

Structuralism in Linguistics

Lecture 2

Outline

- ▶ The origin of Structuralism.
- ▶ Schools of Structuralism.
- ▶ Stages in Structuralism development.
- ▶ Structuralism conceptual ideas.
- ▶ Discovery procedure.




Structuralism

- ▶ a mode of knowledge of nature and human life that is interested in relationships rather than individual objects or, alternatively, where objects are defined by the set of relationships of which they are part and not by the qualities possessed by them taken in isolation [Mauro W. Barbosa de Almeida, in [International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences \(Second Edition\)](#), 2015];
 - ▶ a philosophy and method that developed from insights in the field of linguistics in the mid-20th Century to study the underlying patterns of social life [R.G. Smith, in [International Encyclopedia of Human Geography \(Second Edition\)](#), 2020].
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Structuralism

- ▶ an intellectual tendency that seeks to understand and explain social reality in terms of *social structures*. *Structures* are defined as the patterns and forms of social relations and combinations among a set of constituent social elements or component parts such as positions, units, levels, regions and locations, and social formations [W.V. Heydebrand, in [International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences](#), 2001].
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Structuralism

- ▶ is concerned with the analysis of an experience, event, or idea down to its smallest part. Once the smallest parts have been found, they are classified into groups [Peter Sturmey, ... Erica Doran, in Functional Analysis in Clinical Treatment (Second Edition), 2020].

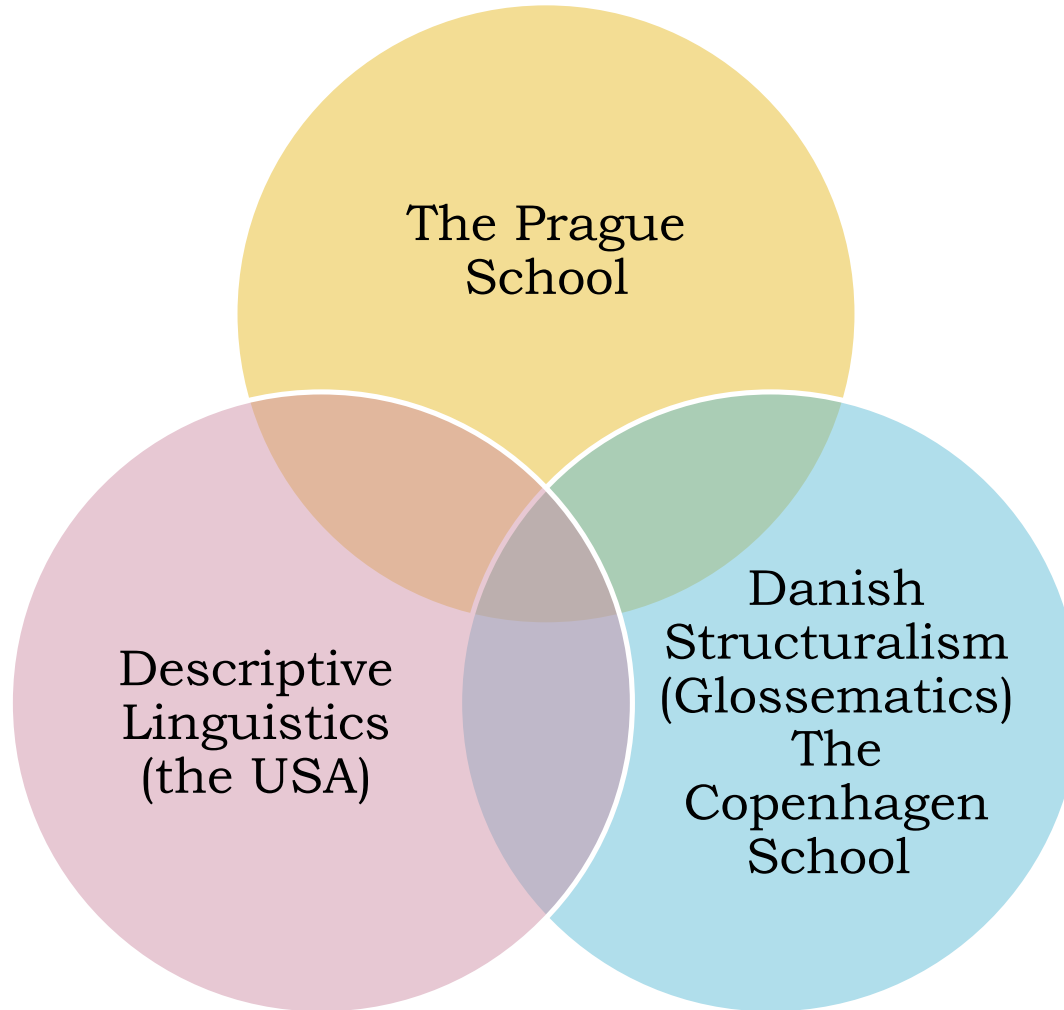


Structuralism



Schools of Structuralism

20-40s of the XX century



The Prague School

Pražský lingvistický kroužek

- ▶ established in Prague in the 1920s by Vilem Mathesius;
- ▶ representatives: Russian linguist *Nikolay Trubetskoy* and the Russian-born American linguist *Roman Jakobson*, the famous Czech literary scholars *René Wellek* and *Jan Mukařovský*.



