Structuralism

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Abstract

Each word in language is a sign and language operates as a system of signs. Saussure in his linguistic analysis regards two components for a sign: a phonic component, which is called "signifier" and a mental and conceptual component called "signified". Signified is not one thing, but a concept of a thing, a concept that comes to our mind when we speak the signifier. Therefore, signifier forms the material aspect of the language. Any spoken and written meaningful form is signifier. He distinguished between language and speech and mentioned that language is the system or structure of a language. Language is a series of linguistic rules that people must obey to communicate. The use of this system by people in their life is speech. The same distinction is suggested by structural sociologists between structure and event. In other words, they have separated the abstract systems of rules from single objective events occurring in the systems.

The second distinction by Saussure is synchronic and diachronic axes. Synchronism exists at a given moment. Saussure was in favor of synchronism. In general, structuralism is synchronic.

Keywords: Structure; Discipline; Vision; Saussure; Parsons

Introduction

Each word in language is a sign and language operates as a system of signs. Saussure in his linguistic analysis, regards two components for a sign: a phonic component, which is called "signifier" and a mental and conceptual component called "signified". Signified is not one thing, but a concept of a thing, a concept that comes to our mind when we speak the signifier. Therefore, signifier forms the material aspect of the language. Any spoken and written meaningful form is signifier. He distinguished between language and speech and mentioned that language is the system or structure of a language. Language is a series of linguistic rules that people must obey to communicate. The use of this system by people in their life is speech. The same distinction is suggested by structural sociologists between structure and event. In other words, they have separated the abstract systems of rules from single objective events occurring in the systems.

The second distinction by Saussure are synchronic and diachronic axes. Synchronism exists at a given moment. Saussure was in favor of synchronism. In general, structuralism is synchronic and studies a particular structure and system in artificial and ahistorical conditions.

In these studies, in the hope of explaining the system, the current structure of the previous structures and systems is not followed. Saussure's another influence on structuralism are is arbitrary linguistic signs. A contractual relationship exists between the first level of signifier and the signified thing (agreement on the word tree). The second level of the signified is contractual and selective. There are concepts in each language that is absent in another language (more specified in translation). The universal range of color vocabulary is a completely sign in this linguistic from of the relationship among its constructing units. Any contractual issue is likely to change.

Saussure maintains that language is form not essence. Without this vision, other structuralists' productions were not possible. The important assumption of structuralism is studying the relationship between the interdependent elements of a system not the relationship between independent and self-sufficient essences.

Example: In a language, no word is self-sufficient and free from other linguistic elements.

The book "Method and theory in political science (seventh edition) written by David Marsh/Jerry Ester and translated by Omid Mohammad Haji Yousefi" is concerned with langue, language as a system, and parole, as a set of speech. Langue makes rules and procedures, but parole in the chess behavior in the fact that chess is reached from Iran to Europe is external. On the contrary, anything that is related to the chess system and its rules is internal. If we use ivory beads instead of the wooden ones, we do not make changes in the system, but reducing the number of the beads disorders the play grammar and anything that changes the system.

Structure-Agent in the Penguin English Dictionary means a person who acts (agent) and in the Oxford Dictionary, it is defined as a person who applies the power or makes an impression. Therefore, power is basically related to the idea of the winning of agent or subject over other structure or object. Social and political sciences should study the active and volitional agents, however, at limited levels. On the contrary, natural sciences explain trans-historical structures and what might be called infrastructures.

Social structures, unlike natural structures, are not independent of the activities under their control.

Social structures are not independent of agents' ideas of what they do in their work.

Social structure may be only relatively stable.

The concepts of structure and agent are relevant to questions of power, causation, and political explanation. Thus, they are at the heart of philosophy as well as social and political sciences. Different positions on the structure and agent reflect different kinds of epistemology. Distinct positions emerge according to the ontology and epistemology:

Structuralism

Voluntarism

Structuration

Critical realism

The structuralism perspective in the structure-agent offers superiority to the structure.

