REVIEW ARTICLE

UNDERSTANDING THE CONCEPT OF MEANING: A CONTRASTIVE STUDY OFSTRUCTURALIST AND POST-STRUCTURALIST PERSPECTIVES

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	Meaning has been one of the primordial issues of concern because of its enigmatic nature not only in the Oriental Philosophy but also in the Occidental tradition.Initially rationalism and empiricism dominated the ambit of analytic philosophy, and it is not an exception to these impacts. Later on, the concept has been dealt with structuralist and post-structuralist perspectives. The paper undertaken hereby aims at conducting a contrastive study on the conception of the problem of meaning approached by two schools of philosophy: structuralism and post-structuralism. On one hand, it deals with the issues attempted by Saussure, Barthes, Bloomfield, Louis Hjelmslev and Jakobson, whereas on the other hand, those by Foucault and Derrida. Furthermore, it strives to delve deep into the points of contact, similarities and differences between them on the aforementioned issue. Whereas, for the structuralists, meaning arises from the functional differences between the elements (signs) within the system (langue). On the contrary, post-structuralists view the signification of meaning as an infinite and perennial process and meaning is the result of a play of 'différance'.

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INTRODUCTION

The concept of meaning has been one of the most enigmatic phenomena not only in the eastern philosophy of language, but also in the western tradition. As far as the eastern philosophy is concerned, philosophers like Pātanjali, Pānini, Bhartrhari, Katyayana have dealt with the issue of meaning. In the western philosophy, stalwart semiologists like Ferdinand de Saussure, Frege, Bertrand Russel, Wittgenstein, Austin, Paul Grice and many others have approached the problem of meaning from different theoretical standpoints."Meaning is the sense of linguistic expression, sometimes understood in contrast to its referent in Linguistics and Philosophy"-Encyclopaedia Britannica. The problem of meaning has always been a primordial philosophical concern in the analytical-philosophical tradition. Semantics and semiology are the two disciplines that attempt to unravel various dimensions of sense and reference which are manifested in language, one of the media of referring man, knowledge, and its world. Semantics, the study of meaning, emphasizes on the relationship between signifiers: words, phrases, signs, symbols and their denotation. In addition, it is that discipline which employs several strategies for comprehending the human expression through language.

The second discipline, Semiology, is the study of the process of meaning-making which includes the study of signs and sign processes, indication, analogy, metaphor, symbolism, signification and communication. Initially, rationalism dominated the ambit of analytic philosophy, and meaning is not an exception to this influence. To these thinkers, Signs are considered to have their genesis in the mind which is innately capable of meaning-making faculty. Thereafter, the empiricism pervades impeccably into the philosophy of language which upholds the idea that meaning is constructed with the sense experience of the signs at play and accordingly knowledge is acquired regarding the sensible world. Then, the next plethora of structuralist philosophers make their presence felt by taking up the issue of meaning emerging from the very system of language. In other words, they talk of meaning as fixed in the very structure of the language, society, world, knowledge, and so on. The most avant-garde and radicals of philosophers are the post-structuralists who rejected the very notion of the existence of the signs. They approach meaning in terms of their multiplicity, difference, infiniteness, deconstruction, which is in opposition to what structuralists stand by.

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PRE-STRUCTURALIST PERSPECTIVE

It is assumed to be a general notion that names have some attributive meanings to the persons they suggest in many civilizations.

So far as the Greek tradition is concerned, Socrates, Plato and Aristotle have dealt with the issues like whether the names are conventionally and arbitrarily assigned to individuals or there is a natural and inherent correlation between the names and individuals they designate. From a conventionalist perspective Socrates claims that there is no inherent connection between the names and individuals, rather it is based on convention, and hence arbitrary in nature. The function they perform is "to distinguish one thing from another, one person from the next". For instance, the name "Hermogenes" distinguishes the individual Hermogenes from other individuals (Harris and Taylor, 1989, p.6). This notion of the function of the names can be pertained to the concept of 'difference' as proposed by Saussure in the twentieth century, which was later tackled by Derrida, with the concept of "defferance"; albeit in an another vein.

