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Citation for published version:
Joseph, JE 2022, 'Saussure's dichotomies and the shapes of structuralist semiotics', *Sign Systems Studies*, vol. 50, no. 1, pp. 11-37. https://doi.org/10.12697/SSS.2022.50.1.02

Digital Object Identifier (DOI):
10.12697/SSS.2022.50.1.02

Link:
Link to publication record in Edinburgh Research Explorer

Document Version:
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Published In:
Sign Systems Studies

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Download date: 23. Nov. 2026

Sign Systems Studies 50(1), 2022, 11–37

Saussure's dichotomies and the shapes of structuralist semiotics

John E. Joseph[1]

Abstract. The *Cours de linguistique générale* (1916), which became the master text for structuralist linguistics and semiotics, is characterized by a series of dichotomies. Some of them, e.g. *langue* and *parole*, signified and signifier, arbitrary and motivated, are very well known, others less so. This paper looks at Saussure's semiotics in terms of these dichotomies, and considers how later critiques, such as Voloshinov's (1929), and reformulations, particularly Hjelmslev's (1935, 1942) and the concept of enunciation which emerged conjointly in the work of Jakobson, Lacan, Dubois, Benveniste and others, were shaped as responses to the Saussurean dichotomies. Also examined in terms of its contrast with Saussure is Bally's stylistics. The aim is a fuller understanding of the shapes taken by structuralist semiotics, in view of the heritage on which they were based and the broader intellectual climate, including phenomenology and Marxism, in which they developed.

Keywords: semiotics; structuralism; Ferdinand de Saussure; *langue* and *parole*; arbitrariness; enunciation; stylistics; Marxism; phenomenology; Louis Hjelmslev; Charles Bally

Linguistic versus non-linguistic signs

When people talk about Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913), they usually mean a book he did not write. The *Cours de linguistique générale* (*Course in General Linguistics* [Saussure 1916], henceforth *CLG*) was put together by two of his colleagues after his death. Albert Sechehaye produced a collation of Saussure's notes and notes of his lectures taken by some of his students (now published as Sofia 2015), and from this, Charles Bally drafted the published text. What the *CLG* has to say about *sémiologie* – semiology, or semiotics – is limited to a few passages.[2] The first passage projects the vision of "*A science that studies the life of*

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[2] As noted by Nöth (1990: 14), "Often, *semiotics* is used to refer to the philosophical tradition of the theory of signs since Peirce, while *semiology* refers to the linguistic tradition since

https://doi.org/10.12697/SSS.2022.50.1.02

signs within society" (Saussure 1959[1916]: 16).[3] The paragraph which follows says that linguistics can be a science only insofar as it is a part of this bigger semiotic study; though the paragraph preceding the quoted passage has already proclaimed language to be "the most important" of all the systems of signs.

Further on we read that "linguistics can become the master-pattern for all branches of semiology although language is only one particular semiological system" (Saussure 1959[1916]: 68).[4] This accords with what we find in a book by Saussure's colleague and cousin Adrien Naville:

> Mr Ferdinand de Saussure insists on the importance of a very general science which he calls *semiology*, the object of which would be the laws of the creation and transformation of signs and their meanings. Semiology is an essential part of sociology. As the most important of sign systems is the conventional language of men, the most advanced semiological science is *linguistics* or the science of the laws of the life of language. (Naville 1901: 104)[5]

The *CLG* says that general semiotics "would be a part of social psychology and consequently of general psychology" (Saussure 1959[1916]: 16).[6] For Saussure, that is as much as to declare that it is not his business. When, further on, we come to his detailed account, it is specifically of the *linguistic* sign. He considers himself unqualified to pronounce on its mental functioning, its social constitution or how it relates to the things being talked about.

A striking feature of Saussure's way of thinking is its binarism. Key concepts are presented in the form of a dichotomy. This is one of them: *linguistic versus non-linguistic signs*. Saussure was keenly aware that his expertise lay with linguistic signs

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Saussure [...]. In 1969, the initiators of what was to become the International Association of Semiotic Studies [...] decided to adopt *semiotics* as the general term that should henceforth comprise the whole field of research in the traditions of both semiology and general semiotics". I am following the latter practice, except when quoting passages containing '*sémiologie*'.

3 Original: "*une science qui étudie la vie des signes au sein de la vie sociale*" (Saussure 1922 [1916]: 33; italics in original).

4 Original: "*la linguistique peut devenir le patron général de toute sémiologie, bien que la langue ne soit qu'un système particulier*" (Saussure 1922[1916]: 101).

5 Original: "*M. Ferdinand de Saussure insiste sur l'importance d'une science très générale, qu'il appelle* sémiologie *et dont l'objet serait les lois de la création et de la transformation des signes et de leurs sens. La sémiologie est une partie essentielle de la sociologie. Comme le plus important des systèmes de signes c'est le langage conventionnel des hommes, la science sémiologique la plus avancée c'est la* linguistique *ou science des lois de la vie du langage.*" (Translations from French are by the author, unless indicated otherwise.)

6 Original: "*elle formerait une partie de la psychologie sociale, et par conséquent de la psychologie générale* [...]" (Saussure 1922[1916]: 33).

only. The "general semiology" which embraces both types is a subject he could talk about only as an amateur, and from boyhood on his maternal grandfather and his father had insisted to him that scientific credibility demanded choosing one specific subject of study and not venturing beyond it (Joseph 2012: 176). On the occasions when Saussure extended his intellectual horizons, notably to the study of Germanic legends and of the use of anagrams as a structuring principle of poetry, projects which totally engulfed him for extended periods, he ended up abandoning them without producing any published work. The course on general linguistics which he had to take on at the *University of Geneva* starting in January 1907 was itself a stretch for a scholar whose professional reputation lay specifically in Indo-European linguistics, particularly phonology. But throughout his career he had thought deeply about how language systems function generally, even sketching out books on the subject; and he was aware that, since the death of William Dwight Whitney in 1894, there was no one whose work showed a deeper understanding of general linguistic principles than he, Saussure, possessed.

Psychology and sociology were an entirely different matter, representing academic specializations of which he had some limited knowledge, but not expertise, and would not risk his reputation by treading on their turf – not because he considered it unimportant, but too important for anyone but an expert to deal with it. Hence another dichotomy, extending from the one between linguistic and non-linguistic signs: *internal versus external* aspects of linguistic signs, where the internal involves nothing beyond the system of signs, and the external involves things such as the physical production of sounds, and real-world referents that the signs might be about.

Signified and signifier

The detailed account starts with Saussure distancing himself from the common view of language which he calls a '*nomenclature*', translated here as 'a naming-process only'.

> *Sign, Signified, Signifier*
>
> Some people regard language, when reduced to its elements, as a naming-process only – a list of words, each corresponding to the thing that it names. For example:

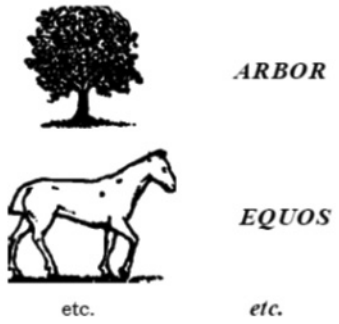


Figure 1: The nomenclaturist view of language.

