Notes on the contribution of linguistics to the trans-disciplinarity of cultural studies

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Cultural Studies is a trans-disciplinary academic field in which concepts and perspectives from different disciplines are selectively drawn, re-articulated, and re-theorised to examine the relations of culture and power. The field borrows freely theories and methodologies from Social Science disciplines and all branches of Humanities and the Arts (Sadair and Van Loow 1997: 7). The present paper discusses the contribution of Linguistics to the trans-disciplinarity of Cultural Studies. The discussion centres on the works of Ferdinand de Saussure, Claude Levi-Strauss, Roland Barthes and Stuart Hall as respective representatives of respective eras of Structural Linguistics, Structuralism, Semiology, and (British) Cultural Studies.

It is hard to define the term Cultural Studies because the task heavily depends on the definition of a notoriously ambiguous concept; culture (See Sadair and Van Loow, B. 1997:4-5). This lack of precision makes Cultural Studies appear non-scientific, rather amorphous; an attractive carry all bag. Ang (1996:237-8) has addressed the problematic nature of the definition of Cultural Studies. He draws a distinction between critical-cultural approaches to communication, generally called Cultural Studies and the less-encompassing social-scientific interest in cultural phenomena within mainstream communication research e.g. George Gerbners cultural indicators project. Ang cautions that the two schools differ from each other considerably in their theoretical, methodological, epistemological, and political assumptions. Mainstream communication research conceptualises culture as behavioural and functional on the basis of the possibility of accumulating objective knowledge by testing some generalisable hypothesis using social-scientific methods. In contrast critical-cultural approaches understand culture not simply as discrete object of communication research but a contradictory process of cultural production, circulation and consumption. In this light critical-cultural approaches view Cultural Studies as "a cluster (or formation) of ideas, images and practices, which provide ways of talking about forms of knowledge and conduct associated with a particular topic, social activity, or

institutional site in society" (Hall 1997a:6). The discipline is particularly interested in "all those practices, institutions and systems of classification through which there are inculcated in a population particular values, beliefs, competencies, routines of life and habitual forms of conduct" (Bennett 1998:28).

Owing to the fact that the study of culture has got no definite origins, Cultural Studies tends to be reluctant to accept institutional legitimacy (Baker 2003:5, 6). However, Sadair and Van Loow (1997:3, 5, 25) contend that Cultural Studies first came to be recognised as an intellectual discipline through the formation of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in 1964 at Birmingham University in the United Kingdom. However, it was not until the early 1970s that the Centre began to impact on intellectual activities. In 1972 the Centre published working papers which introduced Cultural Studies on the intellectual map. Consequently, Cultural Studies began to register substantial impact on academic work within the Arts, the Humanities, the Social Sciences and even Science and Technology (Sadair and Van Loow 1997: 3, 25). To date Cultural Studies is not only recognized as one of the disciplines in tertiary institutions but there also exit self-defined Cultural Studies practitioners all over the world (Baker 2003: 6).

The influence of Linguistics on Cultural Studies began as a coincidence. Language was the greatest single force that had influenced twentieth century thought at least in the Humanities and in the Social Sciences when the youthful discipline of Cultural Studies was casting about for innovative approaches to culture in the 1960s (Tudor 1999:49 – 50). More particularly, Cultural Studies crisscrossed the path of Linguistics through Structuralism, an intellectual movement that "takes signification or meaning production to be the effect of deep structures of language that are manifested in specific cultural phenomena or human speakers" (Baker 2003:15). According to Anthropology literature Structuralism originated in Paris, France in the 1960s[1] and was first associated with the works of Claude-Levi Strauss and later Roland Barthes (Sturrock 1979a:1-2). Apparently, it began as an intellectual protestation against "primitive positivists attempts to reduce the Human Sciences to the branch of the natural Science, and the romantic (and usually irrationalist) attempts to hold the Science at bay insisting on the irreducibly subjective character of human experience" (Clarke 1981:1). The intellectual movement was heavily influenced by the works of a number of Linguists; Levi-Strauss read Roman Jacobson and Ferdinand de Saussure (Kurzweil 1980: 13 -16) while Barthes read L. Hjelmslev and Ferdinand

de Saussure (Tudor 1999:73). However, of all Linguists the most profound influence on Structuralism came from Saussure as evidenced through the recurrence of Saussurean terminology in the works of early Structuralists despite their different ideological orientations (Sturrock 1979a:5).

