

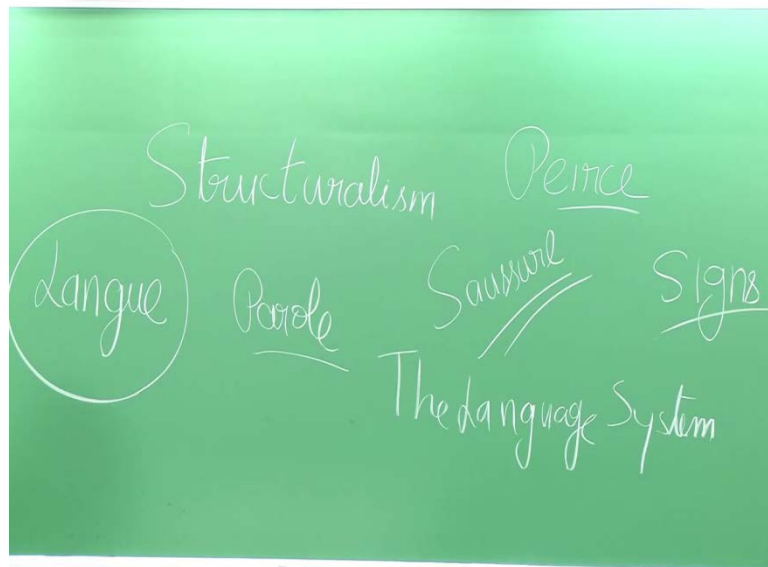
**Literary Theory and Literary Criticism**  
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**Lecture - 12**

**Part A**

**Structuralism**

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Hello friends, so today's lecture is about Structuralism. The key names are Ferdinand de Saussure, Charles Peirce, the American philosopher, de Saussure, we have been talking about him all along and he is an Assuwas Langues. We will be talking about the language system, langue and parole two concepts given to us by Saussure. We will also talk about science, the way Saussure talks about and what is meant by signifier and signified.

Structuralism is concern with theories which are focused on the analysis of the surface structure of a system in terms of it is analyzing structure. In that system could be anything will be talking about it in detail soon. Structuralism developed out of the works of the formalist and the two theories formalism and structuralism overlap. While, formalism is concerned with the devices and rules that go into the making of cultural artifacts, with the author actively employed techniques to achieve it is specific ends.

His structuralizes; however are concerned with the framework of meaning, how a spectator or reader reads and understand since within a text. So, this is important to understand formalism is concerned with the rules that going to the making of cultural artifacts. A text or example, whereas the structuralism is concerned with, how a meaning is conveyed and how reader or spectator, you know it can be extended to cinema as well.

So, cinematic tax and how a movie viewer watches a film or how a reader reads a tax and how they understand science within a text. Structuralist are interested on the walking of the human perception and the basic premise of a structuralism is that human activity and it is products, even perceptions and part itself are constructed and not natural. And by doing this, they were challenging certain establish norms about they were meaning is constructed and how meaning is derived.

So, structure is the principle of construction and the object of analysis to be understood by it is intimate reference to the concepts of system and value as defined in semiotics. So, this is another domain that we venture into while talking about structuralism and how closely connected it is to the study of semiotic, which is the study of science. So therefore, language system, science and two more important concepts related to science, the signifier and the signified.

Now, each element has meaning according to the structuralist in the options and therefore, defined again the background of other possibilities. This is a radical view of meaning that, meanings are arbitrary and not previously constructed for us. Structuralism derives a lot from the works of Ferdinand de Saussure and Charles Pierce, while Saussure favors science; Pierce prefers the word symbol. Saussure makes a basic different language and parole. Language, what is langue? Langue is the social aspect of language; it is the share systems which we draw upon as speakers.

So, langue is the social aspect of language, parole is the individual realization of the system in actual insistences of language. So, langue is the social aspect, it is a share system and parole is the actual instance that is the key basic difference. The right of linguistic or the right aim or right objective of linguistic study is the system which underlines any particularly human signifying practice, not the individual utterance.

For Saussure, language is a system of science, this is what you have to remember, language is a system of science and these science are arbitrary; that means random and

defined by difference from other words. Now, this science can only be understood within a cultural system, I am just telling you what is meant by Saussure system of language and science.

So, according to him, this science and this system can only be understood within a cultural system. Therefore, arbitrariness of language, for example, and this is a famous example given to us by Saussure, the word dog; d o g is not common to all languages. The French for dog, the French word for dog is chien whereas, in the German language, the word for dog is hund; h u n d. Although, all these words are referred to the same animal and animal that has 4 legs, sharp teeth; that wags its tail and so on.