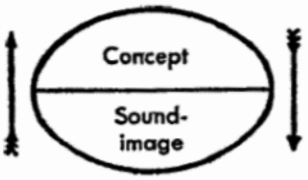
> This conception is open to criticism at several points. It assumes that ready-made ideas exist before words ([...]); it does not tell us whether a name is vocal or psychological in nature (*arbor*, for instance, can be considered from either viewpoint); finally, it lets us assume that the linking of a name and a thing is a very simple operation – an assumption that is anything but true. But this rather naïve approach can bring us near the truth by showing us that the linguistic unit is a double entity, one formed by the associating of two terms.
>
> We have seen in considering the speaking-circuit ([...]) that both terms involved in the linguistic sign are psychological [...]. (Saussure 1959[1916]: 65)[7]

This passage begins by telling us, not what a language is "when reduced to its elements", but what it is *not*. It is not "a list of words, each corresponding to the thing that it names"; it is not "a naming-process". Actually, the text does not exactly say that *it is not* these things, but that this "rather naïve approach" is "open to criticism at several points", yet "can bring us near the truth".

The units which make up a language are indeed twofold: something kind of like a name, attached to, not a thing as such, but a thing as known. A concept, which exists in the mind. In fact, as we see at the end of the passage, "both terms involved in the linguistic sign are psychological". The "sound-image" too is conceptual, and

[7] Original: "*Signe, signifié, signifiant. Pour certaines personnes la langue, ramenée à son principe essentiel, est une nomenclature, c'est-à-dire une liste de termes correspondant à autant de choses. Par exemple: [figure* Arbor etc., Equos etc.*]. Cette conception est critiquable à bien des égards. Elle suppose des idées toutes faites préexistant aux mots ([...]); elle ne nous dit pas si le nom est de nature vocale ou psychique, car* arbor *peut être considéré sous l'un ou l'autre aspect; enfin elle laisse supposer que le lien qui unit un nom à une chose est une opération toute simple, ce qui est bien loin d'être vrai. Cependant cette vue simpliste peut nous rapprocher de la vérité, en nous montrant que l'unité linguistique est une chose double, faite du rapprochement de deux termes. On a vu [...], à propos du circuit de la parole, que les termes impliqués dans le signe linguistique sont tous deux psychiques [...]*" (Saussure 1922[1916]: 97–98). In the original edition of the 1959 translation, the figure was mistakenly placed after the second paragraph rather than the first.

mental. It is not sounds. As we see in the next image, the linguistic sign is "two-sided", the dichotomy of concept and sound-image, conjoined to form a whole – or as indicated in the section heading (see Saussure 1959[1916]: 65, cited above), the dichotomy of *signified and signifier*, constituting the sign.

> The linguistic sign is then a two-sided psychological entity that can be represented by the drawing:
>
> 
>
>
> *Figure 2*: The linguistic sign.
>
> The two elements are intimately united, and each recalls the other. (Saussure 1959[1916]: 66)[8]

The sign, besides being superordinate to the dichotomy of concept/signified versus sound-image/signifier, has a reality which Saussure likens to that of a sheet of paper, which has – is made up of – a front and a back, as inseparable as are the two sides of the sign (Saussure 1922[1916]: 157, 1959[1916]: 113).

Individual versus socially-shared associations: *parole* and *langue*

Saussure makes the further, somewhat mysterious observation that "only the associations sanctioned by that language appear to us to conform to reality, and we disregard whatever others might be imagined". This seems to allude to the distinction he has made between the *langue*, the socially-shared language system, and *parole*, the individual side of language, including texts which are uttered in the language. If you have happy associations with trees, whereas they make my blood run cold because of the tree which cast scary shadows into my room when I was a boy, neither association is sanctioned by the language. They may well affect the *parole* each of us produces, but Saussure says the linguist must "disregard" such

[8] Original: "*Le signe linguistique est donc une entité psychique à deux faces, qui peut être représentée par la figure: [concept / image acoustique]. Ces deux éléments sont intimement unis et s'appellent l'un l'autre*" (Saussure 1922[1916]: 99).

associations unless and until they get the social sanction which makes them part of the language system.

This made for a considerable tension between him and Bally, whose best-known works set out to analyse the "affective" elements in a language system, those with a link to the emotions. Bally dedicated two of these books on his "stylistics" to Saussure, one during his lifetime and the other soon after his death (Bally 1909; 1977[1913]); and yet Bally recognized that Saussure was *un intellectualiste convaincu*, where the 'intellectual' represented the opposite of the affective (Bally 1977[1913]: 157; see Joseph forthcoming a). For Saussure, if there was an affective side to a *langue*, its analysis fell to the psychology of language, not within his own bailiwick as a grammarian (the term he usually applied to himself). If on the other hand the affective was part of *parole*, then Bally's stylistics was not actually a separate enterprise from linguistics, a science whose next task, Saussure believed, was to found a *linguistique de la parole*. However, for Bally the affective definitely lay within *langue*.

Bally's dichotomy of affective versus intellectual elements was not one that Saussure found easy to accept, and two reasons for this suggest themselves. One is that the "affective" challenges his division of internal versus external aspects of the linguistic sign, taking it into the territory of psychology if it invokes the external, and rendering stylistics indistinguishable from linguistics if it does not. The other reason is that affective versus intellectual does not represent a true dichotomy of semiotic function: Bally's affective signs still do the "intellectual" work of distinguishing concepts and sound-images through difference. In Saussure's binarism, the intellectual would be the superordinate category, dividing into the affective and non-affective, but Bally does not conceive of it in this way.

Saussure's tendency to think binaristically can also be seen in the solution he arrives at for the problematic trio of terms '*parole*', '*langue*' and '*langage*'. In ordinary usage, they are often interchangeable, each having a wide range of meanings that overlap. Saussure considered it a necessary first step to sort them into distinct meanings for use as scientific terms, and he did this by creating a double binary division, with '*langage*' as the superordinate category, under which belonged the '*langue* versus *parole*' dichotomy, with '*langue*' denoting the socially-shared system, and '*parole*' the linguistic production of an individual. It remains problematic, because he sometimes uses '*langue*' to mean the language system as a universal type, and other times to mean a specific system such as French or English; and as will be discussed below, confusion would arise amongst structuralist linguists about whether '*parole*' means the act of speaking, or the text produced, or both.

Values, not sounds

What Saussure says about associations makes for an interesting segue to the next part of the discussion, which is about how the linguistic sign and its component parts are conceived within the language system. We find traces in the *CLG* of Saussure's struggles over the terminology for the sign and its components, but their full extent only becomes clear with examination of the manuscript sources. Saussure was not fond of neologisms, and tried out various combinations of existing words, including sound-image and concept. It was not until one of his final lectures on general linguistics, in May 1911, that he gave in and adopted the terms '*signifiant*' and '*signifié*', 'signifier' and 'signified'. Why did he do it?

