

**Literary Theory and Literary Criticism**  
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**Lecture - 20**  
**Part A**  
**Semiotics Theory**

Hello friends, so we will continue from Structuralism to Semiotics, you will find many of the ideas in today's class. They are going to overlap, but however, that is the way it is, you will find some ideas that we have been discussing so long and so far in formalism as well as structuralism. So, just rest assured that we have covered quite a bit of what we are going to do today in some of our previous classes.

So, semiotics we will come to it, what is it and I will just do a quick recap of whatever we have been doing by way of semiotics, particularly in our classes on structuralism. We have already seen the works of Ferdinand de Saussure. Today's class, we will be talking about Charles Sanders Peirce, Umberto Eco and his theory of semiotics. We also talk about Roland Barthe and his concept of S by Z, what is S by Z.

The word semiotics is derived from the Greek word Semeion, so Semeion is the Greek word for sign. The modern disciplines of semiotics as we have already seen are invented by Ferdinand de Saussure. We have already seen that and his general course in linguistics, which is a collection of his essays, and also we move much to the works of the American philosopher and linguist Charles Sanders Peirce.

Essentially, semiotics is the study of science, it is noteworthy that what can be read from a single image, a much can be read in a single image. So, that is what is meant by study of science. For example for Charles Sanders Peirce, there were a multiple types of sign and three main types of word discussion and he takes a talk about the icon, the index and the symbol.

So, the icon or a sign which is similar to what it signifies, the index, which is affected, but by what it represents and the symbol assign that is connected to what it signifies by a law or convention, I will explain this. An icon is when a structure visually resembles,

what it is suppose to stand for. So, this is important an icon visually resembles, what it is supposed to stand for. For instance, classical paintings and photographs are iconic as they share a likeness with the subject or object captured. You must have come across these great works of art these great works of sculpture and they represent what they stand for. Now, icons can also be illustrations or diagrams, for instance, look at this particular traffic icon, a set of traffic icons.

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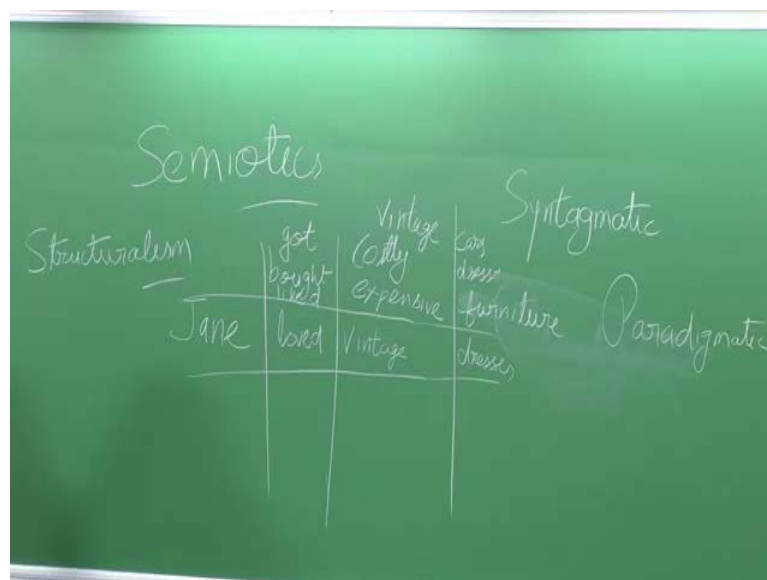
As you will recognise some of these icons, they are asking you here, this is a traffic sign, you have to go in order or men at work or this is a traffic light and symbols, etcetera. All of us are aware of what these icons stand for. Coming to the symbolic, there is no apparent relationship between symbols and their meanings. Here, the link is arbitrary and understood by conventions.

Let us say for example, a flag; now flag is a symbol of patriotism, you know the honour that we give to a nation. So, flag represents, flag sort of symbolises, nationality and pride in nation, likewise National Anthem. So, it is a symbol of our, the feelings of patriotism. Now, here the link is arbitrary and understood by conventions and upbringing. We all stand up whenever we listen to our National Anthem. So, this is by way of our upbringing and also conventionally we have been doing this, so we continue doing that, so this is symbolic.

