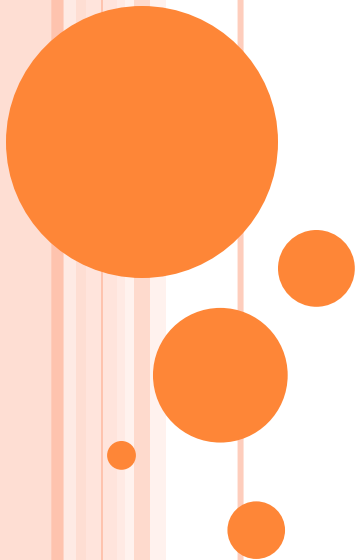


RIZVI COLLEGE OF ARTS, SCIENCE AND COMMERCE

STRUCTURALISM
CLASS: TYBA

BHASWATI PARASAR
ASST PROFESSOR
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH



INTRODUCTION

- Structuralism –derived from the word-’structure’
- Structure means organisation/arrangements of component parts/constituent parts into a meaningful whole. Let us take example of a building- a building is a structure made of various parts like the wall made again from bricks, the window-the window in turn is made of wood. A poem is or a literary text is a structure, a whole made up of sentences.
- Since the time of Aristotle, structure was given importance while analysing a piece of literature like- study of the thematic structure or the plot structure.



WHAT IS STRUCTURE:

- But, in the 19th Century, structure got a new meaning with the New-Critics.
- They studied how a particular structure gets its meaning. The generation of meaning/ **the meaning making process became important.** Lets go back again to the example of the building.
- The component parts of the building, in isolation, take, for example-a pile of bricks will not be called a structure-because each of the bricks has a **separate and individual existence** beyond being a part of the pile. It is not so in case of the building.



ASPECTS OF A STRUCTURE:

- The bricks don't actually have an independent existence beyond the whole. If you take out the window from the building and keep it in an open field, it will not have the same meaning that it has in the building. So, in a structure, **the component parts are subservient to the whole.**
- Besides, we identify the window as window because it is not the wall or the door. These parts become meaningful only in an oppositional relation to the other components of the structure. So, we can say that **each constituent parts makes sense within the structure in an oppositional relation.**



SAUSSURE 'S PRINCIPLES

These aspects of structure applies to all . Saussure talked about the linguistic structure that was borrowed by the structuralists of the 19th C. So, before we study structuralism, let us study Saussure's basic principles first.

He said that

- Language is a structured **system of relationships**
- Words is a linguistic sign with 2 interconnected sides-the *signifier* and the *signified*.
- *Signifier* is the sound or the written sign and the *signified* is the concept associated with it.
- The **relationship** between the signifier and the signified is **arbitrary**-e.g- the letter that form the written word “dog” or the sounds that constitute the spoken word “dog” have **no** real connection to the living animal they represent.

SAUSSURE CONTINUED..

- Meaning of a signifier can only be understood in relation to other signifiers –we know what “spoon” signifies because we can differentiate it from a “fork” or a “knife”. It is just like the door and the wall of a building.
- Signs are often understood in terms of *binary opposites* such as day-night, light-dark, capitalist-socialist etc.
- Language constitutes in two parts-**Langue**-the system of rules of a particular language already existing and **Parole**-the individual utterances using the langue.
- Linguistic communication is the result of the **interrelated working** of these two parts. To understand the structure of Langue, we have to study the parole.



SAUSSURE CONT....

- Relations among signs are of two sorts-the two axes of combination and selection-the **syntagmatic**-contiguity-the existence of all grammar and the **paradigmatic**-substitutability-the ability to substitute or know something by something else-eg.- metaphor or metonymy.
- There is an importance of **synchronic** (a language at a **moment in time without taking its history into account**) analysis of languages to understand their inner functioning within the **diachronic** (the evolution of a language) concerns.



INTRODUCTION

- **Structuralism** refers to the **analytical practice** that **studies the system of structures** producing **meaning** in literature.
- The practice was developed in the early 1900s, in France and included a number of Russian Formalists like Roman Jakobson.
- Structuralism resurfaced in 1960 as a large movement -French Structuralism-inaugurated by the cultural anthropologist Claude –Levi-Strauss in 1950.
- They **applied to literature the concepts and methods of structuralist linguistics** developed by **Ferdinand de Saussure** in his **Course in General Linguistics (1915)**



STRUCTURALISM

Structuralists believe -

- **Cultural phenomena** like myths, literary texts, advertisements, fashion modes of preparing food etc can be studied on the basis of **Saussure's linguistic model**.
- Like language, cultural phenomena too derive its meanings from their **interrelated relations** to other cultural phenomena.
- They focus on **discovering the system of structures** that **create meaning** in literature.



STRUCTURALISM

- See the **cultural practices** as combinations of signs that have a **fixed meaning (set significance)**
- Show the rules and procedures by which these practices have got their meanings (cultural significance)
- Specify what that **meaning/significance** is by referring to an **underlying system of relationships**
- The primary interest of the structuralist, is **not** in any **particular cultural phenomena** or event (the cultural “parole”) but **its relation to the structure**, features and **rules of the general system** (the “langue”) that create its meaning.



STRUCTURALISM

Like signifier in a language system,-

- The elementary (basic) cultural phenomena are not objective facts – do not have inherent properties to identify.
- They have only “**relational**” identities
- Their **identity** as a sign **comes** from their **relation to** and **differences from other elements within the cultural system**
- Each individual in the cultural group masters these internal relations



STRUCTURALISM AND LITERATURE

- **The Text is a Second order** signifying system-the **parole** uses **first-order** structural system of language-**langue**
- A structure/construct, itself to be analysed on the models of linguistic theory
- A text is a play of component elements and therefore focus on the **grammar and the narrative structure**
- The text **generates an illusion** of reality but have no truth-value.
- The text is subject to a set of codes rather than being a product of the author's mind-and so structuralism-
- **Replaces the author by the reader** as a supreme agency
- It also **opposes Mimetic and expressive criticism** in its view that literature does not express/represent reality- as all **signification is arbitrary**



TO SUM UP

- Meaning occurs through differences.
- Much of our imaginative world is based on structures of and by binary opposites.
- Relations among signs are of two sorts-the **syntagmatic**-contiguity-the existence of all grammar and the **paradigmatic**-substitutability-the ability to substitute or know something by something else-eg. metaphor or metonymy.
- There is a **coherent connection** among the **conceptions of reality** - the social, the individual and the unconscious—all are composed of the same signs, codes and conventions and work on the similar principles.



TO SUM UP

Structuralism applies linguistic concepts like-

- **Distinction** between **Phonemic and morphemic** levels of organization
- Or between **Paradigmatic and syntagmatic relationships**
- Tries to see how a competent reader make sense of a particular literary text-
- 1. by specifying the **underlying** system of literary convention
- 2. the **rules of combinations** that has been unconsciously mastered by the reader.
- Most important figures associated with the movement-**Roland Barthes,, Louis Althusser, Jonathan Culler**



THANK YOU

