

# Wetenschapsfilosofie Engels W4 Cheat Sheet by Soraya (Soraya) via cheatography.com/19522/cs/2665/

## Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913)



- · founder of modern general linguistics
- studied Indo-European languages (Latin, Greek, Sanskrit)
- thesis on the primitive vowel system in the Indo-European languages
- from 1906-1913, de Saussure taught the Course in General Linguistics, which made him famous

## Laryngeal theory

- First proposal of what it now known as the laryngeal theory.
- In analyzing the vowel system of Proto Indo European, de Saussure proposed the existence of a previously unidentified element, now known as a laryngeal, that would account for changes in vowels and lengthening within the paradigm of a root.
- → Saussure hypothesized 3 "laryngeal" sounds (h1, h2, and h3) in Proto-Indo-E-uropean words.
- This proposal was in spite of the absence of this element in any of the daughter languages known in de Saussure's time.

## Saussure's Succesors

**Prague School:** developed techniques for the analysis of sound systems in languages!inaugurated phonology

## Saussure's Succesors (cont)

Linguistic Circle of Copenhagen: he development of precise terminology to describe different parts of linguistic systems and their interrelatedness; called glossematics

American structuralism: study of native

American languages – terminology and concepts used in Western linguistics inadequate; the only way to describe these sentences is to start from scratch – collecting the data without theory (Bloomfield)

## Structuralism as a paradigm

- first 'paradigm' in linguistics
- the beginning of linguistics as an autonomous discipline → "language must, to put it correctly, **be studied in itself**; heretoforth, language has always been studied in connection with something else, from other viewpoints"
- moreover, the approach to linguistics had been purely descriptive, not theoretical.

## Cours de linguistique generale

- Published in 1916 written by former students on the basis of notes taken from de Saussure's lectures in Geneva.
- → Innovative approach to the discussion of linguistic phenomena
- it presented new views on language that result in an independent, isolated object of research;
- it specified the requirements that observations have to meet in order to be scientifically relevant;
- it provided criteria for what could count as adequate explanations for these observations:
- in other words: it sough to achieve **descriptive and explanatory** adequacy.

## Object of linguistics

- speech varies from time to time, place to place and person to person; it forms a "heterogeneous mass of speech elements";
- "whereas speech is heterogeneous, language as defined, is homogeneous. It is a system of signs in which the only essential thing is the union of meaning and sound-images, and in which both parts of the sign are psychological" = object of linguistics;
- the object does not exist independently from the theory about it; the theory is not so much derived from some independent observable object; instead, the object is formed on the basis of the perspective.

## Linguistic relativity

#### "Language is not nomenclature."

- → speakers of different languages have different mental representations of "reality"
- → "Without language, thought is a vague, uncharted nebula. There are no pre-existing ideas, and nothing is distinct before the appearance of language."

### Syntagmatic and associative relations

Syntagmatic relations: relations between elements that are combined within one larger system; these relations define the possible combinations of elements (their distribution) at various levels (word, sentence); "The syntagmatic relation is in praesentia."

Associative relations: relations between elements that have a common association (to teach, teacher, pupil etc.); terms in an associative family; "the associative relation unites term in absentia".



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#### Sign



## Signifier and signified

- Langue: a huge network consisting of elements related to each other (directly or indirectly) by means of syntagmatic and associative relations;
- the sign is a two-sided psychological entity, uniting two elements; the signifier and the signified;
- Signifier: the sound-image; "not the material sound, a purely physical thing, but the psychological imprint of that sound"; e.g., CAT;
- Signified: the concept or object that appears in our minds when we hear or read the signifier the meaning of the word; e.g., 'a small domesticated feline'
- → the object (referent) is not part of the system

### Langue versus Parole

Parole: the concrete manifestations of language (the "material" or "executive" side); a messy collection of individual utterances

Langue: all concrete manifestations of a particular language, e.g. Dutch or English, exist outside the individual;

- → a socio-psychological phenomenon a kind of collective knowledge about language;
- → in the collective mind of a speech community; only partially present in the mind of the individual speaker

#### Principle of arbitrariness

- there is no direct connection between the sound-image and the concept;
- a sign is the result of **convention**: speakers of the same language group have agreed (and learned) that certain (combinations of) letters or sounds evoke a certain image;
- exceptions: onomatopoeic expressions and interjections

#### Signification versus value

- Signification: concerns the (vertical) relation between a signifier and its signified;
- Value: concerns the (horizontal) relation between:
- 1. signifieds (conceptual viewpoint) and
- 2. signifiers (material viewpoint)
  the content of a sign in linguistics is
  ultimately determined and delimited not by
  its internal content, but by what surrounds
  it: the synonyms to dread, to fear and to be
  afraid have their particular values because
  they exist in opposition to one another
  the value of each element is determined by
  its relations with other elements in the
  network; outside the network, it has no
  value.



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