Republic of Iraq
Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research
University of Kufa
College of Arts
Department of English Language

STRUCTURALISM : A Comparative Study

A Graduation Research Submitted to the Committee of the Department of English Language in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the B.A. Degree in English Language and Literature

by

Marwa Khudair AL-Mayali

Supervised by

Asst. Lecturer : Hassan Hadi

2017 A.D 1438 A.H.
الحمد لله رب العالمين الرحمن الرحيم مالك يوم الدين إياك نعبد وإياك نستعين إهدنا الصراط المستقيم صراط الذين أنعمت عليهم غير المغضوب عليهم ولا الضالين

(سورة الفاتحة)

In the Name of Allah, Most Benevolent, Ever-Merciful.

ALL PRAISE BE to Allah, Lord of all the worlds, 2. Most beneficent, ever-merciful, 3. King of the Day of Judgment. 4. You alone we worship, and to You alone turn for help. 5. Guide us (O Lord) to the path that is straight, 6. The path of those You have blessed, 7. Not of those who have earned Your anger, nor those who have gone astray..

(Al-Fatihah)
Acknowledgements

All Praise Be To Allah, Lord of the Worlds for his mercy and Blessings. I would like to express my deepest thanks and gratitude to my supervisor and mentor Asst. Lecturer Hassan Hadi for the inestimable guidance, encouragements, and invaluable suggestions that he equipped me with in order to complete the current work. Many thanks are due to all my teachers at the DEL.
Dedication

To the incessant river of passion and sacrifice my beloved mother, to a great man and source of elegance my father, I dedicate this research.....
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contents</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ayah</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dedication</td>
<td>II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgments</td>
<td>III</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contents</td>
<td>IV-V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>VI</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Section One

### Structuralism

1.1 Sanssurean, Sanssurian Structuralism ................. 3
1.2 Bloomfieldian Structuralism ............................. 3

## Section Two

### Structural Grammar

2.1 Rise of Structuralism ...................................... 5
2.2 The Major Differences between Traditional and The Structural approach ........................................ 7
2.3 Comparative Grammar ......................................... 8
2.4 Ferdinand de Saussure ....................................... 10
2.4.1 Synchrony and Diachrony .................................................. 10
2.4.2 Langue and parole................................................................. 11
2.4.3 Significant and Signifier...................................................... 12
2.4.4 Syntagmatics and Paradigmatics............................................ 12
2.5 Mid-Twentieth-Century Developments of Structuralism.............13
2.5.1 Bloomfield......................................................................... 13

Section three
Structural Linguistics and Structuralism........................................16
3.1 Comparison between the European and American
Structuralism.............................................................................. 17
Conclusion.................................................................................... 18
Bibliography.................................................................................. 19
Abstract

This research is intended to comparatively treat the linguistic movement of structuralism. It is divided into four sections. **Section One** introduces the concept of structuralism, its major figures, and their basic fundamentals. **While, Section Two** aims to investigate the Structural Grammar, covering its background, definitions and other relevant notions, as well as identifying the major differences between this type of grammar and the traditional grammar. **Then, Section Three** sheds light on the significance of American school of structuralism, concentrating on Bloomfield influence. Finally, **Section Four** sums up the conclusion arrived at by this work.
Section one

1. Structuralism

In sociology, anthropology and linguistics, structuralism is the theory that elements of human culture must be understood in terms of their relationship to a larger, overarching system or structure (Lyons, 1981:88).

It works to uncover the structures that underlie all the things that humans do, think, perceive, and feel. Alternatively, as summarized by philosopher Simon Blackburn, structuralism is “the belief that phenomena of human life are not intelligible except through their interrelations. These relations constitute a structure, and behind local variations in the surface phenomena there are constant laws of abstract culture structuralism in Europe developed in the early 1900s, in the structural linguistics of Ferdinand de Saussure and the subsequent Prague, Moscow and Copenhagen schools of linguistics (lepschy,1972:25).

