

Stylistics and Contemporary Fiction

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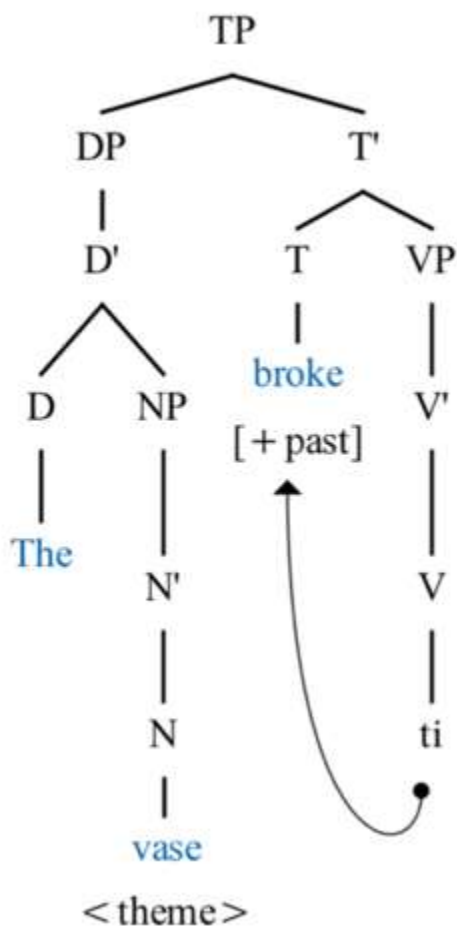
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The key difference between synchronic and diachronic linguistics lies in the viewpoint used to analyse these two branches of linguistics. Synchronic linguistics, also known as descriptive linguistics, is the study of language at any given point in time while diachronic linguistics is the study of language through different periods in history.

Synchronic linguistics and diachronic linguistics are two main divisions of linguistics. The Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure introduced these two branches of linguistics in his *Course in General Linguistics* (1916). Overall, synchrony and diachrony refer to a language state and to an evolutionary phase of language. Synchronic linguistics, also known as descriptive linguistics, is the study of language at any given point in time, usually at present. However, this point in time can also be a specific point in the past. Thus, this branch of linguistics attempts to study the function of language without reference to earlier or later stages. This field analyses and describes how language is actually used by a group of people in a speech community. Thus, involves analysing grammar, classification, and arrangement of the features of a language. Synchronic linguistics is the study of language at any given point in time while diachronic linguistics is the study of language through different periods in history. Thus, the main difference between synchronic and diachronic linguistics is their focus or viewpoint of study. Diachronic linguistics is concerned with language evolution while synchronic linguistics is not. Moreover, the latter focuses on subjects such as comparative linguistics, etymology and language evolution while the former focuses on grammar, classification, and arrangement of the features of a language. The difference between synchronic and diachronic linguistics depends on their focus of study. This is because the former looks at language at a given period of time while the latter looks at language through various

periods in history. However, both branches are important in order to study a language properly.



Unlike diachronic linguistics, it does not focus on the historical development of language or language evolution. Ferdinand de Saussure introduced the concept of synchronic linguistics at the beginning of the twentieth century. What is Diachronic Linguistics? Diachronic linguistics basically refers to the study of language through different periods in history. Thus, it studies the historical development of language through different periods of time. This branch of linguistics is the diachronic linguistics. Main concerns of diachronic linguistics are as follows: Describing and accounting for observed changes in particular languages reconstructing the pre-history of languages and determining their connection, grouping them into language families Developing general theories about how and why language changes describing the history of speech communities studying the history of words.

Synchrony and diachrony are two complementary viewpoints in linguistic analysis. A synchronic approach (from Ancient Greek: *συν*- "together" and *χρόνος* "time") considers a language at a moment in time without taking its history into account. Synchronic linguistics aims at describing a language at a specific point of time, often the present. In

contrast, a diachronic (from δια- "through" and χρόνος "time") approach, as in historical linguistics, considers the development and evolution of a language through history.

For example, the study of Middle English—when the subject is temporally limited to a sufficiently homogeneous form—is synchronic focusing on understanding how a given stage in the history of English functions as a whole. The diachronic approach, by contrast, studies language change by comparing the different stages. The terms synchrony and diachrony are often associated with historical linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, who considered the synchronic perspective as systematic but argued that language change is too unpredictable to be considered a system.

The concepts were theorized by the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, professor of general linguistics in Geneva from 1896 to 1911, and appeared in writing in his posthumous *Course in General Linguistics* published in 1916.

