

## Linguistic Structure, Geographical And Reconstructive Linguistics: Method Of Reconstruction In Letrary Criticism

البنية اللغوية واللغويات الجغرافية والاسترجاعية:

منهج إعادة البناء في النقد الأدبي

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### الملخص:

يستعرض هذا المقال علاقة البنية اللغوية *langage* باللغويات الجغرافية والاسترجاعية من خلال تحليل تأثير العوامل الجغرافية على تطور وانتشار اللهجات واللغات عبر الزمن والمكان. يركز المقال على كيفية تأثير التوزيع الجغرافي للغات على بنية اللغة الداخلية، ويناقش كيفية تأثير العوامل الثقافية والاجتماعية في تشكيل هذه البنية، استناداً إلى أفكار دو سوسير حول اللغويات الجغرافية ومنهج إعادة البناء. يهدف المقال أيضاً إلى إظهار أن التغيرات اللغوية لا تقتصر على الاختلافات الصوتية فقط، بل تشمل أيضاً التأثيرات الجغرافية والأنثروبولوجية التي تساهم في تحول اللغة وتوزيعها. وهذا ما قدمه مفهوم البنية اللغوية في اللغويات والأنثروبولوجية اللغوية. كما يقدم المقال نتائج وتطبيقات منهج المقارنة في إعادة البناء ضمن دراسة اللغات القديمة، ويكشف عن دور اللغويات الاسترجاعية في فهم تحولات اللغة عبر الزمن وجغرافيا المكان. كما يتناول الربط بين اللغة والمجتمع وتأثير ذلك على الثقافات والعلاقات الإنسانية.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** البنية اللغوية، اللغويات الجغرافية، اللغويات الاسترجاعية، منهج إعادة البناء، الأنثروبولوجيا.

### Abstract:

This article explores the relationship between linguistic structure (*langage*), geographical linguistics, and reconstructive linguistics by analyzing the impact of geographical factors on the development and spread of dialects and languages across time and space. The article focuses on how the geographical distribution of languages affects their internal structure and discusses how cultural and social factors shape this structure, based on Saussure's ideas on historical linguistics and the method of reconstruction. The objective of this article is to show that linguistic changes are not limited to phonetic differences but also include geographical and anthropological influences that contribute to the transformation and distribution of language. This is what the concept of linguistic structure offers in linguistics and structural anthropology. The article also highlights the importance of the comparative and reconstructive methods in studying ancient languages and reveals the role of reconstructive linguistics in understanding language changes over time and geography. Furthermore, it discusses the connection between language and society and its influence on cultures and human relationships.

**Keywords:** Anthropology; Linguistic Structure; Geographical Linguistics; Reconstructive Linguistics; Method of Reconstruction.

**1. Introduction:**

The actual intersection between *structure*—with its core components (totality, transformations, and self-regulation)—and linguistic structure (*le langage*)—with its fundamental elements (the physical, physiological, and psychological aspects)—provides us with a deeper understanding of how to read literary works through a precise and critical lens. In this context, language is considered a structure composed of multiple interwoven levels, such as the phonetic, syntactic, and rhythmic levels, as well as its intellectual, social, cultural, and lexical dimensions, among others. This leads us to the significance of the geographical distribution of languages within the field of *linguistique géographique* (geographical linguistics), and how geographical factors influence the development and spread of dialects across various regions. Linguistic diversity opens the way for investigating dialects and linguistic variations within a single language, shaped by spatial multiplicity and its manifestations. The movement, spread, and migration of languages and dialects from one geographical area to another cause them to influence one another. Saussure refers here to the relationship between linguistic phenomena and space, thus moving from the internal study of language to external linguistics, or shifting the focus toward external diffusion and its internal transformations as well. He states: «The first thing that strikes one in studying of languages is their diversity, the differences as between one country to another, or even one district and another»<sup>1</sup>.

Accordingly, the differences that emerge when a language shifts from one place to another are not based solely on external structures—they also impact the internal linguistic system. As Saussure notes, «Whereas divergences over time often do not come to the notice of the observer»<sup>2</sup>, this highlights the difficulty of detecting language changes over time, as such analysis requires a deep historical study to trace and interpret linguistic evolution. On the other hand, spatial variations are easier to observe, as they manifest clearly in distinct dialects and pronunciation patterns.