In the late 1950s and early ‘60s, when structural linguistics was facing serious challenges from the likes of Noam Chomsky and thus fading in importance, an array of scholars in the humanities borrowed Saussure’s concepts for use in their respective fields of study. French anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss was arguably the first such scholar, sparking a widespread interest in structuralism (wikipedia.com)
The structuralist mode of reasoning has been applied in a diverse range of fields, including anthropology, sociology, psychology, literary criticism, economics and architecture. The most prominent thinkers associated with structuralism include Levi-Strauss, linguist Roman Jakobson, and psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan. As an intellectual movement, structuralism was initially presumed to be the heir apparent to existentialism (Ibid).

However, by the late 1960s, many of structuralism’s basic tenets came under attack from a new wave of predominantly French intellectuals such as the philosopher and historian Michel Foucault, the philosopher and social commentator Jacques Derrida, the Marxist philosopher Louis Althusser, and the literary critic Roland Barthes. Though elements of their work necessarily relate to structuralism and are informed by it, these theorists have generally been referred to as post-structuralists. (Ibid)

In the 1970s, structuralism was criticized for it rigidity and a historicism. Despite this, many of structuralism’s proponents, such as Lacan, continue to assert an influence on continental philosophy and many of the fundamental assumptions of some of structuralism’s post-structuralist critics are a continuation of structuralism (Ibid).
1.1 Saussurean Structuralism

Characteristic of, or a follower of, the principles of Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913), especially as outlined in his posthumous cours de linguistique generale (paris,1913), first translated by W.Baskin as course in general linguistics ( New York,1959). His conception of LANGUAGE as a system of mutually defining entities was a major influence on several schools of linguistics (e.g.2) the prague school, Geneva school, Glossematics), and most of the theoretical distinctions he introduced have become founndations of lingnistic study. Chief among these are the notions of langua and parole, syntagmatic and paradigmatic, synchronic and diachronic, and significant and signifie.(Crystal, 2008;423)

1.2 Bloomfieldian Structuralism

Characteristic of, or a follower of the linguistic approach of the American linguist Leonard Bloomfield (1887-1949) as exemplified in his book language, published in 1933. Bloomfieldianism refers particularly to the school of thought which developed between the mid-1930s and 1950s especially in America and which was affirmative influence on structural linguistics. It was especially characterized by its behaveiouristic principles for the study of meaning, its insistence on rigorous discovery procedures for establishing linguistic units (Crystal,2008:57).
And a general concern to make linguistics autonomous and scientific (in a behaviorist sense). A reaction against Bloomfiddian tenest was a powerful force in producing generative grammar. Though Bloomfieldianism is no longer fashionable, some of its methods are still widely used in field studies. (Ibid).
Section Two

2. Structural Grammar (Background, Definitions and Notions)

During the nineteenth century, as scholars began studying and comparing large numbers of languages, many of them radically different in structure from Latin. They saw that traditional grammar was inadequate. (Liles, 1971; 5)

2.1 Rise of Structuralism

The dissatisfaction went on into the 20\textsuperscript{th} century scholars were discontent with traditional grammar methods and prescriptions, as they realized the shortcomings of traditional approach. The second quarter of the twentieth century has seen the evolution of a new approach to the study of language (structural linguistics.) (Leipsch, 1972; 25).

Other approaches to language which, in spite of their considerable differences have often been associated under the same label as “structuralist”. These schools of thought have produce an immense literature devoted both to theory and its application to the description and interpretation of specific linguistic facts. (Ibid)
Structuralism can be defined as European critical movement of the mid 20\textsuperscript{th} century. It is based on the linguistic theories of Ferdinand de Saussure, which hold that language is self-contained system of sighs. (Britannica.com).

