Connotation is also dealt with in two particularly abstract sections of *Sproget. En introduktion* (1963, cf. Hjelmslev 1970), written in the same period as the *Omkring Sprogteoriens Grundlæggelse* (1943): the chapter concerning the different 'layers' of a language ('*sproggrader*'), originally conceived as the conclusive chapter but later removed in the first Danish editions because of its complexity; and the two parts on linguistic typology (typology of schema and of usage) are discussed. The chapter on *sproggrader* enucleates the main features of connotation, namely:

1. the heterogeneity of connotators, which characterise any section of a text;

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290. This is especially true as they do not constitute a text (cf. Badir 2014, 225).

2. the mutual translatability ('substitution') of those sections, once connotators are subtracted. For instance, a section in verbal language can 'mean the same thing' as a section in written language, once those two connotators have been subtracted; two segments in resp. direct and indirect speech styles 'mean the same thing' once their connotators have been subtracted. These are two different configurations of linguistic constraints (such as tense-, person- and voice-features etc.) connoting a narrative as opposed to a descriptive rendering, a prose text as opposed to a poem, a specific work of a specific period by a specific writer, and so forth;

3. the fact that the operations of identification and subtraction of connotators do not exclusively pertain to stylistics but are carried out on a common ground in grammar as in any stage of linguistic analysis;

4. the treatment of connotators, as content, requires a different degree of analysis, as elements belonging to a given level of abstraction (for instance: denotation) can only be defined in opposition to other elements belonging to the same level (cf. Hjelmslev [1942] (1970), 98, point n. 9).

This last consideration is further addressed in the section concerning the possibilities of a semantic typology. Here the idea is taken up of a hierarchy of content-substances that ranges from abstract meanings to concrete instantiations: the hierarchy is conceived as a continuous articulation of varieties (variants bound to a specific context) and variations (individual variants):

> In the study of meaning (*semantics*) we should expect to be able to arrive at a typology of linguistic usage for the content plane of language. This is for many reasons a more difficult task than phonetic typology, partly because semantics has been much less cultivated and partly because it embraces a far greater domain. The content of language is nothing less than the world surrounding us, and the minimal particular meanings of a word, the particular meanings that are individuals (cf. 114) are the *things* of the world: the *lamp* that stands here on my desk is a particular

meaning of the word *lamp*; I myself am a particular meaning of the word *man* (Hjelmslev 1963, 120).

This kind of articulation is said to be universal, as it can be carried out on any material, not just linguistic phenomena: the focus is on the principles according to which substances that manifest linguistic forms (thus also connotators) can be orderly described. The idea of an inclusive hierarchy of content-substances is tackled here once again, in agreement with Uldall's early considerations: the requirement for a structural analysis of connotators is not the closedness of their category, but a hierarchical distribution, so that a certain number of connotators can be put in relation with denotative elements according to their 'size' (or 'rank' i.e. their place within the analysis).

7.6 La Stratification du langage

Only a few hints to connotation can be found in *La Stratification du langage* (1954), but they are significant ones nonetheless. Firstly, its pervasiveness. Connotation can occur on each of the four strata, and in linguistic scheme, norm and usage alike. Secondly, the asymmetrical correlation (unilateral participation α:A) between substances, which links to Uldall's idea of content-symbols modulated in line with Urban's position. In the standard rapport between content-substance and expression-substance, the first includes the second; contrariwise, as far as connotation is concerned, the connotative expression-substance (the denotative plane of language) must be recognised as unmarked (:A) in respect to the connotative content (the referent), which is the marked pole (:α) (cf. Hjelmslev [1954] (1959), 61). Within glossematic axiomatic, this means that things may very well be linguistic signs, but only signs can properly substitute things, disentangling the speaker from the bounds of the *hic & nunc*.

7.7 Some reflexions on practice and theory in structural semantics

One of Hjelmslev's final contributions, the paper *Some reflexions on practice and theory in structural semantics* (1961a) was his contribution to a festschrift to the founder and director of the so-called Nature method of foreign language acquisition, Arthur Jensen. It is remarkable from many points of view, especially since one would hardly have expected an affinity to exist between glossematics and an inductive approach based on implicit grammar, such as the one endorsed by the Nature Method. In this paper Hjelmslev not only explains the theoretical reasons behind such juxtaposition, but he also feels the need to unearth the whole topic of connotation once again, addressing for the first time the ambiguity of the terms 'connotation' and 'connotators'. The distinction is then made between *connotatum*, as a substitute for *connotator*, denoting the content-element of a connotative semiotic, and *connotans*, i.e. the sign belonging to the expression plane of the connotative semiotics (cf. Hjelmslev 1961a, 59–60, n. 7).

