8

The Training and Disciplinary Identity of Linguists in Europe's Long Nineteenth Century

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Introduction

In the mid-nineteenth century, the centres of philological and linguistic study in Europe were a handful of German universities that led the way in organizing doctoral training. In seminars guided by a senior professor, students presented papers on specialized topics and had them critiqued and queried, as a way of preparing them for researching and writing the thesis on which the award of the doctoral degree would stand or fall.

This chapter examines the historical background and the eventual practice of such training, along with developments in the methodology and conceptual framework of linguistic study. It does this in a somewhat unconventional way that might be called cinematographic: the focus shifts from wide-lens establishing shots with an international or national panorama, to medium shots trained on particular universities, learned societies or journals, and down to close-ups on the experience of one Leipzig doctoral student who went on to lecture in Paris. That student, Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913), was responsible for some of the key conceptual and methodological shifts of the late nineteenth century, with his influence becoming ever greater as the twentieth century progressed.

The political and cultural relations between Germany and France in the two decades following the Franco-Prussian War and the annexation of Alsace and Lorraine coloured and complexified the importation of the German doctoral training model in the various branches of the University of Paris, and not least in the section of the *École Pratique des Hautes Études* in which Saussure was hired to lecture on Gothic and Old High German, to a student body made up disproportionately of displaced Alsatians.

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Saussure's teaching set the agenda for French doctoral training in linguistics and adjacent areas at least through the 1960s, and indeed across Europe and beyond – this despite the fact that he was never in a position to direct a single doctoral thesis himself.

In the wake of Napoleon

By the middle of the nineteenth century Continental European universities had not yet recovered from Napoleon's determined mission to destroy them as autonomous or ecclesiastical institutions. In so doing, he was extending both the centrism that had characterized the French state since its founding, and the egalitarian and anti-clerical aims of the French Revolution. Already in 1793 the universities of France, which had numbered 143 at the start of the Revolution in 1789,[1] had all been suppressed by the Revolutionary Convention. Specialized establishments were then founded under central government control, starting in 1794 with the *École centrale des travaux publics* (Central School of Public Works) for the training of civil engineers and the *École normale* (Normal School) for training teachers; the former was renamed the *École polytechnique* (Polytechnical School) in 1795, while the latter was shut down 'after four months of tumultuous activities',[2] and not re-established until 1830. These *grandes écoles* (great schools), as they came to be known, did not require completion of a secondary degree for admission, nor did they award degrees, but only prepared students for national examinations.

Also in 1795 the beginnings of a university sector were re-established with the creation of *Écoles de santé* (Schools of Health) in Paris, Montpellier and Strasbourg. That same year saw the opening of the first institution in France devoted to linguistic study, the *École des langues orientales* (School of Oriental Languages) in Paris.[3] Left untouched, apart from a change of name to the *Collège national*, the non-degree-granting *Collège royal* (now the *Collège de France*) founded in 1530 by François I was not a university

[1] Christophe Charle and Jacques Verger, *Histoire des universités (XIIe-XXIe siècles)* (Paris, 2012), 47.

[2] Walter Rüegg, 'European Universities and Similar Institutions in Existence between 1812 and the End of 1944: A Chronological List', in Walter Rüegg (ed.), *A History of the University in Europe,* iii. *Universities in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries (1800–1945)* (Cambridge, 2004), 673–706, 692. Gathering definitive information on the history of universities is an ongoing enterprise. Some of the chapters in the volume just cited, for example, contradict other chapters. I have given the best information I can based on the wide range of sources I have consulted.

[3] See Louis Bazin, 'L'École des Langues orientales et l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres', in *Comptes rendus des séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres*, 139/4, 1995, 983–996.

nor connected directly to the universities. Rather, it had always stood in an uneasy rivalry with them, and partly on this account, its 'courses were unmolested; the Convention even raised the salaries, by decree, from one and two thousand francs to three thousand'.[4]

Under Napoleon, other specialized schools or faculties were established in provincial towns in the first decade of the nineteenth century, and in 1806 the *Académie de Paris* was created, including faculties of letters, sciences, law, medicine, Catholic theology and Protestant theology. The remit of the *Académie de Paris* extended from primary education upward, including a tertiary level destined to be integrated into Napoleon's plan for replacing all the universities within his empire with a single, centrally-controlled *Université impériale* (Imperial University). The plan had only been partly instituted by the time of the French defeat at Waterloo and the subsequent reconfiguration of Europe at the Congress of Vienna in 1814–15. In its wake, from the west of Spain to the Russian border, lay a trail of universities in ruins, along with about a hundred that continued to function. None of these were in France, where what remained of Napoleon's plan were the *grandes écoles* and most of the faculties established in the previous decade, which remained separate until the Loi Liard of 1896 allowed faculties in the same towns to regroup into universities.[5]

Elsewhere, sparks had appeared among the ashes, the brightest being the founding of a new sort of civic/state university in Berlin in 1810, while it was under Napoleonic rule, and in London between 1826 and 1836. The University of Berlin (today the Humboldt University of Berlin) is credited with having 'constructed the modern doctoral candidate', with statutes stipulating that 'The candidate must have been matricultated for three years, must have actually attended some class or other, must swear a couple of oaths, and must furnish two documents', a *curriculum vitae* and a police certification of the candidate's honesty.[6] The awarding of doctorates took

[4] J. B. Delaunay, 'The Collège de France', *The Catholic Encyclopedia* http://www.catholicity.com/encyclopedia/c/college_de_france.html. Under Napoleon it became the *Collège impérial*, then again *royal* under the Restoration and again *impérial* under the Second Empire, with the name finally settled as *Collège de France* in 1870. On the earlier history of the *Collège royal*, when it was also known as the *Collège des trois langues* (College of the Three Languages, viz. Latin, Greek and Hebrew, clearly indicating its philological orientation), see Ina Baghdiantz McCabe, *Orientalism in Early Modern France: Eurasian Trade, Exoticism and the Ancien Regime* (Oxford and New York, 2008), 24–8.

[5] A number of faculties of letters closed in 1815, including those at Clermont-Ferrand, Lyon, Montpellier, Nancy, Orléans, Poitiers, Rennes and Rouen.

[6] William Clark, *Academic Charisma and the Origins of the Research University* (Chicago, 2006), 202. Until the late eighteenth century the degree of doctor was awarded only in law, medicine and theology, and it was with considerable struggle that the appellation 'doctor of philosophy' came to be accepted in some German and Austrian universities, with no clear rules for how it was to be awarded (see Clark, 194–6). Academic degrees were another tradition which the Napoleonic Empire wished to abolish, but which survived not only intact but strengthened.

decades to spread to the older surviving universities, which included the seven ancient universities of the British Isles, twenty-two other Reformed (Protestant) universities in Switzerland, the Netherlands and Germany, and some sixty Roman Catholic universities. The Catholic institutions were more inclined toward teaching accepted doctrine than establishing new knowledge through original research, but were nonetheless home to individual scholars of great originality and importance.[7]

Most of the young men who undertook university-level philological study did so as part of a career plan aimed at secondary school teaching or a religious vocation.[8] In 1850 the choice of a university career was determined in France by the competitive examinations for entrance into the *École normale supérieure*, which had been hived off in 1845 from the original *École normale* so as to focus specifically on the training of teachers for universities and for another Napoleonic innovation, the *lycées*, a system of state-financed late secondary schools created in 1802 for boys who performed best in a competitive entrance exam. Entry into the *Normale sup'*, as the *École normale supérieure* was (and is) popularly known, was as close as one could get to a guarantee of a future teaching post, though that post might be in the *lycée* of a remote provincial town rather than in the university. In other countries, there was rarely such a guarantee before undertaking one's training.