Saussure’s theories influenced many linguists between world war \textsc{I} and \textsc{II}. In the united states, for instance, Leonard Bloomfield published a comprehensive work entitled simply language, which attempted to lay down rigorous procedures for the description of any language. (Aitchison, 1999; 25)

David crystal defines the term “structural linguistics”: the analysis of language that pays explicit attention to the way in which linguistic features can be described in terms of structures and systemes. Structural grammar, as a general term, is now a largely dated conception of grammatical analysis, though the emphasis which characterized it may still be seen in several areas of applied linguistic studies. (Crystal, 2008; 458).

The structural grammar was produced to analyze how words from and how those are used together to form larger structures or units. It has drawn the line between form and meaning in language. Structural approach has exceeded traditional grammar in several ways. It shifted the attention from prescription to description paring the way for structural grammar prominence. (Ibid).

-6-
2.2 The Major Differences between Traditional and Structural approach.

The most important distinction that can be drawn between the traditional school and the structural school of grammar is related to their approaches to language. The traditional school of grammar is characterized by its prescriptive approach to language, which attempts to prescribe rules of correctness as to how language should be used. Using such criteria as purity, logic, literary excellence. Prescriptive grammars of English include such recommendations as: "I" should be used after the verb (be) e.g. it is I , "whom " should be used as the relative pronoun in object function e.g The man whom I saw (Crystal,2008;410).

The structural school of grammar has a descriptive approach language. In this approach, analysts collect sample of language they are interested in and attempt to describe the regular structures of the language as it is used, not according to some view of how it should be used.(Yule,1996;92).

There are other differences between the two approaches: Traditional grammar is basically concerned with meaning i.e. the meaning of the collection of words portrayed-structural school is interested in the form of language. For example (4), The structuralists would emphasize the noun/verb agreement, while traditionalists would stress that the sentence must be a (complete thought )The traditionalists say “a noun is the name of a person, place , or thing”, yet could not include “blue” and “red” in the list of nouns, though they are names of colors. The structurelist are not satisfied with such prescriptive definition, therefore they provide us with a different descriptive .Method to fix the traditionalist shortcoming through the substitution method suggested by fries.(Ibid)

-7-
This is one of the major differences between traditionalists and structurelist in studying language that will be dealt with through the next section. In the following section, we shall go through the principles and treatments employed by both schools to define nouns, showing the basic issues and drawbacks that might be held against both approaches. And we shall which approach has managed to fix the problem in a scientific way. (Ibid).

2.3 Comparative Grammar

Franz Bopp; development of the discipline is marked by scholars more noted for their technical skill than for their theoretical insight, as pott, Schleicher, find Brugmann and Delbruck, research as ‘scientific’ because it was devoted to the history of language, the study of language change. As this problem could not be dealt with ‘scientifically’. (Lepschy,1972:21-22).

A definite system of correspondences between historically documented language. Schmidt upheld the “wave theory”: linguistic innovations spread from a center (like the waves caused by throwing a stone into a pond), and their spread can be marked on a map. These tenets developed fruitfully with the elaboration of ‘linguistic geography’ and the production of linguistic atlases. (Lepschy,1972:23-25).

A notion basic to structural linguistics, yet not hitherto sufficiently discussed, is that of model. Mathematical models, physical models. A structural description is thus marked by its abstraction and generality, and does not look for the concrete and the particular, as much of traditional linguistics does, or claims it does. (Lepschy,1972;25,26).
Three different senses. Widest sense, every reflection on language has always been structural had to consider the particular utterances as messages particular rules, with reference to a particular code; identify certain bits of speech as manifestations of the same language, more restricted since designates those trends of linguistic thought in this century which deliberately and explicitly tried to gain an insight into the systematic and structural character of language. (Lepschy,1972: 35-36).