Here, Saussure emphasizes the importance of viewing language from multiple perspectives to understand the nature of linguistic change. While temporal changes demand historical depth, the study of geographical linguistics aims to explore spatial differences as a means of understanding the dynamics of language—how it develops, spreads, and interacts. This interaction does not stop at the formal aspects of language but also extends to how it affects the structure of communities and reflects on their cultural and social life.

This perspective is echoed in the work of French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss, whose structural readings of social categories examined how groups relate to one another, differ, and are geographically distributed through specific dialects and languages. These linguistic distributions, in turn, shape cultural systems composed of symbolic structures that mirror linguistic ones. Cultures, with their myths, customs, and traditions, are thus analyzed in the same way language is—structurally and symbolically.

Such an approach draws attention to how signs and meanings are distributed across geographic spaces and how these patterns reflect historical and cultural relationships among linguistic groups. Therefore, the central question becomes: how can we understand the linguistic structure of geographical linguistics through mechanisms of retrospective linguistics and the method of reconstruction?

## 2. Linguistic Structure (*le langage*) and the Physiology of Place

It is noticeable that the environment has a significant impact on human physiology, as we find that the geographical environment has its influencing characteristics and various factors that create a unique physiological space. These factors include climate, mountains, highlands, steppes, soil types, and natural resources. The environment also shapes the lifestyle of social groups, which attempt to adapt to different climates, whether cold or hot, and whether these social groups live in high-altitude areas or in lower areas. They often seek successful ways to adapt and stabilize. Thus, the environment plays a major role in influencing the human body and its physiological levels, and consequently, it also affects language. As Saussure describes, when we observe primitive individuals, we find that it is a custom or habit for them, similar to clothing and weaponry. It is a reflection of the customs created by society according to the spatial and temporal framework. He says that «the term *idiome* itself designates, most appropriately, the language as reflection of the individual characteristics of a community (the Greek word *idioma* already had the meaning "special custom")»<sup>3</sup>. He goes further by pointing out that when we see a distinctive feature in a language, «the notion contains an element of truth, but one which easily turns into error when it is taken so far that a language is seen as the attribute not of a nation but of a race, on a par with the color of the skin or the shape of the head»<sup>4</sup>. This leads him to believe that every people believes in the superiority of their dialect, which means that language shifts from its communicative linguistic level to the level of belonging and collective and geographical pride. All their emotions arise within the scope of this dialect and the dimensions of that place. Even an individual who speaks a language other than their own – as Saussure put it – is easily considered incapable of speaking, almost as if they were one of the odd individuals who can be easily distinguished within that social group.

The geographical diversity that affects the physiology of communities is the first thing Saussure observes, and it is the first characteristic presented by linguistics. It «determined the initial form taken by scientific research into linguistic matters, even by the Greeks. It is true, simply fastened upon the differences between various Greek [Hellinic]<sup>5</sup> dialects; but this was because they took little interest in general in what went on outside Greece itself», meaning the geographical region of Greece. This also points to the relationship between linguistic structure and place, on the one hand, and what we can call genetic linguistic structure (*la structure linguistique génétique*), on the other. This is represented in modern studies on animal groups and their relationship to place, followed by the linguistic relationship between humans and

animal groups. For example, hypotheses show the occurrence of "specific mutations in genes with ancient origins shared with other animals, leading to changes in the functions at the origin of the human species and its linguistic structure." This can be linked to other studies concerning scientific fields and the overlapping, varying, and multiple meanings of phonetics in comparison to humans, animals, and diverse geographical areas.

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**2.1 The Dialectic of Linguistic Diversity within Linguistic Structure: Between Language, Dialect, and Idiom**

A rigorous inquiry into the foundations and historical origins of language constitutes a vital starting point for understanding its diversity—particularly through the use of comparative methods grounded in detailed observation between, for instance, two related or distinct languages. While some languages may belong to the same linguistic family, such comparisons often encounter significant conceptual and methodological challenges, requiring a careful distinction between what is theoretically possible and what can be empirically demonstrated.

