

ATINER CONFERENCE PAPER SERIES No: LNG2013-0836

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**ATINER's Conference Paper Series**

**LNG2013-0836**

*Course in General Linguistics by  
Ferdinand De Saussure in Azerbaijani  
Language. Problems of Recovery of  
Meta-Language*

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URL Conference Papers Series: [www.atiner.gr/papers.htm](http://www.atiner.gr/papers.htm)

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**ISSN 2241-2891**

23/1/2014

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This paper should be cited as follows:

**Ibrahimova, S. (2013) "*Course in General Linguistics* by Ferdinand De Saussure in Azerbaijani Language. Problems of Recovery of Meta-Language" Athens: ATINER'S Conference Paper Series, No: LNG2013-0836.**

***Course in General Linguistics* by Ferdinand De Saussure in  
Azerbaijani Language. Problems of Recovery of Meta-  
Language**

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**Abstract**

In 2003, the *Course in General Linguistic* by Ferdinand de Saussure appeared in Azerbaijani. The translation was done by a professor of the Baku State University N.Jafarov. The translator - an expert in the theory of language, is the head of the Department of General Linguistics in Baku State University. Meta-language in modern linguistics has been differentiated by three existing paradigms. If assumed that modern or actual scientific linguistics begins with comparative linguistics then we can say that there are three paradigms. At the same time, we can see the trend in modern cognitive linguistics having been formed as a holistic paradigm. In our view, a paradigm in science is inseparable from meta-language. When we speak about the existence of a paradigm, we have in mind the fact that it has been formed as a language for the description of the object. Science is characterized by entirety and not limited by geographical or socio-cultural boundaries. Although there are several paradigms in linguistics, within each of them there is a common space of meaning and purpose, methods, and systems. It does not deny the possibility and validity of the using of different methods of paradigms in a particular study, depending on the main goal of the study. But it is important to consider that in a similar study particular pieces will be characterized by the defined boundaries as installations and scientific apparatus, including the terms and traditional syntax, stamps. In our opinion, the meta-language is a certain cultural tradition. Therefore, we need to talk about the foundation of the tradition. It is clear that the tradition creates a fundamental text. The fundamental text can be created based on their-own cultural tradition, but may be translated. In the case of translation of the text it creates a tradition on the basis of national culture and introduces us to a global culture that is based on a tradition. Translation of the *Course in General Linguistics* in Azerbaijani language creates cultural and scientific precedent. As the history of Russian Saussure goes back to the 30s of the last century, it is safe to say that a wide range Azerbaijani readers are familiar with this tradition indirectly. Translation of the *Course* in Azerbaijan language in the XXI century, creating a new meta-language and a new tradition, as yet to be a true reflection and development as a meta-language of *Course*, and its deep content lies ahead of us.

**Key words:** meta-language, translation, paradigm

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Our paper is devoted to the analysis of the text of the *Course in General Linguistics* by Ferdinand de Saussure in Russian and Azerbaijani languages. In this case, the source is the French original, prepared by Sh.Balli and A.Seshehaye. This kind of comparison is extremely important because the Azerbaijani translation made by a corresponding member of Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences professor Jafarov and published in 2003, in our view, creates a new text, precedent, or laying the foundations of a new meta-language of Azerbaijanian linguistics. The fact is that until 2003 the Azerbaijani text of the *Course* was not exist. Azerbaijani scientists read it in Russian. However, in Russian before the appearance of a new edition based on the translation by A.M.Sukhotin in 1977, processed on the third French edition by A.A.Kholodovich, there was the publication of 1933. So the *Course* in general, it has been rare for the Russian reader too. It can be argued that for Azerbaijani readers Ferdinand de Saussure was not accessible at all. However, in the Soviet period was formed a tradition to refer to Ferdinand de Saussure as the founder of modern linguistics, which was understood as structuralism. Within frame of this tradition became obligatory to refer to the *Course in General Linguistics*, the same information about it, as a rule, derives not from the *Course* but from the works of the few linguists, Russian or Azeri, who were familiar with the founder of structuralism. Even fewer were those who read Saussure in the original, so familiar with the *Course* linguists usually came from Russian text, and, as it is usually the case, it was taken as a absolute, including translation errors. Knowing firsthand Saussure, linguists still have to consider compulsory using of such terms as *the signifier and the signified*, *the dichotomy* between language and speech in the aspect of the dichotomy, *synchronic and diachronic*, *sound-image*, etc. It also occurs the using of terminology without reference to the author. The situation in some way acquired a folk character. This is the case with popular songs, whose authors have been forgotten, and the songs themselves are beginning to be called folk. If we take into consideration the fact that the *Course in General Linguistics* is known to us, in the translation of Sh.Balli and A.Seshehaye, then it becomes quite clear with what Saussure and how much he was known to Azerbaijani reader. The translation by Jafarov performs primarily educational function. A canonical text appears in Azerbaijani. It creates a unique in-kind situation where the reference to the text is ahead of familiarity with him for half a century at least. The translation creates the preconditions for the mass profile of Saussure, given the fact that the teachers working today at the philological faculty of Azerbaijani universities, recommend to their students *Course in General Linguistics* as required readings. We do not want to be categorical, but it seems that such a familiarity with the text of the *Course* will have a significant impact on the meta-language of the modern Azerbaijani linguistics. It may become the Saussure terms of the second order more commonplace, that many people do not realize, as the terms noted above still remain theirs attraction and using. Azerbaijani text of the *Course* will necessarily be of larger order, orderliness in the meta-language, of course, on the condition that it will gain popularity among the youth of the linguistic and will be in demand for the