Moreover, the epistemological implications of the 'subtraction of connotators' are clarified: to subtract is to produce a uniformity, allowing one to grasp the identity of the substance behind two different formal patterns. And as the connotators are subtracted, the denotative elements become variants, a mutual 'transposability' between these (or 'traduction', in the case of linguistic denotata) becomes possible. For instance, once the connotative varieties belonging to a text as pronounced by a specific speaker have been extracted, it becomes possible to compare the text with others pronounced by other speakers etc., recognising them as the 'same' type of performance (a pronunciation) of a 'same text', i.e. the same substance behind different formal patterns. Thus 'extraction' does not mean removal, rather temporary *Ausschaltung* (*epoché*), deferral to a later stage of analysis:

> Since the subtractive operation underlying the translation is in principle of a negative nature, it may perhaps be difficult to see that a translation implies a consideration of external elements such as denotata. Suffice it to say that subtracting is far from being the same as ignoring, and

that any translation has to take the subtracted elements (e.g. different languages) into account and to keep them apart [...] (Hjelmslev 1961a, 60–61, n. 4).

Despite the importance of these details, the whole picture of connotation remains substantially unaltered. This is again a fascinating aspect of Hjelmslev's reflection: the cohesion of his rumination, from his early discussions with Uldall and later on, beyond the elective domain of linguistics, in the constant effort of incorporating further fields within the framework of glossematics – a rumination that lasted a lifetime.

8. From linguistic theory to a general theory of language

Let us round up. We have tackled the evolution of the concept of connotation from its very beginning, describing its genesis both conceptually, through the correspondence with Uldall, and chronologically, in the early 1940s. We have followed the elaboration of connotation along two complementary paths: the idea of manifestation and its corollary (the hierarchy of substances as a continuous and non-symmetrical articulation), and the variational aspect, close to what Coseriu would have called the 'architecture of language' (in opposition to the uniform 'functional language', Coseriu 1988, 285–286, cf. Jensen 2012, 159), but not restricted to traditional stylistic values.

The understanding of connotation as a central concept for a variational framework was not specifically due to Hjelmslev, whose original contribution lay in having asserted the need for, and given the means to, a systematic treatment of connotations, including stylistic ones. In fact, Hjelmslev's starting point was neither a stylistic nor a variational consideration, but rather the epistemological issue concerning the multifarious manifestations of linguistic forms. This was interpreted in terms of 'functions of functions', and was fostered by Uldall's insight on linguistic and non-linguistic hierarchies, which manifested a quite different take on the matter.

In fact, it's a striking feature of Uldallian glossematics that it

completely lacks the semiotic apparatus which, instead, became a hallmark of the Hjelmslevian approach: no typology of semiotic structures is put forward in the *Outline of glossematics*, which is only concerned with a functional description of human phenomena. Consequently, there is no trace of connotation, of the distinction between denotative, connotative and metalinguistic layers. The examination of the correspondence between the two linguists has shown us why: Uldall and Hjelmslev conceived the 'deduction' in quite different ways.

From Uldall's perspective, we simply don't know enough about how human phenomena are constructed to postulate the need to understand them by projecting (i.e. recursively multiplying) a basic semiotic structure (denotation) outwards, as Hjelmslev did. Drawing much from Cassirer's perspective,[291] Uldall conceived a culture as a collection of different institutions, each having its specificity described in functional terms, without assuming any privileged linguistic perspective. Now, it is quite curious to note that Hjelmslev's stance was rooted in the same argument: precisely because we cannot have any a priori knowledge[292] of how the external world is articulated, we need a foothold solid enough to start with. Such a foothold is represented by *language*, the only point in which expression and knowledge conflate. Consequently, Hjelmslev's step into the deductive hierarchy was a purely epistemological definition of *semiotics*, the structure of which could be used to illuminate the world around him, like a flashlight of sorts. Uldall had to choose another route. Since starting with the assumption of a basic semiotic structure was out of the question for him, since semiotics was just one structure-type among many others, he had to resort to a different totality to begin his deduction: the 'world' or 'universe' (*verden*, see above, section 4) – the only totality broad enough to ensure

291. The correspondence shows that Cassirer's Philosophy of Symbolic Forms was indeed perused by Uldall during the Forties (cf. for instance Uldall 1940a, 3–4). One of the last contributions by Uldall, the unpublished manuscript "Ciencias culturales" (Cultural sciences, composed in 1948; cf. Fischer-Jørgensen 1967, vii) represents an evident reference to Cassirer's mind-set.