Saussure's work as manifested in *A Course in General Linguistics,* which constitutes the origin of the modern structural linguistics, is a development of the Greek pre-structuralists, late seventeenth and eighteenth century theory of language, especially that of Locke and Condillac. To these thinkers, there is an intimate connection between material objects in the real world and the languages that we use to talk about those objects and their interrelations. In *Essay*, Book III, Chapter II, Locke's thesis is that "words signify ideas". There are four statements to this thesis. They are as follows

- …words come to be made use of by Men, as the signs of their Ideas.
- The use then of words, is to be sensible Marks of Ideas; and the Ideas they stand for, are their proper and immediate Signification.
- Words in their primary or immediate signification stand for nothing, but the ideas in the Mind of him that uses them.
- That which words are the Marks of, are the Ideas of the Speaker.

According to Aarsleff (1983, pp 604-05), Locke's argument is directed against the theory of knowledge and the conception of language in *Essay* published in 1960.The relationship of the sign to the signified is arbitrary. In the essay entitled "Leibniz on Locke on Language," Aarsleff points out that Leibniz rejects the doctrine of the arbitrariness of signs as well as the notion that the significance of words is determined by natural necessity. For Leibniz, as Aarsleff states, words and language are the "mirrors of the mind" (p.69) whereas in Locke's *Essay, Book III*, it is opined that signification of words is anything other than what is there in the mind of the individual user. For him, language becomes an obstacle to understanding and to the acquisition, progress and spread of knowledge. His telementational conception of communication, which upholds the notion of conveyance of the ideas from the mind of one individual to another, is derived originally from Aristotle.

By the early sixteenth century the standard definition of 'significare' was 'to represent some thing or some things or in some way to the cognitive power'. In the foregoing discussion, a distinction is made between the linguistic and non-linguistic signs like smoke or footprints (Thomas, 1995).

Linguistic signs are further classified as natural and conventional signs. One kind of natural linguistic sign is inarticulate sound i.e. laugh or groan; which cannot be conventionally written, but are significative elements. On the contrary, articulate conventional signs are significative instrumentally. In *Essai* (1746), Condillac rejected the argument posed by Locke that the imperfections of language could be remedied by giving definitions to all potentially misleading terms (e.g. names of mixed mode). Rather, Condillac argues that in order for us to understand the true meaning of names for complex ideas we must 'reduce the ideas to simple ideas from which they were composed and then follow the successive steps of their generation' (De l'art de penser: 118). The unique thing in Condillac is that he insists on tracing the history of the meaning of a word in order to come to an understanding of its present signification (Harris and Taylor, 1989, p. 140). Here the great philosopher is stressing on the etymological investigation into the meaning of a word.

In the foregoing debate, with regard to reduction of the complex ideas into simple ideas, it can be argued that although there is the possibility of fragmenting the idea of the 'gold' which is a concrete thing: can be touched, can be felt, can be seen etc. but a complex idea like "idea' itself is next to impossible so far as the reduction of complexity to the simplicity is concerned. Apart from it, another crucial argument could be posited, that is, the concept of 'idea' will vary from person to person along with some modalities. Thus, the issue of relativity with respect to the meaning of an idea pops up.

Condillac claims that without the use of the language man cannot have voluntary control over his faculty of reflection including other mental faculties. Here, one would disagree with the very initial part of the thesis that without the application of language it would have been just impossible for man to have voluntary control over his own reflection. An instance could be drawn here from the pre-historic man who, despite the incapability of using language verbally, could employ the reflection with dexterity. To support this claim, he distinguishes between three types of signs: accidental, natural and institutional (artificial). Accidental signs are those which connect the circumstantial things with our ideas. Natural signs are those involuntary responses like the cries and gestural expressions to certain sensations, reflexes and desires that Nature makes us to act. On the contrary, artificial signs are voluntary creations: like conventionally naming an object 'tree' for its external manifestation[1]. Since they are chosen by an act of free will; in other words, by voluntary control, they 'bear only an arbitrary relation to our ideas' (Essai, p.2 & 4).

