To sum up, system is the set of paradigmatic relationship between elements, and structure is the set of syntagmatic relationships between elements at each level in the language. For example:

At the level of sound

At the level of sounds there is:

i.   A phonological system: (consisted of vowels & consonant sounds)

ii. A phonological Structure: (determining the combination of these vowels and consonants)

At the level of sentence-formation

At the level of sentence- formation, there is:

i.   A syntactic system: (consisted of word-classes such as noun, verb, adjective and adverb)

ii. A syntactic structure: (determining the combination of these word-classes) to enable the formation of sentences.

1.9   DIACHRONIC & SYNCHRONIC APPROACHES

This distinction is made in linguistics between two approaches to the study of language.

1. Synchronic approach

Chronos' stand for *time*. Synchronic approach sees language as a living whole that is existing as a 'state' at one particular time.

This state of language is accumulation of all the linguistic activities of language community engages in a specific time period.

2. The time factor is irrelevant

In synchronic study of language to study language linguists collect samples of language as it exists the time factor becomes irrelevant. Linguists describe samples regardless of any historical considerations, which may have influenced the language at any previous time. Once linguists have isolated a focal point for synchronic description the time factor becomes irrelevant. Whatever changes are taking place in the material, all changes are considered irrelevant to the main focus of the study which is the system of the language as it exists.

3. Diachronic approach

The diachronic approach traces the historical development of the language and records the changes that have taken place in it between the successive points in time.
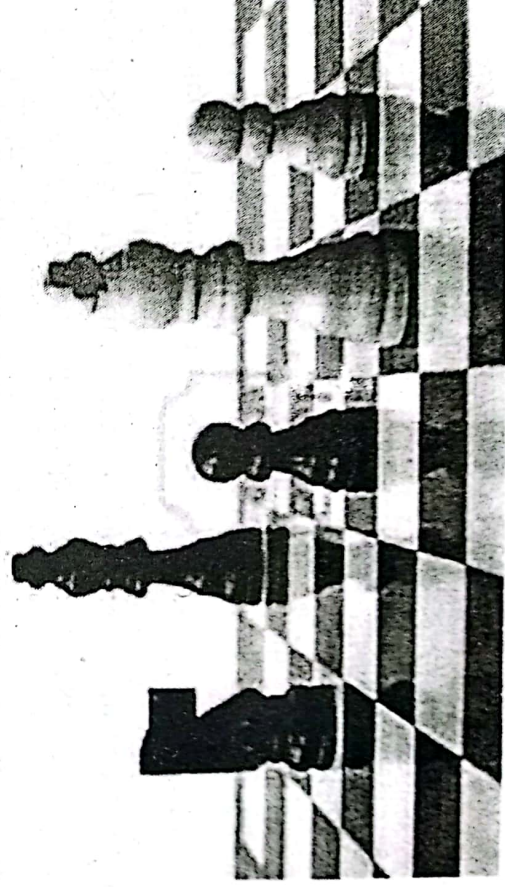
This approach investigates language changes as they have occurred from time to time. It also investigates the evolution of languages.

4. Synchronic approach is prior

Saussure gives priority to synchronic approach. He explains this priority by analogy with the game of chess.

5. Analogy of the game of chess

Chessboard constantly changes with each move. During the game at any moment a 3rd person can understand the state of game by looking at the position of pieces. Regardless what kind of moves & how many moves have been made before arriving at this stage. The game can be described without reference to the earlier moves.

i. Game rules are determined before game

Game rules which are determined before the game. All rules continue to operate with each move.

Language has rules

Similarly, rules exist in language too.

ii. Value of pieces

The value of the pieces depends on their position on the chess board.

Value of linguistic term

Language term derives its value from its opposition to all the other terms.
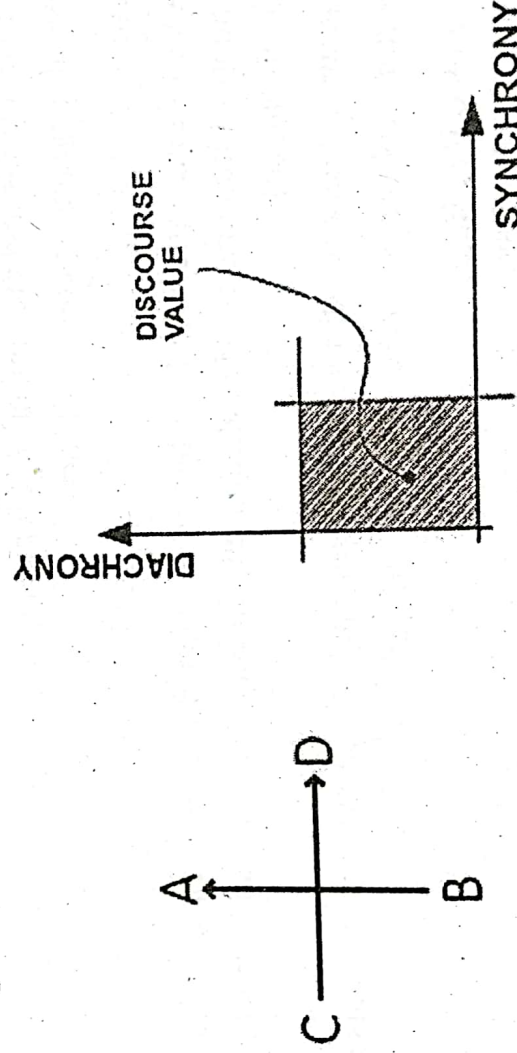
iii. Changes in game

Changes take place to pass from one stage to the next. Only one piece needs to be moved at a time. Succession of moves can change the outcome of the game.

6. Changes in language

In language changes effect only isolated elements, not the whole language. These changes ultimately do result in changing the language.

Inter-relationship of synchronic & diachronic approaches

CD is synchronic axis (static). All the facts of language co-exist at a particular time. AB is diachronic axis of successions. AB is an imaginary line moving through time. The historical path through which language has travelled & will continue travelling. CD can intersect AB at any point because at any given time there will be a number of facts about language co-existing. X is the point on AB where the particular point in time can be isolated and the language can be described at that point as it exists.

Conclusion

Language can & should be described synchronically. On its own terms without reference to what it has developed from or what it is likely to develop into. However, this does not mean that diachronic/historical study cannot be done. To Saussure, though the diachronic perspective is not related to the language system. It does affect/condition the system.