Saussure was a linguist devoted to science and the scientific method (Clarke 1981:122). He criticised his predecessors and contemporaries for failing to find a true science of the study of language by not recognising language as a discipline in its own right (Saussure 1959:16). In reaction, he decided to put together what he thought could be distinguished as the proper subject matter of Linguistics as a science. In an effort to identify this subject matter Saussure discovered that every language has two distinct levels, namely *langue* (the underlying rules of a language), and parole (the executive side of those rules, the act of speaking) (Saussure 1959: 9, 13). Saussure argued that *langue* "is not to be confused with human speech (*langage*), of which it is only a definite part. [*Langue*] is both the social product of the faculty of speech and a collection of necessary conventions that have been adopted by a social body to permit individuals to exercise that faculty" (Saussure1959: 9). Thus Saussure managed to separate a system lying behind the act and the act itself thereby separating the purely linguistic question from those which would introduce psychological, physiological, or sociological considerations (Clarke 1981:120).

Saussure (1959:67) applied to the basic unit of language (the linguistic sign) his newly discovered principle of abstract rules (*langue*) and their corresponding physical manifestation (*parole*). He consequently, conceived the linguistic sign as having two faces, namely the *signifier* (the acoustic component or sound that corresponds to the physical manifestation of the abstract rules) and the *signified* (a mental or conceptual component that corresponds to abstract rules). Furthermore, he perceived the relation between the signifier and the signified as arbitrary. He, for example, argued that "the idea of '*sister*' is not linked by any inner relationship to the succession of sound *s-o-r* which serves as its signifier in French" (p.67). He concluded, therefore, that signs are arbitrary and by doing that he challenged a widely held view of his time that meaning is *referential*. He instead argued that meaning is *structural* and *relational* and went further to explain what he meant by introducing another pair of concepts, namely the *syntagmatic relations*, and the *associative relations* popularly known as *paradigmatic relations*. The former refers to a linear combination of words inside

discourse while the latter refers to a non-linear combination of words outside discourse (Saussure 1959:122 - 26). For example, the following words which together form a grammatically correct sentence are related syntagmatically: "*John is eating macaroni*". However, the word *macaroni* has paradigmatic relationship with the word 'Nsima' in the sentence, 'John is eating *nsima*' because one term, 'food' is common to both words. The author chooses which one of the two correctly represents the food that John is eating. And the choice of one may evoke limitless associations. Thus *syntagmatic relations* are based on what is present while a *paradigmatic relations* unites terms that are absent in a potential mnemonic series (Saussure 1959:123).

Although Saussure was first and foremost concerned with linguistic meaning he challenged his contemporaries with the possibility and necessity of universally applying his principles of the study of language to any kind of system of signification. He was convinced that language was a system of signs that expressed ideas, and was therefore comparable to any other sign system such as system of writing, rituals and military signals except that language was the most important of these systems. Consequently, he proposed a science that studies the life of signs within society and called it Semiology from the Greek word for sign *semeion* (Saussure1959: 16).

Saussure's theory of language has received criticism both within Linguistics and Cultural Theory. Clarke (1981:124-125) regards Saussure as a confusionist who failed to embody his philosophy of language in systematic analyses of particular linguistic systems thereby causing the philosophy itself to remain programmatic. He contends that Saussure discovered nothing; rather he introduced an extremely confused programme as evidenced by the fact that Saussure is easily claimed as a forebearer by very different schools of linguistics. Some critics have disputably described this alleged problem as a 'crisis of the Humanities' (Burke et al, 2000:4).