We have to go back more than thirty years, to 1878–1879, and the book on the Proto-Indo-European vowel system that Saussure wrote when he was twenty years old (Saussure 1879). It had a huge impact on the linguistics of the time, proposing a radically new conception of how the vowel system of the original Indo-European mother language was constituted. Crucial to his method was leaving aside, in effect forgetting, what everyone took to be most important – how the vowels *sounded*, their acoustic and articulatory properties – and thinking instead about their functioning as units in a system, as what he would eventually come to call 'values'. When other linguists asked what was the original sound that gave rise to the different stressed vowels of Latin '*quínque*', Greek '*pénte*', Sanskrit '*páncha*', all related words for 'five', they expected to find the answer in how surrounding sounds affected the vowel's articulation. Saussure asked a further question: what impact did the change, whatever its cause, have on the whole system of vowels?

To answer that required imagining the full inventory of sounds in the original Proto-Indo-European language. As he did so, Saussure realized that the most efficient explanation was that there was originally just one vowel.

> *The phoneme* a_1 *is the root vowel of all roots. It can be the vowel of the root on its own or it can be followed by a second sonant which we have called* sonant coefficient. (Saussure 1879: 8)[9]

He writes it as a_1, but it did not actually matter how it was pronounced. At a certain point, people started colouring it one way in some contexts and another way in others – /e/ and /o/, though again the exact sounds are unimportant – and from then on there was a *difference* that could be used to signify different verb tenses, or different concepts. The introduction of such a change resulted in a whole new system.

[9] Original: "*Le phonème* a_1 *est la voyelle radicale de toutes les racines. Il peut être seul à former le vocalisme de la racine ou bien être suivi d'une second sonante que nous avons appelée* coefficient sonantique" (Saussure 1879: 8).

End of flashback. In December 1906 Saussure's colleague who gave the general linguistics course had to retire for health reasons, and Saussure was handed the unwelcome responsibility for the course. Unwelcome because he thought that the way to learn general linguistic principles was inductively, by analysing texts. But this course was for students who lacked the language background for such analysis. Saussure gave the course three times, developing it significantly on each occasion. The first, in 1907, was something of a warm-up, much concerned with the psychological process of analogy and its role in language change. The emphasis in the second course in 1908–1909 however is on *value*, which is socially determined. The language system is a system of values. There is nothing intrinsic to a value, only its *difference* from other elements, other values, in the system.

> Everything that has been said up to this point boils down to this: in language there are only differences. Even more important: a difference generally implies positive terms between which the difference is set up; but in language there are only differences *without positive terms*. Whether we take the signified or the signifier, language has neither ideas nor sounds that existed before the linguistic system, but only conceptual and phonic differences that have issued from the system. (Saussure 1959[1916]: 120)[10]

The problem with the terms 'sound-image' and 'concept' is that they suggest something other than a pure value. The signifier is whatever is activated in my mind when I hear /tri/, or /arbr/, such that I recognize it as signifying, as the phonological component of a meaningful sign; or that gets activated in my mind when I say /arbr/, or am about to do so. It has some enduring manifestation, which seems to give it a physical character; and to represent it in an enduring way we have recourse to letters, or to a spectrogram or some other visual manifestation. But then that representation appears to be what the sound-image actually *is* – as if we had a store of phonemic transcriptions in our heads. Saussure knew that letters are a recent historical development, and writing is marginalized in his linguistics. Yet faced with a blackboard to draw a representation of the linguistic sign on, what could he do with the sound-image but spell it out, despite how this worked against what he was saying about them being pure values.

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[10] Original: "*Tout ce qui précède revient à dire que* dans la langue il n'y a que des différences. *Bien plus: une différence suppose en général des termes positifs entre lesquels elle s'établit; mais dans la langue il n'y a que des différences* sans termes positifs. *Qu'on prenne le signifié ou le signifiant, la langue ne comporte ni des idées ni des sons qui préexisteraient au système linguistique, mais seulement des différences conceptuelles et des différences phoniques issues de ce système*" (Saussure 1922[1916]: 166).

Values, not referents

So too with the concept. Here the absurdity is manifest when, after using the drawing of a tree to show how a language does *not* work, the *CLG* uses the same drawing, or nearly the same, to show how it *does* work. In Fig. 1 above, the drawing of the tree is meant to be taken as the *thing*; then, two pages later (Fig. 3), as the concept:



Figure 3. The sign '*arbor*' (Saussure 1922[1916]: 99; 1959[1916]: 67).

Little surprise that so many people, including linguists, take the signified to be what Frege called the 'referent': an actual tree, or else the image of one, rather than the concept or category of tree, which the text says the signified is, but the picture undercuts it.

The problem of how to represent semiotic value is made all the harder by Saussure's view of it as generated by *difference*. As I put it in an earlier article,

> The values that signifiers and signifieds consist of are nothing other than their difference from all the other signifiers and signifieds in the language system. How do you depict *that*? The answer is that pure value cannot be pictured directly; describing it verbally is hard enough, and since it has no visual dimension, any illustration of it will of necessity be metaphorical. (Joseph 2017: 155)

The illustrations in the published *CLG* were very powerful. Yet all we find in the students' notes are, first, what is on the left side in Fig. 4, and later, what is on the right.



Figure 4. The linguistic sign as found in the *CLG* source materials (Saussure, Constantin 2005: 221 [on left], 238 [on right]; cf. Saussure 1968–1974[1916]: 147–151).

The rest is Bally's creation. It has engendered much misunderstanding. Yet it offered a way into Saussure's conception of language for readers who might otherwise have found it impenetrable. Were it not for Sechehaye's and Bally's "betrayal" of Saussure, he might have fallen into total obscurity, rather than becoming the founder of modern linguistics.

Note how the idea of meaning-by-difference is put into effect in the *CLG*. The discussion of signs began by saying more or less what they are not. Despite overlaps, linguistic signs differ from names on crucial points. In addition, difference is inherent in Saussure's characteristic presentation of his concepts as contrasting pairs: *langue* and *parole*, signifier and signified, sound-image and concept, synchronic and diachronic, arbitrariness and motivation, mutability and immutability. With each pair, neither term can be fully comprehended without its Other.

The most radical reformulations of the Saussurean sign were proposed by Lacan starting in his seminar of 1955 on Poe's "The purloined letter" and Baudelaire's translation of it ("*La lettre volée*") and continuing into the next decade (see Lacan 1966: 19–75; also Joseph 2017: 158–160). Although they lie within the scope of this article, length constraints mean that I must leave them aside, but they are a prime example of a Saussurean dichotomy that inspired a central conception of structuralist psychoanalysis, even if the linguists who were close to Lacan, including Jakobson and Benveniste, did not take up his reformulations.

Arbitrariness and motivation

Arbitrariness is closely associated with Saussure and the *CLG*, where it is presented as the first of two primordial characteristics of the linguistic sign and principles of its study.[11] Saussure defines it very narrowly, as applying to "the bond between the signifier and the signified": it is strictly internal to the sign.

> *Principle I: The Arbitrary Nature of the Sign*
> The bond between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary. Since I mean by sign the whole that results from the associating of the signifier with the signified, I can simply say: *the linguistic sign is arbitrary*. (Saussure 1959[1916]: 67)[12]

[11] I shall not take up here the debates over arbitrariness amongst structuralist linguists starting with Benveniste (1939), since, although they would be relevant to the topic, they were focussed on questions which were ultimately of less interest than the ones discussed in this section.