So, you know the image of dog that barks up. So, all these things, but every cultural system has its own specific word to describe this animal. Within each culture, there has to be a consensus, you know everybody should agree that this animal should be referred to as a dog or as a sheep or something else. So, it is culture specific and there has to be a consensus that certain letters in a particular order serve to represent a certain creature.

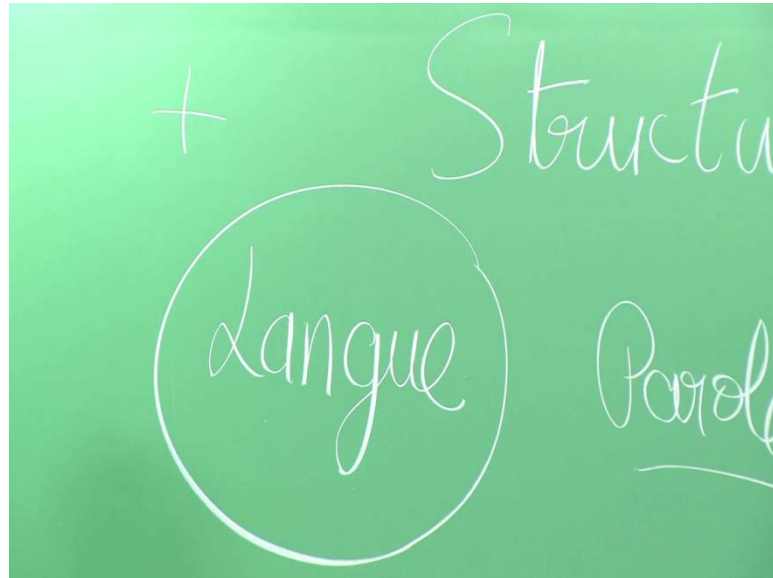
So, this is important Saussure states that there are only differences that language is only a series of phonetic; that is sound, phonetic, I am sure you are aware of it is study of sound. So, phonetic differences matched with series of conceptual; that is images. So, how sound matches images, that defines meaning. So, by this he means that, each sign only has a meaning, because it is different from others.

Dog has no inherent meaning, its meaning comes, because of the way, the alphabets have been arranged and I can give example from the English language d o g. Let us assume that the words, the alphabets are arranged as f o g, it becomes fog or d o t, it becomes a dot. So, the sounds and the order of those letters, they explain, they define our conception of a particular creature or an object and that leads and that gives us its meaning.

Now, what is sign? The sign communicates information, you say dog and you conceptualize the image. So, it can be anything, sign can be anything, it can be an image, it can be a gesture, we will be talking about these things later on in this lecture, it can be a word, written or spoken, it can be a shape or color. So, all these things are imbued with certain meanings. So, these are signs and they convey meanings, the sign is the first step

in the process of interpretation. However, signs have no intrinsic meaning, meaning is given to them and established by universal or cultural conventions.

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A sign has to stand for something else, let us assume that a sign, such as this is a plus sign for most of us and it can also mean something else. You say, let us assume, you are holding a remote control in your hands and there is this button. So, it does not definitely say that add something to it, it stands for increasing the volume, increase the sound. So, a sign is determined by cultural, the meaning of a sign is determined by cultural conventions.

A sign has to stand for something else, it has no meaning in itself, the sign is comprised of two components, the signifier and the signified. And these are two important concepts, two important components of sign and we will be looking at these in detail as well. The signifier is the form that the sign takes, for example, a specific sound or marks on a piece of paper. The signified is the conceptual stage of communication, this is when the sign stimulates a mental idea or image.

The discipline of semiotics plays an important role in structuralist literary theory and cultural studies. Semioticians apply structuralist insides to the study of sign systems, a non linguistic object or behavior that can be analyzed as a ((Refer Time: 12:09)) language. Specifically, semiotics examines the ways non linguistic objects and behaviors tell us something.

Semiotics takes off from Peirce; Charles Peirce for whom language is one of numerous systems and structuralism takes off basically from Saussure, for whom language was the sign system. And he tells us that it is a language is the sign system par excellence. Prior to Saussure language had been thought of simply as a system for naming objective reality, which was assumed to exist before and outside of language itself.

Within this view of thinking, the real world is clearly already there, while language simply labels it all. So, you see there is a system before Saussure and after Saussure, post and pre, pre Saussure period language was thought of simply as a way of naming things, objects and it existed as a sort of objective reality. For Saussure, the social element of language constitutes the field of semiology.