The signs that are 'perfectly arbitrary' may not be comprehended; for they are not analogous. It is the analogy

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[1] Ibid, p. 141

which makes up the whole art of languages (Logic, 389-90).In the aforementioned statement, what Condillac is trying to predominantly focus on is that signs in our instituted languages could not be arbitrary, because they would not be comprehensible. Here, he is rather talking about a chain of natural analogies in all languages to the natural gestural and vocal signs. Therefore, he vehemently rejects the idea of arbitrariness of the sign refuting his own prior thesis.

In the book (Grammaire: p. 365-66), Condillac argues that in comparison to the natural signs, artificial and institutional signs are the creations of man's individual responses. In other words, they are neither being given by nature nor are being gifted by God. His theory views arbitrariness as a hindrance to understanding. While Locke opines arbitrariness as an essential feature of signs, Condillac views contradictorily natural analogy as the primary principle which governs signs and arbitrariness interferes as an occasional flaw."Finally, we shall know how to use words when analysis has enabled us to acquire the habit of looking for the chief meaning in their first use, and all others in analogy" (Logic: 399). He hails arbitrariness responsible for the existence of many languages in the world rather than a single one derived from the original. Depending on the natural analogies a particular language has better or worse grammar, and more transparent or obscure vocabulary. This issue has been taken up by Humboldt in the concept of his 'ideal language' in which he considers Sanskrit as a 'near perfect language'. It is because there is less arbitrariness and elements are more motivated owing to analogy.

Thus, the development of ideas and of the faculties of the mind had to be perceptible in these languages where the original meaning of a word was understood and where analogy provided all the others. As long as language is analogically derived from the original language it will be a perfect vehicle for communication. Because the principle of analogy is applicable to the natural languages that are directly derived from the natural signs there will be less discrepancy between a signified and signifier. Consequently, meaning is conveyed in a smooth manner and thereby the process of communication becoming efficient. The basic distinction which leads to the difference of opinions between two stalwarts is that Locke is basically an empiricist while Condillac is a rationalist. To the former, ideas emerge from the sense experiences and get transformed into knowledge in opposition to the latter's stance, i.e. ideas are innately originated.

STRUCTURALIST PERSPECTIVE

To the structuralists, including Saussure, meaning arises from the functional differences between the elements (signs) within the system (langue). Furthermore, meaning is not a private experience, but the product of a shared system of signification. In addition, a text or utterance has a meaning, but its meaning is determined not by the psychological state or intention of the speakers, but by the deep structure of the language system in which it occurs. French linguist Ferdinand de Saussure studied the elements of language from a formalistic and theoretical point of view i.e. as a system of signs. According to him, the linguistic sign unites a concept and a sound image. He views it

as 'a whole that results from the association of a signifier and signified,' and since "the link between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary" concludes that "linguistic sign is arbitrary" (Saussure, 1959, p.67). In other words, the sign is what emerges in the mind on the basis of a chance bonding between the formal part and the meaning part; without the latter playing any determining role with respect to the former (Manjali, 2014, p. 7). Forces of change like time and generation bring about a shift in the relationship between the signified and the signifier.

For instance, Latin 'necare' (kill) became 'noyer' (drown) in French. Both the concept and sound-image changed, but it is useless to separate the two parts of the phenomenon. It is sufficient to state that the bond between the idea and the sign was loosened, and that there was a shift in their relationship in terms of the meaning. Relations and differences between linguistic terms fall into two distinct groups, each of which generates a certain class of values. On one hand, in discourse, words acquire relations based on the linear nature of language because they are chained together. Combinations supported by linearity are syntagms. The syntagm always consists of two or more consecutive units. In the syntagm, a term acquires value only because it stands in opposition to everything that precedes or follows it or to both. On the other hand, paradigmatic relations are defined as "are not supported by linearity". Thus, a paradigmatic relation exists, for e.g. between 'a' and 'the', and one can substitute one for the other in the same syntagmatic slot to produce different and yet meaningful utterances (Saussure, 1959, p.123).

