

Unit one: Modern linguistics (European structuralism)

Lesson 05: Copenhagen School of Linguistics



Louis Hjelmslev (October 3, 1899, Copenhagen – May 30, 1965, Copenhagen) was a Danish linguist whose ideas formed the basis of the Copenhagen School of linguistics. Hjelmslev's sign model is a development of Saussure's bilateral sign model. Saussure considered a sign as having two sides, signifier and signified, and also distinguished between form and substance.

It is a group of scholars dedicated to the study of linguistics. It was founded by Louis Hjelmslev (1899–1965) and Viggo Brøndal (1887–1942). In the mid twentieth century the Copenhagen school was one of the most important centres of linguistic structuralism together with the Geneva School and the Prague School. In the late 20th and early 21st century the Copenhagen school has turned from a purely structural approach to linguistics to a functionalist one, Danish functional grammar, which nonetheless incorporates many insights from the founders.

The principal ideas of the school are:

A language consists of content and expression.

A language consists of a succession and a system.

Content and expression are interconnected by commutation.

There are certain relations in the succession and the system

There are no one-to-one correspondents between content and expression, but the signs may be divided into smaller components.