

## Ferdinand de Saussure. USSR. 1950...

Ekaterina Velmezova<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract.** During the linguistic discussion organized in the Soviet newspaper *Pravda* in 1950, Ferdinand de Saussure was mentioned only a few times, but the corresponding references are important from the point of view of both the opinions about Saussure that were prevalent in Soviet linguistics before the discussion, and in light of its evolution afterwards. In 1950, both a supporter and an opponent of Marrist linguistics, Ivan Meschaninov and Arnold Chikobava respectively, unconditionally agreed on at least one thing: namely, that the theories of Saussure were, from their point(s) of view, unacceptable for “progressive” Soviet linguistics. This criticism of Saussure shows the significant shift made by Soviet humanities in the middle of the last century over the course of just a few years: in the late 1950s, it was the “revision” of the main theses of the criticism of Saussure that made possible the (relative) triumph of structuralism, which finally took place in the Soviet Union in the 1960s.

**Keywords:** Ferdinand de Saussure; history of Soviet linguistics; structuralism and semiotics; Marrism; linguistic discussion of 1950 in the USSR

The year 1950 was a turning point in the history of Soviet linguistics. The linguistic discussion organized (as it became known at the time, on the initiative of Stalin himself) in the Soviet newspaper *Pravda*, radically changed the situation in Soviet humanities: up until then, the “New Theory of Language” elaborated by Nikolaj Marr (1864/1865–1934) had been dominant in Soviet linguistics; after Stalin’s criti-

---

<sup>1</sup> Université de Lausanne, Centre de linguistique et des sciences du langage, Quartier UNIL-Chamberonne, Anthropole, CH-1015, Lausanne, Switzerland; e-mail: ekaterina.velmezova@unil.ch; University of Tartu, Faculty of Arts and Humanities, Juhan Liivi 4–202, 50409 Tartu, Estonia; e-mail: ekaterina.velmezova@ut.ee.

I presented the main theses of this article at the international conference “Pollen/Blütenstaub/Pyl’tsa. Russian culture and its interlocutors in global cultural space (in honour of Boris M. Gasparov)”, organized in St. Petersburg at the National Research University Higher School of Economics and held online in December 2021. I am grateful to Boris Gasparov for his valuable comments expressed during the discussion at the conference, as well as during the discussions at the doctoral school “Le structuralisme en linguistique et dans les sciences du langage”, organized by the universities of Lausanne and Bern and held online in early October 2021.

cism addressed at Marrism, however, a return to this doctrine became impossible, dividing the history of the humanities in the USSR into a “before” and an “after” 1950. Subsequently, it became possible in the USSR to organize discussions about structuralism, the founder of which is sometimes considered to be Ferdinand de Saussure (see Velmezova 2014: 372ff.). In this sense, the 1950 discussion anticipated the (relative) triumph of Saussure and of the *Course in General Linguistics* that followed the discussion in the linguistics of the USSR.<sup>2</sup>

But how exactly did the participants in the 1950 linguistic discussion refer to Saussure and to his intellectual legacy?<sup>3</sup> And how exactly could this affect the further development of Soviet humanities – leading, in particular, to the formation of semiotics in the USSR in the 1960s (in particular, within the framework of the Moscow-Tartu School of Semiotics)?<sup>4</sup> The discussion began in *Pravda* on 9 May 1950 in order to address the supposed “unsatisfactory state” (Ot redaktsii 1950) of Soviet linguistics. After the opening of the discussion on 9 May (a Tuesday), the newspaper published articles every subsequent Tuesday by both supporters and opponents of Marr’s “New Theory of Language”, as well as articles written in attempt to reconcile Marrism with the so-called “traditional linguistics”. Stalin himself put an end to the discussion, by sharply criticizing Marrism, on 20 June.

It may seem paradoxical, but with all the obvious interest it generated, the linguistic discussion of 1950 as such has not yet been studied well enough. At present, this linguistic discussion is most often reduced to a “dispute” between Marr and Stalin. Other participants in the discussion seem to be forgotten: their texts were (and still are) much less frequently studied and quoted (an exception to the rule, which occurs more often than others, is the interest regularly expressed in the Georgian linguist Arnold Chikobava [1898–1985], whose explicitly anti-Marrist article opened the discussion in *Pravda* on 9 May).<sup>5</sup> However, the points of view of the other participants in the discussion are no less interesting and, as a rule, are not reducible to unambiguous judgments: the Marrists recognized some shortcomings of the “New Theory of Language”; their opponents did not always agree with each other on everything and could not deny a number of Marr’s academic

<sup>2</sup> On this point see Chapter 6 in Velmezova 2014 and Velmezova 2018a.