Rendered common in linguistic thought some dichotomies such as synchrony diachrony, ‘language, ‘speech’ syntagmatic paradigmatic, ‘signifier’ ‘signified’ developed a functionalist view of language, and whilst taking into account many problems such as those of style, literary language, and historical linguistics, provided a detailed model for phonological analysis. The glossematic trend, in particular on the opposition of form to substance, and on the formal character language. ‘mentalism’ ‘behaviorism’, A. Martinet and R. Jacobson contributed greatly to bridging the gap between European and American linguistics. (Lepschy,1972:37-38)
2.4 Ferdinand de Saussure

**Saussure and the course de linguistique generale**

In 1878 gave lectures entitled memoire sur lesysteme primitifedes voyelles dans les languages Indo-Europeennes such as the so-called law of palatals. He postulates elements of an abstract character which are defined on the basis of their structural function rather than their phonetic shape. In 1916 Ch. Bally and A. Sechehaye published, an elaboration of the notes taken by several members of his audience. A posthumous compilation based on students, as if Saussure’s conceptions were best summarized by a series of dichotomies. In 1957 R. Gödel published a very important book on the manuscript sources of the course. R. Engler began the publication of a monumental critical study.( Aitcheson, 1999:22).

2.4.1 Synchrony and Diachorny

By looking at it at particular point in time, and obviously, this point is not necessarily fixed in the present, but may be as distant from us as the existing documentation allows. Taking into account its changes from one point in time to another one. One the strict separation of the two points of view, the Prague school has been favorable to a synthesis of the two. Correlative terms of which neither can be studied without taking the other into account. Not so the third one: synchrony can in fact be studied quite separately from diachorny. (implicit or explicit) view of elements of a system may change in an isolated way and thus give rise to new systems, though the change itself is non-systematic. (Fromkin et al.,2007:22)
Diachronic structural linguistics has been advocated and practiced with considerable success, Prague circle tradition, the idea that language is continuously changing is in fact a scientific fiction on a higher level of abstraction than the idea of language as a synchronic system. The language we use is an essentially synchronic system even though it involves the use of strings of elements which may manifest themselves, in the spoken utterance, along a time sequence. One must be careful not to identify ‘diachronic’ with ‘historical’ in spite of the fact that traditionally ‘historical linguistics’ does mean ‘diachronic linguistics’. Indeed, from the point of view.(Ibid).

2.4.2 Langue and Parole

Social, individual, abstract, concrete: parole is the individual aspect of language, as it is manifested in the concrete psycho-physiological and social reality of particular speech acts. Is the social part of language, outside the individual speaker, who cannot appears to be at a more abstract level than parole, Saussure goes out of his way to stress that langue is an object of a concrete nature; the signs, as a system, constitute langue, are not (Lepschy,1972:47-48)

Abstractions, but real: langue could correspond to Durkheim’s ‘social fact’ (fait social ) is a psycho-social phenomenon, which exists in the collective conscience of the social group, while parole would correspond to the individual element, as presented by Trade. Copenhagen circle has insisted on the abstract character of langue, and the Prague circle has used the dichotomy to consolidate its own distinction between phonemes and speech sounds (Ibid).
2.4.3 Significant and Signifiè.

For Saussure is not something which stands for something else (i.e. is a sign), but a relationship between two things: it is arbitrary (P.P), and its significant is linear. Define the sign as a relationship between two entities. The linear character of the significant. R. Jakobonhas criticized Saussure’s idea of linearity because it does not accommodate a conception of the phoneme as composed of simultaneously occurring distinctive features. But perhaps it is possible to distinguish items which occur simultaneously and items which occur in sequence (Fromkin et al, 2007: 48-49)

2.4.4 Syntagmatics and Paradigmatics

It has with the preceding and following signs a syntagmatic relationship. This is a relationship in praesentia, which are all present in the message. A sign is also opposed to other signs not because they are in the message but because they belong to the language; associated (through similarity or difference) with these other signs, it has with them an associative relationship. The term ‘associative’ was abandoned, and replaced by the term ‘paradigmatic’. Paradigmatis and syntagmatics the correlational, ‘either-or’, and the relational ‘both-and’, hierarchies, in Hjelmslev’s terms or ‘choice’ and ‘chain’. (Lepsch, 1972: 50-51)
2.5 Mid-twentieth-Century Developments of Structuralism.

