**Lecture: Concepts in Modern Linguistics**

Ferdinand de Saussure was a famous Swiss Linguist. He is the founding father of ***‘Modern Linguistics’*** and he laid the foundation for ‘***Structuralism’*** as his contributions are great. Saussure’s book ***“Course in General Linguistics”*** (published in 1916) is considered as one of the most influential works, and had a big impact on linguistics later.

De Saussure’ contribution to the field of linguistics is highly valuable, and it can be summarized in what follows:

* ***Langue/Parole***: according to De Saussure, language has two sides which he called langue and parole.
* ***Langue:*** refers to the abstract system that all members of a speech community (native speakers) have in common.
* ***Parole:*** isthe actual verbal behavior of individuals and it differs from one speaker to another.

De Saussure made an analogy between language and the game of chess:

But of all the comparisons that might be imagined, the most conclusive is the one that might be drawn between the game of language and a session of chess. In both, we are confronted with a system of values and we witness their modifications. A session of chess is like an artificial realisation of what language presents us with in a natural form. (Saussure 1971 [1916] ; as cited in Ducard, 2017, p. 201)

* ***Diachrony/Synchrony:*** De Saussure broke with his predecessors who studied the history of language and its origin (historical linguistics or philology) maintaining that language can be studied in another way through investigating it at a given point of time. He made a distinction between diachronic and synchronic study of language.
* ***Synchronic linguistics***: refers to the study of language being a ‘state’ at a given point of time, for instance, the language of the present educated class in a given city.
* ***Diachronic linguistics:*** is the study of language evolution over time including language origin, families and relationships.For, instance, the study of the development of the phonological system within a given language.
* ***Signifier/Signified:*** this dichotomy deals with the two aspects of the linguistic sign. They can be considered as the two sides of the same card. Bauer, B. (2007) states that “the sign unites the physical set of sounds (the signifier, or signifiant) with a particular mental image (the signified or signifié)” (p. 45).

Linguistic sign=signifier+signified

For instance, the concept of a tree (tall plant: ***signified)*** may be represented by these sounds /tri:/: ***signifier***. The connection between signifier and signified is arbitrary.

* ***Syntagmatic/Paradigmatic Relations:***

When produce language, units or bits are placed one after the other. De Saussure maintains that these units have two types of relations:

* ***Syntagmatic relations:*** they are relations of combination.

The +boy+ ate+ an +apple

Syntagmatic relations

* ***Paradigmatic Relations:*** they are relations of substitution. That is to say, every word can be replaced by other alternative words which have common features.

The boy ate an apple

The girl opened the door paradigmatic relations

My father visited the countryside

**References**

Bauer, B. (2007). The linguistics student’s handbook. Edinburgh : Edinburgh University Press

Ducard, D. (2017). Language and the game of chess. *Semiotica, 214*, 199-217. DOI : 10.1515/sem-2016-0201