Again, look at lights at a traffic signal, we know, what is green light symbolises and what a red light symbolises. So, the difference between that, the two kinds of lights and we are already aware of that by convention by upbringing. Now, index or indexical signs, now this is a direct connection between, what is indicated and our understanding of that information.

An index is the mode in which the signifier might not resemble it is signified object, it is not arbitrarily assigned and is directly connected in some way to the object. Nevertheless, the relationship between what the sign stands for, it is referent and the sense behind it, the interpretant. So, two words, referent and interpretant, these may have to be learnt.

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We will talk about now two kinds of axis that are given to us by Charles Sanders Peirce, syntagmatic and paradigmatic, these are the axis. Now, the paradigmatic axis is read vertically and paradigmatic relations are concerned with substitution. A paradigmatic relationship refers to the relationship between words that are the same parts of speech and which can be substituted for each other in the same position within a given sentence.

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|               |      |           |           |
|---------------|------|-----------|-----------|
|               |      | pricey    |           |
| Structuralism | Hari | got       | costly    |
|               | Jane | bought    | expensive |
|               | John | purchased | costly    |
|               |      |           | cars      |
|               |      |           | dresses   |
|               |      |           | furniture |

Semiotics

Structuralism

Syntagmatic

Paradigmatic

I have used the name Jane, but you can as well as use John same part of speech, you can also use the word Hari. Now, here we have a set of verbs, same part of the speech, vertically. So, we are talking about paradigmatic, got, bought, liked, loved, you can also use a word like purchased, all referring to the same part of speech. Let me remove liked and loved, you know in order to make it more consistent.

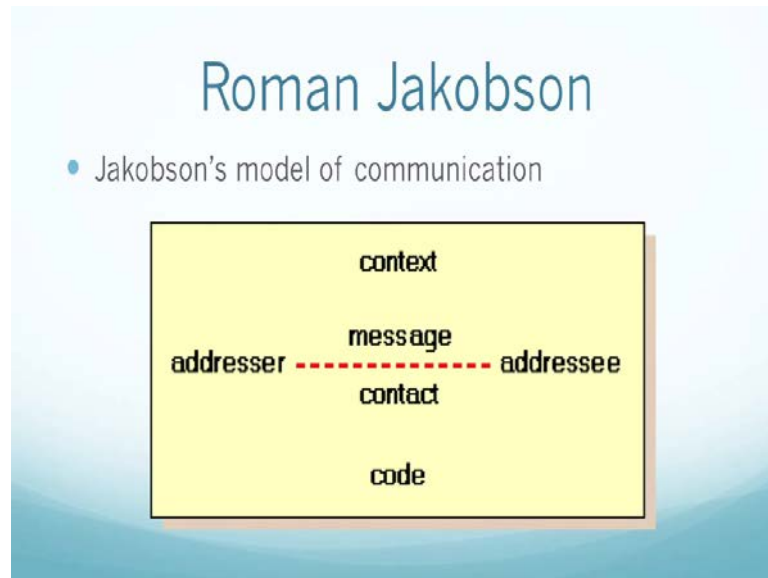
So, she got, bought, purchased, all these things suggest the same thing, all these words suggest the same thing, here the act of buying. At the same time, we can use words like costly expensive and let me remove vintage from here, let me replace it with something like pricey. Again adjectives and suggesting the same meaning more or less, here we have same set of common nouns, cars, dresses, furniture, etcetera.

So, this is your, a set of paradigmatic relationship, a syntagmatic relationship on the other hand refers to the relationship a word has with other words that surrounded. The syntagmatic axis should be read horizontally, syntagmatic relations are concerned with sequences. Now, in the table here paradigmatic relations are shown vertically and syntagmatic relationship horizontally.