scientific life of one or two generations. N.S.Chemodanov in the preface from the editors for publication in 1977 *Соссюр Ф. де Труды по языкознанию. М.: Прогресс, 1977, с.696* (Ferdinand de Saussure. Works on linguistics. Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977, 696 p.) writes the following: ‘из трудов Ф. де Соссюра на русском языке до настоящего времени был известен лишь “Курс общий лингвистики”, изданный в 1933 в переводе А.М Сухотина. Для данного издания этот перевод потребовал значительных исправлений и уточнений’ (From the works of Ferdinand de Saussure in Russian up till now it has been known only the *Course in General Linguistics*, published in 1933, translated by A.M.Sukhotin. For this edition this translation required significant corrections and clarifications).<sup>1</sup> In our view, *corrections* and *clarifications* must accompany the life of the great text in another language. Corrections and clarifications have to meet long-term, and a constant work in comparison with the original translation. In addition, a comparative analysis provides a deeper insight into the meaning of the text, and just takes great aesthetic pleasure. We should not lose sight of the fact that Sh.Balli and A.Seshehaye, as it is known, didn’t use the full lecture notes by Saussure, but in particular E.Konstanten notes and drafts of the scientist. Besides, the summaries at the disposal of Sh.Balli and A.Seshehaye significantly reduced by them. A.A.Kholodovich puts it:

‘Even a cursory reading of the critical edition of Engler shows that Saussure as presented by Bally - Seshehaye and Saussure in writing synopses of his listeners are not quite identical. In a some sense, one could even argue that it is not Saussure and non-synonymous paraphrase of Saussure. And so is the case not only with the Bally's and Seshehaye. All subsequent linguistics, at least the one that pushes away from Saussure, perceived through the prism of the reconstructed *Course* is a non-synonymous paraphrase the ideas of Saussure, unremitting variations on a theme developed by him. Some of these “variations”, a paraphrase of the ideas of Saussure, unremitting variations on a theme developed by him, Some of these “variations”, paraphrases coincide with the pre-Saussure, a lot – no’<sup>2</sup>.

Thus, Saussure in the Azerbaijani language has to be refined in the direction of going beyond the publication of Bally's and Seshehaye. The Azerbaijanian translators are absolutely necessary to have at hand the notes of E.Konstanten (one in 306 pages, the second - in the 407)<sup>3</sup>. Therefore, careful work on the Azerbaijani Saussure has only just begun, and that it generally starts great merit of Jafarov. Our analysis is aimed at identifying some discrepancies of Azerbaijani translation from French original. As the text of the proxy was used by Russian translation made by A.M.Sukhotin and amended by A.A.Kholodovich. The name of the second chapter of the *Course* in Russian translation reads as follows: ‘Материал и задача лингвистики. Ее отношение к смежным дисциплинам’<sup>4</sup> (The material and the task of