<sup>3</sup> Concerning the topic “Marr and Saussure”, see Gasparov 2021; on general trends in the perception of Saussure’s theories in the USSR during the first half of the past century, see Ivanova 2016.

<sup>4</sup> In the context of the interest of Soviet semioticians – participants of the Moscow-Tartu School – in this discussion, see for example the recent study by Trunin (2020).

<sup>5</sup> As an exception to this general tendency, it is worth pointing out the well-known book on Marr and Marrism by Vladimir Alpatov (1991: 168–190); see also Alpatov 2021 on the 1950 discussion in the context of the general situation in Soviet linguistics at that time.

achievements. Finally, some of the participants of the discussion tried to take a so-to-say intermediate, “neutral” position, to a certain extent moving closer both to the Marrists as well as their opponents.

From 9 May to 20 June 1950, the following articles were published in *Pravda* (publications continued after 20 June as well, but the discussion ended *de facto* with Stalin’s article on 20 June):

9 May (*Pravda*, № 129):

- A. S. Chikobava “*O nekotoryh voprosah sovetskogo yazykoznaniya*” [“On some questions of Soviet linguistics”], pp. 3–5

16 May (*Pravda*, № 136):

- I. I. Meschaninov “*Za tvorcheskoe razvitie naslediya akademika N. Ya. Marra*” [“For the creative development of the heritage of academician N. Ya. Marr”], pp. 3–4

23 May (*Pravda*, № 143):

- N. S. Chemodanov “*Puti razvitiya sovetskogo yazykoznaniya*” [“Ways of development of Soviet linguistics”], p. 3
- B. A. Serebrennikov “*Ob issledovatel’skikh priemah N. Ya. Marra*” [“On N. Ya. Marr’s research methods”], pp. 3–4
- G. D. Sanzheev “*Libo vpered, libo nazad*” [“Either forward or backward”], p. 4

30 May (*Pravda*, № 150):

- F. P. Filin “*Protiv zastoya, za razvitie sovetskogo yazykoznaniya*” [“Against stagnation, for the development of Soviet linguistics”], p. 3
- G. A. Kapantsyan “*O nekotoryh obshchelingvisticheskikh polozheniyah N. Marra*” [“On some general linguistic theses of N. Marr”], pp. 3–4
- A. I. Popov “*Nazrevshie voprosy sovetskogo yazykoznaniya*” [“Topical issues in Soviet linguistics”], p. 4

6 June (*Pravda*, № 157):

- V. V. Vinogradov “*Razvivat’ sovetskoe yazykoznanie na osnove marksistsko-leninskoy teorii*” [“Developing Soviet linguistics on the basis of Marxist-Leninist theory”], pp. 3–4

13 June (*Pravda*, № 164):

- L. A. Bulahovskij “*Na putyah materialisticheskogo yazykoznaniya*” [“On the paths of materialistic linguistics”], p. 3

- S. D. Nikiforov “*Istoriya russkogo yazyka i teoriya N. Ya. Marra*” [“The history of the Russian language and N. Ya. Marr’s theory”], p. 4
- V. D. Kudryavtsev “*K voprosu o klassovosti yazyka*” [“On the question of the class nature of language”], p. 4

20 June (*Pravda*, № 171):

- I. V. Stalin “*Otnositel’no marksizma v yazykoznanii*” [“About Marxism in linguistics”], pp. 3–4
- P. Ya. Chernyh “*K kritike nekotoryh polozhenij ‘novogo ucheniya o yazyke*” [“To the criticism of some theses of the ‘new theory of language’”], p. 4<sup>6</sup>

Ferdinand de Saussure is mentioned only a few times by these linguists, but these references are very important from the point of view of both the opinions about Saussure that were prevalent in Soviet linguistics before the discussion, and in light of its evolution afterwards.