292. Or at least a non-linguistic knowledge – one of the main arguments endorsed by Urban (1939, passim).

that no human factor could be overlooked, the only totality broad enough to incorporate the very dividing line between quantitative (nature) and qualitative (humanities).

The 'semiotic turn' of glossematics was then accomplished by Hjelmslev alone, in the wake of Urban's *Language and Reality* (1939). Within this framework, the role of connotation is to situate abstract forms in their context, so that the notion of 'context' itself becomes dispensable.[293] And if connotation is said to characterise any segment of any linguistic text,[294] it is because a concrete sample of a language co-occurs with the conditions of its manifestation. Despite their multiplicity and multifariousness, such conditions can be put in relation to the 'size' of the element considered (read: to the level of the analysis in which it appears), so that a mapping of such conditions becomes possible, turning a conglomeration into a layered system of systems. It is through connotation that the theory can account for both the variational heterogeneity of concrete texts, conceived as a *factum*, and their cohesive nature, i.e. their constituting organic totalities. Concrete texts have to be recreated as 'objects' in order to disclose their uniformity.[295] Uniformity is then both a presupposition and a goal of analysis (a 'bet', cf. Almeida 1997, Badir 2014, 197), but not a requirement for empirical data. Actually, such a bet may be even more substantial (!) than this, as 'connotative analysis' seems less bound to the operations carried out by a glossematician, than to those carried out by specialists and laymen alike, when dealing with texts. In other words, there seems

293. As Paolo Fabbri (1939–2020) used to say, the notion of "context" is only required if you have a poor definition of "text".

294. Belonging to the linguistic schema or to usage. There are, however, a few exceptions: formal languages or hypothetical reconstructed languages, such as Proto-Indo-European, are not "spoken" by any actual linguistic community and thus have only in that respect a 0 "zero" connotative content.

295. This is held against the vue according to which pragmatic nuances described by glossematics in terms of connotation are "regarded as an extra dimension on the sign that disturbs the functional homogeneity of the object" (Trabant 1987, 102). On the contrary, connotation and connotators are introduced in order to account for the concrete aspects of semiotic structures in terms of layered homogeneity, without being forced to assume such homogeneity a priori.

to be an argument for suggesting that identification, subtraction and substitution of connotators is carried out implicitly whenever one text is compared with another, in order to be interpreted, understood and described.

The view outlined here may sort out some problems, including the spurious distinctions between formal *vs.* substantial connotations, or between literary *vs.* scientific domains, or too realistic interpretations of denotative and connotative languages, or even unjustified preconceptions of connotators as affective nuances or stylistic *Nebenbedeutungen*. However, this view is still far from answering all remaining questions on the matter. Let us name a couple of these.

The identification of connotators seems to depend on the experience or the 'encyclopaedic knowledge' of the specialist – i.e. on his take on the 'sense' behind the patterns of form. This might not be a problem, but only insofar as the identification of connotators is just one of the first steps of the analysis, as different insights might produce quite different analyses.

Moreover, if two sentences can be identified and described by subtracting their connotators such as 'Danish' and 'English', as Hjelmslev suggests, what about the case of texts belonging to different semiotic orders? It would be tempting to treat two texts belonging respectively to 'natural language' and 'sculpture' by subtracting their respective connotators. In this way, the content of e.g. a *Vita Mariae* (a narration of the life of the Virgin, which was quite common in the Middle Ages) and the content of the choir wall in Chartres Cathedral, which portrays it, could be identified and treated accordingly, by acknowledging the fact that, behind their different formal structures, they 'say the same thing' or 'narrate the same story'.[296]

These might seem far-reaching speculations. Yet it must be made clear that it was precisely this sort of solicitation which fostered the initial exchange between Uldall and Hjelmslev, propelling

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296. Provided that the two are effectively semiotics – something that cannot be taken for granted in the first place. In glossematics, because of their very nature, symbolic systems cannot have connotators.

glossematics from being a linguistic theory to a general theory of language.