Hence, the distinction between languages and dialects is not merely a matter of surface-level observation but rather a methodological reading of every linguistic transformation. Accordingly, «Languages [*les idiomes*]<sup>8</sup> differing only slightly are called *dialect*»<sup>9</sup> which means that the term idiom—according to Saussure—implicitly contains the concept of dialects. Perhaps this is precisely what we observe in the field of local dialect (*le dialecte*), where the idioms do not diverge significantly.

From this, we can conclude that for Saussure, the terms *idiom* and *dialect* are conceptually close, and the term *idiom* carries within it the semantic weight of *dialect*. Indeed, as he states, «it is difficult to say what the difference is between a *language* and a *dialect*. Often a dialect is called a language because it has a literature»<sup>10</sup>.

Thus, to summarize a wide array of issues within this field, we may say that *language* is the scientific system that encompasses idioms marked by dialectal multiplicity in general. The plurality of idioms signals the plurality of dialects—and when such a dialect gives rise to literature and knowledge, it fulfills what we mean by *language*.

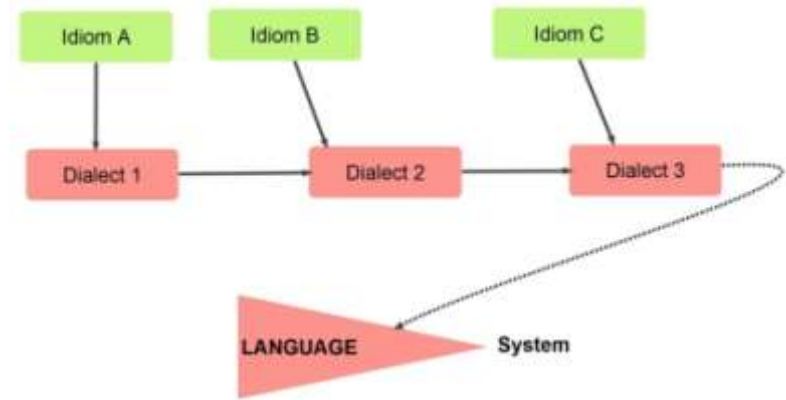


Fig.1. Structure language system diagram

Through these concepts, we can access the specificity of the physiological factor and its relationship to place. On one hand, it is linked to the nature of the location itself and how it affects the inhabitants of those regions, and subsequently to phonetic differences on one side and levels of communication on the other. On the other hand, it is related to the movement of individuals and families from one region to another, which influences dialects either through transfer or reception.

Moreover, place plays a significant role in preserving the stability of linguistic boundaries, and it also impacts the distinctiveness of dialects in specific areas. As a result, we often find similar linguistic markers in many neighboring regions, yet these may differ in phonetic realization. Therefore, this realization can be considered a key element within the scope of the geographical impact of a region. This influence appears through the following factors:

- Geographic isolation leads to a distinctive phonetic realization in terms of stability, as well as internal linguistic evolution due to the limited presence of external factors.
- Isolated communities tend to develop greater phonetic diversity.

- In terms of mutual influence, open regions are more receptive to linguistic overlap.
- The development of new dialects often represents a blend of phonetic features from multiple languages.
- Deserts, forests, highlands, and mountainous regions influence phonetic execution according to each area's topography and climate.
- Large-scale migration contributes to the spread of phonetic traits from different languages.

As an example of Arabic dialects, we find that rural dialects often differ in phonetic realization from those of urban areas. This distinction is also observable on a broader scale between Maghrebi and Mashreqi dialects, due to both geographical and historical factors.

In general, geography can play a central role in the formation, variation, and distribution of phonetic features within the structure of dialects (les dialectes), reflecting the natural and cultural diversity that characterizes this linguistic multiplicity.

However, geographical dispersion and diversity alone do not provide a solid foundation for explaining linguistic exchange and evolution. The element of time, along with sociohistorical conditions and factors related to linguistic affinity, also play a crucial role.