Those preparing for a career in their country's military or imperial service attended schools set up particularly for them. Of all the imperial powers, France had the strongest 'assimilationist' policy, with only the French language used in administration, courts, schools and other institutions in its overseas territories.[9] The first request by a French naval officer for leave from service to undertake study at the *École des langues orientales* was made in 1887 by Léopold de Saussure (1866–1925), Ferdinand's younger brother, who had to persuade his superiors that learning Chinese would be a valuable preparation for his planned career in the administration of Indochina,[10] whereas in the British colonial service

[7] See Walter Rüegg, 'Themes', in *A History of the University in Europe,* iii. 3–31.

[8] Details of the social composition of student bodies across Europe can be found in Christophe Charle, 'Patterns', in *A History of the University in Europe,* iii. 33–80, and in Charle, *Histoire des universités*. On France in the Third Republic see Charle, *La République des universitaires (1870–1940)* (Paris, 1994). On the social origins of those teaching in universities, particularly in Germany, where the most detailed records were kept, see Matti Klinge, 'Teachers', in *A History of the University in Europe,* iii. 123–61.

[9] The classic study is Raymond F. Betts, *Assimilation and Association in French Colonial Theory, 1890–1914* (Lincoln, 1960). See also John E. Joseph, 'Language and "Psychological Race": Léopold de Saussure on French in Indochina', *Language and Communication* 20, 2000, 29–53.

[10] Raymond de Saussure, 'Léopold de Saussure (1866–1925)', *Isis*, 27 (1937), 286–305, 287.

it had been taken for granted since the late eighteenth century that the training of administrators should include the languages of India or wherever else they were going to be posted.[11]

While earning their crust teaching in secondary school, men and eventually women who had earned a *licence*, or the equivalent in countries other than France of a 'license' to teach, might undertake the original research necessary for a doctoral thesis. Those who were successful often continued as school teachers, in addition to which, in countries such as Germany and Switzerland, they might get an appointment as *Privatdozent* in a university, which was an official recognition of someone's capability to tutor university students, who would pay them directly.[12] In France they would first have to pass a further examination, the *agrégation*, to qualify to teach in a university, where they would receive a salary as an *agrégé*.

Some universities employed lecturers and demonstrators as assistants to professors; these too were few in number. The young doctors might also publish their thesis, and articles in specialist journals in their area, and take part in the meetings of academic societies. A very select few might have the chance to replace temporarily a professor seconded to administrative duties or, more rarely, granted research leave. When a chair fell vacant, an election was held among the other professors to fill it; in the prestigious universities, the young and not-so-young doctors might have to compete against men already holding chairs in less prestigious universities.

How an individual's acceptance to candidacy for a doctorate was handled, and what support, if any, they were given for writing the thesis, varied by country and institution. In general, aside from medical studies, it was assumed that whatever knowledge could be taught through lectures and reading would be acquired in the course of a bachelor's or other first university degree. Hence, someone undertaking a doctorate in the university where they had gained their *licence* or other first degree would proceed directly to the thesis, while auditing any relevant courses they had not already taken. However, the great centres of philological and linguistic study attracted doctoral students who had done their first degree elsewhere – or, in

[11] See Thomas R. Trautmann, *Languages and Nations: The Dravidian Proof in Colonial Madras* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 2006).

[12] In earlier times, and still in some universities in the mid-nineteenth century, students paid a fee to attend individual lectures, with the fee divided between the lecturer and the university. Professors received a salary, which tended to be low enough that they needed to supplement it with income from examination fees and extra tuition. Even in universities where the professorial lectures were open to the public free of charge, one of the reasons for the long survival of Latin as the language of lectures was that the professors could then offer paid tutorials in which they would explain the contents of the lecture in the vernacular. see Klinge, 'Teachers', 141.

some cases, had not even taken a first degree, as was the case with Ferdinand de Saussure.

Establishing Linguistics as a Field

The German universities led the way in organizing 'doctoral training' for students, in the form of seminars guided by a senior professor, where the candidates presented papers on particular topics and had them critiqued and queried. This model was exported to the USA with the founding of Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore in 1876, followed by the University of Chicago in 1890. It took considerably longer for anything comparable to be adopted in the UK.

In France, the *École Pratique des Hautes Études* had been established in 1868 in order to bring the German model of 'seminars' into French higher education. The 'Pratique' of its name signalled the intent for the students not to listen passively to professors' lectures but to *practice* their subjects while studying them.

> The Minister of Public Instruction, Victor Duruy, anxious to remedy the deplorable poverty of higher education, decided to establish, in Paris at least, something similar to the 'seminars' in which was delivered the 'familiar and direct' teaching that had been so fruitful across the Rhine. [...] In the Minister's mind the École 'should be in a close relationship with teaching in the Sorbonne and the Collège de France, and should complement the lectures given there with sessions in which the students, under the direction of tutors (*répétiteurs*), take the floor and present their own work, conceived according to a common plan and open to the criticism of all'.[13]

That was the design, but it does not appear to have taken hold. Duruy told Gabriel Monod after attending one of his seminars that it was very good, but not at all what he had been hoping for. In the view of one observer, Duruy's mistake had been to appoint serious young scholars to the drudgery of tutoring, and not to anticipate that they would do what scholars do in the classroom: teach.[14]

Germany was looked to as the model not just for organizing doctoral training, but also as the leading country in the study of language and

[13] Charles Bémont, 'Gabriel Monod', *École Pratique des Hautes Études, Section des sciences historiques et philologiques, Annuaire 1912–1913*, 1912, 5–41, 10, citing 'Mélanges publiés par la Section pour le dixième anniversaire de sa fondation', fasc. 35 de la Bibliothèque de l'École (1878), 1. Gabriel Monod (1844–1912), who had just returned from studies in Berlin and Göttingen, was among the first to be appointed as tutor in the historical section.