Some cultural theorists have questioned Saussure's lack of interest in the text-context relationship in his study of signs. Clarke (1981) for instance, finds misleading Saussure's mentalist argument that the sign is arbitrary because from a psychological point of view the sign is not necessarily arbitrary. He, for instance, explains that "the meaning of the sound 'tree' for a particular individual is not determined only by its relations with other linguistic sounds. It contrasts with

'bush', 'house' 'sky', 'pole' etc. It is also determined by all the previous uses of the sign that the individual has encountered: the trees to which it has been applied, the contexts within which it has been uttered" (Clarke 1981: 121). Similarly, in an effort to assert Semiotics above Semiology Tomaselli (1996:29) observes that Saussure's Semiology eliminates the political, economic, social and historical processes out of which specific texts arise thereby weakening its capacity to address certain contextual issues which are critical to meaning production. Finally, Hall (1997b:35) summarises the concerns of cultural theory over the Saussureean model of sign systems by concluding that it fails to deal with the true social character of language because it regards language as a closed system in which meaning could be studied and predicted scientifically.

Despite the various criticisms leveled against the Saussurean theory of language Saussure's work remains important to Cultural Studies. Saussure tasked himself "to develop the science of human culture based on a conception of cultural phenomena as objective systems of forms dissociated from the individual subject, with their own immanent and specific laws, imposing themselves on the individual with the force of the unconscious" (Clarke 1981:124-125). Saussure further managed to show that meaning is socially constructed by arguing that 'any means of expression accepted in society rests in principle upon a collective habit or on convention" (Saussure 1983:68). As Potter rightly explains, Saussure was against "the idea that there are natural sets of things such as rivers and streams waiting to be named by any group of humans who happen to evolve language in their vicinity; rather each language produces its own conceptual world" (Potter 1996:70). In the final analysis Saussures' ideological programme gave rise to the structural approach and its comparable theoretical approaches (Clarke 1981: 125) [and caused many disciplines to consider] the theoretical assumptions upon which their approach to their object of study was based; and indeed the constitution of that **object**" (Burke, et al 2000: 4-5).

The first influence of the work of Saussure on Cultural Studies through structuralism is evident in the work of Claude Levi-Strauss, the father of Structuralism (Kurzwei 1980:13). Levi-Strauss was first introduced to Structural Linguistics by Roman Jakobson at the New School for Social Research in New York in 1939 (Leach 1965:23). Jakobson empirically studied language impairment and loss among aphasics. He found a 'horizontal - vertical' polarity in linguistic performance, which in his view supported Saussure's insight

concerning the syntagmatic and associative (paradigmatic) planes of linguistics. The discovery motivated Levi-Strauss to regard Saussure's study of language as a self-sufficient system that postulates a dynamic relationship between the components of every linguistic sign (Kurzweil 1980:15). Convinced that structuralism supported his view that culture and language existed inside the individual (Kurzweil 1980:22) Levi-Strauss advocated a marriage between principles of Structural Linguistics and Anthropology, a social science which by far had made the greatest progress. He justified the proposed marriage on four grounds, namely: Structural Linguistics' shift from the study of conscious linguistic phenomena [*parole*] to the study of their unconscious infrastructure [*langue*]; its tendency to treat terms on the basis of their analytical relations rather than as independent entries; its concern of linguistic phenomena as part of a broader system; its aim to discover general laws, either by induction or by logical deduction thereby giving them absolute character (Levi-Strauss 1963:34).

In order to address the skepticism of both linguists and anthropologists Levi-Strauss wrote an essay explaining the inevitable relationship between language and culture and dispelling the claim of linguists that their Structural Linguistics had nothing to do with culture, social life and history of the speakers of a language. He concluded the essay by challenging both linguists and anthropologists to work together closely and discover together correlations that existed between language and culture on certain issues and certain levels (Levi-Strauss 1958: 402). Levi Strauss demonstrated what the proposed marriage between Linguistics and Anthropology could achieve by combining Saussure's analysis of language with Jacobson's phonemic analysis to show the likeness between kinship systems and language. He successfully demonstrated that "[they] both involved exchange (of women and words respectively) and were a form of communication that reflected the higher faculties of the human mind" (Levi-Strauss 1963: 34). Similarly, he applied *langue* and *parole* in his effort to prove that languages and myths of different cultures resembled each other and appeared to be structured in a similar fashion (Levi-Strauss 1963: 32, 39).