Coming to semiotics, this is the general signs of science. So, science of signs and this was pioneered in the 1880's by Charles Peirce, Charles Sanders Peirce and we will discuss the philosophy, the language philosophy, the language systems as proposed by Saussure and Charles Peirce, further in our class on semiotics. When we apply the linguistic model to literature and literary criticism, we need to first understand that literature uses language as its medium.

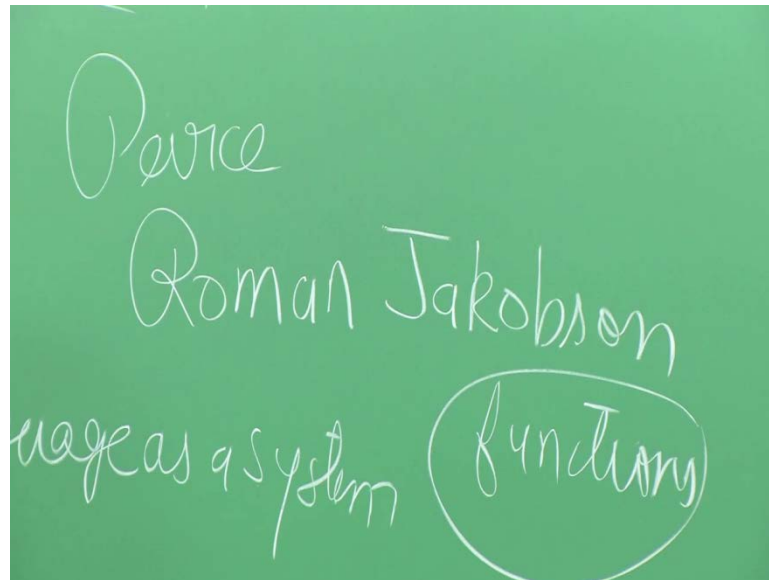
However, this does not mean that the structure of literature is identical with the structure of language. Structuralists believe that literature has a special relationship with language. So, see we are moving towards that period in literary criticism and theory, where language and literature started to have a sort of correlation. Earlier, it was always there, but people had not theorized it, people had not talked about it and this started taking place after especially after Saussure.

So, literature draws attention to the very nature and specific properties of language, therefore we can say that structuralism is closely related to formalism. So, the first to apply Saussure's ideas about language was the Russian formalist, such as Roman Jakobson, Boris Eichenbaum and Viktor Shklovsky. These are the academicians particularly associated with the Moscow linguistics circle. Structuralist principles have been used to formulate general rules to distinguish literary from non literary discourse. So, this is the importance of structuralism.

Now, Roman Jakobson outlined the three stages of formalist research, he talks about analysis of the sound aspects of a literary work. Secondly, he talks about problems of

meaning within the framework of poetics and thirdly, he talks about an integration of sound and meaning into an inseparable whole. The formalist study of literature occurs within the more general study of language, which Jakobson categorizes in terms of its functions.

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So, another important word that you should know, Roman Jakobson and the theory of functions, the main elements of this functional system are the addresser and addressee in between a complex set of determinants that include context, message, contact and a code. Known to both the addresser and the addressee, addresser, the person who addresses, addressee, the interlocutor. So, the main elements of the functional system are the addresser and the addressee and there is a complex set of determinants that include context, message and contacts.

Jakobson talks about two axis or levels of meaning upon which poetry draws the metaphoric and selective and the metonymic and combinative. So, these are the terms that we should know. For Jakobson, the poetic function projects the principle of echovillance from the axis of selection into the axis of combination. Jakobson means that in poetry selection made on the level of metaphor are super induced onto the level of metonymy, where they are combined with other words to create poetic effects.

Jacobson's definition departs from the simple fact that all words can be classified and categorized. To give an example of what Roman Jakobson means by super induction of

language, let us take a word for which there is a perfect synonym. Let us think, blossom can also be thought of as flower that is a synonym, why would a poet, a writer use a particular word, a flower in some contexts and blossom in another. So, that is the idea.

So, we will have to choose between two equivalents, which word we choose depends on exactly what kinds of emotions, we want to project, what kinds of emotions, what kinds of language, we want to project, whether it is too dignified language or too colloquial language. All these things depend exactly specifically on the words that a poet chooses. It is this principle of linguistic equivalence that poetry borrows from what Jakobson terms as the axis of combination.