[14] Ibid, 11. For more on the teaching of linguistics in this period see Gabriel Bergounioux, 'Faire cours: L'enseignement de la linguistique au temps de Meillet et Saussure', *Langages*, 209 (2018), 19–34.

languages. In 1876 the manifesto of the *junggrammatische Richtung*, the Neogrammarian order, was published by two young lecturers, Hermann Osthoff (1847–1909) and Karl Brugmann (1849–1919).[15] It set out a programme for research on the historical development of languages that would be based on two seemingly simply principles, the mechanical (that is, neuro-muscular, unconscious and exceptionless) nature of sound change, and the (mental, semi-conscious) process of analogy whereby any apparent exceptions to mechanical sound change can be explained.[16] The simplicity of the programme gave it great appeal at a time when linguists were struggling to cope with the weight of all the diverse data gathered from ancient and living languages, and it had the added advantage of being interpretable in a way that fit with both the Darwinian theory of evolution and the dominant psychological paradigm of associationism, which preferred to locate knowledge in the neuro-muscular system as a whole rather than in some 'cerebral closet', and to recognize that the processes in which knowledge consists do not generally enter into conscious thought, except in the case of what would now be called cognitive dissonance.[17]

The success of the Neogrammarian order would not just cement the position of the University of Leipzig as the premiere centre in the world for linguistics and philology, but would establish in the academic and popular mind that linguistics was a *science*, with all the institutional prestige which that word carried. What kind of science – natural or historical – continued to be a matter of debate, notably between the leading Sanskritist of Britain, Friedrich Max Müller (1823–1900) of Oxford, and his American counterpart, William Dwight Whitney (1827–1894) of Yale, with Müller arguing for the natural side and Whitney for the historical. The two never met; their debates took place in separate lecture series and in print. In the 1860s, reports of their sniping at each other had helped to bring modern linguistics to the attention of a very broad international newspaper-reading public.

[15] Hermann Osthoff and Karl Brugmann, preface to *Morphologische Untersuchungen auf dem Gebiete der indogermanischen Sprachen* 1, (Leipzig, 1878), iii–xx. Brugmann reportedly drafted the preface single-handedly, though he is listed as second author—with his name spelled 'Brugman', as it would be for several more years until he, along with the rest of his family, added the extra n. The term 'Neogrammarian' had been hurled at Osthoff and Brugmann as a term of abuse by those who did not share their methodological scruples, so their embrace of it was somewhat light-hearted.

[16] On how the Neogrammarian approach fits into the broad sweep of the history of linguistics, see 'Nineteenth Century', Chapter 7 of John E. Joseph, *Language, Mind and Body: A Conceptual History* (Cambridge, 2018).

[17] 'Cerebral closet' is the disdainful term used by Alexander Bain (1818–1903), the principal figure in mid-nineteenth century associationism, in *The Senses and the Intellect* (London, 1855), 332.

The term *Linguistik* is first attested in German in the eighteenth century, then in French as *linguistique* (1812), but it took decades to catch on as the designation of an academic field. The earliest attestation I have found of the word *linguistics* in English is in an 1837 review article in *The North American Review*.[18] Most of the early attestations come from American publications, including the writings of Whitney, in the 1860s and 1870s.[19] In institutional terms, the *Société de Linguistique de Paris* was founded in 1864,[20] but university chairs in linguistics were slow to be established in France or any other country. The Linguistic Society of America was founded in 1924, almost seventy years after its French counterpart, and it would take another thirty-five years for the founding of the Linguistic Association of Great Britain in 1959. Linguistics was particularly slow to develop in countries such as the UK where language study remained strongly rooted in the older tradition of philology.

What distinguished linguistics from earlier approaches was no single criterion, but a constellation.[21] Unlike philology, it was not bound up with the interpretation of classical or medieval texts; unlike etymology, its principal concern was not the origin of particular words; unlike the *grammaire générale* tradition of seventeenth and eighteenth century France (later to be revived by Noam Chomsky), it was not linked to enquiries into logic; unlike the pedagogical grammar tradition it was not aimed directly at the teaching of the standard language or of classical or modern foreign languages. At the same time, the proponents of modern linguistics did not cut their ties with these more venerable enterprises, but instead asserted dominion over them, based on a claim of scientific authority. This they staked largely on redefining their object of study as the language conceived

[18] Anon., 'History of Navigation in the South Seas' (review), *North American Review*, 45/97 (1837), 361–90. Not much eludes the attentive eye of James Turner, but his *Philology: The Forgotten Origins of the Modern Humanities* (Princeton, 2014), 146, dates the first English attestation to 1839. The *Oxford English Dictionary* gives an 1840 citation for the noun *linguistic*, designating 'the science of languages', occurring in William Whewell, *The Philosophy of the Inductive Sciences, founded upon their history*, (London, 1840), I/cxiv; while its earliest citation for *linguistics* is from Webster's American dictionary of 1847, which is surprising, since dictionaries are meant to record, not create words. *Linguistics* also appeared in Ogilvie's *Imperial Dictionary* in 1855.

[19] See William Dwight Whitney, *Language and the Study of Language: Twelve Lectures on the Principles of Linguistic Science (*New York and London, 1867), and *The Life and Growth of Language: An Outline of Linguistic Science* (New York and London, 1875); Stephen G. Alter, *William Dwight Whitney and the Science of Language*, (Baltimore and London, 2005); John E. Joseph, *From Whitney to Chomsky: Essays in the History of American Linguistics* (Amsterdam and Philadelphia, 2002).

[20] Two earlier Sociétés de Linguistique had been founded, one in 1837 about which little is known, and a second in 1854, headed by Casimir Henricy and disbanded in 1860.

[21] A very full account can be found in Turner, *Philology*.

as a self-contained system, which they approached without value judgements about what aspects of it might be reckoned good or bad.[22]

Methodologically, modern linguistics was to be descriptive rather than prescriptive, and by the 1950s the consensus among its practitioners was that 'All languages are equally complex'.[23] This is the sort of dogmatic assertion that not only defies empirical investigation into its veracity, but would close investigation down altogether. Its rise becomes understandable when we look back to how commonly authors of accounts of 'exotic' languages from the sixteenth until the early twentieth century treated structures that differed from the familiar Indo-European ones as fundamentally illogical. Either the exotic structure appeared more economical than that of the European languages, in which case the language and its speakers were labelled as underdeveloped, or the structure codified some distinction which European grammars do not make, in which case the languages and their speakers were described as quaint at best, and at worst, wasteful of mental energy. Both positions served to characterize the non-European languages as primitive and inferior.[24]

The Müller-Whitney debate is a classic instance of the polarization between science and the human (subject/society) that Bruno Latour sees as defining the modern era.[25] Latour argues that modernism, antimodernism and postmodernism are all equally grounded in a 'Constitution' that took shape in the seventeenth century, whereby Nature and Society were separated, then gradually made into irreconciliable opposites. By the early nineteenth century this Constitution had become impervious to criticism. It undid the premodern incapacity to tamper with either nature or society, each being conceived as inexorably bound to the other at every point, under the authority of God. The moderns 'crossed out' God, allowing them to depict their Constitution as 'humanism'—but this produced an asymmetry, which Latour considers the true mark of the modern, and the source of its ultimately fatal contradictions.

[22] For every instance of usage purported to be bad, because illogical, a linguist will cite examples from a range of the world's languages in which the same structure is treated as perfectly logical. The double negative, for example, is scorned as illogical in English (*I don't have nothing*), but is the only way to form a negative sentence in Italian (*Non ho niente*). To challenge linguists on this would be to paint oneself into the pre-modernist corner of having to assert absurdly that Italians, as a people, are illogical.