The meaning of a term (a word or expression) does not begin and end with the speaker's experience or intention as in Husserl's theory. The acts of speaking and intending presuppose a language already in place and upon which the speaker must rely on to say anything. Concepts or meanings (signified) are picked out because of the differences in the network of words (signifier or graphic images) that make up the language (langue). Therefore, each word or each structural element of the language finds its relative position or node within the network of difference. In Saussurean terms "in the linguistic system, there are only differences", meaning is not mysteriously immanent in a sign but is functional, the result of its difference from other signs. The meaning of a word is owing to its relative difference from all other terms in the language. A signified is properly comprehensible in terms of its position relative to the differences among a range of other signifiers (word with different positions in the network 'langue' and hence different meanings).Influenced immensely by the Junggrammatiker and contemporary psychology[2], Leonard Bloomfield dedicated most part of his book (Bloomfield, 1933) to Historical linguistics. To his opinion, modern structural linguistics should be studied in terms of

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[2]Bloomfield, Language (1933) asserts himself in the Preface to his thoroughly revised work that his first book, Introduction to the Study of Language (New York, 1914), had mainly been based on the principles of the psychology system developed by Wilhem Wundt [cf. his Volskerpsychologie, Part I, Die Sprache, 3rded. (Leipzig, 1913)

behavior. Emphasizing a synchronically oriented approach to the study of language, he holds

"To study this co-ordination of certain sounds with certain meanings is to study language."

Since his object of concern was parole, he thought it to be directly connected with the communication process. Thus, while summing up the Jack and Jill story which is based on the stimulus-reaction model, he defines "Meaning is the linguistic form as the situation in which the speaker utters it and the response which it calls forth in the hearer." (1933, 139)

Basically, what he is trying to state is that, in other words, meaning emerges from the speaker-hearer interaction, where the response of the hearer is directly grounded on the speakers' stimulus in the form of phonetic unit. So the approach taken up by Bloomfield solely finds its genesis in Behaviorism which out-rightly rejects the mentalistic aspect or Cognitivism.

In his pamphlet *Linguistic Aspects of Science*, Bloomfield opines that "The term 'meaning', which is used by all linguists, is necessarily inclusive, since it must embrace all aspects of semiosis that may be distinguished by philosophical or logical analysis: relation, on various levels, of speech-forms to other speech-forms, relation of speech-forms to non-verbal situations (objects, events, etc.), and relations, again on various levels, to the persons who are participating in the act of communication." (1939:18)

In the aforementioned statement Bloomfield is approaching the problem of meaning from an eclectic approach, integrating the semantic effects on the structure and analysis of linguistic expression which seems to be analogous to the functional interpretation by the Prague School. He argues that there are only the aspects of 'form' and 'meaning' whereby the grammatical function of a given linguistic unit is a property of the form (Bloomfield, 1943). He further concedes that "meaning is the weak point in language study, and will remain so until human knowledge advances very far beyond this present state" (1933:140). According to his view, linguistic study must start from the phonetic element, since the signals are analyzable and preliminary component of language.

Later, the issue has been addressed by the Bloomfieldians like Charles Hockett who defined morphemes as "the smallest individually meaningful elements in the utterances of a language" (Saussure, 1959,p. 123). This definition was challenged by another of Bloomfield's students named Trager who argues that morphemes are "meaningless as well as unfortunately misleading" (Bloomfield, p.79).The differences between the Saussurian and Bloomfieldian approaches to meaning are as following:Firstly, Saussure's approach is cognitive while Bloomfield's is behavioristic. On one hand, the former tackles the issue with respect to the signified and signifier which are both psychologically and socially oriented. On the other hand, Bloomfield considers meaning in terms of Stimulus and response, with the inclusion of the speaker and hearer.
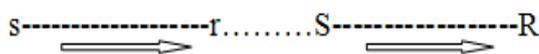
On one hand, he talks of the physical world whereas on the contrary, the language world, and in the mid-way lies the language. Secondly, for the Saussurians, the signification part has been the primordial part. On the contrary, the Bloomfieldians consider meaning as the weak point in Linguistics. Thirdly, the meaning is semiological for the Saussurian while for the Bloomfieldians, it is formalistic, emerging out of the structure of language itself. Saussure was one of the first to show that phonemes are negative, opposable, and correlative entities, which is how they can function to signal different word meanings.