So, let us look at this. Let us try to sort it out, paradigmatic, syntagmatic. Now, Jane bought a pricey, a costly or you can say, pricey, costly, expensive dresses. So, let us say costly and here, dresses can be as well be substituted by cars or even furniture. So, you get the meanings of, so here horizontally you have the syntagmatic relationship. And all

these words from these vertical tables, paradigmatic table structures, anything can be used here and it will estimate sense. Now, let us move on to another great semiotician, linguist, Roman Jakobson and this is the way he gives us his table, his chart.

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Jakobson's model of communication, addresser in there, and addressee, message or contact or code is transferred from addresser to addressee. There is a code, the message is coded and it always takes place in the context. Now, this model means that every act of communication requires someone who sends the message and someone who receives it; that is the message itself.

Knowledge of the context in which the message is conveyed, knowledge of the code and a method of context, so that is our model of communication; that is every act of communication requires someone who sends the message. So, the addresser someone who receives it addressee, the message itself is very important. What is the message you are trying to convey, knowledge of the context in which the message is conveyed knowledge of the code and a method of contact.

You can look at any number of messages and modes of communication and you will understand that meanings become clearer, when the addresser and the addressee understand the codes and the convention and the context of the message. This model directs our attention or rather points towards the ways in which messages vary according to their emphasis on a particular aspect of the communication situation, this is important.

So, for instance look at an example like, it is hot in here. So, this is I am the addresser and the addressee may respond. So, do you think, we should open the window, now this communication this set of communication or exchange rather can take place and in any number of contexts. And whatever, you want to derive from it, whatever the kinds of meaning you want to derive from it, it will depend on the context, it is just a simple example.

Now, Charles Sanders Peirce his system is much more detail and though both Charles Peirce and Saussure emphasized on the rule govern characteristics of signifying systems. And we have to understand that for both Saussure and Peirce language is a rule governed system and therefore, we keep on referring to Peirce's model of icon a systems of signs icon index an symbols.

As we have been talking about an icon resembles it is object and an index is connected to it is object, because the interpreter recognises, connecting functions, for example, understand that when a finger points towards something we know where to look. So, that is index, Pierce also talks about the interpretant and the object. The sign stand for something it is object to someone, the way sign for the object is understood by a particular someone is the interpretant. So, it is the way sign for the object is understood by a particular someone is that becomes your interpretant.

Remember Pierce also suggested a quite a controversial idea or rather a startling idea, man himself is a sign. Each human subject is constituted in language and by language, we all or we are all the sum total of our utterances and thinkers, such as Jacques Lacan, and Michelle Foucault. They have all derived from these ideas, all their theory, many of their theories are derived from this idea that we are all the sum total of our utterances.

So, one of the most significant contribution of structuralism and semiotics to literary studies is the concept of rule govern production and consumption of text. This we have to remember rule govern and this can be applied to works of literature as well as any other texts like films. So, it is all governed by certain rules, how they are produced and how they are consumed by the audience, by the receivers, by the readers.

Meanings can only be expressed through system of relations and all communication is necessarily systematic. Now, coming to Umberto Eco and his, a theory of semiotics Eco defines a sign system as anything that can be used to lie. So, for instance, the way

advertisements use signs to sell a product and it is an act of lying, language is one such system. So, for Eco in a theory of semiotics, semiotics is in principle that discipline studying everything which can be used in order to lie.

So, lying is an important factor in many of the signs and particularly, an advertisement in bill boards, in written and electronic media that we come across often and in other aspects of life as well. So, signs which can be used in order to lie. So, this is a famous quotation from Eco and his, a theory of semiotics that semiotics is in principle, the discipline studying everything which can be used in order to lie.

If something cannot be used to tell a lie conversely, it cannot be used to tell the truth it is very interesting to note that, it cannot in fact, be used to tell at all. So, signs lie as well as speak the truth that is the idea. Now, Eco is one rare semiotic theorist, who also wrote a novel in 1983, several phenomenon of coming together of creative writing as well as theory. And Eco is one of those few theorist, who has managed to attain or achieve this, extraordinary feat.