Levi-Strauss advocated the application of the Saussurean theory of language to cultural phenomena with full awareness of its possible limitations. In his study of myth he had to address the dimension of time which characterises the telling of myths but is absent in Saussure's theory of language. He decided to distinguish the *langue* and *parole* of myths by different time dimensions of each (Levi-Strauss

1963:32). And to account for the shift in time, he added to the Saussurean duo a third dimension "the gross constituent unit" referring to a meaningful combination of two or more words in a sentence (Levi-Strauss 1963: 208-09).

Levi-Strauss work has not been spared from criticism. For example, it has been criticised for presenting a society that ignores the role of power, and a culture that has no influence of active human intervention. Other critics find Levi-Strauss' Structuralism "guilty of transforming men into static, timeless objects, related to things in the world and to other men in purely formal, objective and timeless ways" (Kurzweil 1980:25). Still more, others criticise him for misunderstanding some linguistic concepts despite his faithfulness to Saussurean terminology. Sperber (1979: 29) particularly pinpoints that "he tends to refer to symbolic phenomena as *signifiers*, and one might assume that the investigation is into an underlying code which pairs these *signifiers* with their *signifieds* [and] yet if the reader begins to look for the *signifieds*, there are no *signifieds*. Everything is meaningful, nothing is meant".

Nevertheless, within Cultural Studies Strauss's work is regarded "as a cornerstone in the application of structural and linguistic analogies to the analysis of cultural phenomena" (Smith 2001:104). By focusing on universal patterns of oppositions to explain social reality he elaborated that cultural systems are rule governed just as is language. "In asserting that cultures have developed not simply in response to external demands but more fundamentally in accordance with the human mind's internal constraints, Levi-Strauss took a major step away from empiricism at a time when empiricism exercised an almost total domination over the Social and Psychological Sciences" (Sperber 1978: 49). Eventually, "his theory of unconscious structures did lead to the creation of various new subjects of inquiry such as the relationship between the structures of all signs in language, their function within messages, and their rapport with other sign systems such as music, gestures [and] body language" (Kurzweil 1980:25).

Linguistics further influenced Cultural Studies through the work of Roland Barthes. Just like Levi-Strauss, Barthes' debt to Saussure is both apparent and professed. However, Barthes made a more personal and radical reading of Saussure than did Levi-Strauss. Barthes (1957:412) argued that any sign system operates on two planes: the plane of experience and the plane of analysis. On the experiential plane the *signifier* and the *signified* are so inseparable from each

other that people only see one thing, the sign. For example, in the Western view although a bunch of roses signifies passion people tend to ignore the *signifier* (roses) and the *signified* (passion) and consequently only see the sign, 'passionified' roses. On the plain of analysis the *signifier* (conceptual rose), the *signified* (passion) and the sign (the actual rose) are treated as separate items. Barthes contended that the plane of analysis provides a comprehensive understanding of how the process of representation articulates meaning because it provides two semiological systems. On the one hand, he saw a system of signification that articulates the literal meaning of signs. He called this system the *language object* and the resultant meaning thereof produced *denotation*. On the other hand, he saw another signification system that is created when denotative meaning is turned into a signifier of a subsequent semiological system. He termed this second order semiological system *myth* and its meaning *connotation*.

Barthes (1972: 17) used images such as, photographs, paintings, drawings, theatre and cinema to illustrate how denotative and connotative meaning operate. At first sight each of these images is a message without a code and the reader sees it as having an analogical relation to its object. However, the way the same representation is treated in a particular cultural context produces another level of meaning. Thus denotation is the literal meaning of an image while connotation is the manner in which society communicates what it thinks of that image. Thus myth is the imposition of a second meaning on an image (Barthes 1972: 17, 20). More importantly, Barthes saw myth as a peculiar system because the process of imposing meaning on an image reduces the materials of mythical speech, e.g. ordinary language, photography and rituals to a pure signifying function (Barthes 1957:413). A hypothetical example of a photograph of Congolese women and children waving to United Nations peacekeeping troops may sufficiently illustrate Barthe's point. The denotative meaning is that Congolese women and children are waving to United Nations troops. However, if one surreptitiously adds a new *signifier* to this meaning thereby turning it into a *signifier* it produces another meaning, namely that the Congolese welcome the presence of United Nations troops in their country.

