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SAUSSURE AND STRUCTURALISM



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ABSTRACT:

Structuralism a Modern intellectual movement which began in France in the 1905. It first seen in the work of anthropologist claude Levi-Strauss and literary critic Roland Barthes. Throughout the 19th century and early 20th century, philology, not the linguistics was the Science of language. The Philologist's described compared, analyzed the language of the world to discover similarity and relationship. Their approach to language study was diachronic. Their Philologist's main emphasis was the historical development of all languages. They were the supporters of the mimetic theory of language. According to mimetic theory. Symbol equals things.

KEYWORDS

Saussure and Structuralism , Science of language.

INTRODUCTION

In the first decade of 1900's a Swiss philologist and teacher, Ferdinand de Saussure began questioning these long held ideas and brought reformation in language study. Through his research and his innovative theories Saussure changed the direction and subject matter of linguistic studies. Saussure wrote a book *Course in General Linguistics*. He introduced the synchronic approach, focusing attention on studying a language at one particular time in its evolution and emphasizing how the language functions, not its historical development. Saussure draws attention to the nature and composition of language and its continuant parts.

Saussure rejected the mimetic of language structure. In its place he asserted the language is primarily determined by its own internally structure and highly systematized rules. The rules govern all aspects of language. Saussure proposed number of distinctions like

- 1) La langue and parole.
- 2) Synchronic and diachronic.
- 3) Paradigmatic and syntagmatic.
- 4) Signifier and signified.

Langue the structure of language that is mastered and shared by all its speakers. The institution called language which is a set of impersonal rules and conventions, langue is transindividual and abstract langue emphasizes the social aspects of language parole is the actual manifestation of language in speaking, which is taken as primary, A Speaker can generate countless examples of individual utterances, but these all utterances governed by the language, system, its langue. It is the task of the linguist to infer a language's langue from the analysis of many instances of parole. In other words, for Saussure proper study of linguistics is the system of language, not the parole.

Saussure reexamined the definition of a word rejecting the belief that a word is symbol that equals a thing. Saussure proposed that words are signs made up of signifier and signified. According to Saussure like the two sides of a sheet of paper the linguistic sign is the union of these two elements. As oxygen combines with hydrogen to form water. Like this the signifier joins with the signified to form a sign. According to Saussure a word does not represent a referent world in the objective world but a concept in our minds.

Saussure said, the linguistic sign is arbitrary. There is not natural correspondence between signifier and signified, nor is there any natural relationship between the linguistic sign and what it represents. One sign differs from all other signs. By comparing and contrasting one sign to other signs we learn to distinguish each individual sign, sign is composed of signifier and signified. Signifier is an object and signified is concept signifier may be fixed but signified is an open question.

Saussure emphasized that the meaning of words is relational. That is to say not a word can be defined in isolation from other words. The definition of any given word depends upon its relation with other 'adjoining' words. For example- the word 'hut' depends for its precise meaning on its position in a syntagmatic chain, that is chain of words related in function and meaning. The syntagmatic chain in this case might include the following (hovel-shed-but-house-mansion-palace). The meaning of any one of these words would be altered if any one of the others were removed from the chain. Thus hut and shed are both small and basic structures, but they are not quite the same thing. Hut is primarily for shelter while the other is primarily for storage without the others, each would have to encompass both these meanings, and hence would be a different word likewise, a mansion can be defined as a dwelling which is bigger and grander than a mere house, but not as big and grand as a place we define 'Mansion' by explaining how its meaning relates to that of the two words on either side of it.

For Saussure, meaning is therefore relational and matter of difference. Without differences

there can be no meaning, white is white because it is not black, red is red because it is not green. Structuralist like C.S. pierce and Saussure believe that a study of the grammar that govern literary interpretation becomes the critics primarily says that there is another kind of structuralism that is 'narratology.'

As Jonathan culler points out, in the preface to his 'structuralist poetics' (1975) three characteristics of structuralist literary theory, clearly stand out first, it is not primarily interpretative, secondly, structuralism literary theory does not Focus on individual works, but attempts' to understand the conventions which make literature possible' the langue of literature in the words of Jockobson, or the universal underlying structure in chomskyan terms. Thirdly, it would 'attempt to specify how we go about making sense of texts what are the literature, itself, as an institution, is based'. Saussure believes that a meaning of language depends upon the concepts in which it is studied meaning is therefore contextual.

Foreg- If a red rose flower is presented by a young boy, to young girl it means 'love'. Same flower is presented by a boy to his Mother it means 'love and affection' and if the same flower presented to a dead body it means 'condolence', therefore it is a context which determines the meaning of language.

Structuralism thus constructed on elaborate a way of thinking on the basis that literature is like language, or language becomes 'literature's being', Todorove's Introduction to poetics' (1981) speaks of the grammar of literature. In structuralism, any individuals work (like parole) can only reveal a part of a system (like langue)

End Note:-

- 1) Caller Jonathan : structuralist Poetics (1975)
- 2) Charles Bressler : Literary criticism, An introduction To Theory and Practice.
- 3) Peter Barry : Beginning theory, An introduction to literary and Cultural theory, Manchester University (1995)
- 4) Raman Selden : A Reader's guide to contemporary Literary theory.

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