[23] See John E. Joseph and Frederick J. Newmeyer, 'All Languages Are Equally Complex': The Rise and Fall of a Consensus', *Historiographia Linguistica*, 39/3 (2012), 341–68.

[24] See Matthew Lauzon, *Signs of Light: French and British Theories of Linguistic Communication, 1648–1789* (Ithaca, NY and London, 2010).

[25] Bruno Latour, *Nous n'avons jamais été modernes: Essai d'anthropologie symétrique* (Paris, 1991). English version, *We Have Never Been Modern*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge, MA, 1993).

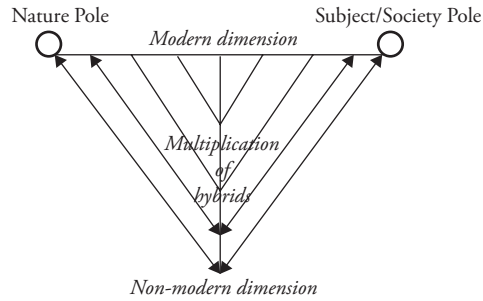

Figure 8.1 The modern 'Constitution' of knowledge according to Latour (1991), from John E. Joseph, *Language, Mind and Body: A Conceptual History* (Cambridge University Press, 2018), with permission.

Modernity is often defined in terms of humanism, either as a way of saluting the birth of 'man' or as a way of announcing his death. But this habit itself is modern, because it remains asymmetrical. It overlooks the simultaneous birth of 'nonhumanity'—things, or objects, or beasts—and the equally strange beginning of a crossed-out God, relegated to the sidelines. Modernity arises first from the conjoined creation of the human, the non-human and the crossed-out God, and then from the masking of their creation, while, underneath, hybrids continue to multiply as an effect of this separate treatment. The double separation is what we have to reconstruct: the separation between humans and nonhumans on the one hand, and between what happens above and what happens below, on the other.[26]

The human pole will be split between what Latour designates as Society and Subject. He directly addresses that split in other work, but here refers to Subject/Society as though they were conflatable. They are not, but his reader's willing suspension of disbelief is repaid with a grand narrative of modernism as the proliferation of 'hybrids' which mediate between the natural and the social. The Constitution denies the existence and even the possibility of such hybrids, being committed instead to 'purifying' the split. And yet, Latour maintains, the split, being artificial, has to be mediated. The Constitution thus ends up surreptitiously demanding the proliferation of hybrids it claims to forbid. Because we have never actually practiced the absolute separation which is preached, Latour says that we have never been modern. Hence the idea of a postmodernism is as absurd as the thought of returning to premodernism.

[26] Ibid, 13.

For Müller, the realization that language is a natural phenomenon was the great breakthrough that positioned linguistics at the centre of the academic universe. As understanding of language grew, it would, he believed, provide the keys to unlocking the secrets of the human mind and its evolution. A language was a living thing, an organism, that grew following the same laws as other organisms, such as plants. For Whitney, on the contrary, languages were human 'institutions'. Language had not grown organically out of the evolution of the vocal apparatus, as Müller thought; rather, the vocal apparatus was chosen, by a combination of chance and convenience – sign language could have developed equally well – and all languages contain elements created by haphazard accident, and ratified through an implicit democratic process among those in the community, who determine which creations are rejected and which retained.[27]

The naturalist position of Müller and his allies had been formed through a Latourian purification, in an attempt to position linguistics among the hard sciences as their prestige was now outstripping that of the law, theology and medicine faculties that had traditionally ruled the roost in universities.[28] Whitney, in response, was undertaking a hybridization, not denying that linguistics had natural aspects but arguing that they needed to be balanced with its institutional ones, which, when push comes to shove, have the upper hand.

The Müller-Whitney debate raised the profile not only of linguistics generally, but in particular of Oxford as the centre for linguistic study in Britain. Copenhagen was another centre, with a number of high profile Indo-Europeanists. Other great figures in the field – the Italian Graziado Ascoli (1829–1907), the Pole Jan Baudouin de Courtenay (1845–1929), the Russian Filip Fedorovich Fortunatov (1848–1914) – were scattered. In both the scholarly and the popular mind, linguistics was a German science, and Oxford its outpost.

The success of the Neogrammarian order had another strong impact, in that it brought to the fore a generation gap within philological and linguistic studies, with the younger generation perceived as leading the field forward into a scientific future. The older generation included some figures to whom the Neogrammarians looked for inspiration and guidance, along with many others who were dubious about the possibility of reducing all the complexity of language into regular laws, though these others were

[27] See Stephen G. Alter, *Darwinism and the Linguistic Image: Language, Race, and Natural Theology in the Nineteenth Century (*Baltimore and London, 1999); and *William Dwight Whitney* (cit. n. 19); Joseph, *From Whitney to Chomsky*, 20–7.

[28] On the 'naturalist' school in France, see Piet Desmet, *La linguistique naturaliste en France (1867–1922): Nature, origine et évolution du langage* (Leuven and Paris, 1996).

not averse to piggybacking onto the great international and interdisciplinary recognition of the Neogrammarians' success. In the case of Brugmann, he owed his initial prominence to the senior professor of Indo-European linguistics at Leipzig, Georg Curtius (1820–1885), who in 1876 made Brugmann co-editor of his journal *Studien zur griechischen und lateinischen Grammatik* (Studies on Greek and Latin grammar), known generally as *Curtius' Studien*. The first issue for which Brugmann shared editorial responsibility went to press while Curtius was away from Leipzig. Without consulting the senior co-editor, Brugmann decided to include an article of his own in the issue, in which he put forward a proposal about the Indo-European vowel system that caused a great stir and was hailed as revolutionary.[29] When Curtius saw the printed issue and read Brugmann's article for the first time, he was displeased, to put it mildly, and added a note at the end of the volume explaining that he had not had a chance to vet Brugmann's article. 'I must therefore leave to him alone the responsibility for his far-reaching conclusions', Curtius wrote – and after one further volume of the journal, he announced that it would cease publication.[30] The next year Curtius started up another journal, without inviting Brugmann to collaborate. The effect of this was not what Curtius intended: it fed what was for linguistics, as for many other fields, a sense of real excitement about postgraduate training – the perception that the old masters knew less than their young apprentices, and that doctoral seminars were where the cutting edge of the field was being defined and honed.

Saussure's Doctoral Studies

Ferdinand de Saussure arrived at the University of Leipzig to begin doctoral studies in October 1876, a month before his nineteenth birthday.[31] He had attended the University of Geneva for the preceding academic year, taking a wide range of courses, though deliberately avoiding the course in general linguistics, which did not have a good reputation. Instead he arranged an independent study of foundational works in comparative-historical linguistics with the *Privatdozent* Louis Morel (1851–1917), who had himself spent the year prior to that studying at Leipzig. The precocious Saussure began sending papers to the *Société de Linguistique de Paris*, where they were read out in meetings and published in the Société's journal; he

[29] Karl Brugmann, 'Nasalis sonans in der indo-germanische Ursprache', *Studien zur griechischen und lateinischen Grammatik*, 9 (1876), 287–338.