Structuralism presents a perspective that can be simple or menopausal. In structuralism, explanations are not founded on motivations, determinations, strategies, and agents' responses, since are considered they spend as a product for the structures, which are finally the determining factors

Structuralism is closely linked with determinism, functionalism and all forms of fatalism.

Criticisms

It usually underestimates people's goal or is completely unaware of it. It does not accept the people's real independence, denies its influence.

It does not depict a picture of the socio-political world and does not draw a distinction between political systems.

It supports fatalism that encourages lethargy.

It is based an infinitely compassionate and pretentious distinction between intellectuals and the masses, which is not viable in terms of logic.

Giddens in structuration theory suggests structure and agent, but by showing that the structure and agent are connected internally in the social practices, he has clearly presented an example of a theoretical development.

Criticism

1. The system has not been developed and described.

2- It redefines the structure which is Giddens' condition suggesting going beyond the dualism of agent and structure.

Critical realism is an explanation from the outside or central structure and the relationship between structure and agent.

They do not consider structure and agent two sides of the same coin, but two springs inside an alloy.

Cybernetics: Science of Control and Communication

Structures are things formed from systematic and patterned relationships of human with each other.

Strauss applied structuralism approach in social sciences that was developed in linguistics (De Saussure, 1857-1912). The singular units of any system becomes meaningful only in terms of their relationship with each other so that make a determined system.

The basis of structuralism thought in social sciences is that social science must penetrate beneath the surface of social life to find the underlying foundation that organizes the superficial phenomena (History of political thought in the twentieth century by Dr. Kamal Puladi).

In France, Althusser, as a structuralist in Marxism severely criticizes Marx's view and regards superficial impacts on infrastructure considerable, contrary to the orthodox view, Marx is a young Marx. He believes that the state structures and the economic ideology have an impact on infrastructure, which is the production relationship. He makes an example of an organic structuralistic relationship. Louis Strauss is the professor of social anthropology, who is among the co-founder of the authenticity of structure in anthropology. His first major work, namely the basic structures of kinship (1949) made him famous in this field.

Jean Piaget, the Swiss psychologist, maintains that the elements of a structure are determined by rules, and the structure is determined according to the rules (Twentieth-century political thoughts of man, p. 280).

Structures are things, which are formed by human beings' patterned systematic relations with each other. De Saussure (1857-1912), the Swiss linguist, began the course of structuralism epistemology.

Levi-Strauss, the French anthropologist, applied structuralism approach in developed linguistics for the social science. In the view of structuralism, the emphasis is that singular units of the system become meaningful only in terms of their relationship with each other so that make a determined system.

The basis of structuralism thought in social sciences is that social science must penetrate beneath the surface of social life to find the underlying foundation that organizes the superficial phenomena (Book by Dr. Kamal Puladi).

Altimeter said that in respect to three economic, political and ideological levels or categories, each one separately had its own history of evolution and conflict as well as internal dynamism.

Contrary to orthodox Marxists, conflicts and changes in society cannot be reduced to a united central conflict. Orthodoxy says that all social, economic, political and ideological phenomena in each period, regenerate only one main conflict.

Structuralistic look in general sense suggests that individuals' all actions are formed in a causal relationship affected by society in the super structural form.

Structuralist researcher pursues two objectives.

Discovering and explaining the deep structure.

Explaining every phenomenon in the direction of its deep structure

Structuralism movements: Dr. Abbas Manouchehri

Mental structuralism that considers individuals' acts in the super structural field and the appearance of both is not a true relationship (like Freud)

Social structuralism (such as De Saussure's issues)

Parsonsian structuralism

Social structuralism (such as discussions of Marxism)

Cultural structuralism (such as Strauss' discussions)

Dr. Yunes Shokrkhah:

European structuralism: it evolved by the ideas of De Saussure and Strauss.

American structuralism: linguist like Noam Chomsky.

Russian structuralism or Russian formalists and formalism that Mikhail Bakhtin is among its greatest theoreticians.

Semiotics and linguistics: language is a device of signs.

