

## I N T R O D U C T I O N

### The Conditions of Phonetic Studies at the University of Copenhagen - a Historical Sketch.

#### A. Teaching.

The teaching of phonetics has a long tradition at the University of Copenhagen. Vilhelm Thomsen lectured on general phonetics from 1881, and Otto Jespersen continued these lectures in 1895. In the same year Jespersen started lecturing on English phonetics. French phonetics had been taught already from 1890 by Kristoffer Nyrop, and in the following decades, primarily due to the influence of Otto Jespersen, special courses in the phonetics of other languages were introduced. Thus, for the last 40 - 50 years courses in the phonetics of the particular languages have been given regularly to all students of Danish, English, German, and French, and phonetic knowledge has been required for the exams.

The courses in the phonetics of individual languages included also an introduction to general phonetics, and from 1905 to 1939 no separate courses of general phonetics were given. In the year 1939, however, Louis Hjelmslev started again a separate course in general phonetics, and from 1943, when a lectureship of phonetics was established, these courses were given every year. In the beginning they were attended by a modest number of students, but the number of participants increased gradually, and now almost all students of foreign languages (approximately 500 a year) take a course in general phonetics, normally in their first term. The course comprises 30 hours in all. The students are divided into groups of about 25, and taught by the staff members of our present institute. (For students of Danish the general phonetics is incorporated in the course in Danish phonetics.)

The course in general phonetics is followed by courses (1-2 terms) in the phonetics of particular languages. These courses are administered by the various language departments (in continuation of the older tradition) and not by the Institute of Phonetics, but there is normally a close cooperation between the teachers of specific and general phonetics, and several of the teachers have had a training in general phonetics.



In addition to the elementary course in general phonetics intended for all students of foreign languages, special courses for advanced students have been given since 1943. These courses were, for instance, attended by those who had chosen a phonetic subject for their MA thesis. Since 1960 a so-called cand.art. degree in phonetics was established. The preparation for this degree is planned to take two years of full time study. Four candidates have passed this exam up till now, and ten are preparing for it. - It is now (since January 1967) also possible to take an MA in phonetics. The study for this degree will take approximately six years.

The regular courses for the cand.art.-students now comprise (i) phonemics (ii) practical training in sound perception and production, and phonetic transcription, (iii) experimental phonetics. Each of these courses comprises three terms with two hours weekly. Moreover there is a two-term course in statistics, and various more occasional supplementary phonetic courses. Moreover there are seminars for postgraduate and advanced students.

From 1943 to 1953 all instruction in elementary and advanced phonetics was given by the lecturer in phonetics. From 1953 practical training lessons for beginners were given by teaching assistants (paid by the hour). In 1958 these assistants took over all instruction for beginners. It was not until 1963 that another permanent post was established. Further posts were obtained in 1965 and 1966. In 1966 a chair of phonetics was founded.



## B. Research Possibilities.

The first vowel synthesizer was built in Copenhagen as early as 1781 by C.G.Kratzenstein, but it was not until nearly two centuries later that the University obtained a first grant for phonetic instruments. In the meantime some experimental work had been started more privately. The well-known comparatist Karl Verner made some acoustic vowel investigations in the eighties of the last century, and at the same time Georg Forchhammer worked with a phonoscope. - But Otto Jespersen was not interested in instrumental phonetics (although he worked for a time with Rousselot), and this was probably the main reason why the University did not obtain a phonetics laboratory. In the early thirties of this century Poul Andersen and Svend Smith received a grant from the Carlsberg Foundation for a kymograph and a Meyer-Schneider pitchmeter, and for a short period of time these instruments were placed in the University.

In 1933 a "room for phonetic exercises", later called "phonetic laboratory", was established at the University under the direction of professor W. Thalbitzer and from 1939 under the direction of professor Louis Hjelmslev. This, however, was not a laboratory for instrumental research, but simply a small room equipped with a grammophone, a collection of records, and a few books. An application for a real phoneticslaboratory was sent in by professor Hjelmslev in 1939, and again in 1940, without any result. In 1956 an Institute of Linguistics and Phonetics was established with professor Hjelmslev as a director. The classrooms of the institute were equipped with tape recorders and grammophones, and there was a special room where 8 students could listen to records or tapes by means of headphones. - Instrumental phonetic research had, however, to take place in other institutions. - In 1943 the Institute of Speech Pathology (which is not part of the University but belongs under the Ministry of Social Affairs) got a laboratory of experimental phonetics. This laboratory was established in close cooperation with professor Hjelmslev, and it was agreed that it could also be used by the Institute of Linguistics and Phonetics. - In 1953 the University received a Kay Electric sonagraph from the Rockefeller Foundation, and this was placed at the Institute of Speech Pathology, and used by both institutions. Moreover various students and teachers from the Institute of Linguistics and Phonetics had



occasion to work at the Dentists' High School (with palatography and X-ray), at the Cardiographic Laboratories of the University Hospital and the Copenhagen District Hospital in Gentofte (particularly with pressure measurements), and at the Speech Transmission Laboratory in Stockholm. Eli Fischer-Jørgensen had also the opportunity to work for some time in 1952 at the MIT, and Jørgen Rischel at the Communication Sciences Laboratory of the University of Michigan (in 1962), and both visited the Haskins Laboratory in New York for a short time.

In the long run it was, however, very unpractical that the University did not have its own laboratory. The difficulties were augmented by the fact that the laboratory at the Institute of Speech Pathology, which from 1958 was directed by dr. Svend Smith, intensified its own research work, and the space was too limited to be used by two institutions. In 1958 some rooms in the basement of 13 St. Kannikestræde, where the Institute of Linguistics and Phonetics was housed, became vacant, and an application was sent in immediately. It took, however, 8 years before the money was granted and the rooms repaired, but in the meantime we succeeded in getting some money for instruments. In 1961 we bought a mingograph, an intensity meter, and a pitchmeter, and in the following years some supplementary equipment. This was placed provisionally in a small room in the first floor which needed repairing very badly, and which could only be very insufficiently heated. In spite of the bad conditions a good deal of instruction and research took place here during the years 1962-65.

It was thus a very great progress when, at the end of November 1966, we could take six small rooms in the basement in use as a laboratory of experimental phonetics. Shortly afterwards the Institute of Linguistics and Phonetics was divided into two separate institutes, an Institute of Linguistics with professor Gunnar Bech as a director, and an Institute of Phonetics with Eli Fischer-Jørgensen as a director. Both institutes are housed in the same building in 13 St. Kannikestræde. The Institute of Phonetics has now at its disposal: an office, four studies for teachers, a listening room (which also functions as a library), and the six laboratory rooms. - It shares two classrooms with the Institute of Linguistics and the Institute of Danish Dialectology.

Eli Fischer-Jørgensen