[30] See Holger Pedersen, *The Discovery of Language: Linguistic Science in the 19th Century*, transl. by John Webster Spargo (Cambridge, MA, 1931), 293.

[31] For an account of his life and work see John E. Joseph, *Saussure* (Oxford, 2012), where full references are provided for the information in the following pages.

thus already had publications forthcoming when he began his doctoral studies at Leipzig, something as unusual then as it would be now.[32]

Saussure's education had given him a firm grounding in Latin and Greek, and he had taught himself Sanskrit, with the help of a family friend. At Leipzig Saussure signed up for courses in a range of Indo-European languages: Lithuanian, Old Persian, Celtic; and he regularly attended the seminar in comparative Indo-European grammar given by the senior professor, Curtius, as well as courses in historical phonology and the history of linguistics. During that first semester, he gave two *Vorträge* (lectures or presentations) in Curtius's seminar, although he was not officially enrolled in it. These he was expected to present in German, though when it came to his doctoral thesis, no objection was raised to his writing it in French.[33]

The first semester went from November to February, the second March to July. The students were also invited, and expected, to accompany their lecturers and professors to a local pub one evening a week, for informal discussions; but Saussure stayed away, apparently feeling uncomfortable among them, partly because he was a foreigner, but mainly because he had grown up in an aristocratic milieu and found it hard to fit in with his teachers and most of his fellow students.

In his second year at Leipzig, 1877–78, it does not appear to have caused consternation among his teachers that he was not attending all his lectures. He later claimed to have attended none at all, but his notes of various courses have survived and suggest that he was actually rather assiduous. Still, he had hunkered down to write a long and intricate paper, not as part of his university studies, but with the intention of having it published. It ended up being so long that it had to appear as a book.[34] It was issued in December 1878. The title page says 'printed by B. G. Teubner', and the printing was paid for, at great expense, by Saussure's father. Not enough is documented as yet about scholarly editorial practices in this period, but it is doubtful that any publisher would have risked their capital on a highly technical linguistic study by a young student with no university degree.

[32] He sent in the first paper in April 1876, together with his letter applying for membership in the Société. Intended as proof of his worthiness to join, the paper was impressive enough not only for him to be made a member, but to be accepted for publication, appearing as 'Le suffixe –t–', *Mémoires de la Société de Linguistique de Paris*, 3/3 (1877), 197–209. Five additional papers by Saussure would appear in the 1877 volume, which is all the more remarkable given that he would have only some two dozen publications over his entire career.

[33] Saussure did not consider himself to be bilingual. He understood German without difficulty but was uncomfortably aware of his limitations in speaking and writing it.

[34] Ferdinand de Saussure, *Mémoire sur le système primitif des voyelles dans les langues indo-européennes* (Leipzig, 1879).

It made an immediate splash, as it proposed a radically new way of conceiving historical Indo-European phonology. It arguably also introduced the approach that in later decades would come to be called structuralism. Saussure wrote it because he was anxious to get his ideas into print before anyone else did. He was afraid that someone—perhaps Brugmann, the one lecturer with whom Saussure struck up a friendship, or Osthoff, Brugmann's collaborator—was following the same path as he was. In fact they were not. But for their part they felt, on reading the book, that he had appropriated certain ideas of theirs without proper citation. He sensed, exaggeratedly, that he had become *persona non grata* in Leipzig, and for his third year, 1878–9, he decamped to Berlin, where he undertook the research for his doctoral thesis, choosing to do it on a completely different area of linguistics.

That Saussure could have submitted his book on the Indo-European vowel system for his doctoral degree is implied in the reports filed by his examiners on the thesis that he eventually submitted (see Appendix), and indeed it was perceived as strange that he chose to undertake a new thesis on an obscure topic, when his book had aimed right at the heart of what linguists of the time were focussed on. The reason was that he had decided to obviate any possibility of the whispers of plagiarism being voiced in opposition to his doctoral award.

He was not assigned a supervisor for his thesis; there does not appear to have been a formal system for supervision, though most doctoral students would have been under the wing of a *Doktorvater*, a senior professor whose teaching had inspired them and who was inclined to take them on as protégés. The one requirement Saussure had to meet before undertaking the doctoral thesis was to pay a personal visit to every professor in the Leipzig faculty of philology, at home, in order to explain the plan for his thesis and get their approval. Unfortunately for our purposes, he had no difficulty – if he had, I might be able to report on how the process went when the doctoral plan met with objections. The one remarkable thing in Saussure's case occurred when one of the professors asked him whether he was related to the 'famous' Saussure; Ferdinand replied, 'Yes, I am his great-grandson', thinking that the professor meant Horace-Bénédict de Saussure (1740–1799), a great scientific name of the previous century. But in fact he meant the famous author of the recent book on the Indo-European vowel system.

Saussure stayed in Berlin from November 1878 to early April 1879. At the end of his stay he chanced to meet Whitney, who was visiting Germany and paid a call at the home of Heinrich Zimmer (1851–1910) during a tutorial session he was giving Saussure in Celtic languages. At the time Zimmer was also translating Whitney's *Sanskrit Grammar* into German.

Saussure returned to Geneva with his accumulated research notes from the five months of reading Sanskrit texts, and completed the thesis by the end of the year. He then went back to Leipzig to submit it for examination.

That made nine months of self-directed analysis and writing up—during which he decided to drop the third part of the thesis, the part that interested him most, in which he was to draw out theoretical issues concerning language and its evolution. The three-part thesis had been the plan approved by the professors of the faculty, but, being in Berlin, he could not – or perhaps would not—go back to them with a revised plan. He was aware of taking a risk in submitting just the first two parts for his doctorate. On 15 February 1880 the thesis was certified by Ernst Windisch as acceptable for oral defence, and on 17 February, Curtius, wrote his concurring report, admitting that he had to rely on Windisch for the correctness of the details contained in the thesis. Their reports are contained in the Appendix to this chapter.

The oral defence took place on 28 February. These were public events, and a cousin of Saussure's who attended would later remark that 'You can guess how he passed his examinations; had he not been so modest, the roles could have been reversed: the young examinee could have put his learned examiners' feet to the fire'.[35] The examiners unanimously awarded him a pass *summa cum laude* for the oral defence, in addition to the *egregia* for the written thesis.

We do not know what indication if any Saussure was given concerning the outcome on the day. That evening he treated Brugmann to dinner at one of the best restaurants in Leipzig, along with one of the two fellow doctoral students with whom Saussure had made friends. Brugmann, eager to mend fences with Saussure after their earlier rift, greatly appreciated the gesture, but then was surprised to find in succeeding years that Saussure remained cool toward him, politely declining an invitation to attend Brugmann's wedding the following year and, so far as we know, never seeing him again.