**2.2 Physiology of Environmental Interaction**

From our perspective, within the framework of physiology of place and geographical variation, we conclude that the linguistic structure also arises based on the physiology that interacts between nature and the vocal apparatus. Animals of the same species, for example, may differ in their physical and even vocal characteristics. For instance, mountain animals of the same species differ slightly or significantly in their physiology compared to similar animals in plains or deserts. This is also evident in scientific studies that have compared the chimpanzee and human vocal apparatus. For instance, «measurements were taken of the diameter of the hypoglossal canal on different fossils, such as Asian man (Australopithecus), homo habilis, and Neanderthals, in order to indirectly estimate their ability to control their tongue movements and, therefore, their potential for producing complex linguistic structures»<sup>11</sup>.

The physiological similarities were not isolated from the geographical region. In fact, geography played an effective role in shaping these characteristics, as natural traits weave into the physiology of living beings. This interplay can be observed through the following:

- Xerophytic plants (plants that tolerate drought)
- Atmospheric pressure
- Physiological adaptations
- Lung capacity
- Morphological adaptations
- Robust limbs
- Growth and development
- Skin pigmentation
- Thermoregulation
- Metabolism
- Altitude
- Hypoxia (oxygen deficiency)
- Ultraviolet radiation
- Respiration
- Homeostasis
- Biological evolution
- Biomechanics

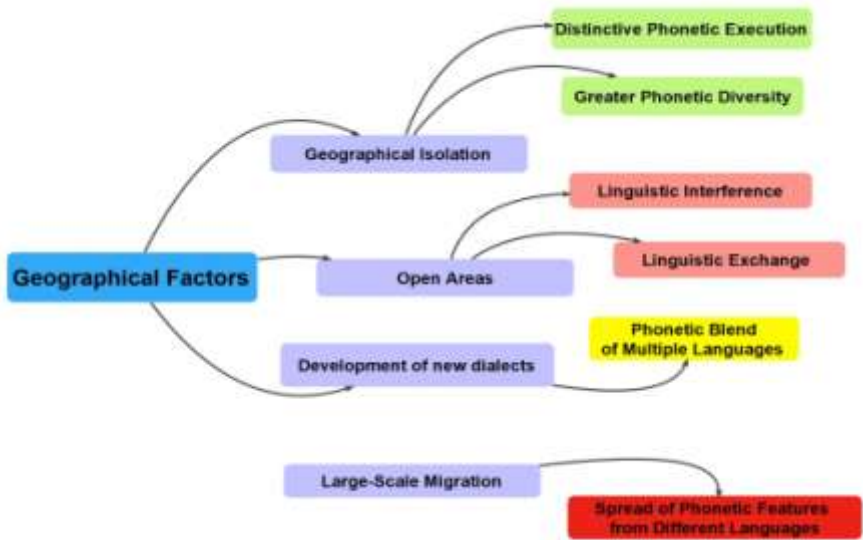


Fig.2. Geographical Factors

These terms highlight the connection between physiology and the environment, studying the movement of organisms and how forces affect them, along with genetic changes in species over time in response to environmental pressures. It also explores the interaction of living organisms with the non-living environment, the body's ability to maintain balance despite external changes, and the changes in shape, structure, and sound in response to the surrounding environment.

Thus, geographical factors have an influence on the sounds produced by humans. Additionally, the biomechanics of speech show how physical forces act to produce sound, affecting the vocal cords through vibrations, condensation, or contraction.

From this perspective, it becomes clear that language is not a closed system in their transformation, but a semantic entity that interacts with the natural and physical environment, producing its meaning through a network of relations between the sign and the physiological aspect.

The human voice is not understood merely as an articulatory phenomenon, but as a sign within the semiological system, whose production and interpretation are influenced by geographical and environmental factors.

This relationship brings the semiological dimension into the very core of the biomechanics of speech, as the vocal sign becomes a reflection of internal tensions between the body and space—between the idiom as a linguistic concept and the influence of the environment on its physical and semantic formation.

**3. Linguistic Structure and the Reconstruction Method**

Understanding le langage—the linguistic structure—is considered the fundamental and proper path to understanding language, and, by extension, to understanding the human being as well. This approach has been embraced by postmodernist thought and explored by geneticists, geographers, scholars of myth, religion, belief systems, behavioral science, sociology, anthropology, archaeology, and other modern sciences. These disciplines aim to study the underlying structure that constitutes all the internal components forming the subject of inquiry.

