



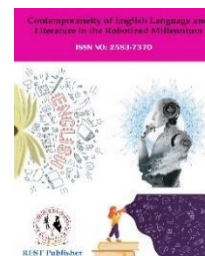
Contemporaneity of English Language and Literature in the Robotized Millennium

Vol: 4(4), December 2025

REST Publisher; ISSN: 2583 7370

Website: <https://restpublisher.com/journals/cellrm/>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.46632/cellrm/4/4/1>



Saussure's Influence on Structuralism and Post-Structuralism in Literary Criticism: A Research Review

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Abstract: The research paper pours over the influence of Saussure on Structuralism and post-Structuralism in the context of literary criticism. This paper thoroughly examines his ideas how they paved the way for these concepts in the field of literary criticism and theory. Primarily, Saussure asserted that language is a structure/system of signs rather than a mere list of words or mirror of reality and this notion becomes the fundamental argument for both structuralism and post-structuralism. The research paper aims to find out how his insights and innovations brought out change and contributed the literary criticism through the emergence of these movements. His study of literary elements like sign, signifier and signified, langue, and parole influenced the perspective of literary theorists and critics to the literary criticism.

1. INTRODUCTION

It is a slight difficult to define and interpret criticism because it has multiple meanings and definitions into different contexts. It has a long history as human understanding accelerated through the veins of the history and time. It emerged along with the philosophy, literature and the culture of the human civilization. It has been always topic of the discussions at the level of every situation and time in the historical context and present situation of the event and condition. While it got applied in the literature of the particular civilization then it emerged as the literary criticism. M.H Abrams talks about the literary criticism and he depicts that literary criticism is a term for studies concerned with defining, analyzing, classifying, interpreting, and evaluating the works of the literature (Abrams 49-50).

When it is studied further, there is the emergence of its various categories and types according to the context of the subject. For instance, there are feminist literary criticism, Marxist literary criticism, eco-criticism etc. In its discussion in the historical context, there are various components, concepts, elements of it which deal according to period and the passage of time. Structuralism and post-Structuralism are of the major components of the literary criticism and they came into existence according to historical situation of the criticism. There were various critics and theorists who contributed in the literary criticism according their interest and area of study. Saussure was one of those eminent theorists and critics who contributed in the literary criticism, language, literature and the theory on a great level. He left his significant influence upon the structuralism and post-structuralism in the context of literary criticism.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research paper, having involved a qualitative and theoretical approach, is descriptive and analytical in nature. Primarily, the study brings out the conceptual analysis Saussure's ideas and secondly, the concepts of structuralism and post-structuralism have been rigorously analyzed.

Saussure's Influence on Structuralism: Structuralism is one of the major movements and concepts which emerged in the literary criticism as per the historical conditions. In literary criticism, to some extent, it is a response to contemporary literature, which had purposefully examined the limitations of meaning and searched for stylistic effects in deviations from all forms of language, literature, and social activities in the process of "defamiliarization." Because of its focus on codes and structures, structuralism rejects the idea of literature as a simulation of the world and instead examines its experimenting with a culture's language and codes. Structuralism is basically a critical method which reads text as structures of interrelated signs in which meaning arises from the underlying structures, patterns, and codes that configure them as constituent of a larger cultural and linguistic system. Literature for structuralist critics is appreciated for its analysis of the structuring procedures by which we

organize and realize the conventional nature of our social world. It has a very close relation with the 'Formalism' and the formalists used devices as imagery, rhythm, syntax, meter and their 'Defamiliarization' devices to find out the meaning of the work of literature. After that, the structuralists did the same as the formalists did with the literary works in the context of meaning. Structuralism in fact has its roots in the thinking of the linguist Ferdinand de Saussure.

Saussure's approach to language is quite different from that of nineteenth-century philologists. Saussure pursued a synchronic linguistics in opposed to a 'historical' - diachronic linguistics that examines developments in individual languages through time. He talks about the study of language on the basis of the 'Sign.' The signals that make up the circuit code between the two individuals "unlock" the contents of each person's brain. Body and spirit, or the recto and verso of a page of paper, are the signifier and signified. Saussure has already claimed the arbitrary relation among linguistic signs and concepts. He states, "The connection between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary" (Saussure). Its two parts are inextricably linked; one cannot live without the other. Thus, a linguistic sign does not link a name and a thing, but a concept (signified) and an acoustic image (signifier). This whole structure of the language further made the structuralism possible. As a result, language is a system of interconnected things. But it is also what makes meaning conceivable. It not only delimits a sign's spectrum of use, which is required since an isolated sign might be used for absolutely anything or nothing without first being differentiated from another sign (Ghosh 1).

In the context of the structuralism and the study of the language, there is the structure of the language and Saussure also claimed that language has its own structure which helps us to understand the meaning of the text. Through the language of the text, the text creates its own structures and compositions.