<sup>1</sup>Соссюр Ф. де Труды по языкознанию. М.: Прогресс, 1977, с.5

<sup>2</sup>Ibid, p.21

<sup>3</sup>Ibid, p.11

<sup>4</sup>Ibid, p.20

linguistics: its relation to related disciplines). In Azerbaijani translation: ‘*Dilçiliyin materialı və vəzifəsi. Onun yaxın fənlərə münasibəti*’.<sup>1</sup> In the original: ‘*Matière et tâche de la linguistique; ses rapports avec les sciences connexes*’.<sup>2</sup> In the original text is used the right word, leaving no sit for doubt regarding *the adjacency* what is at stake. This word is *sciences*. In Azerbaijani translation of the word used *fənn*, which is equivalent not to *sciences* in French, but to Russian *discipline*. In modern Azerbaijanian language the word *fənn* is using mainly in the sense of *subject, matter*. It will be more accurate the using *elm*, that matches *the sciences*. In the original source we read: ‘*La matière de la linguistique est constitué d 'abord par toutes les manifestations du langage humaine, qu il s' agisse des peuples sauvages ou des nations civilisées, des époques archaïques ou classiques ou de décadence en tenant compte, dans chaque periode, non seulement du "beau langage", mais de toutes les formes d'expression*’.<sup>3</sup> In Russian translation: ‘*Материалом лингвистики являются прежде всего все факты речевой деятельности человека, как у первобытных народов так и культурных наций как в эпоху расцвета того или другого языка, так и во времена архаические, а также в период его упадка с охватом в каждую эпоху как форм обработанного или «литературного», языка, [так и форм просторечных] – вообще всех форм выражения*’.<sup>4</sup> (The materials are primarily linguistic facts of human speech as among primitive peoples, nations and cultural, as in the heyday of this or that language, as well as in archaic times, as well as in the period of its decline, with coverage in every age as a form of processed or "literary" language, [and colloquial forms] - generally all forms of expressions). In Azerbaijani translation of *archaic times (des époques archaïques)* is given as *arxaikləşdiyi zamanlarda*<sup>5</sup>. Translation is not correct, because the expression is the process in translation of Azerbaijani *archaism*, i.e *in times of archaism, when the archaism took place*. This translation changes the meaning of the expression, here we are talking not about ancient stages of language development, but about such stages when something (it should be assumed - the language) became obsolete, archaic subjected. A.A.Kholodovich is giving the expression *так и форм просторечных* (also the colloquial forms) in square brackets and notes on the same page: ‘*In the square brackets we took those parts of the Course, that are absent in the version of Sh.Balli and A.Seshehaye, but we found in the contexts of students' course*’<sup>6</sup>. In Azerbaijani translations brackets are removed, the text enclosed by Kholodovich in brackets is entered in the text here. If for someone is important to feel the difference between a text of Bally - Seshehaye and the abstracts of students, then this difference here disappears. Of course, the Azerbaijani translator had the right to do so. In this way he brings the text to Saussure's original. So in the

<sup>1</sup>Sössür F.de. Ümumi dilçilik kursu. Bakı: BDU nəşri, 2003, s. 60.

<sup>2</sup>F.de Saussure. Cours de linguistique générale. P., 1955, p.20

<sup>3</sup>F.de Saussure. Cours de linguistique générale. P., 1955, p.20

<sup>4</sup>Ф.де Соссюр Труды по языкознанию. М.: Прогресс, 1977, с.44

<sup>5</sup>Sössür F.de. Ümumi dilçilik kursu. Bakı: BDU nəşri, 2003, s. 60.