But the end result of Saussure's analysis was merely a phonological inventory; a mechanical sum of phonemes, without any clear exposition of how these phonemes relate to each other as a system or a whole. It is this shortcoming that the new structuralist, Jakobson attempted to redress. Jakobson's contribution to morphology and grammatical semantics can broadly be summed up in two points: the inextricable relationship of linguistic form and meaning and formulation of the concept of meaning as encapsulating the analysis of both constant and invariant meanings. The latter point pertains itself to the continuation of the Saussurean structural principles and later becomes the foundation stone for Pragmatics.

To Saussure, communication takes place when the elements of sound-images (signifiant) and the elements of meaning (signifie) in a sign are invariant across all the contexts in which the sign is used. This invariance holds also for relations of opposition among signs and constitutes the generalized and collectively shared (social) language system (langue). It was of course Saussure's famous dictum that linguistics studies this system rather than the mechanical, voluntary, accidental and variable realizations of speech (parole). Jakobson dissociates himself from Saussure's "preconceived idea that phonic evolution has nothing to do with the linguistic values of the sound", rather he considers signs in a hierarchical structure in a syntagm. He defines phoneme as "a bundle of differential elements".

Hjelmslev's model of sign is an extension of Saussure's bilateral sign model of signifier and signified. Saussure considered a sign as having two sides, i.e. signifier and signified, and also distinguished between form and substance. Hjelmslev's famously renamed signifier and signified as respectively 'expression plane' and 'content plane'. The combinations of the four would distinguish between 'form of content', 'form of expression', 'substance of content', and 'substance of expression'. In Hjelmslev's analysis, a sign is a function between two forms: the content form and the expression form, and this is the starting point of linguistic analysis. However, every sign function is also manifested by two substances: the content substance and the expression substance. The former is the psychological and conceptual manifestation of the sign. The latter is the material substance wherein a sign is manifested. This substance can be sound, as is the case for most known languages, but it can be any material, for instance, hand movements, as is the case for sign languages, or distinctive marks on a suitable medium as in the many different writing systems of the world.

In short, Hjelmslev was proposing an open-ended and scientific method of analysis as a new semiotics. In proposing this, he was reacting against the conventional view in phonetics that sounds should be the focus of enquiry. Somehave interpreted his work as if Hjelmslev argued that no sign can be interpreted unless it is contextualized intreating his functives, 'expression' and 'content' as the general connotative mechanisms (for instance by A. Greimas). For Hjelmslev, the point of view of the linguist on meaning is that of the form of content.

Even if the content substance is important, one has to analyze it from the point of view of the form. Not only do pictures and literature manifest the same organizing principles; more broadly, seeing and hearing, though certainly not identical, interact in surprisingly complex ways at deeper levels of the sign hierarchy which Hjelmslev sought to understand. Claude Levi Strauss is the French anthropologist who applied structuralism and linguistics on anthropology and called it social anthropology. He started doing the structural analysis of narrative and viewed different myths as variations on a number of basic themes in his *Mythologies*. Beneath the immense heterogeneity of myths were certain constant structures that are universal and to which any particular myth could be reduced. Myths can be broken down into individual units called 'mythemes'. Mythemes are like phonemes which acquire meaning when combined together in particular ways. The rules which governed such combinations could then be seen as a kind of grammar, a set of relations beneath the surface of the narrative which constituted the myth's true meaning. These relations are inherent in human mind; when we study the myths we look at not just narrative contents, but the universal operation that structures it. Consequently, structuralism decenters the individual subject, who is no longer regarded as the source nor is he considered to be the end of meaning (Eagleton, 1983, p.104).