Signifier and signified: mental and contractual relationship

Phonemes, single, word, statement, discourse: discourse of each word of a statement is a word. Morpheme is the smallest meaningful unit of language while a word is consisted of a single word like the word Shademani in Persian: Shade+man+i

Consort relationship, substitution, litigant, similarity of meaning sounds:

Being contractual,

European Summary.

In the relation between human and language, language is of priority. The structure of collocation-substitution of the elements of one system does not only apply to language.

Levi Strauss studied culture as a language (as a result of action)

He did not see meaning within a cultural sign, but enclosed in "structural relationship" "relationships of signs with each other".

Rola Baritones also followed the way and with suggesting "signifier systems" such as how to eat, dress wear, the movie, fashion and literature believes that human's mind in each area of life has structure that the analysis of these mental structures is interesting for structuralists. Human mind's structure is evident from his social behavior.

Althusser was the one who first introduced elements of structuralism to Marxism. If the West's recent discourse courses in four discourse forms:

Discourse of liberalism (18th and 19th centuries).

Discourse of welfare state with democracy (from the late 19th century until the First World War).

Speech of totalitarian discourse (after the First World War until the late 1980s).

Discourse of neoliberalism (contemporary period): At this time, we see that the concept of structuralism in the period of totalitarianism discourse went public. The period that the West was the ground of fascism, Nazism, Stalinism and the bipolar system. Structuralism is an image of one-form thought and a framework of research method. It has not been an effective school in the in political sovereignty, but effective in analytical studies. At a dramatic level, in the kind of sin, it has been under the influence of totalitarianism discourse components as the dominant discourse of that period.

The main issue in the discussion of structuralism is the discussion of the human subject and priority of structure over agency. The common point of all structuralistic schools such as linguistics, anthropology, mythology and structural Marxism, is the negation of human subjects and the originality of the structure rather than the agency.

Structuralism is based on the principle that without accepting and applying them in the studies, structuralistic results cannot be achieved. The most important thinkers in the review of the views will be studied.

Structuralism has a fundamental difference with the two streams of thought, subjectivist phenomenology and individualistic activism.

To understand structuralism, the best way is to analyze the elements that the conceptual system founded by them including "social structure", "social relations" and "social elements". Structure is something beyond relationships, since relationships are between two structural elements. While, structure includes both elements and relationships between the elements. However, structure is obtained by a set of relations, but finally cannot be reduced to relationships. The distinction in the concept of "social structure" and "social relations" is crucial. Thus, structuralism is a complex theoretical device that is obtained from disrupting the balance between social structure, social relations and social elements. The Structure must have the characteristic of system so that change in one element causes change in all elements. Each model must belong to a group of transformations that each of them would be adaptable with the same family so that a set of the changes makes a group of transformations. In addition, the mentioned characteristics should be possible to forecast that how the model reacts in case of change in one of its elements. The model must be created in a way that can cover all the observed facts. Therefore, structuralism regards an understanding and analysis of facts and social events that are beyond disturbance and are in search of order and an ancient model that orders social events on the basis of it.

Parsons' theory foundation in 1930 was in response to Marxist theories. Ian Krayp on Parsons' statements said that it is very difficult to understand due to its complexity not deepness. Gey Roche said that Parsons' theory was similar to nested boxes when you open one another is so. He said that Durkheim and Weber deal with meanings and thoughts, but one begins his work from a single thing and the other from a general thing. Parsons theory of action as the common denominator of the theories before his theory. The book "Recognition of social action" was published in 1935.

1. Parsons at the beginning of his general theory of action or system regarded the level of the action itself. He connected action system to social system, namely macro-level. He mostly considered institutions and organizations and is recognized with his speech of the end of his life, namely macro-perspective and structure-perspective.

2. Parsons says about the turmoil in the world and for understanding it, makes speech and defines the outside world in the form of a series of abstract concepts so that we must make these concepts ourselves, then we can speak about the outside world. The presupposition of this abstract conceptualization is that the real world is a systematic system.

3. Despite the seemingly diverse social world, it is organized logically and rationally. Therefore, the theory that is made must be like the abstract concept so that contains logical consistency and internal order.

4. Parsons considers culture in the society as a determining factor and regards that any change in it causes changes in other aspects of society. Society is made and managed by norms, values and beliefs built.

