

Q. Who is Ferdinand de Saussure? What, according to him, are the sign, the signifier and the signified? Explain.

Ans:- Ferdinand de Saussure was a Swiss linguist and called the founder of modern linguistics. For Saussure, language was a system of signs whose meaning is defined by their relationship to each other. His work laid the foundation for structuralism and semiotics. In his book, *Course in General Linguistics*, published in 1916, Saussure explained that a sign was not only a sound-image but also a concept. Thus he divided the sign into two components: the signifier (or "sound-image") and the signified (or "concept").

The sign, the signifier, and the signified are concepts of the school of thought known as structuralism. The central tenet of structuralism is that the phenomena of human life, whether language or media, are not intelligible except through their network of relationships, making the sign and the system (or structure) in which the sign is embedded primary concepts. As such, a sign -- for instance, a word -- gets its meaning only in relation to or in contrast with other signs in a system of signs.

In general, the signifier and the signified are the components of the sign, itself formed by the associative link between the signifier and signified. Even with these two components, however, signs can exist only in opposition to other signs. That is, signs are created by their value relationships with other signs. The contrasts that form between signs of the same nature in a network of relationships is how signs derive their meaning.

Saussure introduced Structuralism in Linguistics, marking a revolutionary break in the study of language, which had till then been historical and , philological. In Saussure's theory of linguistics, the signifier is the sound and the signified is the thought. The linguistic sign is neither conceptual nor phonic, neither thought nor sound. Rather, it is the whole of the link that unites sound and idea, signifier and signified. The properties of the sign are by nature abstract, not concrete. According to Saussure, "A sign is not a link between a thing and a name, but between a concept and a sound pattern"

To sum up, we can say that Saussurean legacy of structuralism assumes the form of the speech in language on the one hand, and the study of culture, language and society as system of signs on the other, which facilitate communication and the creation of meaning in human culture.