Saussure’s name was mentioned only four times in the discussion: twice in the article written by the anti-Marrist Arnold Chikobava published on 9 May, and also twice in the subsequent article by Ivan Meschaninov, a follower and student of Marr, published on 16 May. In addition, the same article by Meschaninov mentions the *Course in General Linguistics* published under the name of Saussure (as for the majority of Soviet linguists at the time, and linguists worldwide, there was an established equivalence between Saussure and this famous work published under his name). Thus only two out of the fourteen authors of the articles published in *Pravda* as a part of the discussion before Stalin’s intervention on 20 June mentioned Saussure and this occurred in only two articles. While this is not much, the fact that he was referenced at all seems remarkable. The fact is that the articles by Chikobava and Meschaninov were published by *Pravda* at the very beginning of the discussion when it was completely impossible as yet to predict its outcome and when both sides were clearly sincere in believing in the possibility of their point of view gaining the upper hand – hence their efforts to present their arguments as clearly as possible.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> As can be seen, among the participants in the discussion there were some researchers whose names are widely known even now (for example, Ivan Ivanovich Meschaninov [1883–1967] and Viktor Vladimirovich Vinogradov [1894/1895–1969]), and some who are much less well known today.

<sup>7</sup> In general, this spirit of uncertainty about the outcome of the discussion would continue later; however, at the very beginning of the discussion the result was not certain for the majority of its participants.

In what contexts was Saussure's name mentioned in the linguistic discussion of 1950? In order to be opponents on certain issues, the corresponding participants needed to have quite a lot in common in their views and judgments. In this particular case, both a supporter and an opponent of Marrist linguistics, Meschaninov and Chikobava respectively, adhered to diametrically opposed views on how exactly Soviet linguistics should develop, yet agreed unconditionally on at least one thing: namely, that the theories of Ferdinand de Saussure were, from their point(s) of view, unacceptable for "progressive" Soviet linguistics. Therefore, the name of Saussure always appears in an exclusively critical context.

In particular, in the article by Chikobava that opened the discussion, the connotations of Saussure's name were purely negative. At the very end of this article, Saussure's theories were declared to belong to the "bourgeois" Western linguistics, which was opposed to Soviet language science:

The facts of the history of languages should be illuminated by the method of materialistic dialectics; this is the only method of Soviet science in general, and of linguistics in particular. Only such a history of languages will be truly scientific. The Soviet history of language, the materialistic history of language, is contrasted with any other history of language, explained idealistically – be it Vossler's understanding, according to which the cause of change is the spirit [*duh*], be it the positivist interpretation, when the psychological sociology of Durkheim acts as the basis of linguistics (Meillet), or when linguistics is declared a part of social psychology (Saussure). (Chikobava 1950: 5)

Marr, in the opinion of Chikobava, was no good as a scientist, partly because he could not formulate a real criticism of Saussure:

Marr's Japhetic theory [as the Marrist "New Theory of Language" is sometimes referred to, E. V.] does not provide a genuine criticism of the fundamental foundations of idealistic linguistics. Declaratively taking up arms against idealism in general, Marr the academician does not say a word about psychologism – about this main source of idealism in the most influential currents of the Indo-European studies (the Neogrammarian direction – Paul, French sociologism – Saussure, Meillet). Vossler's militant idealism remains completely unnoticed. Neither the question of formalism in grammar nor that of the means of overcoming it are at all touched upon. As a matter of fact, there is no real struggle against particular idealistic currents in the Japhetic theory of Marr the academician. This is understandable, since according to Marr's Japhetic theory the struggle is waged in the name of elemental analysis,<sup>8</sup> in the name of stadial classification, and since Marr

---

<sup>8</sup> One of Marr's aims was to discover, in all the words of every language, the traces of four primitive "elements" which, according to him, gave birth to the human languages in general.

the academician himself could not rise to the correct understanding of Marxism-Leninism. (Chikobava 1950: 5)

Here it is interesting to pay attention to the word ‘formalism’: “formalism in grammar and [...] the means of overcoming it.” Criticism of “Saussure the formalist” (as he was then called) was accompanied by the 1933 publication in the USSR of the *Course in General Linguistics* (Saussure 1933). In the comments to this book written by the first female professor of linguistics in the USSR, Rosaliya Osipovna Shor (1894–1939) (Shor 1933), in its introduction written by Dmitriy Nikolaevich Vvedenskij (1890–1968) (Vvedenskij 1933), as well as in other works published at the time, Saussure was often blamed precisely for “formalism”. In this context, the word referred to a number of parameters that opposed the *Course in General Linguistics* to the more “advanced” (as seen at that time) Soviet linguistics. Namely, it was the question of the Saussurian concept of a negatively – “formally” – defined *value* (Fr. *valeur*), which would later be used as a basis for a number of semiotic theories, as well as the question of related postulates about the separation of language from thought, from the history of material culture and social basis, which led to Saussure’s lack of interest in the study of historical semantics.<sup>9</sup>

Therefore, the attitude towards Saussure “the formalist” and – maybe to an even greater extent – the peculiarities of the public expression of this attitude became a kind of litmus test in the USSR of the 1950s that determined the degree of “Sovietness” of certain linguistic theories. That is, the “correct” criticism of Saussure in the works of Soviet linguists became a kind of a “test for Sovietness”. This is how the topic “Saussure and Soviet Linguistics” was presented in Chikobava’s article – of course, this topic was secondary, or even tertiary, in relation to the main objective of Chikobava’s text: to elaborate a criticism of Nikolaj Marr’s theories.

