

# Theories and Schools of Linguistics

4<sup>th</sup> meeting

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# LANGUAGE AS A SOCIAL FACT



# Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913)



# Ferdinand de saussure

- The father of modern linguistics
- Saussure's most influential work, *Course in General Linguistics* (*Cours de linguistique générale*), was published posthumously in 1916 by former students Charles Bally and Albert Sechehaye on the basis of notes taken from Saussure's lectures at the University of Geneva.



# Some concepts proposed by Saussure

- 3 distinguished terms for language: langage, langue and parole
- Synchronic view of language instead the diachronic one
- The semiotic theory of 'Signifie' and 'signifiant'
- Descriptive vs prescriptive study of language
- Paradigmatic and syntagmatic relations of language



# The influence of sociology on Saussure

- His concept of language was much influenced by French sociologist Emile Durkheim, who stated that sociology was “the science of social facts.”
- Saussure adopted this view by stating that language is a social fact, implying that in language there are values, cultural norms and social structure shared by the members of a society.



# Langage, Langue and Parole

In relation to 'language', Saussure proposed the terms langage, langue and parole in his book *Cours de linguistique generale*.

langage: language in general

langue : a particular language

parole : the language of an individual



# Langage

- 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.
- Human's possession





# langue

- 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 Bahasa Indonesia, English, French, Javanese etc.
- Language as social possession
- The most significant concept because the use of **langue** always relates to particular societies.



# parole

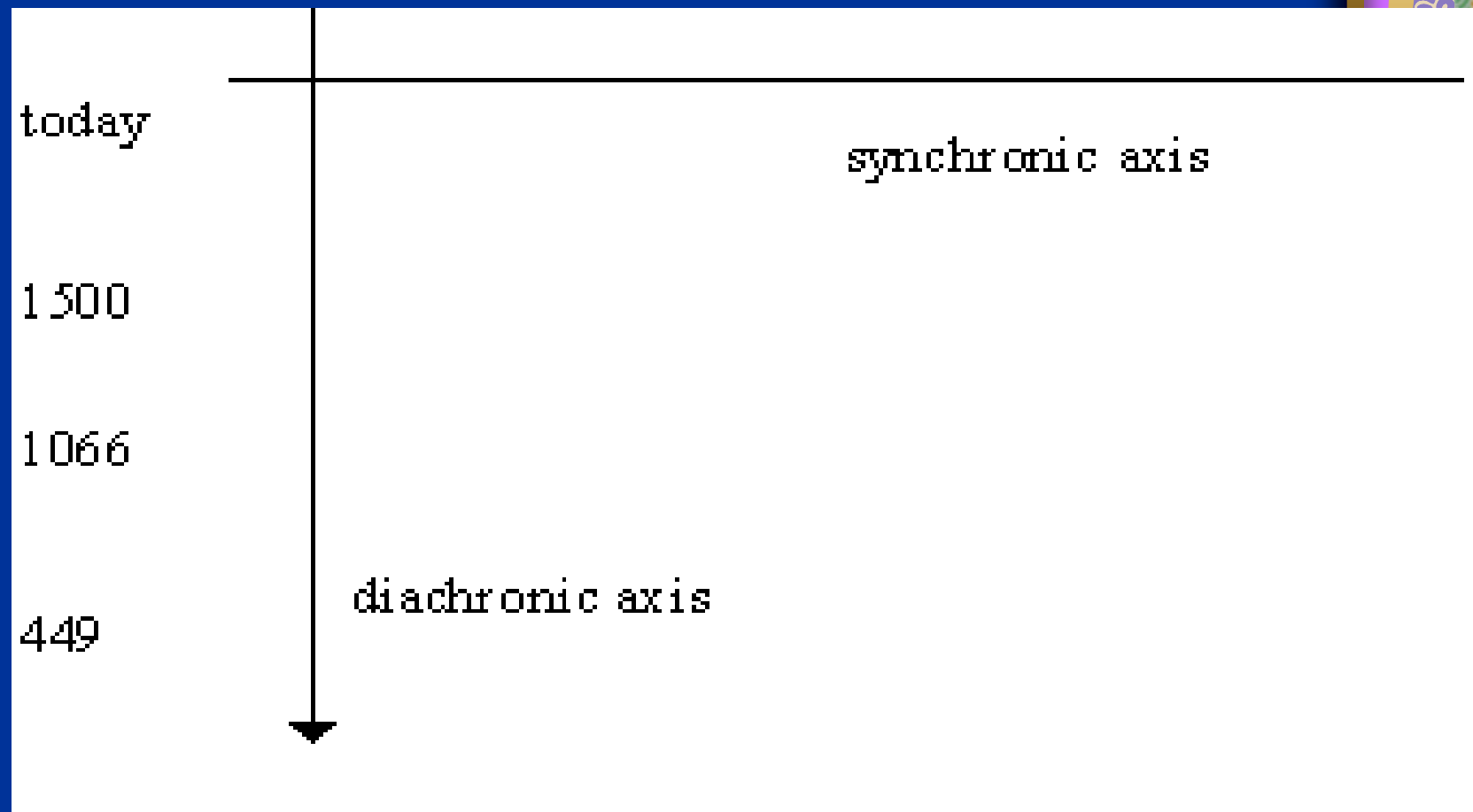
The actual use of language by people in speech or writing

The language of an individual

Examples: my language, yours, somebody else's



# Diachronic vs. synchronic view of linguistics



# Diachronic view

- Diachronic linguistics views the historical development of a language.
- We can go back and forth in time, watching the language with all its features change.
- E.g. the change in sound system of English from old English to modern English



# Synchronic view

- Synchronic linguistics views a particular state of a language at some given point in time.
- This could mean *Modern English* of the present day, or the systematic analysis of the system of Shakespeare's English.
- E.g. the modern system of modern English



# structuralism

- Modern linguistics, following Ferdinand de Saussure, is primarily interested in the **synchronic** point of view.
- Saussure postulated the priority of synchrony: no knowledge of the historical development of a language is necessary to examine its present system.
- He arrived at this radical viewpoint due to his conviction that linguistic research must concentrate on the *structure* of language.
- Later, the whole paradigm was hence called *structuralism*

# Theory of signs (semiotics)

In linguistics, the sign has 'two faces' which cannot be separated

- 'signifie' → thing meant
- 'signifiant' or 'signifier' → the acoustic image



# Descriptive vs prescriptive

## ■ Prescriptive

- the 19<sup>th</sup> century grammar was prescriptive
- how the language should be

## ■ Descriptive

- acc. To Saussure, linguists' job is to describe, not to prescribe





# Paradigmatic vs. syntagmatic

## ■ Paradigmatic

any link in chain of speech will suggest any other language units to us, because the units either resemble or differ from each other in form and meaning.

e.g. the word 'teaching'



- Remind us of other words that have *-ing* ending: *working, eating, talking, etc*
- Other compounds of teach: *teacher, taught, teaches*
- Other words with similar meaning and form: *tutor, mentor, lecturer*
- Words different in both form and meaning: *chalk, whiteboard*



# syntagmatic

Syntagmatic relation holds between the successive members of a given chain

e.g:

If I *have* money

I *will* buy a car

One of the books *is*...