<sup>6</sup>Ф.де Соссюр Труды по языкознанию. М.: Прогресс, 1977, с.44



French original can not be a match for *the words and colloquial forms*. What word is used in the summaries of listeners is unclear because Kholodovich not lead the French word for it translated as a *vernacular*. As it is known, in the Russian linguistic tradition the term *vernacular* is commonly understood as ‘the speech of urban residents who do not adhere to any of the canons’. For example: ‘Просторечие-разновидность русского национального языка, служащая средством общения в основном малообразованной части городского населения и характеризующаяся ненормативностью, территориальной незакрепленностью стихийностью функционирования’.<sup>1</sup> - a kind of Russian national language, serves as a means of communication mostly uneducated part of the urban population and is characterized by a non-normative, territorial unsuspended, the spontaneity of the operation. Sometimes the term *vernacular* is interpreted and used in accordance with the internal form of the word, i.e in the sense of *simple language*. What meant Saussure, or understood and recorded his audience, and what meant Kholodovich remains unclear. Jafarov translates it as *adi danışiq dili*. Thus he introduced another word, which also has the meaning of the terminology used to. In the Russian and in Azerbaijani respectively (Soviet) linguistic tradition the *spoken colloquial* term (non-written) involves the form of literary language. Under the vernacular means an other thing, vernacular and spoken language is not the same thing. It is difficult to say what is more exact, at any rate the accents are different. Perhaps Saussure him-self had in mind what is used to define as a domestic style of the literary language. Saussure's term *beau langage* Kholodovich gives as *расцвет языка* (flourishing of language), Jafarov as *çiçəkləndiyi dövr*. French *beau* means *beautiful*. As for the opposite meaning and state of the language, then Saussure used *la decadence*, from Kholodovich - *упадок языка* (the decline of language), in Jafarov - *böhran*. Azerbaijani *böhran* means *crisis*. Perhaps it would be more successful to use one of the words as *tənəzzül, süqut, düşkünlük*. The fact is that the *crisis* means more fighting, for example, the struggle for survival and prosperity. *Decline* or the French *la decadence* does not assumes the struggle, in this case the fight is over and was unsuccessful. In the original text: *à reconstituer dans la mesure du possible les langues mères de chaque famille*.<sup>2</sup> Saussure's expression *les langues mères* in Russian linguistic tradition is used as *proto*. It is this term that Kholodovich uses. In Azerbaijani translation the expression *uludil* is used. I must say that in the Azerbaijani language there is also a tradition of the use of the given term. More accurate in this context probably to be used an expression of *kökdil*. The term *uludil* does not distinguish between the concept of *old language* and *ancient language* or *protolanguage*. Saussure's expression *les langues mères* means the language from what were derived the languages that we know. Or if it is an one language, then it is that root of the language, which dates back to known language. In the original: ‘*La tâche de la linguistique sera: b) de chercher les*

<sup>1</sup>Стариченок В.Д. Большой лингвистический словарь. Ростов-на-Дону: Феникс, 2008, с.500

<sup>2</sup>F.de Saussure. Cours de linguistique générale. P., 1955, p.20

*forces qui sont en jeu d'une manière permanente et universelle dans toutes les langues et de dégager les lois générales aux quelles on peut ramener tous les phénomènes particuliers de l'histoire*<sup>1</sup>. In Russian translation: the expression of *универсальный действующий*<sup>2</sup> is used. In Azerbaijani translation: *universal şəkildə mövcud olan*<sup>3</sup>. Apparently, to Saussure it comes to universally valid laws or the laws of language evolution. Azerbaijani *mövcud olan* means *existing*. The concept of *action* is replaced by the concept of *existence*. You can offer such a translation too: *'dilçiliyin ümumi vəzifəsi b) bütün dillərdə daimi və ümumi tərzdə iştirak edən amilləri axtarmaq və tarixin xüsusi hadisələrini gətirib çıxaran ümumi qanunlarını aşkar etmək'*.<sup>4</sup> Jafarov gives as *ümumi qanunları meydana çıxarmaq*<sup>5</sup>, i.e to bring to the surface. Kholodovich gives *установить общие законы*<sup>6</sup>, i.e quite simply to *find it*. So, apparently, the best is *aşkar etmək*. In the original: *'Par exemple,... doit être soigneusement distinguée de l'ethnographie et de la préhistoire'*<sup>7</sup>. Kholodovich gives: *история древних эпох*.<sup>8</sup> In Azerbaijani translation: *qədim dünya tarixindən*<sup>9</sup>. The concept of *qədim dünya* means *ancient world*. Thus, *qədim dünya tarixi* - is the history of the ancient world. In the middle school, we had text books of the ancient world, describing the history of ancient Egypt, Sumer, Greece and Rome. The ancient world - a world of ancient civilizations existing on earth. Saussure says *préhistoire*, i.e the so-called pre-historical times. He was not referring to the history of the ancient world, that is, ancient civilizations, namely that dark period about which there is no evidence. So the expression *tarixdən əvvəlki dövr* would be more exact. In the original: *le langage est un fait social*.<sup>10</sup> In Russian translation: *Язык это социальный факт*<sup>11</sup> (social fact). In Azerbaijani translation: *Dil sosial hadisədir*.<sup>12</sup> Azerbaijani expression means *a social phenomenon*. One can find out the difference between the fact and the phenomenon, in spite the phenomenon can be regarded as a fact. In Saussure, as we see, *fait social*. The word *fait* in this case must be considered in the totality of all the values that formed the system of its semantic structure. So, *fait* activated our understanding of anything *made, finished*. Consequently, the language - it's something made by social, and in every given moment of his history the language is the result of social activity. It is in this context, it should be, in our view, understood the word *social* with the word *fact*. The phenomenon is *the representation, the discovery of something*, but not his *completeness*. In the original: *le caractère phonique du*

