

Titel: notes, [Uldall] 008-0010

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Anvendt udgave: Louis Hjelmslev og hans kreds

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you. You know that they are speech to somebody, to the people who know that language, just as you know that the soldier on the wall is waving signals to somebody, and just as you know when you walk through the streets of an evening that there are waves in the air which to the people listening in are a broadcasting programme, although to you, at present, it all means nothing.

It would appear, then, that speech is a string of sounds by which we manage to suggest meaning. I deliberately say "suggest", not "convey", because as we have seen our speech does not contain meaning. If I say "bear" it means something only to the people who have learnt to associate a certain idea with that particular group of sounds, who possess, so to speak, the code in which I am speaking. The waving of the soldier on the wall of the Castle means nothing to you, but ~~it~~ ^{he} does mean something to the soldier on the other side because he knows the code; they are signals capable of suggesting meaning. And so with all other kinds of symbols. A piece of shorthand is to the uninitiated nothing more than a jumble of scribbles; whereas to those who have learnt to read it, it may mean a lot. You cannot understand a Chinese inscription until you have learnt what ideas to associate with the various symbols.

And so, also, with speech. If I say "sl" to you it means nothing, whereas in a Dane it calls forth much the same associations as you get from the word "~~sl~~" ^{beer}. In other words, "beer" and "sl" carry no meaning in them but they suggest a meaning which can be picked up only by those who know the language.

Human speech, then is a signal system or a set of signal systems which we have invented and developed to communicate with other humans, to suggest ideas and emotions to them, just as other members of the animal kingdom have their, very