Thus, the spread of linguistic waves (les ondes linguistiques) necessarily creates the possibility for the linguistic structure to interact with various means, mediums, and causes. Among these are forms of communication, which drives people to move, or wars, which impose new linguistic models upon weaker societies. Through these models, such social groups attempt to adapt to the new circumstances. Consequently, the linguistic structure becomes intertwined with the cultural and intellectual structure of the victor, particularly when the geographical area falls under the influence of a new linguistic structure<sup>12</sup>. Old English, for example, «It become separated from Germanic as the result of a migration. In all probability, its present form would be different if the Saxons had remained on the continent in the fifth century AD»<sup>13</sup>.

It can be observed that the causes of migration were not limited to a single factor but were multiple, scattered, and diverse. Here, the crucial role of the comparative structural historical method becomes clearly evident in the field of historical linguistics (*la linguistique historique*) and in methodological studies concerning the oldest language or the mother tongue. This is precisely what Saussure addressed in depth through what he called the *reconstruction method* (*la méthode de reconstruction*) within the framework of *retrospective linguistics* (*la linguistique rétrospective*).

This method takes us back to a past of a language that predates the oldest known documents, as it directly seeks to reconstruct the past at its most ancient point. It thus focuses on contemplating the deep history of the language, which Saussure termed *reconstruction*. He particularly emphasized the importance of this method alongside the tools of comparison.

The reconstruction method refers to a later reassignment of something earlier, in that the reassignment seeks to determine the true concept of a term and how its various formations evolved across both temporal and geographical dimensions. As Saussure states, the «series of cases like Latin *fūmus* allows us to say with certainty that *p* occurred in the sound system of Common Italic»<sup>14</sup>.

This perhaps raises our own question concerning the Arabic language: was the phonetic articulation of *p* truly present in the original usage of dialects during that period? This consideration is particularly relevant given the existence of this sound in Syriac, especially in relation to the soft articulation of the letter (ܦ). We know that Syriac includes both hard and soft consonants; in the case of soft consonants, the phonetic realization of the letter (ܦ) corresponds to the sound *p*, as it does in French. Similarly, the letter *b* in Syriac also exhibits a *v* sound. Consequently, Arabic phonology appears to have neglected these two sounds.

Therefore, the reconstruction method is a vast space that encourages us to return to the origins, not only the old ones but the more distant ones, and this is what is scientifically needed by different Arabic linguistic studies, which are rich in their linguistic knowledge fields.

The reconstruction method does not stop at Saussure with its linguistic dimension characterized by a kind of closure in the specificity of its linguistic system, but also touches on its relationship with society, including all of its cultural, scientific, economic systems, and its customs and traditions. Saussure believes that the reconstruction method can provide us with information about the ancient nations themselves. This opened the door to entering the realms of anthropological, ethnographic, and prehistoric research. He addressed this in a special chapter on (*Linguistic evidence in anthropology and prehistory*), to explore the geographical, historical, and social dimensions of the relationship between language, place, time, and races, particularly with regard to language and race, ethnicity, linguistic

paleontology, linguistic type, and the mentality of social groups. Therefore, we can initially view a methodological conception of the reconstitutive method within retrospective linguistics by directly comparing it with anthropological structuralism.

