

## Uldall, Hans-Jørgen (1907–1957)

R Thelwall, Calgary, Alberta, Canada

© 2006 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

Hans-Jørgen Uldall is most widely known for his *Outline of glossematics*, which was finally published only two months before his premature death. Born in Silkeborg, Denmark, the son of a doctor, he began studies at the University of Copenhagen in 1924 as a medical student, but soon changed to English and quickly drew the attention of his professor – Otto Jespersen. After studying under Daniel Jones in 1927, and achieving a native command of English, he was invited, in 1929, to teach at the University of Capetown as deputy for D. M. Beach. A teaching stint followed at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) for most of 1930. Then, on Jespersen's recommendation, in 1931 he went to California to carry out fieldwork for Franz Boas. He studied Southern Maidu in 1931 and in the summer of 1932. During his time in the United States, he studied anthropology under Boas at Columbia University and registered as an M.A. student there, although he never submitted his thesis. After some initial publication based on Jones's phoneme theory, he hesitated to complete his Maidu publication because he felt the need for a revised theoretical base.

In 1932, Uldall returned to Denmark and remained there until 1939. Jobs were hard to find, and Uldall had not completed his Danish degree. He had various temporary posts, initially associated with his old professor, Jespersen. He considered going abroad but his wife became ill with tuberculosis and died in 1937. Uldall was also kept in Denmark through his association with Hjelmslev, whom he had met shortly after returning, through the Linguistic Circle of Copenhagen. A phonology of Danish was planned under the Prague model but never completed. The work, involving Hjelmslev, Uldall, and Paul Lier, led to the development of a new theory that they called *glossematics* (q.v.). They planned various publications, but modifications to the theory delayed publication. In 1937 they agreed on the basic model and hoped to finish two publications on phonematics and Danish

phonology. However, in 1939, Uldall felt obliged to take a post with the British Council in Athens, although he still intended to spend a significant part of the year in Denmark.

His intent was to go to Athens, but wartime circumstances prevented it. He found himself in Egypt instead, with his new bride, Elizabeth Anderson. They taught for the British Council in Cairo, Tel Aviv, Baghdad, and Alexandria. Throughout the war, Uldall was completely cut off from Hjelmslev. Their attempts to reestablish their working relationship of the late 1930s failed, interrupted by Uldall's further work for the British Council, and then for Tucuman University in Argentina, as well as work in Edinburgh (where Elizabeth, his wife, was appointed to the University in 1949). Even most of a year spent in Denmark (1931–1932) failed to further collaboration between the two, not least because their views had diverged. Hjelmslev felt unable to sign off on the proposed publication by Uldall, which was critical to his career. The publication appeared only two months before his death in Lagos, where he was a senior lecturer at the University of Ibadan.

*See also:* Boas, Franz (1858–1942); Glossematics; Hjelmslev, Louis Trolle (1899–1965); Jespersen, Otto (1860–1943); Jones, Daniel (1881–1967).

### Bibliography

- Uldall H J (1938). 'On the structural interpretation of diphthongs.' In *Proceedings of the 3rd international congress of phonetics sciences*, Ghent, 272–276.
- Uldall H J (1944). 'Speech and writing.' *Acta Linguistica* 4, 11–17.
- Uldall H J (1949). 'On equivalent relations.' In *Recherches structurales. Interventions dans le débat glossématique, publiées à l'occasion du cinquantième de M. Louis Hjelmslev*, Travaux du Cercle Linguistique de Copenhague, vol. 5. 71–76.
- Uldall H J (1957). *Outline of glossematics. A study in the methodology of the humanities with special reference to linguistics*. Part 1: General Theory, Travaux du Cercle Linguistique de Copenhague, vol. 10.