

Titel: BREV TIL: Eli Fischer-Jørgensen FRA: Charles Ernest Bazell (1955-11-15)

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Anvendt udgave: Louis Hjelmslev og hans kreds

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København 15/4/55

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Dear Miss Fischer-Jørgensen,

Sorry I did not return your paper before. I am doing so now.

Of course we may notice the difference between two flowers without them having special names. But if no flowers had different names in the languages we know it would not occur to us to apply this test to a new language.

And when we do apply the test, e.g. by pointing to the two flowers in the endeavour to elicit different responses from a speaker, it is not the 'substance of the content' we point at! If it were, we should afterwards undertake a careful examination of the flower in order to find out just what the speaker meant, just as we undertake a careful examination of the sound-substance in order to find out just what he pronounced. (!!)

Instead of this ridiculously irrelevant examination, what we do do if we wish to find out more about the meaning, is to observe the linguistic contexts in which the flower-name is used. We turn away from the flower, and back to the utterances of the speaker. By examining the flower we should be dealing with a substance, but not with semantics; by observing how the speaker uses the word (does he call the flower a weed, or does he compare its beauty to that of golden shield?) we study semantics but not a substance. Either substance without semantics, or semantics without substance. There is no semantic substance.

Yours sincerely