5. The origin of all change is culture, but Parsons did not state exactly how cultures changes, what the mechanism of change in

culture is. However, he mentioned that any change occurs in the long term.

6. Parsons in his final work paid less attention to the personality system, and the fact that man is free is pale in his thought.

7. Parsons believes that the system he has designed also regards dynamics of society, since each action is followed by a reaction the exchange means dynamics.

8. In Parsons, view, social system is different from the society. Social system is more abstract and is true for each set more than two, but society has a tangible and objective concept and is true about a set of specific people with specific cultural boundaries, and country.

9. Functionalism theory is a structure based on three principles, namely unity, necessity, and universality.

Action is apart from behavior of action, which is called "fundamental action" consisting of an actor, means, goals and environment or status. This means that any social actor has some goals and to achieve them, opts the appropriate tools, and certainly, s/he does not select in a vacuum, but environment is quite involved in his/her choice. Here, the environment is material and social factors. Material factors such as the physical appearance of the actor, for example, my slight is not enough good to be a pilot. Since action is not at vacuum and other activists are also effective and each action indeed is a reaction to another action. The concept of action system is formed in Parsons' thought. A set of action systems is the very social system. From here, it leads to the macro level. He states that action systems, not only limit individuals' choices, but also determine them.

Institutionalization

Converting relations into general norms and rules over time (from each actor's action for satisfaction and, ultimately, other actors) from within any system, four sub-systems are created through institutionalization. The fundamental action contains the embryonic form of four sub-systems, which is evolved through institutionalization.

Different levels of Parsons' abstract concepts:

Systems: all creators, absolute universe. This is the highest and most abstract concept.

The second level: living systems.

The third level: action system includes everything in the basic action.

The fourth level: action subsystems, personal, cultural, biological and social systems.

The fifth level: sub-systems of sub-systems.

According to this theory, from the third stage that we enter into human actions and human world, each system has four sub-systems to meet the functional needs to survive. Four neither less nor more because all their vital needs lie in four basic and functional needs, which are reversible.

And this process continues to infinity (subsystems, in turn, are systems and have four subsystems).

Social system is among the subsystem at the fourth level, that because it is system itself has four sub-systems, the political system, issue of politics, socialization system, issue of social psychology,

socioeconomic system, issue of economics and social system, issue sociology including parties, groups and organizations and all social institutions.

The sixth level of subsystems of the subsystems of subsystems

For example, one of the sub-systems is economic and social system that has four subsystems: economic contracts, capitalism, production and organizational subsystems. This branching continues until we reach the most objective and tangible level. For example, if a red ball is on the floor and asks Mr. Parsons what is this? He says in response it is an object (first level of abstraction), red object (second level of abstraction), dark red, bright, pink, round, rubber which is six inches in diameter and is located on the floor (The short answer is ball).

As it can be observed, social system, which is the very society in terms of diameter and abstraction, is lower as a sub-system of action system, but from the macro and micro-perspective the general system of action is at the micro level and social systems are at the macro level. In other words, all the words of Parsons are on two levels, the macro level as society and micro level as action system that at the end of his life, he paid more attention to the macro-level and structures. He mentions some features for each system:

Systems have order and interdependent components.

Automatically and intelligently, systems have order like thermostats.

Systems maintain their borders to each other and the entire.

Systems can be static or ordered in a transformation process.

Each of the systems and sub-systems have their interactions.

The following four functional needs are called "AGIL".

Adaptation: Any system should be adapt itself to the new environment over time.

Goal-attaining: Any system must provide the means to reach the goal.

Integration: Any such should provide coordination and integration between its components and elements.

Latency

Any system must somehow maintain its.

A) At individual level

In biological organism of the human body, actions are conducted according to its needs.

Personality system has the task of achieving the goal.

Each actor by his mental character puts it forward so that achieves his goal by spending energy and effort.

The task of the social system is integration, and aims to prevent people from going astray. It determines the extent of freedom.

Cultural system task is to maintain the model. This is the culture that directs norms, values and beliefs to the activists and prepares individuals for action by creating mental preparation.