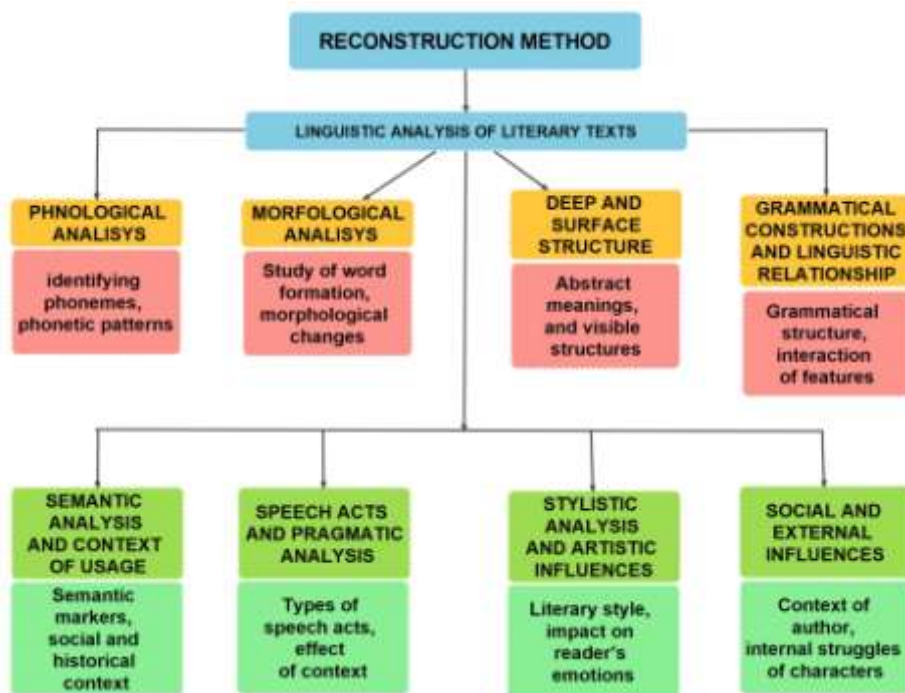


Fig.2. The methodological framework of the reconstruction method

Through the application of these methodological tools, the semantics of the literary text can be systematically reconstructed by analyzing it across multiple levels, thereby revealing its latent meanings and the intricate dimensions of language and human experience embedded within it.

From this perspective, it can be said that the impact of this method on linguistics has yielded excellent results and led to significant scientific progress. Gérard Philippon, in his notable article, clearly demonstrated the actual effect of the reconstruction method, considering that it «introduces a new innovation that will revolutionize the technique of language comparison. After observing the similarities between words belonging to the two languages in question, a systematic comparison of the sounds in each word must be conducted to clarify the ways in which they correspond»<sup>15</sup>.

Philippson illustrated this by citing an example from Jakob Grimm, who worked on a sequential comparison of vocabulary items, attempting to demonstrate the phonetic changes that occur between three languages.

#### **4. CONCLUSION:**

The linguistic structure, through the differences in language classification systems (classification des langues), is characterized by three main approaches in the study of language: the genealogical approach, the standard approach, and the typological approach. The genealogical approach is based on a very important characteristic that involves the hierarchical organization of language families derived from mother languages. The standard approach operates through geographical considerations, while the typological approach focuses on similarities and differences.

In conclusion, the reconstruction approach in literary criticism proves to be an effective and influential tool for understanding literary texts in depth by analyzing their linguistic structure within intertwined social, cultural, and psychological contexts. What distinguishes this approach is its focus on studying the internal relationships of literary texts and the detailed understanding of their linguistic structures, including phonological, morphological, syntactical aspects, as well as the deeper semantic structure that may not be immediately apparent in a primary reading of the text.

Additionally, the reconstruction approach opens new horizons for understanding the impact of social and cultural contexts on the formation of literary texts, enhancing the ability to analyze literary works as products of the societies that produced them. Adopting this methodological approach contributes to the development of literary criticism by offering new tools for studying texts in a systematic and well-thought-out manner, distancing itself from traditional impressionistic readings.

It is crucial to highlight the significance of geographic linguistics in the reconstruction approach, as it focuses on studying the impact of geography on language development, and how the geographical distribution of communities intersects with the evolution and usage of languages. Through geographic linguistics, it becomes possible to study linguistic differences that may arise in different regions, and how words and meanings are influenced by community-based and demographic usages.

The importance of geographic linguistics lies in the potential for using the reconstruction approach to analyze linguistic disparities caused by geographical and social factors. For instance, one can examine words and expressions that carry different meanings or appear in various forms in different geographic areas, where these linguistic differences are governed by the geographical and cultural context. In this sense, the methodological tool of reconstruction can provide a mechanism for understanding these linguistic differences that manifest across geographical borders.

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When applied to literature, the reconstruction approach helps highlight the relationship between language and place, where language is part of the identity of communities and their classification of the world. Through this geographical study of language, we gain a deeper understanding of literature, as the geographic context intertwines with historical and cultural contexts, thereby improving the precision of literary understanding and enhancing the analysis of texts' interactions with society.