However, the same idea – according to which a Soviet linguist is made truly Soviet only by having convincingly criticized and confronted Saussure – is also reproduced in the article written by Chikobava’s opponent and Marr’s supporter Ivan Meschaninov. Marr’s theories were believed to be correct precisely because they were opposed to Saussure’s theories, thus entering into confrontation with them:

The language form, says Marr, cannot be understood without taking into account its content, its social significance. Neither words nor grammatical forms appear by themselves, since language is created by the social environment and is conditioned

<sup>9</sup> See Velmezova 2018b. Cf. also the review, by Georgij Danilov, of the *Course in General Linguistics* published in Russian: Danilov 1933 (French translation: Danilov 2016[1934]), as well as, unfortunately, an incompletely preserved review by M. M. Koenigsberg, written ten years earlier, in 1923: [Kenigsberg] 2016.

by it in its changes. In this way, the basic thesis of the leading figure of bourgeois linguistics – Ferdinand de Saussure, who sharply opposes the external linguistics to the internal one – is still fundamentally rejected today. This division is typical of formal linguistics.<sup>10</sup> Questions about how language arose, how and by whom it develops (external linguistics), are not of interest to the bourgeois scientist. For a Soviet linguist, who recognizes that language is the most important means of communication, an instrument of development and struggle, such an approach to language is absolutely unacceptable. The merit of Marr is that he was the first among linguists to educate his students and followers in this critical attitude to the outdated views of the foreign science. (Meschaninov 1950: 3)

As Meschaninov would have it, Chikobava, on the contrary, as an opponent of the “New Theory of Language,” revealed his “bourgeois essence” by the fact that he was in many ways close to Saussure:

Marr, putting forward a social basis in the formation and development of languages, approaching language as a real consciousness, categorically objects to the sign theory in linguistics, while Chikobava, even disregarding Lenin’s criticism of the sign theory, completely adheres to it. He recognizes that language is a system of signs used by a certain linguistic community as a means of communication (Vol. II, p. 144). Here Chikobava approaches not Marr, but the founder of the new bourgeois doctrine of language, de Saussure, almost repeating his words: “language, as we define it, is a homogenous phenomenon as to its nature: it is a system of signs...”, “language is a system of signs...” (“Kurs obschej lingvistiki”, Russian translation, 1933, p. 39, 40). (Meschaninov 1950: 4)

Here Meschaninov mentions “sign theory”. In fact, in his 1908 work *Materialism and Empirio-criticism* Lenin (1870–1924) criticized the supporters of Ernst Mach (1838–1916) for their adherence to the theory according to which human sensations and representations are not copies (images or representations) of reality (that is, of actually existing objects and natural processes), but rather conventional signs, symbols, “hieroglyphs”.<sup>11</sup> If, in this regard, we return to the criticism of Saussure’s theories, then the sign – in this particular case, the linguistic sign – is inherently conventional (as is articulated in the *Course in General Linguistics*): its “value” is determined exclusively negatively, by its relation to other signs. This was precisely the basis of the corresponding criticism of Saussure in the USSR.

As mentioned above, after the discussion Marrism lost its hegemonic position in the USSR; however, the discussion hardly exerted any influence on the attitude towards Saussure, criticized during the discussion for his “formalism” and for the

<sup>10</sup> Note that Saussure is again blamed for his “formalism”.

<sup>11</sup> Lenin 1984[1909]. See also Patrick Sériot’s article published in this issue (Sériot 2022).

idea of the conventionality of signs in the context of a negative understanding of the concept of value. On the contrary, everything changed after Stalin's death in 1953, as well as after the 20th Congress of the Communist Party in 1956, which made possible the arrival of structuralist theories in the Soviet Union. They came to the USSR with a considerable delay: in the West, many structuralist currents were, by this time, almost beginning to decline, giving way to new trends, in particular to generativism. Structuralism (which at first, in the USSR, was not strictly differentiated from semiotics as one can see, for example, in the early works of Juri Lotman) was largely based on the idea of the conventionality and the arbitrariness of linguistic signs (at least, of the majority of linguistic signs), which was directly associated with a negative understanding of the concept of "value".