It was in America that most of the important developments in mid century linguistics took place. In many respects these owed much to the concern of American anthropologists to record the culture and languages of native American tribes, which were rapidly vanishing before the concerted power of the white races. Much of the credit for undertaking this work must go to Franz Boas, widely considered the founder of American linguistics and American anthropology. At the time that Boas commenced his work many erroneous ideas were in circulation about native American languages based on the belief that they were primitive in structure. So, for example it was commonly thought that native Americans had to rely on gestures to communicate ideas. (Finch,2000:7)

2-4 Bloomfield

‘Here’, ‘there’ ,‘yesterday’, ‘tomorrow’ as a consequence of the poverty of their vocabulary; and that native languages changed so fast and unpredictably that grandparents could not understand their grandchildren. Boas’s innovation was to see that such languages were significantly different from European ones, with the result that categories such as time and location were represented differently. He argued that each language should be described in its own terms, something he called linguistic relativity. Not only that, he believed that each language should be analyzed alongside the culture of which it was apart. A language represented the world view of its speakers. This idea was taken up, most famously, by one of Boas’s students. Edward Sapir. Like Boas, Sapir did not accept the idea that native American (Finch,2000:8).
Languages were primitive, or that one could divide languages along some notional scale of linguistic development. Differences in language represented differences in outlook and belief. Under the influence of one of Sapir’s own students, Benjamin Whorf, this remarkably liberal idea hardened itself into the SAPIRWHORF HYPOTHESIS, which holds that language structure determines thought, i.e. the way we perceive the world is a product of our language, not the other way round. The hypothesis has been the subject of considerable debate over the years, with many linguists regarding it as too deterministic. (Ibid)

It was fiercely attacked by Steven Pinker in the Language Instinct (1994). More popular nowadays is a weaker version of the hypothesis in which language is said to influence, rather than determine, thought. In order to describe these non-European languages Boas and his followers had to construct an appropriate methodology. But it was left to the linguist Leonard Bloomfield to develop this into a methodology suitable for the description of any language. In 1933, he published a book called Language that attempted to do just this. Unlike Boas, Bloomfield had no interest in the cultural side of language (Ibid).

Psychological side of language. His principle concern was to develop linguistics as a science. As such, his approach was rigorously descriptive. It is sometimes referred to as descriptive linguistics, occasionally as ‘structuralist’ (in a slightly different sense than the Saussurean), and, despite the revolutions that have occurred in linguistic thought, it is still at the heart of much linguistic practice. For Broomfield the task of linguists was to collect data from indigenous speakers of a language and then to analyse it by studying the phonological and syntactic patterns. The concept that all language is patterned was fundamental to these procedures. (Ibid)
Bloomfield argued that one of the principal ways in which items are ordered in a language is in terms of their constituency. Any sentence can be analysed in terms of what are called its immediate constituents. These, in turn, can be analysed into further constituents, and so on, down to those at the ground level of words, which are the smallest constituents. A sentence is thus conceived of as a hierarchy of interlocking constituents, all of which can demonstrate their constituency, because they can be either substituted by similar constituents, or redistributed to from other sentences. Thus the sentence the large. (Ibid)

Siamese cat jumped onto the table can be represented hierarchically. A further refinement would be to attach a descriptive label ‘A DJECTIVE’, ‘NOVN’, ‘PHRASE’, ‘SENTENCE’ to each node or intersection. Bloomfield, and the descriptive linguists who followed in his wake, argued that any language could be analysed in this hierarchical manner. The important thing for the linguist to discover were the individual units, or constituents, of the language being observed. This was achieved through discovery procedures, a set of principles that covered the ordering, distribution, and substitutability of items. (Ibid)