One charge that can be levelled against Strauss is that he failed to observe how Jakobsonian linguistics is in comparison with the Saussurean linguistics. Strauss employs one structure for all uses, whereas the essence of Jakobsonian linguistics is that language is not homogenous with respect to the code. Thus, structuralist notions of function and subsystem have either been avoided or have been done away with by the anthropologists. Barthes began his career as a literary critic and introduced a model for semiotic analysis in *Elements of Semiology*. He emphasizes the social motivation of the cultural signs that he analyses as if he were contradicting Saussure's claims concerning the arbitrariness of the sign. While analyzing the folktales, he emphasizes on a crucial point–how choice among alternative codes does transmit information. In a folktale, for instance, it is not the message implied by the sequence of events that has meaning; the choice of which categories of objects and events to include itself conveys information. Besides the paradigmatic relations of items to one another within a code, Barthes has shown us that the codes themselves exist in a paradigmatic relation to one another. He does not focus on the significance of one message versus another within a given code. That is to say, he does not consider what meaning is conveyed by the choice of one over the other.

POST-STRUCTURALIST PERSPECTIVES

Barthes states deconstuctionist "finds the thread dangling from the sweater, pulls it, and watches as the fabric of the garment unravels into the pile of yarn from which it was made." Post-structuralist critics are engaged in the task of 'deconstructing' the text. In other words, 'reading against the grain' or 'reading the text against itself,' with the purpose of knowing the text as it cannot know itself' (Eagleton, 1983).

Post-structuralists tend to see all knowledge–history, language, literature, anthropology, psychology etc. as textual. They deny the distinction between signifier and signified. Concepts are nothing more than words. Thus, signifiers are words that refer to other words and never reach out to material objects and their interrelations. Thus, knowledge is not composed just of concepts, but of words. For instance, word such as 'port' which can mean either 'wine' or 'harbor' can suggest multiple meanings (Derrida, 1976).In holding the shape the structure including the elements, the center limits the movement of "free play" or movement of the elements within the system. This lack of ability to play in philosophical systems ties elements down strictly and does not provide for the questioning and multiplicity of meaning that is the basis of philosophy. Because the center cannot be replaced by other elements within the system.

It also cannot be defined in relation to other things; it is a "transcendental signified" or the ultimate source of meaning-which contradicts the Saussurean viewpoint that meaning is relational and contingent on other elements in the system or structure. The concept of the structure is problematic to the structuralist view of language in that the assumption that the center is the origin of all things within the system makes the center non-relational and irreparable by giving the center what Derrida calls "full presence". Stability, which is a form of fixity caused by the center, is what Derrida calls "presence". Something is fully present when it's stable and fixed, not provisional and immobile. There can be two attitudes towards the idea of play as the disruption of system: nostalgia and disapproval. You can be nostalgic for fixed system and long for a return to the simple beliefs, and can mourn the loss of fixity of meaning.

To indicate the shift in theory, the French philosopher Derrida introduces the word 'différance' to indicate the relation between signifiers as one of both difference and deferral. If a word's meaning is solely the result of its difference from other words, then the meaning (the concept or signified) is not an additional thing 'present' in the sign itself. On the contrary, 'meaning' is the ever-moving play of difference from signifier to signifier, a slipping from word-to-word in which each word retains relations to the words that differ from it.To philosophers like Derrida, the specification of meaning is an infinite and endless process. Meaning, to some extent, always escapes one's grasp- it is always just out of reach, ungrounded, with no origin in the intention of the speaker. Meaning is the result of the play of 'différance', a moment which brings about both 'difference' and 'deferral'.

The notion of discourse has been a recent phenomenon for the analysis of a language. It owes its genesis to a peculiar amalgam of history, historiography and cultural studies that is associated with the work of Michel Foucault who has delved deep into this component of language in relation to ideology and non-referential signification. Unlike the structuralist who sees culture as a static and temporal set of structures, the Foucauldian discourse theorists look at any epoch as having a dynamic and conflicting miscellany of discourses. There are discontinuities in the history of ideas.