The criticism of Saussure in the 1950 discussion by both supporters and opponents of the "New Theory of Language" shows a significant shift in Soviet humanities in the middle of the last century over the course of just a few years: in the late 1950s, it was the "revision" of the main theses of the criticism of Saussure that made possible the triumph of structuralism,<sup>12</sup> which finally took place in the Soviet Union in the 1960s, and thanks to which the Moscow-Tartu semiotic school was ultimately formed. Paradoxically, Moscow-Tartu semiotics was not only directly related to structuralism, but to some extent also to the current of semiotics which reflected the holistic approach inherent in Marrism.<sup>13</sup> This topic, however, merits a separate study of its own.

## References

- Alpatov, Vladimir Mihajlovich 1991. *Istoriya odnogo mifa. Marr i marrizm*. Moscow: Nauka, Glavnaya redaktsiya vostochnoj literatury.
- Alpatov, Vladimir 2020. La linguistique soviétique en 1950. In: Vel'mezova, Ekaterina (sost. i red.)/Velmezova, Ekaterina (éd.), *Diskussiya po voprosam yazykoznaniya 1950 goda: 70 let spustya/La discussion linguistique de 1950: 70 ans après* (Epistemologica et historiographica linguistica Lausannensia 2), 19–73.
- Chikobava, Arnold Stepanovich 1950. O nekotoryh voprosah sovetskogo yazykoznaniya. *Pravda* 9.05.1950: 3–5.
- Danilov, Georgij Konstantinovich 1934. Yazykovedy Zapada [F. Sosyur. Kurs obschej lingvistiki. Pervod A. Suhotina pod red. i s primech. R. Shor. Vvodnaya stat'ya N. Vvedenskogo. Sotsekgiz. M(oscow) 1934]. *Za kommunisticheskoe prosveschenie* 26.09.1934, 222: 3.

<sup>12</sup> Although, as it is now becoming clear, this triumph was rather relative: many Soviet linguists never accepted structuralist theories.

<sup>13</sup> See Chapter 4 in Part 3 of Velmezova 2007.

