Course : Linguistics   **Level : L2**   **Lecturer : Pr. Saliha CHELLI**

Unit: 1 European structuralism   **Lesson 2**

Structuralism

Introduction

Structuralism is an intellectual movement in human sciences with effects on linguistics, sociology, anthropology and other fields. Structuralism sees itself as a human science which tries to understand, in a systematic way, the fundamental structures that underlie all human experience and therefore, all human behaviour and production. It is used in different fields of study such as linguistics, psychology, anthropology, sociology and literary studies. Structuralism in Europe developed in the early 20th century, mainly in France and the Russian Empire, in the structural linguistics of Ferdinand de Saussure and the subsequent Prague, Moscow, and Copenhagen schools of linguistics.

1. Ferdinant de Saussure

Ferdinand de Saussure, born on 26 November 1857, was a Swiss linguist. His ideas laid a foundation for many significant developments in both linguistics and semiology in the 20th century. He is widely considered one of the founders of 20th-century linguistics. He is widely acknowledged as a key figure and the founding father of modern linguistics. He published little himself but his students reconstructed his ideas from his lecture notes and published them in 1916 as *Cours de Linguistique Géneral (course of general linguistics*). Many linguists also appeared and used his ideas as the approach in linguistics, such as Leonard Bloomfield, Charles Francis Hocke, Andre Martinet, Edward Sapir, and many more.

Saussure had a major impact on the development of linguistic theory in the first half of the 20th century. As a result, many linguistic schools in Europe promoted structuralism, especially in **Geneva**, **Prague**, **London**, **Copenhagen** and **France** in addition to **the American school**

2. Structuralism: The linguistic theory

Structuralists focus more on the structure of language rather than on the meaning of words. This means that they are more interested in how words are used in a sentence and in the relationship between words.

Saussure defines language as a system in which all the elements fit together, and which the value of any one element depends on the simultaneous coexistence of all the others

David Crystal (1980) said in his dictionary that structuralism is a term used in linguistics referring to any approach to the analysis that pays explicit attention to the way in which linguistic features can be described in terms of structures and systems.

Colin's English dictionary (2014): Structuralism is an approach to linguistics that analyses and describes the structure of language as distinguished from comparative and historical aspects.

Structuralism is an approach to the study of language that concentrates on its internal structure as opposed to the history of its development and its relationship with other languages.

2.1.   De Saussure's definition of language

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2.2.   The key tenets of strcuturalism

- All languages have a common an underlying structure
- This structure is based on basic elements, or units, that can be combined in different ways to create meaning.
- This sturcture is composed of small units cleed 'sign'
- Language is a system that can be analyzed and described using the scientifc methods
- There is a direct relatinship between the foram of a certain language and its underlying structrure.
- The meaning of a sign is not inherent in the sign itself but determined by its relationship to the other signs in the system.
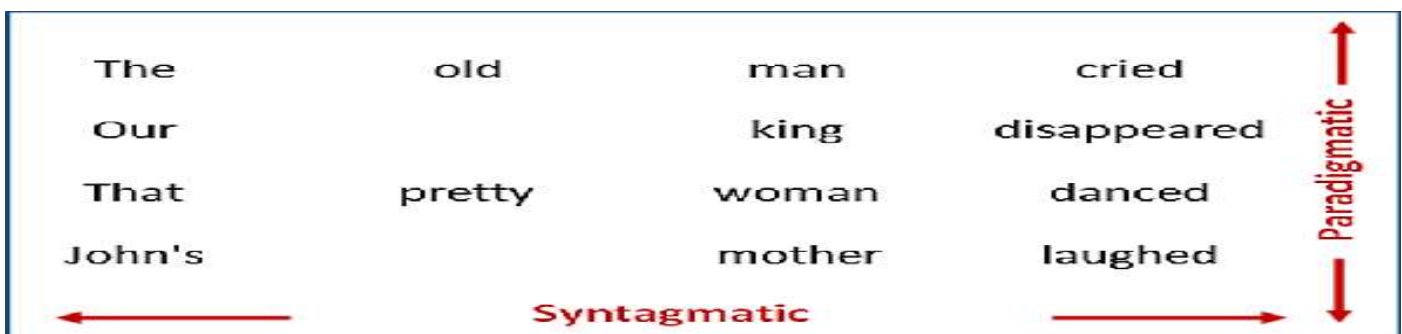
2.3.   Principles of the Saussurean linguistics (dichotomies)

- **Synchronic versus diachronic**

- **Signifier versus signified**

- **Language, langue and parole**

- **Syntagmatic versus paradigmatic relationship**

Differences between the dichotomies

Synchronic linguistics is the study of language at a particular point in time.	**Diachronic** linguistics is the study of the history or evolution of language.
Signifier: any material thing that signifies, e.g., words on a page, a facial expression, an image.	**Signified**: the concept that a signifier refers to.
Language is a human form of communication, which includes the phonetics, the phonology, the morphology, the syntax, the semantics, and the discourse context, as presented by a given speech community.	**langue** refers to the rules behind the way the language is arranged and used **Parole** refers to the actual language use of individual people in their everyday lives.
Syntagmatic relation is a type of semantic relations between words that co-occur in the same sentence or text(Asher, 1994). In other words, syntagmatic relation is about the relationship/position between words in a sentence. The syntagmatic relation occurs on the horizontal axis.	**Paradigmatic relation** is a different type of sematic relations between words that can be substituted with another word in the same categories (Hj⊘rland, 2014). Paradigmatic relation describes a substitution relationship between words of the same word class. The substitution occurs on the vertical axis.

Example: this sentence illustrates the syntagmatic relations between its constituents horizontally while The paradigmatic relations are those substitutions of the words from the same categories done vertically.

References

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Leech, G.N., Deuchar, M. & Hoogenraad, R. (2005). English grammar for today (2nd ed.). London: Macmillan.**Structuralism :** https://www.britannica.com/biography/Ferdinand-de-Saussure