Coming to Viktor Shklovsky, his work on prose as a formal device reflects some of the innovations offered by Jakobson. Shklovsky held that the artistic work of art is autonomous, free from social forces and that prose is essentially form. So, Viktor Shklovsky defining, what is form? Shklovsky gives us the term defamiliarization, which is also called estrangement and these things we have been doing in quite some detail all along.

So, defamiliarization, defamiliarization as perhaps we have already done is an artist device that explains the alienating effect of things most familiar to us and raises a question, whether reality is or isn't purely an effect. Another device that defamiliarises the objects of representation is lying bare, lying bare a text of the authors techniques. Another important writer of structuralism and we owe a lot to this person, Claude Levi Strauss, he is a structuralist, anthropologist, who developed a structural theory in a consideration of myth ritual and traditions.

He explains social structure as a kind of model and demonstrates that the behavior patterns and institutes depend on methods of communication that are all characteristics of how the human mind works. Levi Strauss, for example, analyses the Oedipus myth in a manner, which is truly structuralist. Levi Strauss is more interested in structural patterns than in the narrative sequence. His theories about myth had great influence in the development of the theory of narratology, a further aspect of structuralism, we will be soon looking at it.

Now, another key writer of this movement, this thought is Vladimir Propp, who perceived the analogy between the sentence structure and narrative and developed his

theory of Russian fairy tales and fairy stories. His approach can be understood, if we compare the subject of a sentence with the typical characters, the hero, the heroine, villain's, etcetera.

Propp talks about thirty one functions, where a function is the basic unit of the narrative language and refers to the significant actions which form the narrative, these follow a logical sequence. The last group of functions is a difficult task is proposed to the hero, the task is resolved. The hero is recognized, the false hero or villain is exposed, the false hero is given a new appearance, the villain is punished, the hero is married and ascends the throne.

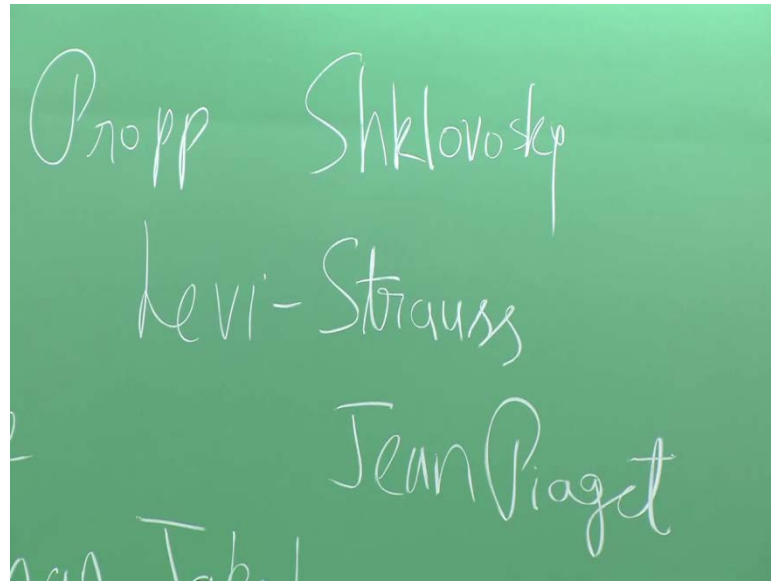
Now, consider the Oedipus myth through the same prism of explanation. Now, Oedipus is challenged with the task of solving the riddle of the sphinx, he resolves it, he provides the solution. So, the hero is recognized and he is married, he ascends the throne, but it does not end here, because Oedipus as we know after all is a false hero, he is the one who killed inadvertently his father and married his mother.

So, he is a false hero, he is exposed and he punishes himself, at the same time, balance and harmony is restored at the end of Oedipus. So, the last structuralist, who I am going to refer to in today's class is John Piaget. He discusses the three components or the rather the three key components of the concept of a structure. The view of a system as a whole instead of several and many parts, the study of the transformations in the system and the fact that these transformations never lead beyond the system, but always engender elements that belong to it and preserve it is laws.

Piaget illustrates the concept as it appears in mathematics and logic, physics and biology, psychology and he relates the idea structuralism to the laws of just start and the structure of intelligence. And Piaget works have also influenced linguistics, where he deals further on synchronicity and generative grammar.



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So, what have we learnt, we have looked at certain key thinkers of early structuralism, we have seen, who was Saussure, Charles Pierce, Roman Jakobson, Claude Levi Strauss, John Piaget. We have also become familiar with Propp and Viktor Shklovsky, we will continue with structuralism in another part of this lecture.

Thank you.