

A Critical Review of Ferdinand de Saussure's Linguistic Theory

Basel Al-Sheikh Hussein^[a]; Ibrahim Abushihab^[b]*

^[a]Assistant Professor. Department of English and Literature, Faculty of Arts/ Al-Zaytoonah, University of Jordan, Amman, Jordan.

^[b]Associate Professor. Department of English and Literature, Faculty of Arts/ Al-Zaytoonah, University of Jordan, Amman, Jordan.

*Corresponding author.

Received 25 October 2013; accepted 3 February 2014

Abstract

Needless to say that the issues and problems by previous linguistic studies and theories have not been completely resolved yet and still remain in dispute. Therefore the authors of this paper feel the need for the re-examination of those problems and principles studied and discussed many years ago. And because the authors believe that many of these problems in linguistics were recognized by Ferdinand de Saussure, the attempt has been made to support this by presenting his linguistic considerations and discussions. The authors' selection of de Saussure can be justified by the tremendous influence of his work in general development of linguistic theories.

The study has revealed that Saussure's vision of complexities and dilemmas in the description of language still persists in linguistics. For example, uncertainty and disputes still exist over the relation of language to the very great number of speech events in the experience of linguists, in addition to the status of rules or laws applying to all languages and in addition to the nature of linguistic units, especially in semantics. Thus, the study reveals that Saussure's deliberations provide an inspiring impetus for reconsidering the still disputed aspects and areas in linguistics.

Key words: Symbolism; Arbitrary; Language change; Phonetic change; Syntagm; Sign system