People have different ideas in consideration to insanity, illness, and sexuality. He talks of subjectivity as having a political effect. In terms of discourse in relation to knowledge, firstly, discourse theorists conceive knowledge as something not internal to the agent, rather a set of structured statements. Foucault hails these knowledge as 'epistemes'- are the power relationships to which a group enters. So far as meaning is concerned, it is inherently subjective: unlike trees and grass, it could not exist in a world without subjects. Meaning-making process of understanding knowledge is relative as it varies from individual to individual. It follows, therefore, that the attempt to characterize discourse and meaning as something wholly objective and external to subjects is mistaken.

THE DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN STRUCTURALISM AND POST-STRUCTURALISM ON MEANING

- Structuralists do not question the existence of 'reality', i.e. some material, human, or social-economic substratum that lies beneath the 'ideas'. Poststructuralists, on the other hand, do doubt the existence of reality, or at the very least they emphasize the extent to which the widely-understood difference between 'ideas' and 'reality' is one constructed through discourse. In other words, if there is a reality, it may not have bearing on our sense of 'truth' at all.
- structuralists tend to emphasize on the coherence of a system which allows for meaning to be constructed. They interpret literature in terms of a range of underlying parallel with the structures of language, as described by modern linguistics. For instance, the notion of the 'mytheme' posited by Levi-Strauss denoting the minimal unit of narrative 'sense' is formed on the analogy of the morpheme, which in linguistics, is the smallest unit of the grammatical sense.
- The post-structuralists tend to emphasize the incoherenceof the systems of discourses and the tensions and ambiguities created by the existence of multiple systems. They concentrate on a single passage and analyse it so deeply and intensively that it becomes next to impossible to sustain a 'univocal' reading and the language explodes into multiplicities of meaning. Similarly, structuralists tend to focus on how systems set limits to what can be thought, said, meant. Poststructuralists, on the other hand, generally tend to focus on polysemy, that is, the plurality of meaning and, indeed, the tendency for meanings to mushroom out of control.
- Structuralistshave a tendency to be reductive. In other words, they tend to reduce many complicated phenomenon to a few key elements that they argue 'explains everything'. Poststructuralists too are reductive in their own way, but they try to keep in focus the differences that are being ignored in carrying out the process of reduction. These differences, they suggest, create cracks or fissures in the system that can be utilized to challenge or even destroy the systems at work.
- Structuralists are reductive because they are often trying to find their own version of 'universal truths'. They are searching for 'universal structures' that bind all humans together at some level (Chomsky) or at the very least, some basic structures that all members of a given society (or possibly multiple societies) have in common (Levi-Strauss). Poststructuralists have given up the search for 'universal truths'. Whereas structuralists look for things that bind us together, poststructuralists tend to focus on that which makes us different. In their minds, this emphasizes the malleability of human kind—a kind of revival of the existentialist "existence precedes essence" just in a new guise.
- Structuralists are radically humanist. In other words, they tend to suggest the power of systems to structure our thought, world-view, sense of self, etc. Nearly all power is handed over to the system, to the point of being rather deterministic. Poststructuralists are anti-humanists, exactly, since they also focus on the ways that language and discourse structure thought. However, they do tend to try to restore some small amount of power or creativity to the subject. But they reject the notion of reason and the human being as an independent entity.
- In short, structuralists focus on the monolithic structure, that is, the systems of meaning and how it functions. Poststructuralists focus more on the reader or speaker who is operating within the structure in terms of the operation of the discourses.

