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LANGUAGE DEFINITION

I/ DE SAUSSURE DIACHOTOMIES

Ferdinand De Saussure provided a set of theories that turned around distinct concepts that influenced research in the field of linguistics.

1/ **Langue vs. Parole**

De Saussure identifies –two aspects of language called **Langue and Parole**. The former according to De Saussure is a social product that must exist within a collectivity. It is stored in the minds of all individuals. The latter on the other hand is heterogeneous and requires the interaction of at least two individuals. It involves concepts or mental facts that are connected to sound images or linguistic sounds. It results from psychological and physiological productions; speech is individual and it is the function of the speaker that employs grammatical system stored in the brain.

2/ SYNCHRONIC AND DIACHRONIC RELATIONS

For De Saussure, language can be studied synchronically and diachronically. As far as the first way is concerned, it refers to the study of language at a particular point in time. Whereas, diachrony implies the study of language through time relying on prospective and retrospective perspectives.

Synchrony attempts to reveal the psychological relations linked to the system of language that exists in the brain of the speakers; it depicts a language state. Diachrony studies the evolutionary phase of language from a historical point of view in order to know the linguistic changes that existed throughout the history of the speech community.

3/ SYNTAGMATIC AND PARADIGMATIC RELATIONS

According to De Saussure, linguistic terms are grouped into two categories: syntagms and paradigms. A **syntagm** includes two or more units; it is a group of words, a phrase or a sentence. Thus, syntagmatic relations refer to the succession of words and their contribution to the structure and meaning of the sentence (i.e, the combination of elements to form a longer unit). They reflect a sort of interdependence of the terms that constitute a sentence. On the other hand, a **paradigm** refers to different forms of the same word (Lexeme). Simply put, paradigmatic relations involve associative relations that involve groups of words that have a common feature in terms of the similarity of meaning of form. Unlike syntagmatic relations, it refers to the replacement/ substitutability of elements to give a novel construction it may include the synonym of words or their derivatives. As a result, a paradigm is linked to the aspect of word formation while a syntagm refers to the arrangements of various units within a sentence or fragments of a sentence.

4 /THE LINGUISTIC SIGN

De Saussure refers to the word as a linguistic sign which links a concept and the sound image. **The sign** is a two-sided psychological entity. The concept is also called the signified while the sound image is referred to as the signifier. There is an arbitrary relationship between the signifier and the signified. Therefore, the sign relates a mental image to a particular sound in an arbitrary relationship. It is the combination of signs that helps in producing a language.

Lyons (1981) summarizes the diachronic-synchronic distinction of linguistics as follows: A diachronic description of a language traces the historical development of the language and records the changes that have taken place in it between successive points in time: 'diachronic' is equivalent, therefore, to 'historical'. A synchronic description of a language is non-historical: it presents an account of the language as it is at some particular point in time.