[12] Original: "*Premier principe: l'arbitraire du signe. Le lien unissant le signifiant au signifié est arbitraire, ou encore, puisque nous entendons par signe le total résultant de l'association d'un signifiant à un signifié, nous pouvons dire plus simplement:* le signe linguistique est arbitraire" (Saussure 1922[1916]: 100).

Hence this is not the semiotic promised land which Saussure had seen from the mountain top in Naville (1901), the science that did not include how the signs of language relate to referents, things in the world, which will need the expertise of sociologists and psychologists, expertise he lacks. But his expertise does extend to the relationship between signs, and this is the subject of a later section on "relative motivation", which is linked to what he calls "associative relations" – we now usually refer to this as the "paradigmatic axis", following the Copenhagen School. Later the *CLG* introduces another key dyad of the language system, "syntagmatic and associative relations", which involve distinct forms of mental activity:

> Relations and differences between linguistic terms fall into two distinct groups, each of which generates a certain class of values. The opposition between the two classes gives a better understanding of the nature of each class. They correspond to two forms of our mental activity, both indispensable to the life of language.
>
> In discourse, on the one hand, words acquire relations based on the linear nature of language because they are chained together. (Saussure 1959[1916]: 123)[13]

Unfolding in time, as 'discourse' or the 'chain of speaking', linguistic signs occur in succession, and form 'syntagms'. "In the syntagm", says the *CLG*, "a term acquires its value only because it stands in opposition to everything that precedes or follows it, or to both" (Saussure 1959[1916]: 123).[14] Signs, however, also have associative relations, which are virtual in nature, what he calls '*in absentia*' relations as against the '*in praesentia*' syntagmatic relations.

> Outside discourse, on the other hand, words acquire relations of a different kind. Those that have something in common are associated in the memory, resulting in groups marked by diverse relations. For instance, the French word *enseignement* 'teaching' will unconsciously call to mind a host of other words (*enseigner* 'teach,' *renseigner* 'acquaint,' etc.; or *armement* 'armament,' *changement* 'amendment,' etc.; or *éducation* 'education,' *apprentissage* 'apprenticeship,' etc.). All those words are related in some way.
>
> We see that the co-ordinations formed outside discourse differ strikingly from those formed inside discourse. Those formed outside discourse are not supported by linearity. Their seat is in the brain; they are a part of the inner

[13] Original: "*Les rapports et les différences entre termes linguistiques se déroulent dans deux sphères distinctes dont chacune est génératrice d'un certain ordre de valeurs; l'opposition entre ces deux ordres fait mieux comprendre la nature de chacun d'eux. Ils correspondent à deux formes de notre activité mentale, toutes deux indispensables à la vie de la langue. D'une part, dans le discours, les mots contractent entre eux, en vertu de leur enchaînement, des rapports fondés sur le caractère linéaire de la langue [...]*" (Saussure 1922[1916]: 170).

[14] "*Placé dans un syntagme, un terme n'acquiert sa valeur que parce qu'il est opposé à ce qui précède ou ce qui suit, ou à tous les deux*" (Saussure 1922[1916]: 170–171).

> storehouse that makes up the language of each speaker. They are *associative relations.*
>
> The syntagmatic relation is *in praesentia.* It is based on two or more terms that occur in an effective series. Against this, the associative relation unites terms *in absentia* in a potential mnemonic series. (Saussure 1959[1916]: 123)[15]

So the value of a sign is generated by difference in *both* dimensions: difference from the signs which occur around it in discourse, and from the signs to which it is related associatively. As the preceding quote says, the latter have "their seat [...] in the brain; they are a part of the inner storehouse that makes up the language of each speaker", although the language is socially shared.

Associative relations account for why some signs are "relatively motivated". The French number 19, '*dix-neuf*', is not arbitrary in the same way as is the number 20, '*vingt*', because '*dix-neuf*' is transparently motivated by its links to '*dix*' 'ten' and '*neuf*' 'nine'. '*Vingt*' has no such link, and so is unmotivated, as are '*dix*' and '*neuf*' individually (see Fig. 5).

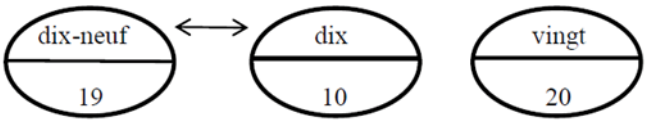


Figure 5. Relative motivation.

'*Dix-neuf*' is still ultimately an arbitrary sign, since these component parts each have an arbitrary relationship between signifier and signified; its relatively motivated nature mitigates the arbitrariness, without undoing it. Saussure makes the surprising remark that the linguist's work is to limit what is arbitrary in language, because it is about finding hidden relations and motivations.

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[15] Original: "*D'autre part, en dehors du discours, les mots offrant quelque chose de commun s'associent dans la mémoire, et il se forme ainsi des groupes au sein desquels règnent des rapports très divers. Ainsi le mot* enseignement *fera surgir inconsciemment devant l'esprit une foule d'autres mots (*enseigner, renseigner, *etc., ou bien* armement, changement, *etc., ou bien* éducation, apprentissage*); par un côté ou un autre, tous ont quelque chose de commun entre eux. On voit que ces coordinations sont d'une tout autre espèce que les premières. Elles n'ont pas pour support l'étendue; leur siège est dans le cerveau; elles font partie de ce trésor intérieur qui constitue la langue chez chaque individu. Nous les appellerons* rapports associatifs. *Le rapport syntagmatique est* in praesentia*; il repose sur deux ou plusieurs termes également présents dans une série effective. Au contraire le rapport associatif unit des termes* in absentia *dans une série mnémonique virtuelle*" (Saussure 1922[1916]: 171).

> Everything that relates to language as a system must, I am convinced, be approached from this viewpoint, which has scarcely received the attention of linguists: the limiting of arbitrariness. This is the best possible basis for approaching the study of language as a system. In fact, the whole system of language is based on the irrational principle of the arbitrariness of the sign, which would lead to the worst sort of complication if applied without restriction. But the mind contrives to introduce a principle of order and regularity into certain parts of the mass of signs, and this is the role of relative motivation. (Saussure 1959[1916]: 133)[16]

It is not difficult to see how a statement such as this would give rise to much misunderstanding:

– the whole system of a language is based on the arbitrariness of the *sign*, yet
– everything that relates to the language as a *system* is a *limitation* on arbitrariness.

The distribution is such that arbitrariness belongs to individual signs, and its counter-force to the system linking them. Saussure saw the work of the linguist as being to discover the system, which is to say those aspects which limit arbitrariness within the language being analysed. The importance of relative motivation in his conception of a language is massive. Nevertheless it has been treated as a footnote to the strong statements about arbitrariness being a fundamental fact and the first principle. In the published *CLG* the section on relative motivation appears much later than the one on the principle of arbitrariness, and it is apparent that over the decades many readers have absorbed that earlier section, with far less attention paid to the later one.

