

Laudatio Frans GREGERSEN

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Frans Gregersen was born in 1949 in Copenhagen. He studied Linguistics and Psychology of Language at the University of Copenhagen. After his studies Gregersen started his career as a researcher and later as an associate professor at the Institute of Nordic Philology and the Institute of Danish Dialectology of the University of Copenhagen. In 1996 he was appointed full professor of the Danish language at the Institute of Nordic Philology. He was elected to the Royal Academy of Sciences in 1997 and currently serves as a member of its committee on research policy. Earlier on he had already served as a member of the Council for the Humanities at the Ministry of Education. From 1996 to 2001 he was a member of the Danish Research Council for the Humanities and he has continuously been active as a Ph.D. supervisor and educator, serving as vice chairman and later chairman of the board of Ph. D. studies at the University of Copenhagen. Since 2001 Frans Gregersen has been director of the Graduate School of Language Sciences in the Copenhagen region (www.gradeast.dk) financed by the Danish Academy.

His research covers two main areas. On the one hand Frans Gregersen has applied himself to the study of Danish structuralism and in particular to Louis Hjelmslev's theory and its influence on Danish linguistics. This was also the subject of his doctoral dissertation, *Sociolingvistikkens (u)mulighed*, [The (im)possibility of Sociolinguistics], which he defended in 1991. Even earlier writings show that he has a great interest and is well-educated in the theory of language and in the history of the area of linguistics in general, as well as of Danish linguistics in particular. Together with Simo Køppe he published a book on 'Geistesgeschichte' and the theory and history of the humanities, *Videnskab og lidenskab*, [Scholarship and Passion] (mark the pun in the Danish title), as early as 1985. Other important books followed soon, such as *Against epistemological relativism, History and Philosophy of Science* (1988), as well as the two volumes *Idehistorie*, [History of Ideas]. Thus it is beyond any dispute that Frans Gregersen is an eminent

candidate for the Sarton medallion.

On the other hand Frans Gregersen has won his spurs as a sociolinguist. In this respect *the Copenhagen Project in Urban Sociolinguistics I-II*, which he directed together with Inge Lise Pedersen from 1986 to 1991, can particularly be regarded as pioneering work. In 1998 Frans Gregersen was appointed director of the Øresund project, a joint effort by Danish and Swedish universities financed by the EU and focussing on the development of pedagogical and didactic skills of native language teachers. In collaboration with the university of Lund this project resulted in a number of new research projects, among which an investigation on the phonetic distance and the mutual language understanding between Danish and Swedish.

Frans Gregersen has always displayed a broad active interest in the so called 'Verständnis des Faches', the identity and positioning of the discipline. Closely connected with this are a great reflection and meta-approach of native language didactics. This was expressed early on in a project such as *Skolesprog*, [Language at School], (1974-1979). From 2001 to 2003 Frans Gregersen chaired a group commissioned by the Ministry of Education to renew the school and university subject of Danish. The result was the publication of *Fremtidens danskfag*, [The future of Danish as an academic subject], in March 2003. To this end, Frans Gregersen arranged several discussion fora, in which all the actors in the field could enter into a discussion with each other.

Frans Gregersen has an impressive list of publications, which both reveal his broad intellectual scope and testify of his methodological unrest and depth. He has published in all major Danish periodicals and in international journals such as *Soziolinguistica*, *Culture and Society*, *Acta Linguistica*, *International Journal of Sociolinguistics* and he has written contributions to the *Encyclopedia of Languages and Linguistics*.

Frans Gregersen has been a member and chairman of several evaluation committees in and outside of the Nordic countries. Recently he has been appointed chairman of the Nordic Language Council, which makes him into a key figure of the language policy of the Nordic countries. From May 2005 onwards, Frans Gregersen is the director of the Danish National Research Foundation Centre on Language Change in Real Time (the LANCHART centre) at the University of Copenhagen (www.hum.ku.dk/launchart).

To sum up, I quote from *The History of Linguistics in the Nordic Countries* by Even Hovdhaugen et al.

As a central figure in the promotion of various aspects of linguistics in Denmark, Frans Gregersen has not only been a productive scholar in a number of areas, but has also been active in promoting educational reforms and research policy making, in editing books and journals, and in planning and supervising two major research projects in sociolinguistics (6.3.11). Both projects have furthered research in the spoken language and have served to recruit and train young scholars in linguistics. Gregersen has also been instrumental in organizing a doctoral program in linguistics at the University of Copenhagen and in planning courses for doctoral students throughout Denmark. Recognizing the acute need in Denmark to educate a new generation of linguists, he has recently organized a forum for discussing ways to improve the recruiting of candidates of language studies." (Hovdhaugen et al. 2000: 507).

I met Frans Gregersen for the first time during my studies at the university of Copenhagen in 1970-71. Together we took our first steps in Danish linguistics under the guidance of Prof. Em. Erik Hansen.

During my professorship at Groningen University, I arranged a symposium in 1989, devoted to the linguistic development in the Nordic capital cities at the university of Groningen. From all Nordic countries, speakers were invited to report on ongoing research and to develop a comparative perspective. I found it obvious that Frans Gregersen would be the ideal person to report on the Danish state of the art.

Ever since, Frans Gregersen and I have maintained close research connections. These contacts were particularly intensified when we started the Dutch-Danish dictionary project at our department in Ghent. The Danish database which resulted from this project, offers broad perspectives for further contrastive lexical and syntactic research between our two languages. It is then my strong desire that we shall be able to collaborate even closer in the near future.