Appendix

1. Stylistic form

9. Physiognomies

:A

2. Style

:β

:B

8. Regional
languages

3. Value-style

:α

:γ

:γ

:γ

:A

7. National
languages

:γ

4. Media

:A
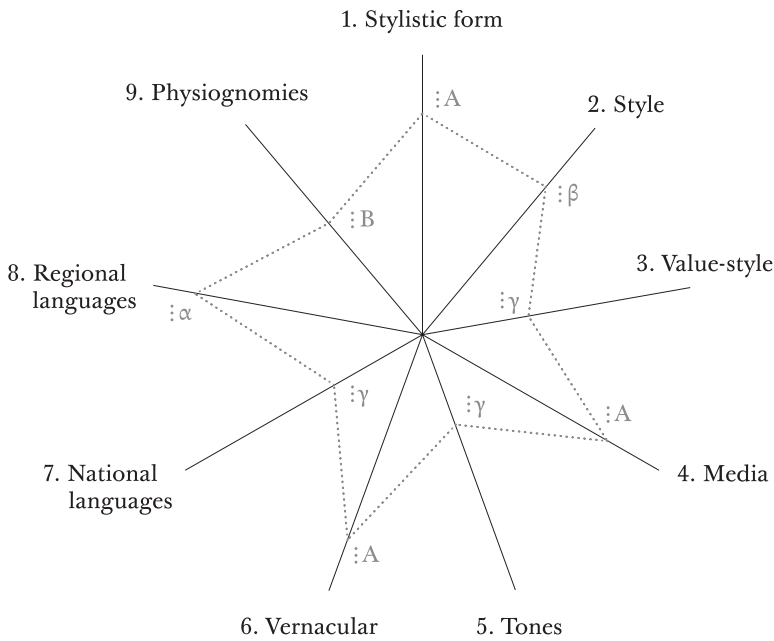
6. Vernacular   5. Tones

Table 1 Speculative representation of the 9 categories of connotators as dimensions (the division of dimensions into correlates is given for purely illustrative purposes)

Each of the nine categories listed by Hjelmslev (cf. Figure 4) represents a dimension that can be further divided into participative members[297] (cf. Hjelmslev 1975, 31, Rg 16; 225 ff.), as follows:

1. *stylistic form* can be articulated into:
   :α'   bound (poetry)
   :A'   unbound (prose)

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297. Properly: cotensive (Hjelmslev 1975, Df 118), as they are only defined in respect to one another, while their correlations don't establish a category. This also mean that their combinations do not need to follow the "laws of solidarity" (Hjelmslev 1975, 31, Rg 16).

2. *style* into
   - :β'   creative
   - :B'   normal (also called 'reproductive)
   - :γ'   archaising

3. value-style into
   - :β'   higher
   - :B'   vulgar
   - :γ'   lower
   - :Γ'   neutral

4. the *medium* (speech, writing, gesture, attire, music, flag-signals, means of payment, game-equipment, etc., cf. Hjelmslev 1975, 228) represents an open class, so connotators enter here either as tags or as sub-systems, whose oppositional criterion has still to be found;
5. *tones* (joyful, sad, polite/impolite, angry, surprise, contempt, etc.) is an open class, see n. 4;
6. *vernaculars* (formal language, informal language, insider-jargon, specialistic language, etc.) is an open class, see n. 4;
7–9. (national languages, regional languages and physiognomies) these are all open classes, see n. 4.

Accordingly, the interjection by Hjelmslev quoted in exergue of this paper, "*Pokkers*", could be analysed as unbound (1), mostly colloquial (4) informal language (6), belonging to normal or reproductive style (2), having low or non-vulgar value (3), usually expressing contempt or surprise (5), generally indicating subjective involvement in the situation in terms of distancing or reject of it, potentially belonging to any regional variety (8) of Danish (7). In the precise case of the quotation mentioned above, the corresponding physiognomy (9) is /Louis Hjelmslev/. By subtracting the connotators /Danish/, the expression becomes comparable to others, such as /Eng./ 'heck' or /Ita./ 'diamine'; by further subtracting the connotator /low/, other expressions may be added (Eng. 'fuck'), etc.

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298. The string on the right refers to the permanent identifier assigned to the digitalised document within the framework of the INFRASTRUCTURALISM project at glossematics.dk. It will enable the document to be retrievable once the material is published in the infrastructure.

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