The reconstruction approach also represents a step forward in literary criticism by providing a creative methodological tool for comparing and analyzing texts in a detailed and profound manner. One of the most impactful tools introduced by this approach is its ability to integrate different linguistic styles with the social and cultural structure of texts. For example, in analyzing phonological and syntactical structures, the impact of the cultural context on literary composition becomes apparent, such as in the use of rhetorical devices or linguistic tricks that contribute to the expression of particular emotions or social issues.

By adding a scientific dimension to literary studies, the reconstruction approach offers the tools needed to understand how social and cultural transformations influence literary works. Through the application of this approach, one can analyze changes in literary language across different periods, helping to identify the development markers of literature and its critical foundations.

Furthermore, the reconstruction approach offers the possibility of analyzing the intricate interactions between texts and readers, and how the social and cultural awareness of a society affects the interpretation of texts. In this way, the approach is not only used for studying literary texts through their linguistic structure but also helps understand how a text interacts with its readers and how social and linguistic variables contribute to shaping this interaction.

### **Challenges and Future Horizons**

However, the reconstruction Method is not without its practical challenges, as it requires precise analytical skills and the ability to connect various linguistic dimensions with the social and cultural context of texts. Moreover, it is essential to consider the historical and geographical contexts that may affect the interpretation of texts, requiring special attention to the psychological and social aspects of both writers and readers.

The reconstruction Method is undoubtedly a significant step forward in the development of contemporary literary criticism, as it provides essential tools for a scientific and comprehensive reading of literary works. Given the importance of this approach in understanding the interaction between language and context, it is expected to contribute to the future evolution of literary studies and offer more advanced mechanisms for analyzing literature in a scientifically rigorous and critical manner.

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In conclusion, it can be said that the reconstruction Method, through its various procedural tools and development within the framework of geographic linguistics, offers a qualitative leap in the study of literary texts and linguistic criticism. This approach opens new horizons for understanding the relationship between language and social, cultural, and historical contexts, and is a vital tool for understanding the evolution of literature in various contexts. In the future, this approach will play a prominent role in critical studies, as it provides a deeper and more accurate perspective for analyzing literature and cultural texts in general.

## 5. Notes:

<sup>1</sup> Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in general linguistics*, T: Roy Harris 2<sup>st</sup> ed., Open Court Classics, USA, 1986, p.189.

<sup>2</sup> Same source, p.189.

<sup>3</sup> Same source, p.189.

<sup>4</sup> Same source, p.189.

<sup>5</sup> It is worth noting that Roy Harris used the term "Greek" to translate "Hellenic," even though Saussure used the term [Hellenic] to refer to the Hellenistic dialects. Therefore, we opted to use the original term "Hellenic" instead of "Greek" to preserve the accuracy of meaning in the context of the text.

<sup>6</sup> Same source, p.190.

<sup>7</sup> Philippe Vernier, *évolution du cerveau et émergence du langage*, dans « aux origines des langue et du langage », édition Fayard, Espagne 2006, p 44.

<sup>8</sup> It is worth noting that Roy Harris translated "les idiomes" as "languages," although Saussure himself did not use the term "langue" in this instance. For this reason, we have placed [les idiomes] in brackets to preserve the nuance of the original French terminology.

<sup>9</sup> Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in general linguistics*. Same source, p.191.

<sup>10</sup> Same source, p.278.

<sup>11</sup> Christophe Coupé, *à la recherche des indices du langage articulé*, dans « aux origines des langue et du langage », édition Fayard, Espagne 2006, p 66.

<sup>12</sup> Saussure notes that, without a doubt, we can find many examples of nations adopting or having imposed upon them the language of their conquerors, as the Gauls did after being conquered by the Romans. See: Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, op. cit., p. 305.

<sup>13</sup> Same source, p.287.

<sup>14</sup> Same source, p.300.

<sup>15</sup> Gérard Philippon, *reconstruire la langue mère science ou fiction ?* Dans « aux origines des langue et du langage », édition Fayard, Espagne 2006, p 348.

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