



**Tikrit University**

**College of Education**

**English Department**

**Class: 3<sup>rd</sup>**

**Linguistics**

**Lecture Title: Twentieth Century and de Saussure**

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## **Early to Mid- 20th Century:**

Descriptive Linguistics De Saussure's central ideas concerning the study of language were expressed in the form of pairs of concepts (dichotomies). These can be illustrated as follows:

### **The differences between Diachronic Vs Synchronic:**

A **diachronic** study or analysis concerns itself with the evolution and change over time of that which is studied; it is roughly equivalent to historical. Thus diachronic linguistics is also known as historical linguistics.

A **synchronic** study or analysis (non-historical/descriptive study), in contrast, limits its concern to a particular moment of time. Thus synchronic linguistics takes a language as a working system at a particular point in time without concern for how it has developed to its present state.

De Saussure illustrates this using an analogy with a game of chess; if we walk into a room and while a game of chess is being played, it is possible to assess the state of the game by studying the position of the pieces on the board.

### **Langage Vs Langue Vs Parole:**

→ Language is the faculty of speech present in all human beings due to heredity; it refers to our ability to talk to each other. This faculty is composed of two aspects: langue (language system) and parole (language behaviour).

→ Langue: It refers to the abstract knowledge of language (the totality of language). It represents the generalized system of rules and word images stored in the mind of individuals or native speakers.

→ Parole: It refers to the actual physical utterance. It is the realization of langue in speech. It refers to the actual and concrete act of speaking on the part of a person (a dynamic social activity) in a particular time and place.

### **The Linguistic Sign: In De Saussure's view:**

The linguistic sign is a psychic entity with two sides: concept and acoustic image. An acoustic image is not a spoken word, but the sound image which is stored in our memory; it is also referred to as significant or signifier. The concept is the meaning or the thing which is meant and indicated by the acoustic image; it is also referred to as signifié. -Concept -acoustic image -signifié (signified) -the sound image stored -thing meant in our memory -significant (signifier)

### **Syntagmatic Vs. Paradigmatic Relations:**

A sentence is a sequence of signs and each sign contributes something to the meaning of the whole.

→ Syntagmatic means that the signs are seen as a linear sequence, the relationship between them is called. It indicates the horizontal relationship between linguistic elements forming linear sequence in sentences as in: Sign Syntagmatic

e.g/ She—can—go Come—quickly When a sign is seen as contrasting with other signs in the language,

→ Paradigmatic the relationship is called or associative relations, It refers to the vertical relations between linguistic signs that might occupy the same particular place in a given structure. These two dimensions of structure can be applied to phonology, vocabulary and any other aspect of language. Each word in a language is in a paradigmatic relationships with a whole set of alternatives. The result is a conception of language as a vast network of interrelated structure and mutually defining entries- a linguistic system.

## Syntagmatic Paradigmatic

She+ can+ go

He+ will+ come

I+ may+ sit

You+ might+ see

## **Mid- to Late- 20th Century: Generative Linguistics**

1. The transformational theory has undergone several stages of development: From 1957 through 1964, the transformational general theory of language focused primarily on syntax rather than on semantics. Chomsky indicated that a grammar model should be based on syntax rather on semantics. Syntax is an independent component of grammar and one which is primary. This shows that the early form of the theory was concerned with form rather than with meaning. Thus, in 1957, the transformationalists followed the linguistics ladder starting with syntax, phonology and semantics. This means that syntax is central and we first need sentences not sounds to express not our ideas.
2. In 1965, Chomsky modified his theory when he published his book *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax* (the Aspects Model or the Standard Theory). It is the most influential book in the 2nd half of the 20th century. According to this model, the linguistic ladder starts with semantics, syntax and phonology. Still Syntax is central and more important than the others that are called interpretive. For example, if we want to give a talk, we first arrange the ideas according to the rules of grammar taken from the syntactic component; such as NP (Det) + N + (Pl). These rules organize the idea, but we need meanings to arrange the idea semantically.

Therefore, we go up to the semantic component to (so it is interpretive). Finally, we have to apply the phonological rules to be able to speak. Thus, we go down to the phonological component taking pronunciation; so, it is interpretive too. Semantics (Interpretive) Syntax (Central/ Heart) Phonology (Interpretive).

**Chomsky's theory** at the beginning was called transformational grammar. Then it was called generative grammar. Later on, it was called transformational generative grammar (T.G.G.). It is transformational because it depends on transformations and it is a kind of grammar which is specialized to change the language from one structure to the other (from active to passive, positive to negative, declarative to interrogative, etc.). If language was without transformation, it would be static and without life. It is generative because it generates all and only the possible grammatical sentences.