Even with regard to the arbitrariness of individual signs, here again enquiry into Saussure's work reveals a very different picture from the man whom Magnus (2013: 201) calls "[t]he most celebrated opponent of the sound symbolic hypothesis". From the beginning and from the end of his career we find articles he published in what is now called 'sound symbolism' or 'iconicity' (following Peirce) which is implicitly part of his explanation of why linguistic signifiers have the form which they have. This is most striking in the last paper he published during his lifetime, "Indo-European adjectives of the type *caecus* 'blind'" (Saussure 1922[1912]). It opens by noting that "[t]he diphthongs *ai* and *au* occupy only an ill-defined

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[16] Original: "*Tout ce qui a trait à la langue en tant que système demande, c'est notre conviction, à être abordé de ce point de vue, qui ne retient guère les linguistes: la limitation de l'arbitraire. C'est la meilleure base possible. En effet tout le système de la langue repose sur le principe irrationnel de l'arbitraire du signe qui, appliqué sans restriction, aboutirait à la complication suprême; mais l'esprit réussit à introduire un principe d'ordre et de régularité dans certaines parties de la masse des signes, et c'est là le rôle du relativement motivé*" (Saussure 1922[1916]: 182). The second half of this passage, and the word '*irrationnel*', were added by the editors of the *CLG* (cf. Saussure, Constantin 2005: 232).

place within Indo-European morphology or vocabulary" (Saussure 1922[1912]: 595).[17] They occur in an extremely limited set of words which, Saussure observes, relate to some sort of infirmity. The examples are mostly drawn from Latin and Greek: '*caecus*' /kaikus/ 'blind', '*claudus*' /klaudus/ 'lame', '*βλαισός*' /blaisos/ 'bent'. He proposes that the diphthongs represent a deviation from the "straight" or the "right". The "straight" vowel /a/ "deviates" off into the sonant. This, combined with the diphthongs' rarity and isolation, correlates with meanings which likewise involve marginality or abnormality.

He is not claiming that this was a morpheme within the Indo-European language system. He was of course aware that words existed which had the diphthong without the semantic feature, and vice versa. He does not attach a specific label to it, but it has things in common with what Firth (1930) would call a 'phonestheme', and Whorf (1956[1937]) a 'cryptotype'. For Saussure, changes, innovations, are constantly being produced in *parole* by individual speakers, but only a very few will end up getting the social sanction required for them to become part of the *langue*. At the level of *parole*, some individuals sensed the sound symbolism of the /a/ diphthongs, and preferred the alignment of them with the meaning of deviation, enough to have affected how the forms developed. Other speakers did not sense the sound symbolism, but – and this is of central importance – even so, '*caecus*' and '*claudus*' functioned perfectly well for them as signifiers, no less so for those who did not sense the iconicity as for those who did.

Innovations by individuals in *parole* supplied the type that "favoured diphthongs with *a*" for the words in this particular "community of ideas" (Saussure 1922[1912]: 599).[18] The iconicity figured in the conditions that produced the cryptotype, without the iconicity becoming part of the *langue*. It is here that the dispute arises about sound symbolism: strong advocates, like Magnus, insist that it exists within linguistic signs, hence as part of *langue*. But Saussure's modernism draws him to think in terms of reducing things to the minimum level at which they function. The examples of onomatopoeia in the *CLG* – the sound of the whip in '*fouet*', or of the trumpet in '*glas*' (Saussure 1922[1916]: 102; 1959[1916]: 69, famously deconstructed by Derrida 1974), are ones which *some* people hear, but have never occurred to most speakers of French, who are perfectly able to use the signs regardless. Actually those examples were supplied by Bally: Saussure's was Latin '*pluit*' 'it rains' (Saussure, Constantin 2005: 222), where some people hear a

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[17] Original: "*Les diphtongues* ai *et* au *n'occupent qu'une place mal définie au sein de la morphologie ou du vocabulaire indo-européen*" (see further Joseph forthcoming b).

[18] Original: "*Autour de ce noyau fourni par le hasard seront venues se fixer des formations toujours plus nombreuses, où une certaine communauté de l'idée mettait en faveur les diphtongues par* a".

drop of water. But even if we take an extreme case like '*meow*', someone who has never seen or heard a cat can still use and understand the signifier /miau/ to signify the sound a cat makes. Plus there is the fact that the Korean equivalent of '*meow*' is the phonetically very different '야옹' '*yaong*', and across languages we find still wider variation in the signifiers for the sounds made by dogs, like English 'bark' and French '*aboyer*' and Estonian '*haukuma*'.

Saussure goes further, to say that not only are signifiers conventionalized in a way that creates a disconnect from any iconicity that may have shaped them historically, but signifieds too are specific to each language. This goes back to what differentiates a language from a "naming-process", a nomenclature (see p. 13 above). The discussion of value (Saussure 1922[1916]: 160; 1959[1916]: 115) includes the example of French '*mouton*', where the signified is sheep, whether on the hoof or butchered into meat. English, on the contrary, has two separate signs, 'sheep' for the animal and 'mutton' for its meat. He does not deduce from this that speakers of French and English *think* differently – again, that would take us beyond the linguistic sign, and into the bailiwick of psychology, where angels and linguists fear to tread, or ought to. Frankly, so should psychologists: yet many of them did not, in Saussure's day, propounding theories about language and racial difference which Saussure was very clear about rejecting.

The *CLG* muddles things a bit by not being precise enough when it says that "the signified 'ox' has as its signifier *b-ö-f* on one side of the border and *o-k-s (Ochs)* on the other" (Saussure 1959[1916]: 68).[19] It sounds here as though the signified 'ox' is the same in French and German, and this contradicts what will be said in the section on value. Saussure's view of the language-specific nature of signifieds is connected with, but distinct from, his principle of the arbitrariness of the linguistic sign: distinct because he is very precise that this principle applies to the link between signifier and signified, the conjunction of which defines the linguistic sign. If a language system, in its synchronic state, were controlled even in part by forces outside the sign – signifiers by sounds-in-the-world, signifieds by meanings-in-the-world (see Fig. 6) – then it would be impossible to explain language *change*.

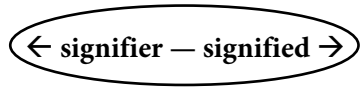


Figure 6. The linguistic sign versus external factors.

[19] *Original: "le signifié 'bœuf' a pour signifiant* b–ö–f *d'un côté de la frontière, et* o–k–s (Ochs) *de l'autre*" (Saussure 1922[1916]: 100).

The disconnect between the sign and things in the world was novel enough to astonish Ogden and Richards (1923) into rejecting it out of hand. However, the arbitrariness of the sign, together with its autonomy *vis-à-vis* the world outside the sign, is a necessary condition for the constant innovation that we can hear speakers introducing into *parole*, and for some of them becoming part of the next *état de langue*, state or phase of the language. Again, those innovations by individuals in their *parole* can be affected by how they personally perceive the world around them. In the case of poets, innovations may give their *parole* originality and deep expressive power. Still, the *langue* does not change, unless and until the language community at large adopts those innovations into the language system.

The signifier and signified come into existence jointly. Signifieds are values, and in a sense concepts, but it is also helpful to recognize that they are *categories*. That too differentiates language from a naming process, because names are prototypically given to individuals. The signified of 'tree' is a category that includes countless individual things, and excludes others – again, for Saussure, what is excluded conceptually determines the signified's value. To create a category is to create a sign, signifier and signified together. This is where his sheet of paper metaphor becomes useful. The sheet of paper is real. I can crumple it up; I cannot crumple the front of the sheet and not the back. The front and back are conceptual.

