

Diachronic & Synchronic Variation of Language

The distinction between Diachrony and Synchrony in relation to language studies was first emphasised by the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure in the early 20th century. In a diachronic approach to language, language change is systematically studied. A comparison is sought in relation to what changes have taken place in a particular language over a period of time. For example, the study of how the Middle English had developed from the Old English in terms of sentence structure, and vocabulary and spelling or how these linguistic components changed in the Modern English is the study of diachronic variation of language. Most diachronic studies of language variations are part of historical linguistics.

As opposed to diachronic approach, synchronic approach to language focusses on description of language at one moment in time. It does not study language variations in relation to time dimension. The study of Shakespearean English or the 20th-century English, for example, will fall under synchronic study of language.