Barthes conception of *denotation* and *connotation* led him to perceive *myth* not as an object but a *meta-language* and to conclude that meaning is produced either linguistically or mythically, a situation that gives an ambiguous identity to the *signifier* (Barthes 1972: 123, 126). On the one hand, the *signifier* is the final term

of the linguistic system. On the other, it is the first term of the mythical system. Barthes believed that this dual process of meaning production affects the way Semiology interrogates any system of signification. "When he reflects on a *meta-language*, the Semiologist no longer needs to ask himself questions about the composition of the language object, he no longer has to take into account the details of the linguistic schema; he will only need to know its total term, or logical sign and only inasmuch as this term lends itself to *myth*" (Barthes 1957:414).

To avoid causing confusion, Barthes used the terms *meaning* and *form* to describe the final term of the linguistic system and the first term of the mythical system respectively. He, furthermore simplified his description by employing the analogy of 'fullness' and 'emptiness' to illustrate how the ambiguous *signifier* operates within each of the two systems. As a meaning the signifier is full because it has a sensory reality that eyes can grasp and thereby automatically postulating a reading (Barthes 1957:413). For example, during the first sight of the above-mentioned hypothetical photograph anyone may read that Congolese women and children are waving to United Nations soldiers. As a form the *signifier* is empty because on the plane of myth the linguistic meaning loses its essence. It "leaves its contingency behind; it empties itself, it becomes impoverished, [its] history evaporates, only the [sign] remains" (Barthes 1972: 127). One has to put the *signifier* in a relevant cultural context in order to fill it with a new meaning, i.e. the connotative meaning.

Barthes further argued that on both the linguistic plane and the mythical plane the *signified* is a concept. However, unlike the form it is not abstract. It is filled with a situation that allows for a new history to be implanted in the *myth*. In other words, the concept "is determined, it is at once historical and intentional; it is the motivation which causes the *myth* to be uttered" (Barthes 1972: 128). Going back to the example about the photograph of United Nations soldiers and Congolese women and children the drive behind the myth may be United Nations military and humanitarian might on the African continent. In this regard it may be observed that on its own the drive behind myth implies a shallow, isolated and impoverished meaning for the form. As a form, for example, the waving of Congolese women and children to United Nations troops does not say much to the reader. Its connotative meaning is dependent on the concept of the military and

humanitarian might of the United Nations, which brings into the picture the respective histories of the United Nations, Africa, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and their present difficulties, ambitions, desires, aspirations, etc.

As described above the tendency of the concept supports the claim that meaning is constructed when the relationship between the *signifier* and *signified* draws from things, people, and events, etc outside the semiological chain. This observation caused Barthes to point out that the mythical concept is not a purified essence of reality but rather some appropriated aspect of that reality. The claim is strengthened by the fact that one concept may be articulated by more than one *signifier* (Barthes 1972: 129). For instance, there are definitely many images that may signify the military and humanitarian might of the United Nations besides the above-mentioned photograph.

Barthes (1972: 131) used the term *signification* to refer to the new sign that develops on the plane of *myth*. He rationalises that the term is appropriate because it emphasises the double function of *myth*. Once again he stressed the fact that meaning is a social construct by observing that the process of signification naturally distorts meaning because the concept and meaning of myth are always in a relation of deformation. The concept distorts the meaning but it does not abolish it because a linguistic meaning already constitutes the form of the *myth* (Barthes 1972: 132).

Barthes further stressed the social construction of meaning when he observed that, "the mythical signification is never arbitrary: it is always in part motivated, and unavoidably contains some analogy" (Barthes 1972:136). The hypothetical photograph about the United Nations peacekeeping mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo becomes handy again. In order for United Nation's military and humanitarian strength to get hold of the waving women and children, on the one hand, and the United Nations soldiers on the other there must be identity between the women and children and the soldiers. It is, for example, common knowledge that Congolese rebels tend to abuse and kill innocent women and children therefore, whoever manages to protect these women and children emerges their hero.