By the third run of his course in general linguistics in 1910–1911, Saussure's linguistics of *langue* was attaining a beautiful, symmetrical elegance, built on that series of dyads, *langue* and *parole*, signified and signifier, arbitrary and motivated, and the rest. He intended to move on in the next course to a new task, the linguistics of *parole*. However, his health deteriorated, with arteriosclerosis so severe that he had to withdraw from teaching. In the brutally cold February of 1913 he caught influenza, which even today can be fatal to people with hardened arteries, and he died at the age of 55. The *CLG* was published three years later.

"Abstract objectivism"

When Serge Karcevskij left Geneva to return to Russia in 1917, he took a copy of the *CLG* with him, and introduced other Russian linguists to it. Their reaction was split. For some, like Jakobson, it offered a new way forward (although Jakobson would go on to contest key aspects of it, including arbtrariness: see Joseph forthcoming b), but for linguists in the circle of Mikhail Bakhtin, the *CLG* suffered fatally from what Voloshinov (1929) called "abstract objectivism", a characteristic of "bourgeois linguistics" generally.

> Abstract objectivism finds its most striking expression at the present time in the so-called Geneva school of Ferdinand de Saussure. Its representatives, particularly Charles Bally, are among the most prominent linguists of modern times. (Voloshinov 1973[1929]: 58)

On an *ad hominem* level, Saussure was nothing if not a bourgeois, but the same is true of Voloshinov, Bakhtin, Lenin, Trotsky, Marx and Engels. None of them ever did a day's physical labour – not that biography is deterministic. For Voloshinov, words are dynamic social signs:

> Every sign, as we know, is a construct between socially organized persons in the process of their interaction. Therefore, *the forms of signs are conditioned above all by the social organization of the participants involved and also by the immediate conditions of their interaction.* When these forms change, so does sign. (Voloshinov 1973[1929]: 21)

It is interesting to compare this with what an older contemporary of Voloshinov's wrote about language and "life":

> Natural language is *spontaneous* language in the service of *real life* (i.e., almost always *spoken* language) as opposed to the forms of language which do not have this function or have it only indirectly (e.g., literary language, scientific language, etc.).[20]

The author of this passage is none other than that prominent member of the Geneva school, Charles Bally. Similarly, for Voloshinov meaning is not a matter of passive understanding, but is negotiated through the active participation of speakers (or writers) and hearers (or readers).

> Existence reflected in sign is not merely reflected but *refracted.* How is this refraction of existence in the ideological sign determined? By an intersecting of differently oriented social interests within one and the same sign community, i.e., *by the class struggle.* (Voloshinov 1973[1929]: 23)

And this refraction too is echoed in Bally's "double prism":

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[20] Charles Bally to Charles Seitz, 17 June 1912, in Amacker 1992: 60. Original: "*La stylistique est une science qui, par les méthodes combinées de la psychologie du langage et de la linguistique générale, étudie les* aspects affectifs *du langage naturel. J'appelle aspects affectifs toutes les expressions des* émotions *dans le langage. Le langage naturel est le langage* spontané *au service de la* vie réelle *(c.à.d. presque toujours le langage* parlé*) par opposition aux formes du langage qui n'ont pas ou n'ont qu'indirectement cette fonction (par ex. la langue littéraire, la langue scientifique)*". Médina (1985) has shown how Bally's use of *'la vie'* 'life' in his stylistics, including in the title of Bally 1977[1913], is taken over from Henri Bergson (see Joseph forthcoming a).

> Nearly all representations of reality get subjectively coloured and deformed in penetrating into a language: then the language itself ceaselessly transforms, and what might we expect to remain of the reality in an image which has passed through this double prism? (Bally 1977[1913]: 155)[21]

Bally's views are not Saussure's, despite what Voloshinov implies in his reference to the "Geneva school". Neither are Bally's views opposed to Saussure's – in fact, the last sentence cited is followed by "I therefore share my master's scepticism on this point", and as noted earlier, he dedicated to Saussure two of the books in which he lays out his stylistics, the study of the "affective" dimension of a language. Saussure's former student Meillet, a key figure in the development of sociolinguistics, likewise credited his teacher with the insight that a language is a social fact, which lies behind Meillet's work analysing the main driving force in language development as being the movement of elements from the lexicon of one area of work, such as farming, to that of another, such as fishing (see Joseph 2020a). These occupations are not normally conceived of as separate "classes", but they are actually much more clearly defined than the vague "working" and "middle" class are.

For Saussure, a speech act is individual; the shared language provides its social dimension. For Voloshinov and Bakhtin, speech and language are inherently "dialogic": they are always social, even if the addressee exists only in the speaker's imagination. The fundamental error and illusion of "bourgeois" linguistics is to conceive of any aspect of language and speech as monologic, generated by the individual psychology of a speaker.[22] Whatever one may think of Voloshinov's critique, it locates Saussure's soft underbelly and punches at it with an impressive ruthlessness. The idea of the "language community" is not probed by Saussure in the way that he does with so many other aspects of language, and it is not obvious how Voloshinov's critiques of him might be refuted. Neither is it obvious how Voloshinov's assertions might be falsified, which disqualifies them as scientific statements. They are ideological ones, which is not to deny them their force.

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[21] Original: "*Produit de l'activité psychique d'un groupe social, une langue peut, à la rigueur, fournir quelques indices indirects sur la mentalité d'un peuple, mais elle ne saurait rien nous apprendre de certain sur sa civilisation matérielle. Presque toutes les représentations de la réalité se colorent subjectivement et se déforment en pénétrant dans la langue : puis la langue elle-même se transforme sans cesse, et que voulez-vous qu'il reste de la réalité dans une image qui a passé par ce double prisme? Aussi je partage sur ce point le scepticisme de mon maître [...]*".

[22] Another debate between a Swiss with a view similar to Saussure's and a Russian with a critique similar to Voloshinov's would transpire in the 1930s, when Vygotsky (1934) contested Piaget's (1923) theory that children's language begins as self-oriented and only later becomes socialized; for Vygotsky language is social from the start, just as for Voloshinov and Bahktin it is dialogic and social through and through.

The word 'social' underwent some semantic change between the start of the 20th century, when it meant what binds people together, what makes a "society", some force that is beyond the control of individuals, and the middle of the century, when, possibly under the influence of Marxism, "social" forces are at least as much about what distinguishes people from one another as what binds them. This is already the case in Voloshinov (1929), where the social is about class struggle. Social class does not figure in any important way in Saussure's thinking; he does not conceive of the French that he speaks as being a different *langue* from that of Parisian factory workers, despite their many obvious dissimilarities.

Hjelmslev's reformulations of *langue* – *parole*

In the 1930s, although Soviet linguistics underwent a sea change that silenced the critical voices of the 1920s for nearly half a century, we start to see signs of dissatisfaction with the simple *langue – parole* division within the new structuralist linguistics emanating from Prague and Copenhagen.