Saussure went home to Geneva, returning to Leipzig in April to receive his degree, and staying there through July doing revisions to the manuscript thesis before having it printed. As with his first book, the doctoral thesis was printed with Saussure paying the costs—which was the common practice at the time. There is no indication of a refereeing process. Saussure had not completed his revisions when he set off for Paris in the autumn, so

[35] 'Allocution de M. Édouard Favre, Président de la Société d'Histoire et d'Archéologie de Genève', in *Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913)*, assembled by Marie de Saussure (Geneva, 1915), 27–34, 30.

continued doing them there. Finally in April 1881 the book was in press with a publisher in Geneva, who issued it later that year.[36]

The PhD from Leipzig was Saussure's first university degree. He quickly converted it into a second one, submitting his thesis the Faculty of Letters of the University of Geneva for the conferral of the *docteur ès lettres*, granted him in 1881.[37] There was special provision for this for Genevese citizens who had completed a doctorate in a foreign university. But that was still not enough: Saussure decided to go to Paris to do another doctorate, in the very different French system, where one had to submit both a major and a minor thesis, with the minor one written in Latin. This would qualify him for teaching in a wide range of institutions in France or Geneva. He arrived in Paris in late November 1880, and attended a wide range of courses during that first winter semester, while also participating in meetings of the Société de Linguistique de Paris, and, again, revising his Leipzig doctoral thesis, before finally enrolling as a student in the *École des Hautes Études* on 15 February 1881.

Saussure's Teaching in Paris, Its Impact on Doctoral Training in Linguistics, and the Role of the Learned Societies

Given France's massive defeat in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–71, one might have expected the country's academic position to have weakened, while that of the newly-established Germany rose. In fact the universities of both countries entered a period of heightened prestige. The French Third Republic was determined to reassert the nation's cultural dominance, and strong support was given to study of the history of the French language and to historical linguistics generally. It was a language scholar, Ernest Renan (1823–1892), who reformulated the country's thinking about language and nationhood following the loss of Alsace to Germany.[38] Dozens of displaced Alsatians wound up at the *École des Hautes Études* in Paris studying the mediaeval Germanic languages from which their dialect descended. The courses in Gothic and Old High German were given by

[36] Ferdinand de Saussure, *De l'emploi du génitif absolu en sanscrit, thèse pour le doctorat présentée à la Faculté de Philosophie de l'Université de Leipzig* (Genève, 1881).

[37] This is recorded in the *Livre du recteur* (Rector's book) for the Université de Genève for that year.

[38] Ernest Renan, *Qu'est-ce qu'une nation? Conférence faite en Sorbonne, le 11 mars 1882* (Paris, 1882). On the enduring importance of this book see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 2nd ed. (London and New York, 1991) [1st ed. 1983]; John E. Joseph, '842, 1871 and All That: Alsace-Lorraine and the Transformations of Linguistic Nationalism', in Wendy Ayres-Bennett and Mari C. Jones (ed.), *The French Language and Questions of Identity* (London and Cambridge, MA, 2007), 44–52.

the Alsatian Michel Bréal (1832–1915). In 1879 Bréal was named *Inspecteur général de l'enseignement supérieur* (General Inspector of Higher Education) by the Third Republic. By late 1881, the burden of this national responsibility had become such that Bréal, having recognized Saussure's talents through their interactions at the Société de Linguistique de Paris, asked him to take over the teaching of his courses.

High administrative posts were the primary means by which senior professors in France could afford the upper-middle class lifestyle that their university salaries would not support, and the vacancies they created were the main stepping stones toward a professorial post for young scholars who had completed their doctorate. Saussure had a Leipzig doctorate and two published books, the second focussed on Sanskrit. Whether this was enough to qualify him to teach at university level Gothic and Old High German, languages which he had never formally studied, when he had no previous teaching experience whatever, might seem debatable—but no one was likely to question the choice of the General Inspector of Higher Education himself, Bréal.

A more ticklish problem was posed by the formal requirement imposed by the Third Republic for all those teaching in its universities to be French citizens, which Saussure was not. As a citizen of the Republic of Geneva, and of Switzerland, both proudly neutral toward other nations, he was disinclined to take the French citizenship to which he was also entitled, as his brother Léopold had done in order to become a French naval officer. In Léopold's case this had been accepted within the family and their wider Genevese circle on the grounds that, whatever else the Swiss might boast of having, a navy was not among them. For Ferdinand, however, this would have provoked discomfiting tensions: his father was a pragmatic Francophile, and his paternal uncle a committed neutralist, while his mother's family supported Germany. Bréal managed to get a dispensation for Saussure on the nationality requirement, but it would store up trouble for later years as Saussure's hopes grew for appointment to a chair, where no such dispensation would be possible.

Saussure threw himself into the teaching to the point that his plans to do a French doctorate fell by the wayside. He was in the French academic system now, and would remain there for ten years, seemingly on track eventually to succeed Bréal in his chair, though in the event Bréal would not retire for another twenty-plus years. Hence Saussure was never in a position to direct anyone's doctoral research in Paris. But the unique value of his teaching came to be widely recognized, and he exerted a strong influence on a generation of French doctoral candidates across various branches of Indo-European linguistics. In the 1850s linguistics had still been in the process of becoming distinct from the broader aims of

traditional philology. By the 1880s, the separation was clear, yet linguistics retained its philological orientation toward ancient texts. Hundreds of doctoral theses were written on Ancient Greek, Classical Persian and Sanskrit, with scant interest shown in Modern Greek or Persian, or contemporary languages of northern India. There were speakers of all these languages living in French and German cities, so it was not a matter of the difficulty and expense of travel to foreign climes. Even studies of Celtic languages were oriented toward old texts, despite the fact that a living Celtic language, Breton, was spoken within France.

Behind this orientation was a combination of tradition and ideology. Just as modern literature was a long time in gaining acceptance as a fit subject for university study, so too were modern languages, unless, like Arabic and Chinese, they had a 'classical' version, or were exotic enough to qualify for anthropological investigation. This takes us back to the Müller-Whitney debate and Latour's polarization, in as much as anthropology pointed toward the Nature pole, whereas the faculties of letters in which linguistics was housed saw themselves as the domain of the Subject, with Society as its adjunct.

Although, as explained earlier, courses at the *École Pratique des Hautes Études* were nominally seminars but actually teacher-led, Saussure's classroom method was seminar-like in the level of active responsibility turned over to the students. They were surprised to hear him insist that the way to understand a language was not to study the most authoritative grammars of it, but to sit down with texts written in the language and deduce the grammar for themselves; and, moreover, if the language had a living variety, to go out, listen to it and record texts for analysis.[39] Three of Saussure's Breton students, Joseph Loth (1847–1934), Émile Ernaut (1852–1938) and Georges Dottin (1863–1928), became leading lights in Celtic studies after being inspired by his teaching. Loth was preparing for the *agrégation* in grammar, and would begin teaching the following year at the renowned secondary school Collège Stanislas. In 1883 he would return to Brittany, becoming professor of Celtic languages and eventually Dean of the Faculty of Letters at Rennes. In 1884 he won the coveted Prix Volney for his Old Breton vocabulary,[40] and in 1910 he was appointed to a chair in the Collège de France. Nine of his works, dating from 1870 to 1909, were in Saussure's personal library, mostly offprints that Loth had sent to

[39] On Saussure's own attempt to do this in Lithuania in 1880, see John E. Joseph, 'Why Lithuanian Accentuation Mattered to Saussure', *Language and History*, 52/2 (2009), 182–98.