Barthes observation that motivation is chosen amongst other possible options provided further support to his claim that meaning is socially constructed (Barthes 1972: 138). As already pointed out, different *signifiers* could be used to signify

the military and humanitarian might of the United Nations. For example, a photograph of a sophisticated United Nations warplane flying over Washington as it leaves for the Democratic Republic of Congo could equally successfully convey the myth of the military and humanitarian might of the United Nations. In other words, by opting for another signifier instead of this one the author constructs a meaning of their choice.

A major weakness of Barthes' conceptualisation of sign systems, though, is seen in his preoccupation with how society constructs meaning at the expense of the the role of the reader in decoding the constructed meaning. By arguing that *myth* works through common sense he "treat[ed] cultural meanings as a given currency which is shared by everyone who is at all acculturated to contemporary popular culture" (van Leeuwen 2001:92). Thus he unnecessarily privileged the author's preferred meaning thereby misrepresenting the reader of a given text as a cultural dupe. For instance, his entire 1957 seminal essay, *Myth Today* is not only silent about how the audience reads mythical speech but it also uses a tone that presupposes that all readers are ideological victims of *myth*.

Barthe's conception of sign systems, nevertheless, offered cultural theorists a versatile model for comprehending how the process of representation produces meaning. First and foremost, unlike Saussure who pursued a diadic model of the sign Barthes pursues a triadic one. Such a sign has "an interior relation which unites its *signifier* to its *signified*; then two exterior relations: a virtual one that unites the sign to a specific reservoir of other signs it may be drawn from in order to be inserted in discourse; and an actual one that unites the sign to other signs in the discourse preceding or succeeding it" (Barthes 1972: 204). The triadic model served Barthes well by enabling him to attach significant importance to contextual issues of signification. Apparently, he was skeptical about the realism of the text. "Rather than treat realism as a consequence of discourse naively reflecting the world, he asked [the reader] to consider realism as an artful assemblage of language that creates the effect of naïve representation" (Potter 1996:74).

Barthes' work represented the first serious initiative to combine the study of signifying systems with Critical Theory. "This provided a much needed infusion of new conceptual blood into neo-Marxist cultural theory, much of which was still lumbering along under the impetus of concepts from Marx's century old *Economic* and *Philosophical Manuscripts*" (Smith 2001:111) Furthermore,

through the work of Barthes the study of popular culture was legitimated in the academy. While his contemporaries, e.g. Levi-Strauss and Lacan worked with esoteric materials he showed that junk culture could also be subjected to intellectual analysis. By the 1970s his work profoundly informed the intellectual character of British Cultural Studies in areas such as advertising and news and by the 1980s his work had become canonical for the area (Smith 2001:111).

Central to the agenda of British Cultural Studies was the question of how messages are produced and consumed in the mass media and Barthes conceptualization of *signifier/signified* and *denotation/connotation* proved influential. In contemporary times the influence of Linguistics on British Cultural Studies has found expression in the work of Stuart Hall. Hall employed the terms *denotation* and *connotation* in his theory of encoding and decoding which he developed in reaction to the traditional American model of communication. He thought the American model was too linear and too simplified to explain the complex process of communication (Hall 1993:91). Instead he proposed a four-stage model with linked but distinct moments namely; production, circulations, distribution/consumption, and reproduction. In his understanding these four stages represent "a complex structure of dominance sustained through articulation of connected practices, each of which however retain its distinctiveness and has its own specific modality, its own forms and conditions of existence" (Hall 1993:91). He contends that the way media messages are produced and consumed is over-determined by a range of influences. For example, television and newspaper messages would be different from each other in terms of their discourses, the pictorial conventions, and the technologies use to carry the message.