Descriptive linguistics provided a powerful means of uncovering some of the surface structures of language, but it ignored two important aspects of language. First, it was not interested in meaning, or semantics, partly because it proved too difficult to analyze the meanings of constituents in the same descriptive fashion, and partly because it didn’t seem immediately relevant to providing an account of syntactic structure. Second, it labored under the illusion that description alone was sufficient for arriving at a set of language rules. It was Noam Chomsky, perhaps the most radical linguist of our time, who showed that more important than mere description for the linguist was explanation. To arrive at that meant penetrating beyond the output and understanding the system that produced it (Finch, 2008: 9).
Section Three


We cannot go into the relation structural linguistics and structuralism in other fields of investigation. It must be appreciated, however that structuralism is very much an interdisciplinary movement. Saussurean structuralism, in particular, has been a powerful force in the development of a characteristically French approach to semiotics and its application to literary criticism, on the one hand, and to the analysis of society and culture, on the other. Taking ‘structuralism’ in a more general sense, we can say, as the philosopher Ernst Cassirer did in 1945: ‘structuralism is on isolated phenomenon; it is, rather, the expression of a general tendency of thought that.’(Fromkin et al.,1981;223)

In these last decades, has become more and more prominent in almost all fields of scientific research. What characterizes structuralism, in this more general sense is a greater concern with the relations which hold among entities than with the entities themselves. There is a natural the affinity in this respect between structuralism and mathematics; and one of criticisms most commonly mode of structuralism is that it exaggerates the orderliness, elegance and generality of the relational patterns in the data that it investigates.(Ibid)
3.1 **Comparison between the European and American Structuralism.**

Structuralism, especially in Europe, is of multiple origin. It is both conventional and convenient to date its birth as an identifiable movement in linguistics from the publication of Saussure’s course de linguistique generale in 1916 many of the ideas that Saussure brought together in the lectures that he delivered at the university of Geneva between 1907 and 1911 can be traced back into the nineteenth century and beyond.(Lyons,1981;218)

Several of the constitutive distinctions of Saussurean structuralism have been introduced already. It suffices to remind the reader of them and to show how they fit together. Since we have just been discussing historicism, it is natural to benign with the distinction between the synchronic and diachronic point of view in the study of languages. The Neo-grammarians took the view that linguistics, in so far as it is scientific and explanatory, must necessarily be historical.(Ibid)

The Neo-grammarians took the view that linguistics, in so far as it is scientific and explanatory, must necessarily be historical. Against this view, Saussure argued that the synchronic description of particular languages could be equally scientific; and also that it could be explanatory. Synchronic explanation differs from diachronic, or historical, explanation in being structural rather than causal: it gives a different kind of answer to the question "why are things as they are". Instead of tracing the historical development of particular forms or meanings, it demonstrates how all the forms and meanings are interrelated at a particular point in time in a particular language-system. It is important to realize that, in opposing the Neo-grammarian view, Saussure was not denying.(Ibid)
4. Conclusion

Structuralism is an approach to the study of language which sees a language as a structured system. Before the twentieth century, linguists took an atomistic view of language: they saw a language as essentially a collection of individual elements, such as speech sounds, words and grammatical endings. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure put forward a very different view: he argued that a language is best viewed as a structured system, with each element in it defined chiefly by how it is related to other elements. In this view, which has come to be called structuralism, it is the system which is the primary object of study, and not the individual elements present in that system. Saussure’s influence helped to make structuralism the dominant approach in European linguistics.

In the USA, structuralist ideas were somewhat independently developed by Edward Sapir and more especially by Leonard Bloomfield. Bloomfield’s successors in the 1940s and 1950s took his ideas to extremes in developing American structuralism, a vigorous but excessively dogmatic approach to linguistic description which attached great importance to distribution. Indeed, virtually all serious work in linguistics in the twentieth century has been structuralist in outlook, though many contemporary linguists continue to regard structuralism as crucial part of past linguistic era and would not apply the term to their own work.

Bibliography
A. References


B. Web Sources

- [www.wikipedia.com](http://www.wikipedia.com)