[40] Joseph Loth, *Vocabulaire vieux-breton, avec commentaire, contenant toutes les gloses du vieux-breton, gallois, cornique, armoricain connues, précédé d'une introduction sur la phonétique du vieux-breton et sur l'âge et la provenances des gloses* (Paris, 1884).

his old teacher.[41] Dottin published widely, became Dean of the Faculty of Letters at Rennes, which now has a Rue Georges Dottin in his honour. Ernault made his mark as a specialist in Old and Middle Breton at the Faculty of Letters in Poitiers, and, as 'Emil Ernod', was a leader of the Breton revival movement. A quarter-century later he sent Saussure a copy of his book on French orthography.[42] Ernault had already begun calling for study of the living Celtic dialects in the 1870s; Loth, within a few years of his studies with Saussure, took up the call in more strident terms. He directly criticized linguists for having done so little done on the existing dialects, preferring to rely on the very partial information supplied by medieval texts. Echoes of Saussure's lectures can be heard in an article Loth published in 1896: 'the exact and precise knowledge of the sounds of a still living language must be the very foundation of all research concerning the life and history of this language'.[43]

Saussure's most devoted student of all would prove to be Antoine Meillet (1866–1936), who first attended his courses in 1887, and went on to be Bréal's successor and the *doyen* of linguistics in France for decades to come. Meillet was studying the Armenian language, in the traditional way until, with Saussure's encouragement, he joined an excursion to Armenia in 1891 to research the living language. For more than thirty years after Saussure's death, Meillet would continue to point doctoral students in the directions Saussure had indicated: understanding language as a social fact, and one that needed to be understood synchronically, that is, as a self-contained system existing at a given point in time.[44] Even historical study

[41] See Daniele Gambarara, 'La bibliothèque de Ferdinand de Saussure', *Geneva*, n.s., 20 (1972), 319–68, 348–9.

[42] Ibid, 338.

[43] Joseph Loth, 'Alphabet phonétique', *Annales de Bretagne*, 11 (1896), 233–5, on 233.

[44] Meillet's influence would extend beyond linguistics proper: a notable example is the work of the American classicist Milman Parry (1902–1935), who did his PhD on Homeric meter under Meillet's supervision, and then, inspired by Meillet, travelled to the Balkans to record contemporary epic song. Parry's work would have a wide posthumous influence through his associate Albert B. Lord's (1912–1991) book *The Singer of Tales* (Cambridge, MA, 1960), and through Lord's Harvard colleague Eric Havelock (1903–1988), whose *Preface to Plato* (Oxford, 1963) mounted a serious challenge to traditional presumptions about the limitations of oral tradition. Those presumptions would be challenged even more strongly a few years later by Jacques Derrida (1930–2004), whose linguistic interests had been shaped in part by his reading of Saussure, in part by the lectures of Meillet's student Émile Benveniste (1902–1976): Derrida, *De la grammatologie* (Paris, 1967) (English version, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 2nd ed. (Baltimore, 1997)) and *L'Écriture et la différence* (Paris, 1967), English version *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago, 1978); and Émile Benveniste, *Dernières leçons, Collège de France, 1968 et 1969*, Jean-Claude Coquet and Irène Fenoglio (eds.) (Paris, 2012). English version, *Last Lectures: Collège de France, 1968 and 1969*, trans. John E. Joseph (Edinburgh, 1999).

needed to take this orientation: in Saussure's view, it was chasing phantoms insofar as it traced the evolution of individual sounds or forms through the centuries. It needed to be rethought as a 'diachronic' study, in which a whole language system as it existed at time A is compared with the whole system as it existed at time B. This was because, for Saussure, the individual elements of a language mean nothing in isolation; their value is generated by their difference from all the other elements in the system.

If the 'social' nature of language as professed by Saussure and Meillet suggests that they were located squarely at one end of Latour's polarization, its status as a 'system' in which everything connects to and supports everything else (*tout se tient*) pulls it in the opposite direction, making it well and truly a hybrid. The tension between these pulls would affect developments in linguistics through the twentieth century and beyond.

Saussure decided to return home to Geneva in 1891, for a constellation of reasons, one of which directly involves the disciplinary separation of philology and linguistics. The very unusual circumstance arose that two chairs of Sanskrit fell vacant in Paris within a short time, one of them through the accidental death of the still-youngish incumbent. The first chair went to a student of Saussure's who was seen as the rising star in Sanskrit studies. The second one came to be disputed between two men a few years older than Saussure, neither particularly distinguished as a Sanskritist nor exhibiting anything like Saussure's genius. Despite having written a hugely important first book on Indo-European languages and a second book specifically on Sanskrit syntax, Saussure was never considered for the chair – probably because he had never become a member of the *Société Asiatique* (Asiatic Society) or attending its meetings. His affiliation was strictly to the *Société de Linguistique*, to which he devoted great energy. Most Indo-Europeanists went to both; but the *Société de Linguistique* had broken off from the *Société Asiatique* in 1866 precisely because the older organization was 'philological' in scope, including linguistic study but putting it on a par with religious, literary and cultural topics. When the chairs of Sanskrit fell vacant, everyone's thoughts turned to which scholars of the *Société Asiatique* might fill them. There is ample evidence that Saussure was wounded by being passed over for men of inferior talent. When he was offered a professorship at the University of Geneva, he chose to designate it as the Chair of Sanskrit and Comparative Indo-European Linguistics, and to make Sanskrit his main teaching subject, although he had never taught it previously.

Saussure and General Linguistics

By the first decade of the twentieth century, linguistics was no longer perceived as the dynamic field of study that it had seemed in the years leading up to 1876 and even more so in the years following it. The historical study of Indo-European languages had settled into being a rather comfortable institutionalized discipline. Germany continued to be perceived as the great powerhouse of linguistics, a field understood in this period to mean the historical study of languages, until the First World War. The study of language was certainly progressing, and in new directions, but ones led by people whose institutional commitments were to other fields, sometimes jointly with linguistics, but in other cases quite separate from it. These included psychology and psychoanalysis, sociology, philosophy, aesthetics and anthropology.