- Danilov, Georgij 2016[1934]. Les linguistes d'Occident (compte rendu de l'édition russe [1933] du *Cours de linguistique générale* de F. de Saussure). In: Velmezova, Ekaterina; Moret, Sébastien (éds), *Rozalija Šor (1894–1939) et son environnement académique et culturel* (Cahiers de l'ILSL 47), 243–262.
- Gasparov, Boris Mihajlovich 2021. Marr i Sosyur: sto let spustya. *Voprosy yazykoznaniya* 1: 104–120. <https://doi.org/10.31857/0373-658X.2021.1.104-120>
- Ivanova, Irina 2016. F. de Saussure lu par les linguistes soviétiques des années 1920–1930. In: Velmezova, Ekaterina; Moret, Sébastien (éds), *Rozalija Šor (1894–1939) et son environnement académique et culturel* (Cahiers de l'ILSL 47), 243–262.
- [Kenigsberg, Maksim Maksimovich] 2016. Le premier compte rendu russe du *Cours de linguistique générale* de F. de Saussure. In: Velmezova, Ekaterina; Moret, Sébastien (éds), *Rozalija Šor (1894–1939) et son environnement académique et culturel* (Cahiers de l'ILSL 47), 313–317.
- Lenin, Vladimir Il'ich 1984[1909]. *Materializm i empiriokrititsizm. Kriticheskie zametki ob odnoj reaktsionnoj filosofii*. Moscow: Politizdat.
- Meschaninov, Ivan Ivanovich 1950. Za tvorcheskoe razvitie naslediya akademika N. Ya. Marra. *Pravda* 16.05.1950: 3–4.
- Ot redaktsii, 1950. Ot redaktsii. *Pravda* 9.05.1950: 3.
- Saussure, Ferdinand de 1933 = Sosyur, Ferdinand de, *Kurs obschej lingvistiki*. Moscow: OGIZ, SOTSEKGIZ.
- Sériot, Patrick 2022. Is language a system of signs? Lenin, Saussure and the theory of hieroglyphics. *Sign Systems Studies* 50(1): 143–162. <https://doi.org/10.12697/SSS.2022.50.1.08>
- Shor, Rozalija Osipovna 1933. Primechaniya. In: Sosyur, Ferdinand de, *Kurs obschej lingvistiki*. Moscow: OGIZ, SOTSEKGIZ, 208–260.
- Trunin, Mihail 2020. Jurij Lotman à propos du dialecte de Kursk-Orel: aux origines de la célèbre faute du Staline-linguiste. In: Velmezova, Ekaterina (sost. i red.)/Velmezova, Ekaterina (éd.), *Diskussiya po voprosam yazykoznaniya 1950 goda: 70 let spustya/La discussion linguistique de 1950: 70 ans après* (Epistemologica et historiographica linguistica Lausannensia 2), 109–117.
- Velmezova, Ekaterina 2007. *Les lois du sens: la sémantique marriste*. Berne: Peter Lang.
- Velmezova, Ekaterina 2018a. Le triomphe du structuralisme et le triomphe du “Cours de linguistique générale” en URSS dans les années 1950–1960. In: Bruno, Marcello Walter; Chiricò, Donata; Cimatti, Felice; Cosenza, Giuseppe; De Marco, Anna; Fadda, Emanuele; Lo Feudo, Giorgio; Mazzeo, Marco; Stancati, Claudia (a cura di), *Linguistica e filosofia del linguaggio: Studi in onore di Daniele Gambarara*. Milan: Mimesis, 525–533.
- Velmezova, Ekaterina 2018b. “Saussure le formaliste” dans les commentaires à la première édition russe du “Cours de linguistique générale” (1933). In: Xanthos, Aris; Surcouf, Christian (éds), *Mélanges offerts en hommage à Marianne Kilani-Schoch* (Cahiers de l'ILSL 56), 277–290.
- Velmezova, Ekaterina Valer'evna 2014. *Istoriya lingvistiki v istorii literatury*. Moscow: Indrik.
- Vvedenskij, Dmitrij Nikolaevich 1933. Ferdinand de-Sosyur i ego mesto v lingvistike. In: Sosyur, Ferdinand de, *Kurs obschej lingvistiki*. Moscow: OGIZ, SOTSEKGIZ, 5–21.

### Фердинанд де Соссюр. СССР. 1950...

В лингвистической дискуссии, организованной советской газетой *Правда* в 1950 году, Фердинанд де Соссюр упоминался лишь несколько раз, однако эти упоминания важны с точки зрения как изучения взглядов на Соссюра, господствовавших в советском языкознании до этой дискуссии, так и в свете дальнейшей эволюции советской науки о языке. В 1950 году и сторонник, и противник марксистской лингвистики (И. Мещанинов и А. Чикобава, соответственно) безоговорочно соглашались, по крайней мере, в том, что теории Соссюра, с их точки зрения, не подходят для «прогрессивной» советской лингвистики. Эта критика Соссюра свидетельствует о существенном сдвиге, произошедшем в советских гуманитарных науках середины прошлого века всего за несколько лет: именно «пересмотр» основных тезисов критики Соссюра в конце 1950-х годов предопределил (относительный) триумф структурализма в Советском Союзе в 1960-е годы.

### Ferdinand de Saussure. NSVL. 1950...

1950. aastal Nõukogude ajalehes *Pravda* korraldatud keeleteaduslikus diskussioonis mainitakse Ferdinand de Saussure'i ainult paar korda, kuid vastavad osutused on olulised nii arvestades Nõukogude keeleteaduses diskussiooneelselt ülekaalus olnud arvamusi Saussure'ist kui ka selle hilisemat arengut silmas pidades. 1950. aastal olid nii Marri vaateid pooldava keeleteaduse toetaja kui ka selle vastane, vastavalt Ivan Meschaninov ja Arnold Chikobava, tingimusteta ühel nõul vähemalt ühes asjas: nimelt selles, et Saussure'i teooriad olid nende seisukohast "eesrindlikus" Nõukogude keeleteaduses vastuvõtmatud. Selline Saussure'i kritiseerimine osutab olulisele nihkele, mis toimus Nõukogude humanitaarias möödunud sajandi keskel üksnes mõne aasta vältel: 1950. aastate lõpus sai just tänu Saussure'i kriitika põhiteeside revideerimisele võimalikuks strukturalismi (suhteline) võidukäik, mis 1960. aastatel Nõukogude Liidus viimaks aset leidis.