Saussure's teachers in historical-comparative and reconstructive linguistics such as Georg Curtius advocated the neo-grammarians' manifesto according to which linguistic change is based on absolute laws. Thus, it was argued that ancient languages without surviving data could be reconstructed limitlessly after the discovery of such laws. In contradiction to his predecessors, Saussure demonstrated with multiple examples in his *Course* that such alleged laws are too unreliable to allow reconstructions far beyond the empirical data. Therefore, in Saussure's view, language change (diachrony) does not form a system. By contrast, each synchronic stage is held together by a systemic equilibrium based on the interconnectedness of meaning and form. To understand why a language has the forms it has at a given stage, both the diachronic and the synchronic dimension must be considered.

Saussure likewise rejected the idea of the Darwinian linguists August Schleicher and Max Müller, who considered languages as living organisms arguing that linguistics belongs to life sciences. Saussure illustrates the historical development of languages by way of his distinction between the synchronic and the diachronic perspective employing a metaphor of moving pictures. Even though objects on film appear to be moving, at a closer inspection, this turns out to be an illusion because each picture is static ('synchronic') and there is nothing between the pictures except a lifeless frame. In a similar manner, the "life" of language—simply language change—consists of a series of static points, which are physically independent of the previous stage. In such a context, Saussure warns against the confusion of synchrony and diachrony expressing his concern that these could be not studied simultaneously.

Following the posthumous publication of Saussure's *Course*, the separation of synchronic and diachronic linguistics became controversial and was rejected by structural linguists including Roman Jakobson and André Martinet, but was well-received by the generative grammarians, who considered Saussure's statement as an overall rejection of the historical-comparative method. In American linguistics, Saussure became regarded as an opponent of historical linguistics. In 1979, Joseph Greenberg stated.

"One of the major developments of the last decade or so in linguistics has been a revived and apparently still expanding interest in historical linguistics (..) As a minimum, the strict separation of synchronic and diachronic studies—envisaged by Saussure, but never absolute in practice—is now widely rejected."

By contrast, Mark Aronoff argues that Saussure rooted linguistic theory in synchronic states rather than diachrony breaking a 19th-century tradition of evolutionary explanation in linguistics.

A dualistic opposition between synchrony and diachrony has been carried over into philosophy and sociology, for instance by Roland Barthes and Jean-Paul Sartre. Jacques Lacan also used it for psychoanalysis. Prior to de Saussure, many similar concepts were also developed independently by Polish linguists Jan Baudouin de Courtenay and Mikołaj Kruszewski of the Kazan School, who used the terms statics and dynamics of language. In 1970 Eugenio Coşeriu, revisiting De Saussure's synchrony and diachrony distinction in the description of language, coined the terms diatonic, diastatic and diaphasic to describe linguistic variation. Synchronic linguistics, the study of a language at a given point in time. The time studied may be either the present or a particular point in the past; synchronic analyses can also be made of dead languages, such as Latin. Synchronic linguistics is contrasted with diachronic linguistics (or historical linguistics; q.v.), the study of a language over a period of time. In the 20th century, synchronic description has come to be regarded as prior to diachronic description; the latter presupposes that synchronic descriptions at various stages of the development of a language have already been carried out. Previously, linguists had placed emphasis on diachronic linguistics. The terminological distinction between synchronic and diachronic linguistics was first made by the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913). Style has been an object of study from ancient times. Aristotle, Cicero, Demetrius, and Quintilian treated style as the proper adornment of thought. In this view, which prevailed throughout the Renaissance period, devices of style can be catalogued. The essayist or orator is expected to frame his ideas with the help of model sentences and prescribed kinds of "figures" suitable to his mode of discourse. Modern stylistics uses the tools of formal linguistic analysis coupled with the

methods of literary criticism; its goal is to try to isolate characteristic uses and functions of language and rhetoric rather than advance normative or prescriptive rules and patterns.

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Resume

Synchrony and diachrony are two different and complementary viewpoints in linguistic analysis. A synchronic approach considers a language without taking its history into account. The word is built on the Ancient Greek words 'syn' meaning 'with' and 'chrony' meaning 'time'. Synchronic linguistics aims at describing language rules at a specific point of time, even though they may have been different at an earlier stage of the language. A diachronic approach considers the development and evolution of a language through history. The word is built on the Ancient Greek words 'dia' meaning 'through' and 'chrony' meaning 'time'. Historical linguistics is typically a diachronic study. The concepts were theorized by the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, Professor of General Linguistics in Geneva from 1896 to 1911, and appeared in writing in his posthumous work 'Course in General Linguistics' published in 1916. In contrast with most of his predecessors, who focused on historical evolution of languages, Saussure emphasized the primacy of synchronic analysis to understand their inner functioning.