ANALYSIS

In the foregoing discussion, it can, however, be averred that the whole paradigm of meaning is a problem of attitude among different schools of philosophers. The analytic-philosophic tradition questions the origin of the meaning, process of meaning-making and the products and byproducts created out of the process. The concept of meaning has been a debatable and controversial issue out of which the byproducts come out and which in a way facilitates the study of language. The hey-day of the analytic philosophy was solely dominated by rationalism which upholds the idea that signs are considered to have their genesis in the mind which is innately capable of meaning-making faculty. Thereafter, empiricism plays a pivotal role in the domain of the philosophy of language which views meaning to have its genesis in the sense-experience. To these sets of philosophers, meaning is a component which is either an innate faculty or is emerging out of the sensory experience. The basic distinction which leads to the difference of opinion between two stalwarts is that Locke is basically an empiricist while Condillac is a rationalist. To the former, ideas emerge from the sense experiences and get transformed into knowledge in opposition to the latter's stance, that is, ideas are innately originated.

Then, the structuralist addresses the concept of meaning as emerging from the very system of language. In other words,

they consider meaning as fixed in the very structure of the language, society, world, knowledge, and so on. According to the Saussurian paradigm, meaning arises from the functional differences of the signs within the system. Furthermore, meaning, to Saussure, is not a private experience, but the product of society. On the contrary, Bloomfield rejects the notion of the meaning sprouting out of the very structure of language. Rather, he holds the idea that meaning is the 'weak-point' in language study. Influenced by the behavioristic theory of language, he deals with meaning in terms of a stimulus-response model.

To him, meaning is a 'linguistic form' which emerges out of the speaker-hearer interaction, where the response of the hearer is directly grounded on the speaker's stimulus in the form of phonetic unit. For the Saussurian, the meaning is semiological while for the Bloomfieldian it is formalistic. The essence of Jakobson linguistics is that language is not homogeneous with respect to the code whereas Strauss employs one structure for all uses. The avant-garde philosophers are the post-structuralists who rejected the very notion of the existence of the signs. They talk of meaning in terms of their multiplicity, difference, infiniteness, deconstruction, which is quite antithetical to the structuralists' stance. The French philosopher Derrida introduces the word 'différance' in order to indicate the relation between signifiers as one of both difference and deferral. If a word's meaning is solely the result of its difference from other words, then the meaning is not an additional thing 'present' in the sign itself. On the contrary, 'meaning' is the perennial play of difference from signifier to signifier, a 'slipping from word-to-word' in which each word retains relations to the words that differ from it. Later, language is studied in terms of discourses to get an overall and multi-dimensional aspect of meaning.

Summing up the aforementioned discussion, the structuralists view meaning objectively while the post-strucuralists opine that it subjectively exists in the individual, based on which the ideas of 'deconstruction' and the plurisignification come into existence. Whereas the former talks of structures in terms of its universality, the latter upholds the belief it in terms of particularity. On one hand, the structuralists talk of meaning as absolute, fixed and of coherent structures. On the other hand, post-structuralists view it in terms of its relativeness, infinity, incoherence and thereby having multiplicity of meanings.

CONCLUSION

In the foregoing deliberation, it can be stated that in contemporary linguistics the problem of meaning has become worsen with the progress in the field of applied linguistics. When we make a program to document a dictionary, translate through machines, or to conduct speech analysis, then the issue of meaning comes forte of consideration. Can there be a machine to code all our emotions to understand the intended meaning behind our speech? There have been some recent advancement in the field of neuro-linguistics about which part of the brain gets activated while we are speaking a particular set of sentences, while thinking and so on.

In the field of pragmatics, philosophers like Wittgenstein, J.L. Austin approach the problem from the usage point of view. Wittgenstein opines that "the meaning of a word is its use in a language"; in other words, "only in the context of a proposition has a name meaning."

Austin analyzed the structure of utterances into three distinct parts: locutions, illocutions and per-locutions, which was later labelled as "speech acts" by Searle. He showed the path how to focus on the way in which words are used in order to do things. The question we should ask to ourselves is: whether there is an end to the controversy on the concept of meaning or will be a perennial one. As far as my opinion is concerned, the issue undertaken does not seem to have been resolved with structuralist erudite reflections, neither does it seem to be accomplished with the avant-garde post-struturalist comments. Therefore, it can be concluded that the specification of meaning is an infinite and endless process as posited by Derrida (1976).

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