Other things were happening at the time, in Geneva as well as in France and Germany, that were changing the division of labour in the linguistics-philology field. The study of phonetics had come into its own, in Paris with Father Pierre-Jean Rousselot (1846–1924), for whom a phonetics laboratory with equipment for recording and visually analysing speech was established in the university;[45] and in Oxford, with Henry Sweet (1845–1912), one of the models for Bernard Shaw's Professor Henry Higgins.[46] In Germany, another sort of laboratory gained great attention: Wilhelm Wundt's (1832–1920) laboratory for psychological research, including into language. At the same time Saussure was hired at Geneva, so was Théodore Flournoy (1854–1920), who had done his doctorate in Germany under Wundt and was provided with a lab similar to Wundt's at Geneva. Saussure himself never directed a doctoral student: when one of his students or colleagues wanted to undertake doctoral studies in linguistics, he helped to arrange their studies at a French or German university; and if it was on the mechanisms of language generally, as opposed to the historical study of languages, it would be done in the psychology faculty. Meanwhile, in France, Meillet had become the principal linguist on Émile Durkheim's (1858–1917) team for the *Année sociologique*, where psychology was the crux of the famous debate between Durkheim and Gabriel de Tarde (1843–1904) about sociological method, which Durkheim won by default when the psychologically-inclined Tarde died in 1904.

[45] See Haun Saussy, *The Ethnography of Rhythm: Orality and its Technologies* (New York, 2016).

[46] See Beverley Collins, 'Sweet, Jones, and Bernard Shaw', *Bulletin of the Henry Sweet Society for the History of Linguistic Ideas*, 9 (1987), 2–7.

In Geneva, the course in general linguistics that Saussure had avoided as a student fell upon him to teach. In the three goes he had at giving it between 1907 and 1911, Saussure—all of whose published work was historical in nature—famously articulated the need for synchronic study, as the study of a language system at a given point in time, which would be the starting point for a reconceived diachronic linguistics, that comparison of synchronic states of whole systems intended to replace the atomistic historical linguistics at which the German universities excelled. After the War, Saussure's call would gradually be put into practice in various universities across Eastern and Western Europe. In Britain and the USA, synchronic study grew in tandem with anthropology. In Germany, things took a different course, with the rise of Neo-Idealism in linguistics,[47] although historical study in the Neogrammarian vein continued to be carried on.

Saussure saw none of these developments, having died in 1913, believing that he had squandered all his early promise and was quite forgotten. When two of his colleagues gathered his and his students' notes to assemble the book they published in 1916 as the *Cours de linguistique générale* (Course in General Linguistics),[48] they did more than produce a textbook: they completed, or nearly completed, the break with philology that had begun a century before, and laid the ground for a modern disciplinary identity that ultimately reunited the various directions of enquiry that had been parcelled out to adjacent fields, and that continues to, maybe not thrive, but survive, a century on.

The story of doctoral training in linguistics after 1914 is generally one of continuity with the preceding period, apart from how the reorientation from classical to living languages, in tandem with the anthropological turn, resulted in fieldwork and other forms of empirical research becoming the expectation rather than the exception. The basic structure of training through doctoral seminars, followed by the supervised writing of a monographic thesis, has remained intact until recently, when the submission of a thesis structured as journal articles (published or potentially publishable, and in some cases co-authored) rather than as a single-thread monograph, has become acceptable and indeed may soon be the norm.

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[47] See John E. Joseph, 'Saussure: The Accidental Father of Structuralism', *Times Literary Supplement*, Footnotes to Plato (online series), 22 Jan. 2019, https://www.the-tls.co.uk/articles/public/ferdinand-de-saussure-accidental-father-structuralism/.

[48] Ferdinand de Saussure, *Cours de linguistique générale*, Charles Bally and Albert Sechehaye with the assistance of Albert Riedlinger (eds.), (Lausanne and Paris, 1916). (2nd ed. 1922, subsequent eds. essentially unchanged.) Critical ed. by Rudolf Engler, *Ferdinand de Saussure, Cours de linguistique générale, édition critique*, i, 1968; ii, fascicule 4, 1974. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz. English version, *Course in general linguistics*, trans. Wade Baskin (New York, 1959); another by Roy Harris, London: Duckworth, (LaSalle, IL, 1983).

Appendix: Examiners' Reports on Saussure's PhD Thesis (my translation: JEJ)

Ernst Windisch, 15 Feb. 1880:

Mr F. de Saussure has already proved his brilliant scientific talent through other work, particularly his book *Mémoire sur le système primitif des voyelles dans les langues indo-européennes* (1879), published by Teubner, which here goes completely unmentioned. In the present treatise he shows again, with reference to another area, with what sharpness he is able to grasp scientific questions, and with what clarity he is able to present them. His past productions were focussed on the area of comparative phonology, but he has preferred to submit as his dissertation the discussion of an interesting syntactic phenomenon of Sanskrit, on which the position he took in the earlier area can in no way be applied. The genitive absolute construction in Sanskrit has never before been the subject of a specialized treatment, neither to what extent it occurs, nor how far its use agrees with what Panini noted concerning its meaning. The rich collection of examples of these constructions, (over 400, demonstrated from p. 46 on in very useful applications, by which the formal use of this idiom jumps immediately to the eyes), which actually are rather rare, the fine manner in which is brought to light what really matters, and on which the characteristic of the genitive absolute vis-à-vis the usual locative absolute and the variation of its meaning within certain limits depends, all this one may regard as a pure profit. One misses reluctantly the 3rd Part, which is to treat the origin of the genitive absolute, but still the treatise is in itself final and extensive enough. I found only a very few details to remark upon. Most quotations would not require translation, since they are taken predominantly from the relatively easy epic literature, and in more difficult places the author always communicates what is necessary for understanding along with his interpretation, and here one can occasionally be of a different opinion. I take the liberty to propose the following:

1) That Mr de Saussure be certified for oral examination on the basis of this paper, and

   that this thesis be awarded the mention of *egregia*.[49]

[49] Ernst Windisch, 'Report on doctoral dissertation of Ferdinand de Saussure, University of Leipzig', 15 February 1880, in Paola Villani, 'Documenti saussuriani conservati a Lipsia e a Berlino', *Cahiers Ferdinand de Saussure,* 44 (1990), 3–33, 10–11.

Georg Curtius, 17 Feb. 1880:

For the correctness and sufficiency of the facts here demonstrated about the usage of the Indic languages I must defer to colleague Windisch alone. But in regard to clarity of presentation, the clear arrangement and the perfection with which the crucial points are discussed, I can attach myself with full conviction to his laudatory judgement. It is however regrettable that the projected third part on the origin of the construction has not been executed. This would surely have a high interest for comparative syntax. However what was required is splendid, and when one adds in de Saussure's other writings, one is astonished at the gift, the knowledge and the industry of this young man of just 23 years, who from pure love for science—he seems to live in brilliant financial circumstances—has delved into such problems in such early years with so much success. An oral examination is actually redundant in this case. However I would like to request no precedent for setting it aside and am convinced that the Candidate himself would much rather go through the regular course.

Thus likewise for permission and the mention of *egregia*.[50]

[50] Georg Curtius, 'Report on doctoral dissertation of Ferdinand de Saussure, University of Leipzig,' 17 February 1880, in Villani (cit. n. 49), 11. In fact Saussure's twenty-third birthday would not be for another nine months, and while his financial circumstances may have appeared brilliant to someone who had to get by on a professorial salary and such accompanying emoluments as he could arrange, Saussure's father had nearly ruined himself with risky investments, and his children were on very modest allowances.