Louis Hjelmslev's first book (Hjelmslev 1928) had followed Saussure very closely, but by 1935 he was putting forward a highly complex and ever-evolving model of language and semiotics, which in 1936 he started calling glossematics.[23] One of its novel features was to limit the extent to which *parole* represents the free choice of speakers. Hjelmslev (1935: 88) introduces the 'norm' as a level intermediate between the 'system', which he characterizes as "an abstract and virtual reality", and 'usage', which is "the execution of the language by the masses speaking in a given environment, [...] the adopted mode, the set of preferred ways of execution".[24] In Hjelmslev's fundamental division of signs into a level of form and a level of content, the system – a term which, starting in 1942, he will replace with 'schema' – belongs to form, and has the norm as its counterpart in content. "The system immediately reveals itself in the *norm*, which fixes, by rules, the possible latitude of variations in execution through speech" (Hjelmslev 1935: 88), in other words the possible latitude of variations in usage.[25]

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[23] His reason for introducing the term was that linguistics "was so frequently misused as the name for an unsuccessful study of language proceeding from transcendent and irrelevant points of view" (Hjelmslev 1961[1943]: 80).

[24] Original: "*Le système se définit comme une réalité abstraite et virtuelle*"; "L'usage*, défini comme l'exécution de la langue par la masse parlante dans un milieu donné [...] constitue la mode adoptée, l'ensemble des façons d'exécution preferees*".

[25] Original: "*Le système se révèle immédiatement dans la* norme*, qui fixe par des règles la latitude possible des variations dans l'exécution par la parole*". On the later development of Hjelmslev's triad in the work of Eugenio Coseriu (notably Coseriu 1952), see Jensen 2021.

Hjelmslev (1942) saw system/schema, norm and usage as a tripartite division of Saussure's *langue*, to which he added the 'speech act' as the equivalent of '*parole*'. Barthes (1967[1964]: 17, I.1.5) would emphasize the continuity, saying that "Hjelmslev has not thrown over Saussure's conception of *language*/*speech*, but he has redistributed its terms in a more formal way".[26] If by 'thrown over' Barthes meant 'reduced it to an outmoded historical relic', he is right: *langue* – *parole* survives and is familiar to far more people than is Hjelmslev's framework, which even specialists are still struggling to comprehend.

Yet if Barthes is talking about Hjelmslev's intentions, they surely were to overthrow the Saussurean dichotomy – and the reason we continue to struggle with his framework is that we see the truth that it captures, even if we cannot yet grasp all its facets. In particular, it is not so clear as Hjelmslev makes it out to be that usage should be taken as part of *langue*, rather than of *parole*, or that the speech act aligns with *parole*, rather than standing outside the *langue* – *parole* dichotomy altogether. What Hjelmslev calls the speech act seems instead to equate with what, increasingly from the 1940s onward, other linguists will call *énonciation*, as discussed in the next section.

Critiques of structuralism tended to exaggerate, sometimes to the point of absurdity, its downgrading of the human Subject from an agent endowed with free will to a puppet with its strings controlled by historically determined linguistic and social structures. Such downgrading is hinted at in some structuralist analyses, but those which assert it in a strong form are rare. Most structuralist work looks for a way to accommodate both individual human agency and the social constraints within which agentive choices are made. This became the central question in the work of Pierre Bourdieu, whose work engaged frequently with matters of language; he identified William Labov as one of his theoretical touchstones (Bourdieu 2004: 13), and Benveniste's work was so important for him that he personally managed the publication of Benveniste 1969. For Bourdieu, as for Merleau-Ponty (with whom Bourdieu has greater continuity than is generally appreciated), what cannot be left out of consideration in the analysis of agency is the physical, bodily dimension – how everything from perception to inclinations is, not determined by, but affected by the sedimentation of experience in the nervous system: what Merleau-Ponty called '*le corps propre*' (usually translated as 'the lived body') and later '*la chair*' ('flesh'), in parallel with what Bourdieu, using a term with a very long heritage, called the '*habitus*' (see further Joseph 2020b).

Walldén (2012) has schematized Hjelmslev's conception as shown in Fig. 7.

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[26] Original: "*Hjelmslev n'a pas boulversé la conception saussurienne de la* Langue Parole, *mais il en a distribué les termes d'une façon plus formelle*" (Barthes 1964: 94).

Institution	Execution		
Social		Individual	
Restricted			Free
SCHEMA	NORM	USAGE	ACT

Figure 7. Walldén's (2012) presentation of Hjelmslev's facets of the semiotic phenomenon.

This is problematic, first of all because Hjelmslev (1942) would eliminate norm, since it is knowable only from inferences made about usage – but then would revive it in Hjelmslev 1958 in a more specific context (Jensen 2021). Secondly, it is far from clear that usage is individual for Hjelmslev, since he defines it as the practice of the majority, or that norm belongs under execution rather than institution. To take an example from outside language: at the time of writing this, during the Covid pandemic, when I get on a bus, there is a sign saying that by law I must wear a mask, unless I am exempt. That is the schema. Nearly all the people on the bus are wearing a mask: that is the norm. I too wear a mask because, although I doubt the effectiveness of the cheap one I use, it is not worth the reaction I might get from the other passengers if I did not wear one: that is usage. On a few occasions, when riding the bus with my mask on, my nose has began to drip, and I have pulled the mask up long enough to wipe it. That is a "free" individual act in the sense that I momentarily ignore the schema, the norm and even my own usage. One can however see the point made by Hjelmslev (1942) about how it would be an illusion to think that norm and usage are epistemologically separable.

Enunciation

In terms of language: the writing I am doing at this moment is an "act", which Hjelmslev may have equated with *parole*, though Benveniste, as discussed below, separates the act as *énonciation* ('enunciation') from *parole* as what is uttered. My enunciation involves you, the reader, insofar as I anticipate your reaction to what I write, and tailor my utterances to what I expect that you will not reject out of hand, but will at least consider. It positions me in relation to you, and *vice versa*. The *parole* which results from the enunciation involves you still more directly, since it is your interpretation of my enunciation that becomes the reading, the text; you probably aim to interpret it in such a way as to recover my intention in writing it, but we can never prove that you succeed, although it is a very common occurrence to discover that it is not the case. Everyone has regular experiences of their utterances being misunderstood from their point of view.

Enunciation is free in the sense that I am choosing what to write about and what to say about it, yet constrained by my expectations of what my readers will or will not understand, will or will not accept as academic discourse. My usage is constrained by social rules as I have embodied them: this can be seen when I write something, then "correct" myself, or choose not to use contractions because I am writing for publication in an academic journal. Norm might be when *someone else* corrects me, or remarks on what I say or write in a way that indicates that they find it odd, or foreign, or downright ungrammatical. But again, I may or may not accept their correction or remarks, and so the recognition of a norm depends on what I finally choose as my usage.

This is what we do not find in Saussure. He had planned for his next course in general linguistics to lay out *la linguistique de la parole*, but fell ill and died before it could take place. He would not necessarily have succeeded in his plan to analyse *parole* in this way, but for all we know, it might have taken on or at least anticipated the shape of what Hjelmslev or Benveniste would later propose. The concept of '*énonciation*', generally associated with Benveniste and then others who followed him, is more accurately seen as having developed conjointly in work done in "distributed cognition" by a group including Jakobson, Lacan and Benveniste, and less directly Hjelmslev, as well as lesser known figures such as Dubois and Sauvageot, and others whose roles in its development have been sidelined because of the *idée reçue* which attributes it uniquely to Benveniste.[27] The first clear presentation of enunciation was in Dubois 1969, shortly before the 1970 paper by Benveniste which established its particular connection with him. In Hjelmslev's categorization, enunciation can be equated with the "act" – almost. Benveniste (1974[1970]: 80) insisted that enunciation is not the same as Saussure's *parole*, in that the latter is text-focussed, whereas enunciation as he conceived it is focussed on speakers and hearers and their positioning. The concepts overlap, but *parole* applies to the *text* produced by an individual speaker, and enunciation to the *act* of speaking.