The Copenhagen School

Cercle Linguistique de Copenhague

- ▶ founded at 8 p.m. on the 24th September, 1931 by *Louis Hjelmslev* and *Viggo Brodal*;
- ▶ theory of language – **glossematics** (“*Prolegomena to a Theory of Language*” (1943) and “*Résumé of a Theory of Language*”);
- ▶ The principal ideas of the school are:
 - ▶ a language consists of content and expression;
 - ▶ a language consists of a succession and a system;
 - ▶ content and expression are interconnected by commutation;
 - ▶ there are certain relations in the succession and the system;
 - ▶ there are no one-to-one correspondents between content and expression, but the signs may be divided into smaller components.



Descriptive Linguistics

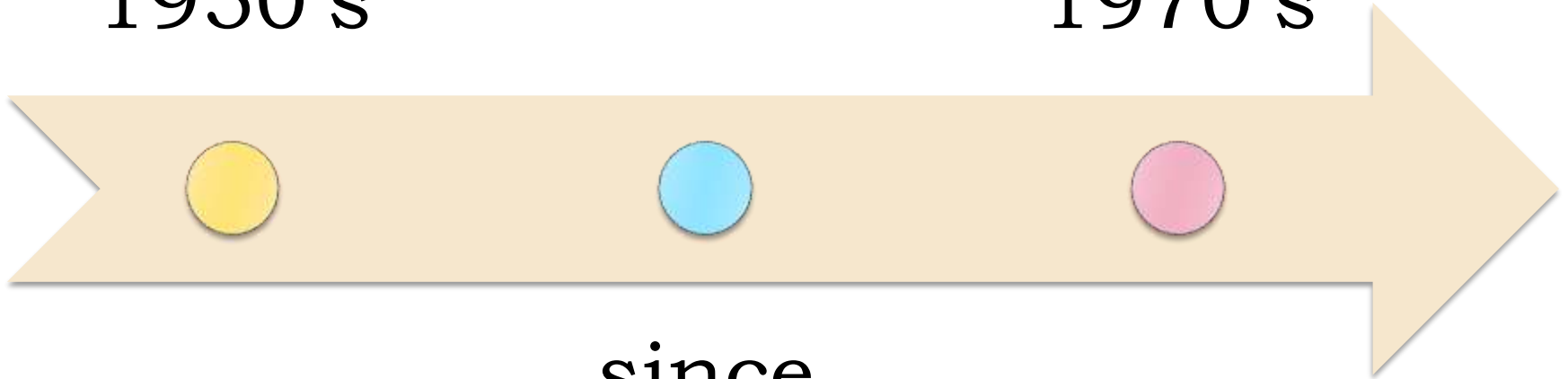
- ▶ founded in 1916 by *Ferdinand de Saussure*;
- ▶ Descriptive linguistics emphasizes:
 - ▶ the primacy of speech;
 - ▶ the adoption of a synchronic approach;
 - ▶ the description of language and dialect systems as they are found to be spoken.



Stages in Structuralism Development

up to
the
1950's

since
the
1970's



since
the
1950's



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- ▶ For structuralists a **language** is a *self-contained* and *tightly organised system* whose history is of changes from one state of the system to another.



Structuralism Conceptual Ideas

language is a system-structural formation in which all its units are connected among themselves by various relations;

language is a system of signs, correlated with other symbolic systems within their common discipline - semiotics;

there is a distinction between language and speech;

language is characterized by syntagmatic and pragmatic relations;




Structuralism Conceptual Ideas

language can be studied synchronically and diachronically, the priority belongs to synchrony;

due to statics, language as a system is balanced, dynamics provides the possibility of changes in language;

language is an independent phenomenon with its own internal laws, it must be studied primarily taking into account intralinguistic factors;

in the study of language it is necessary to use strict, precise methods that make Linguistics closer to the Nature Sciences.



Structuralism Key Concepts

The primacy of
speech

Synchronic
approach

Descriptivism
versus
prescriptivism

Discovery Procedure