In the footsteps of Barthes, Hall believes that there is nothing natural about any kind of communication because messages must be constructed before they are sent. Hall does not only link this 'unnaturalness' of messages to Barthes' *denotation* and *connotation* but he also takes it a step further by arguing that all messages are coded and become inevitably connotative (Turner 1996:84). Hall clarifies his position by presenting codes that operate at two closely related levels. At the first level are widely distributed codes which are learned at very early stages within a community or culture hence their natural appearance. At the second level unnatural codes become naturalised and are not widely distributed in society. In essence the practice of coding can only be said to be more

comprehensive if the code in question appears to be more natural. The common eye usually thinks the naturalised codes give us literal meanings yet the critical eye sees in them ideology. As far as Hall is concerned therefore, the distinction between *denotative* meaning and *connotative* meaning is simply an analytic one. In real life it is very unlikely that one would find a sign that is purely denotative because usually they combine the two meanings. Even the naturalised code is laden with extra meaning. The distinction "is useful in analysis, to be able to apply a rough rule of thumb which distinguishes those aspects of a sign which appear to be taken, in any language community at any point in time, as its literal' meaning (*denotation*) from the more associative meaning for the sign which it is possible to generate (*connotation*)" (Hall 1993:96).

Hall unlike Barthes does not take for granted the role of the readers in his theorisation of the process of meaning production. Hall's theory of encoding and decoding recognises three types of readers (Hall 1993:96 – 97). The first one is the dominant reader who is cheated by the author's subtle use of codes. He/she, for instance, takes the television text for granted and understands it in terms of nothing but its 'denotative' meaning. The codes have been naturalised in him/her. Then there is the negotiated reader who accepts some parts of the dominant reading but rejects to take the rest because it does not suit his needs. He stands between the denotative and the connotative meaning. Finally, there is the oppositional reader who is aware of the dominant codes (connotative meaning), which structure the message hence his rejecting it completely. At present Hall's theory of encoding and decoding is one of the most influential theories within Cultural Studies because of its tendency to give the audience a sense of agency in their interaction with dominant ideology.

Although the parameters of Cultural Studies continue to be fragile the influence of Linguistics on the multi-disciplinary field is clearly articulated in both apparent and professed ways. The work of Ferdinand de Saussure directly influenced that of Claude Levi-Strauss and Roland Barthes. Stuart Hall does not use Saussurean concepts but he indirectly benefits from Saussure's work through the influence that he received from Barthes. However, one notable characteristic of the relationship between the two disciplines in the post-linguistic turn era is that Cultural Studies is apparently disinterested in current linguistic theorising, particularly Generative Linguistics. The discipline is stuck in Structuralism

although every other well defined discipline within the human sciences has felt the tag of Generative Linguistics.

The unprogressive relationship between Cultural Studies and Linguistics may be explained by the fact that after the linguistic turn Cultural Studies' has been more eager to legitimise language as a method for analysing cultural phenomena rather than as an object of study. The discipline erroneously perceives language as a self-contained object of analysis and Linguistics merely as an oppositional methodological alternative to positivism. Apparently, this epistemological primacy has caused Cultural Studies research to direct most of its effort at demonstrating how language constructs the social and how the linguistic method demonstrates this. Eventually, the usefulness of the methodology of linguistics has tended to overshadow language as the actual subject of inquiry. No wonder, much language-oriented research within Cultural Studies as exemplified through Discourse Analysis tends to be too descriptive to meaningfully inform Linguistics.

There is need for Cultural Studies to revitalise its interest in language and to establish possible links with current theorising within Linguistics. The human sciences might never experience another linguistic influence of the magnitude of the linguistic turn but this does not rule out the possibility of Linguistics further informing Cultural Studies. This possibility, however, does not necessarily mean that linguists should sit idle waiting for Cultural Studies researchers to discover what current linguistics theorising can offer their discipline. On the contrary linguists need to assume a pro-active role to market insights of current linguistics to Cultural Studies thereby assisting Cultural Studies to benefiting from contemporary theories of Linguistics.

Notes

1. The genesis of Structuralism is sometimes also attributed to Sociologist Emile Durkheim (1952) on the basis that he was the first to search for the constraining patterns of culture and social life which lie outside of any given individual. Nevertheless, Durkheim does not meet the Cultural Studies criteria for defining a Structuralist because he did not emphasise the place of signifying systems (Baker 2003:15).

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