Linguistic structure is only one part of language, even though it is an essential part. The structure of a language is a social product of our language faculty. At the same time, it is also a body of necessary conventions adopted by society to enable members of society to use their language faculty. Language in its entirety has many different and disparate aspects. It lies astride the boundaries separating various domains. It is at the same time physical, physiological and psychological. It belongs both to the individual and to society. No classification of human phenomena provides any single place for it, because language as such has no discernible unity. (Harris 11)

The structuralism has the structures of the language itself which are employed by the language in the text. Saussure focuses on language, which he defines as "a system of signs that communicates ideas." defines the relationship between two components that make up the overall phenomena of language (in French, langue). 'Parole' refers to specific actions of speaking and putting languages into practice, whereas 'Langue' refers to a system of sign distinctions. It refers to the abstract system of language that is internalized by a given community (Ghosh 4)

Structuralism in literary criticism is partially a reaction to modern literature, which had deliberately explored the limits of meaning and searched for stylistic effects in the deviations from all sorts of conventions of language, literature, and social practices in the process of defamiliarisation. In its focus on codes and structures, structuralism rejects the concept of literature as imitation of the world and instead analyses its experimentation with the language and codes of a culture. Literature for structuralist critics is valued for its inquiry of the structuring procedures by which we organize and realize the conventional nature of our social world. (Ghosh 5)

Saussure has contributed in the structuralism by perceiving the meaning through the language's structures and contradictions of the language. He also claimed that language is arbitrary and it also changes the meaning according to the context.

Saussure's Influence on Post-Structuralism: Like structuralism, post-structuralism is also the historical condition of an idea which is transformed from one idea to another with the extension or the opposition. When Saussure played his significant role in the structuralism, then after some time the, the roots of the post-structuralism started to emerge through the language. Post-structuralism refers to a wide range of critical viewpoints and techniques that supplanted structuralism as the dominant critical approach in the 1970s the radical new approach to dealing with language and other systems of signification. Derrida slammed the methodical, pseudo-scientific approach and pretensions of the strict form of structuralism—derived from Saussure's concept of language structure and represented by cultural anthropologist Lévi-Strauss—by asserting that the notion of a systemic structure, whether linguistic or otherwise, presupposes a "centre" that serves to organize and regulate the structure. (Abrams 238)

The structuralism was in the process of taking shape in itself, and there were also the thinkers who departed from structuralism to post-structuralism. Chief of them were, Michael Foucault, Derrida, and Althusser who traveled from structuralism to post-structuralism. They were the philosophers who modified the various aspects of the classical structuralism. Their objective was not to destroy the base of the structuralism; they were to explore new things and ideas what had been established before them. They were able to transform the aspects of the structuralism because there was Saussure's analysis of every aspect of the structuralism and the language. The philosophers created new foundations of the post-structuralism on the basis of the milestone of the structuralism. The structures of the text and its linguistics contradiction enhanced the practice of the deconstruction which became the soul of the post-structuralism (Lundy 76-78).

Saussure did not directly work upon the post-structuralism; he prepared a ground for the new foundations upon the structuralism. The post-structural approach is renowned for its use of the linguistic turn to provide a critical evaluation of normative notions in classical philosophy. Inner-conceptual conflicts, according to Derrida, must inevitably be hidden by texts as their writers attempt to establish multiple truth claims. Deconstruction is his term for the reading technique of identifying the flaws and fissures in one's own thinking and self-understanding. The philosophical aspects of the post-structuralism and deconstruction are structured upon the internal contradiction and the inter-conceptual conflicts of the language which were identified and found by Saussure (Finkelde 1245-1247).

The post-structuralism represents a shift away from structuralist ontologies of the social world, such as Marxism, structuralist anthropology, and psychoanalysis, in which basic social, cultural, or psychological structures are seen to restrict human behaviour severely. Post-structuralism maintains structuralist concerns about power relations while emphasising the importance of knowledge and textual processes. Here Saussure gives the understanding of the arbitrariness of the language in which the meaning of the text becomes contextual. Post-structuralism encompasses a variety of related interpretations of the link between power, language, and knowledge, all of which share the belief that information is always contextual, incomplete, and fragmented, but never neutral, and influences power relations between individuals or groups. Post-structuralists deny the idea of a singular "truth" and criticise major ideas or systems of thinking that claim to have discovered it, such as religion, science, and social scientific realism. They also propose that this power-knowledge connection has implications for subjectivity and identity (Fox 3-4).

Derrida also provided post-structuralism with a critical perspective on how logocentric claims can be made and justified. He argued that one-way users of language attempt to overcome the limitations and circularity of signification (the bean/kidney problem described earlier) is to define concepts not in terms of what they are, but through their difference from other things. Specification can be enhanced through "binary oppositions" such as hot/cold; good/evil; health/illness; and male/female. Derrida suggested that logocentric claims to know the truth about how the world is (or how it should be) - be they derived from art, religion, science or a political dogma - will take one or more of these binary oppositions and privilege or elevate in status one pole of the opposition, ascribing to it some greater value, while downgrading or excluding the other pole. Thus, in biomedicine, "health" is valued over "illness", while in patriarchal cultures, male is valued over female, and in racist societies, one ethnicity is privileged over another. (Fox 5)

Derrida tried to make us understand the idea of the binary opposition with the example of the health and illness. They are inter-related. On the other hand, Saussure tried to show that binary opposition. He said that the word 'cat' has the meaning because of its 'catness' means it characteristic. It is also different from the word 'bat'. He strengthened the root of the post-structuralism in his theory of binary opposition.

3. CONCLUSION

The literary criticism has its various elements and categories which help it to define, interpret and analyze the work of literature. It is a very significant part or the helper of literature which helps to explore new techniques of writing. Saussure has contributed significant ideas and theories in the literary criticism. He had a great influence not only the components of criticism but also upon the literary criticism. After the structuralism, there were various ideas and theories were established and emerged because Saussure had given the milestone to the literary criticism. He had equally influence upon the structuralism and post-structuralism.

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