<sup>1</sup>Ibid, p.20

<sup>2</sup>Ф.де Соссюр Труды по языкознанию. М.: Прогресс, 1977, с.44

<sup>3</sup>Sössür F. de. Ümumi dilçilik kursu. Bakı: BDU nəşri, 2003, s. 60.

<sup>4</sup>Sössür F. de. Ümumi dilçilik kursu. Bakı: BDU nəşri, 2003, s. 60.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.p.60

<sup>6</sup>Ф.де Соссюр Труды по языкознанию. М.: Прогресс, 1977, с.44

<sup>7</sup>F.de Saussure. Cours de linguistique générale. P., 1955, p.21

<sup>8</sup>Ф.де Соссюр Труды по языкознанию. М.: Прогресс, 1977, с.44

<sup>9</sup>Sössür F. de. Ümumi dilçilik kursu. Bakı: BDU nəşri, 2003, s. 60

<sup>10</sup>F.de Saussure. Cours de linguistique générale. P., 1955, p.21

<sup>11</sup>Ф.де Соссюр Труды по языкознанию. М.: Прогресс, 1977, с.44

<sup>12</sup>Sössür F. de. Ümumi dilçilik kursu. Bakı: BDU nəşri, 2003, s. 61

*signe linguistique*.<sup>1</sup> In Russian translation: *звуковой характер языкового знака*.<sup>2</sup> In Azerbaijani translation: *dil işarəsinin səs xarakteri*.<sup>3</sup> Saussure's *phonique* has many meanings, besides, the Russian word *звуковой* is wider than Azerbaijani *səs*. In *phonique* the important is *acoustic* because Saussure mention the signifier emphasizes that this is an acoustic image of the complex sounds. Perhaps in Azerbaijani translation it would be better *akustik xarakteri*. In the original: '*En tout cas la confusion entre les deux disciplines est impossible: l'essentiel de la langue, nous le verrons, est étranger au caractère phonique du signe linguistique*'.<sup>4</sup> In Russian translation: '*сущность языка, как мы увидим...*'<sup>5</sup> (the essence of language, as we shall see...) In Azerbaijani translation: '*dilin mahiyyəti, gördüyümüz kimi*'.<sup>6</sup> Saussure indicates that the result of its arguments that will be followed we can be sure in anything. In Azerbaijani translation - *dilin mahiyyəti, gördüyümüz kimi* – i. e. we are talking about the natural result of an argument *as you could see, we see*, but that argument was not there, *Course* is only beginning. In conclusion it should again be noted that the comparative analysis of the text of the *Course in General Linguistics* is a highly relevant and rewarding work, in the sense that its results will affect in many branches of the humanities. For us, of course, on the first place it is important to compare the Azerbaijani translation from the French original. However, the Russian translation should be brought to the analysis, because the Russian language for many decades was our intermediate language. It makes sense, of course, to apply to other transfers, such as English.

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<sup>1</sup>F.de Saussure. Cours de linguistique générale. P., 1955, p.21

<sup>2</sup>Ф.де Соссюр Труды по языкознанию. М.: Прогресс, 1977, с.45

<sup>3</sup>Sössür F. de. Ümumi dilçilik kursu. Bakı: BDU nəşri, 2003, s. 61.

<sup>4</sup>F.de Saussure. Cours de linguistique générale. P., 1955, p.21

<sup>5</sup>Ф.де Соссюр Труды по языкознанию. М.: Прогресс, 1977, с.45

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