B) Macro-level (Social System)

Economic system has adaption task so that society meets its members' needs.

Political system, policy institution has the duty of achieving goal.

The durability of the social system must provide accessories and conditions for its members.

The social system, family institution, has the task of integration. A social system must have the minimum unity concerning values social norms.

The institution of socialization and institution of education has the duty of the protection of model.

To manage the crisis, to prevent discontent – caste differences.

Since these systems are of abstract nature their outer expression is institution. In the book by Ian Craib, four systems have cybernetics relation (interaction) with each other at both action and society levels [1]. In another classification of the needs in the system needs, which are concerned with the environment?

2. Needs that are related to the internal coherence of the system (the fourth cause with subsystem in each system).

From here, Parsons' view on strengthening and reinforcement of social order and cohesion is achieved.

For example, current values   must be coordinated with environmental conditions. Cohen says in explaining this point of view that when a special social system faces problems that values cannot justify changes in the environment or vice versa, when value changes means the wrong consideration of self with the environment. In cybernetics, this is a certain assumption that elements of systems, which have high volume of date control elements with high energy.

According to this view, biological organism is full of energy and gives energy to personality system, which is higher than it and personality system gives energy to the social system, which is higher than it, social system gives energy to cultural system and each of them gives information to the lower ones.

Parsons' Evolutionary Theory

He says every society in the development process goes through three stages:

1. Simple society: non-separated subsystems and therefore one thing have several inappropriate works.

2. Middle society where differentiations exist.

3. Modern society where differentiation is completely implemented.

The criterion for the progress of society is the separation rate of systems, institutions and their functions.

This view is affected by organism evolution by dividing a cell into two cells.

Evolution Process

1. Subsystems are differentiated.

2. When are differentiated, each one perform their function well.

3. Now after the separation, how integrity is created? A more general system of values is established at the highest cybernetic level. In other words, new values are created and integrity maintains.

Society's transition to the middle society is with the advent of writing and from middle to modern, with the appearance of judicial and procedural institutions, it is realized, since with the advent of rights, it found the potential to persist more than ever.

Book of Riterz and Ian Craib and article of Javad Borhani from Afghanistan Development Institute [1,2].

Difference between Action and Behavior

Action is a creative, conscious and deliberate act, but behavior is non-creative and involuntary act influenced by external factors.

Criticism

Structural functionalism theory was severely criticized; Riterz divides them into two parts [2]:

A) Inherent Criticism

1. This theory does not address the history and process of the transformation of society.

2. It is not involved in conflict.

3. Gouldner says that this theory is conservative. In other words, Parsons sees the glass half full and not half empty.

4. This theory does not accept man's free will and considers mankind in bondage cultural and social forces consider such as norms and values, it is deterministic, but a cultural deterministism.

B) Methodological Criticisms

1. This theory is vague, unclear and full of ambiguity. Parsons did not discuss any real society.

2. This theory maintains that their prescription is the release of the pain of all societies over time. However, the best thing that sociology can have hope for is theories limited to one historical period and a moderate range (Mirton).

3. There are no efficient methods for the theory questions, since its concepts are extremely abstract.

4. Logical criticism (Turner and Marianske).

1. Teleology: certainly, justified or unjustified teleology [2]

2. Tautology: tautology meaning expressing the same thing in the premises of an argument. In this theory, the definition of the whole to parts and parts to the whole parts to the whole is used. A social system is characterized by the relationship between its components and its components are defined by their position in the wide social system [3].

This theory declined in the mid-1960s to 1980s, but people like Algzand and Colom introduce five characteristics for structural neo-function theory (anti-individualism, opposition to change, conservatism, idealism and anti-empirical). Neo-functionalists give life to structural functionalism by reforming these five ideas:

Human beings are free and the structures do not determine their behavior.

Neo-functionalism while considering structures, regards the action at the individual level.

Integration and deviation are both possible deviations both in society. Integrity is always a constant reality.

In society, there are both order and conflict.

In the process of differentiation of subsystems, change is also considered.

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