In 1983, he wrote an extremely well known and popular novel, *The Name of the Rose*. Now, obviously, Eco here refers to Gertrude Stein's Verse a rose is a rose is a rose is a rose, which conveys the most elementary kind of information. Nevertheless, the message gives the impression of saying something that is semantically rich and therefore, highly ambiguous. So, that is at the centre of this idea, a rose is a rose is a rose is a rose, it is elementary, at the same time, semantically extremely ambiguous, it is loaded with meaning. So, that is way he derives his title from.

So, the action of *The Name of the Rose* and it is set in 14th century A D and it is set in an Italian monastery. There is a murder committed and among called William of Baskerville, he is someone to solve that murder. So, it is sort of a murder mystery also. Central to the action is a missing manuscript and interestingly that manuscript is Aristotle's book on comedy, which may or may not exist. It is mentioned somewhere in the poetics however, the existence of that manuscript is suspect. And our hero in *The Name of the Rose* is also after that he is looking out for that bug.

Now, although this novel stands on it is own as a detective novel or murder mystery and it is a very entertaining work. But, generally it is seen as a questioning of truth, a work that questions the nature of truth. Particularly, from theological, philosophical, scholarly

and historical point of view and semiotics play an extremely important part in unravelling the plot. I would like to quote an excerpt from *The Name of the Rose* just to give you an idea, what an entertaining and how richly ambiguous the novel is.

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## The Name of the Rose

- Until then I had thought each book spoke of the things, human or divine, that lie outside books. Now I realized that not infrequently books speak of books: it is as if they spoke among themselves. In the light of this reflection, the library seemed all the more disturbing to me. It was then a place of a long, centuries-old murmuring, an imperceptible dialogue between one parchment and another, a living thing, a receptacle of powers not to be ruled by a human mind, a treasure of secrets emanated by many minds, surviving the death of those who had produced them or had been their conveyors."

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A living thing a receptacle of powers not to be ruled by a human mind, a treasure of secrets emanated by many minds, surviving the death of those, who had produced them or had been their conveyors. Now, we started today's talk with talking about Charles Peirce and we have been talking about Saussure works also, so just to give a rounding off. So, Pierce's semiotics and Saussure's semiology have been influential in the studies of the verbal arts.

Now, in the article art as semiotic fact John McCroskey, he is another great semiotician, he uses the semiotic framework for the work study of art. And tells us that the work of art should be considered as a sign composed of a signifier and a signification, where signification is an aesthetic object, registered in the collective consciousness. Critics have also discussed how visual semiotics can be applied to folk art songs and theatre.



And theatre as a medium is considered by these critics for studying the semiotic structure, which includes sets, design, décor, complete, mesosoft, theatre, including costume, actors bodies, actors voice, music, etcetera. And thus, an attempt is made to lay bear the the rules underlying the systems. So, we are going back again to the idea that every sign is a set of systems. Language is a set of systems, rule governed behaviour this is your take way from this lecture.

For semiotics human cognition is revealed in systems of signification, such as language, narrative and culture. For semiotics, there can be no direct experience of natural meaning, but everything is mediated through language and narrative. Meaning of course, is a product of a signifying system. Again, in the works of the anthropologist Claude Levi Strauss, the relationship between language and myth and now we are moving to the area of myth, we have been talking about Levi Strauss for quite a while in this course.

And he is a structuralist, he also gave us an understanding on a nature of myths, how myths operate. So, for Levi Strauss thus relationship between language and myth occupies the central position. While, discussing his notion of the savage mind, the primitive mind, he suggests that the nature of that mind reveals itself in their structures of it is myths as much as in the structure of it is language.

Now, French semiotics developed from Russian formalism and Prague structuralism made a major contribution to the study of literary texts, during the mid and the late 1960's in his work structural anthropology. Levi Strauss insists that language itself remains this semantic system Par Exelon, it cannot but signify and exists through signification.

While, discussing his notions on myth, Levi Strauss indicates that myth has obvious connections with language itself to be known a myth has to be told, it is a part of human speech. So, this is what, this is how significant language is in the works of semioticians. Everything is mediated through language and language is a set of signs. So, this is what we understand and we will continue in our next lecture, again which will be on semiotics.

Thank you.