Hjelmslev does not divide the act of speaking from the text produced, but looks instead at the originality, the freedom, of instances of the two, considered conjointly. In a sense, anything I say in an established language – anything that someone else can understand, or think they understand – is restricted, and the only

[27] I have made the case for the collective ownership of enunciation in Joseph 2019, citing amongst others Sauvageot 1946; 1951; Jakobson 1950; Lacan 2013[1958–1959]; Dubois 1969; Benveniste 1968; 1974[1970], as well as Pos 1939. The 'speech act' was also emerging in this same period as a concept for philosophers, in particular J. L. Austin. Benveniste's (1963) analysis of Austin 1962 is important both for the insights offered by the author and for what it reveals about the differences in what 'utterances' (*énoncés*) meant to each of them.

truly free act or utterance would be in no language shared with anyone, including myself (for then it would fall under 'usage'). This, though, is not the sort of thing Hjelmslev was concerned with.

For Hjelmslev, Saussure's *langue – parole* distinction is not black-and-white, but three or four shades of grey. Barthes then replies to Hjelmslev that he has not thrown over Saussure's dichotomy because still, somewhere in that spectrum, there is a single dividing line, which Barthes would place between schema and the other three, what he calls "the group *norm – usage – speech*", before then reducing it to 'usage' when he talks about Hjelmslev replacing '*langue*' and '*parole*' with 'schema' and 'usage' (Barthes 1967[1964]: 18).[28] There is a certain iconicity in the reduction of *parole* from being half of Saussure's model to just a quarter of Hjelmslev's, and then disappearing, or at least getting absorbed, in Barthes'. Over the course of the twentieth century, it became progressively less clear whether as individuals we are free beings, or act under so much social contraint, or genetic or some other natural-physical constraint, that freedom is merely an illusion. In post-war Paris there was a strong reaction against this view, in the existentialism of Sartre and his circle, which became extraordinarily popular and admired. However, there was a problem in that the leading existentialists saw Marxism as the liberation from social constraint that would allow each person to exercise their true freedom. The social forces that held them back were the values of the bourgeoisie, which existed in order to keep the bourgeois living in comfort, off the backs of the working class.

Conclusion

Saussure's *langue – parole* divide continues, and will continue, to be essential to the understanding of linguistic semiotics, because it captures the immediate reality of a dyad between the linguistic system and the texts produced using it, where the system is shared, hence social, and the texts are produced by an author, single or collective, and interpreted individually by hearers who know the system. This reality exists along with the equally real situation that authors and speakers are *inhabited by* the readers and interpreters to whom, for whom, and *with* whom they write and speak. Complete freedom in enunciation would entail uttering nothing that is shared, nothing interpretable. This is possible at the production end; indeed it happens, but is treated as pathological, or as an aesthetic production that, acceptably or not, exceeds the boundaries, not just of language, but of semiotics.

[28] Original: "*le groupe* Norme – Usage – Parole" (Barthes 1964: 95). A figure in Hjelmslev 1942: 40 suggests this division of this group from Schema.

At the interpretation end, however, nothing is beyond being perceived as having what Benveniste (2012) called 'signifiance'.

Around him in his own time, and increasingly in the decades after his death, Saussure's innovative yet contained vision of semiotics met with challenges from people who were so inspired by his enquiry that they were driven to surpass the limits he imposed on himself. The attempts by structuralist linguists to expand on Saussure's dyad of *langue* and *parole* were of particular timeliness because of all that this binary implied about human agency and freedom, in a time when Marxist views of the Subject and History prevailed. These expansions yielded extraordinary insights, yet, paradoxically, without undoing the fundamental role of the *langue* – *parole* dichotomy.

Other Saussurean dichotomies have been interpreted as not simply his way of organizing discussion of complex problems, but as oversimplifying those problems into a black-and-white doctrine. Reading through his enormous quantity of manuscripts, and following the development of his thinking across the three iterations of his course on general linguistics, one is not left with the impression of a dogmatic thinker. Sometimes he is scrupulous to a fault, especially in his adherence to the dichotomy whereby he only considered himself licensed to speak or write publicly about internal aspects of the linguistic sign. This has been interpreted as a blindness to the role played by external aspects, and a refusal to allow others to pursue them – when, on the contrary, he believed they needed to be pursued by people who had devoted their careers to psychological or sociological enquiry or other relevant specializations, as he had devoted his to grammar.

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Дихотомии Соссюра и формы структуралистской семиотики

В *Курсе общей лингвистики* Соссюра (1916) – основном тексте структуралистской лингвистики и семиотики – содержится ряд дихотомий. Некоторые из них – например, *langue* и *parole*, означаемое и означающее, произвольное и мотивированное – хорошо известны, другие известны в меньшей степени. Соссюрианская семиотика рассматривается в статье с точки зрения этих дихотомий; кроме того, анализируется влияние последних на более поздние работы, включая критику Соссюра Волошиновым (1929), переформулировки идей Соссюра, в частности, Ельмслевым (1935; 1942), а также концепцию *высказывания*, разработанную в трудах Якобсона, Лакана, Дюбуа, Бенвениста и других. Идеи Соссюра также противопоставлены в статье стилистике Балли. Цель работы – достичь более полного понимания форм, которые принимала структуралистская семиотика, с учетом наследия, на котором она основывалась, а также более широкого интеллектуального контекста, в котором структуралистская семиотика развивалась, включая феноменологию и марксизм.

Saussure'i dihhotoomiad ja strukturalistliku semiootika esinemiskujud

"Üldkeeleteaduse kursust" (1916), millest on saanud strukturalistliku lingvistika ja semiootika alustekst, iseloomustab rida dihhotoomiaid. Mõned neist, nt *langue* ja *parole*, tähistatav ja tähistaja, arbitraarsus ja motiveeritus, on hästi tuntud, teised aga vähem. Käesolevas artiklis käsitletakse Saussure'i semiootikat nende dihhotoomiate terminites ja vaadeldakse, kuidas hilisemad kriitikad, näiteks Vološinovi (1929) oma, ja ümberformuleeringud, eriti Hjelmslevi (1935; 1942) omad, ning enuntsiatsiooni mõiste, mis kerkis esile ühiselt Jakobsoni, Lacani, Dubois', Benveniste'i ja teiste teostes, said kuju vastustena Saussure'ilikele dihhotoomiatele. Saussure'ile vastandumise kaudu vaadeldakse ka Bally stilistikat. Eesmärgiks on täielikumalt mõista kujusid, mille on võtnud strukturalistlik semiootika, arvestades pärandit, millele need tuginevad, ning laiemat intellektuaalset kliimat, milles need arenesid, sh fenomenoloogiat ja marksismi.