Mohamed Khider University, Biskra
Faculty of Arts and Languages
Course: linguistics
Level: second year

Department of English
Semester One
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Unit one: European structuralism

Lesson 02: Structuralism- A linguistics Theory

1. Emergence of European Structural linguistics (GENEVA SCHOOL)

STRUCTURAL LINGUISTICS IS an approach to LINGUISTICS which treats language as an interwoven structure, in which every item acquires identity and validity only in relation to the other items in the system. All linguistics in the 20th century is structural in this sense, as opposed to much work in the 19th century, when it was common to trace the history of individual words. Structuralism attempted to lay down a rigorous methodology for the analysis of any language. In Europe, Saussure influenced:

(1) the Geneva School of Albert Sechehaye and Charles Bally,

(2) the Prague School of Roman Jakobson and Nikolai Trubetzkoy, whose work would prove hugely influential, particularly concerning phonology,

(3) the Copenhagen School of Louis Hjelmslev, and

(4) the Paris School of Algirdas Julien Greimas. Structural linguistics also had an influence on other disciplines in Europe, including anthropology, psychoanalysis and Marxism, bringing about the movement known as structuralism

2. Structuralism as a linguistic Theory

The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary states that structuralism in literature and language is a method which concentrates on the structure of system and the relations between its elements, rather than on the individual elements themselves.

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.

3. FERDINAND DE SAUSSURE

Ferdinand de Saussure was born on November 26th, 1857 at Geneva, Switzerland, from French Protestant family who emigrated from Lorraine when the religion war launched by the end of 16th century. His language talent had been shown up since he was a child. He died in 1913
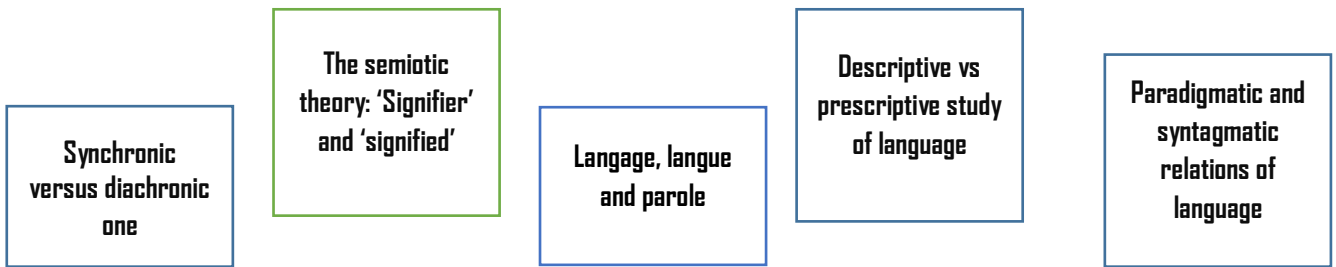
- In the beginning, he learned physics and alchemy at Geneva University as his family tradition, and then he learned linguistic at Leipzig from 1878 until 1879.

- In this university, he learned from great linguists that time, Brugmann and Hubschmann. In 1897, he achieved the doctor title, he proved that he was a brilliant historical linguist.

- His work under the title 'Memoire sur le Systeme Primitive des Voyelles dans les Langues Indo Europennes' (The notes about ancient vowel system in Indo-European languages) was the proof of his talent. In such young age, de Saussure was already viewed as a great figure in historical 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.

4. De Saussure' Definition of Language

In de Saussure's Course in General Linguistics, a book that summarizes his lectures at the University of Geneva from 1906 to 1911, he explained the relationship between speech and the evolution of language, investigating language as a self-contained system. For him:

"A language is 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.

5. Principles of Saussurean linguistics (dichotomies)

Synchronic versus diachronic one	The semiotic theory: 'Signifier' and 'signified'	Langage, langue and parole	Descriptive vs prescriptive study of language	Paradigmatic and syntagmatic relations of language

1. Synchronic versus Diachronic	
Synchronic:	**Diachronic**:
the description of a language at a particular point or period in time	the documentation and explanation of linguistic change
E.g the modern system of modern English	**E.g.** the change in sound system of English from old English to modern English

2. signifier versus signified	
Signifier	**signified**
The linguistic sign, according to de Saussure, consists of two inseparable parts: a sound sequence, called **signifier** (French *signifiant*),	a concept, called **signified** (French *signifié*) The **signified** is what these visible/audible aspects mean to us.
The association between the two parts of a linguistic sign, is **arbitrary**, but **conventional**.	

3. Langage, Langue and Parole		
Langage:	**Langue** :	**Parole** :
Language in general	A particular language	The language of an individual
- The most abstract concept of means of communication using verbal signs, both in **written and spoken form.** - This concept doesn't refer to any particular languages in the world. The ideal form of language.	- The system of language, that is the arrangement of sounds and words which speakers of a language have a shared language of or 'agree to use' - Referring to any particular languages, such as **English, French, Javanese etc**. - Language as social possession - The most significant concept because the use of **langue** always relates to particular societies.	The actual use of language by people in speech or writing The language of an individual **Examples**: my language, yours, somebody else's

4. Descriptive grammar vs. Prescriptive grammar	
Descriptive grammar:	**Prescriptive grammar**:
The systematic study and description of a language. Descriptive grammar refers to the structure of a language as it is actually used by speakers and writers.	A set of rules and examples dealing with the syntax and word structures of a language, usually intended as an aid to the learning of that language. Prescriptive grammar refers to the structure of a language as certain people think it *should be* used.

5. Syntagmatic vs. paradigmatic relations	
Syntagmatic relation	**Paradigmatic relation**
is a type of sematic relations between words that co-occur in the same sentence or text (Asher, 1994). **Syntagmatic** relationships are about positioning. e.g. John ate an octopus. An octopus ate John. Two sentences using the exact same words (syntagms), but very different meanings because the order (the syntagmatic relationship) of the words changed.	is a different type of sematic relations between words that can be substituted with another word in the same categories (Hj⊘rland, 2015). **Paradigmatic** relationships are about substitution. e.g.

The	cow	jumped	over	the	moon
That	dog	walked	around	my	yard
This	cat	slept	under	your	bed

6. Its Influence

Saussure's ideas were consonant with his compatriots such as Claude-Levi Strauss and Emile Durkheim, pioneer of new field of sociology. Saussure's influence spread all through the new social sciences in the early and mid-twentieth century, and ultimately, to literary theory and modern cultural studies. They still exert a very strong intellectual force in all these disciplines (probably most in Linguistics and the disciplines most influenced by literary theory such as traditional Anthropology, Sociology and Psychology)

References

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