Structuralism and Deconstruction in Biblical Scholarship: Annotated Bibliographies

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ABSTRACT
Academic referencing, though very significant in scholarship, has not been an easy task for both students and researchers, especially when one is restricted to following a particular referencing style either as instructed by one’s educational institution or by a publishing house through which one seeks a publication. In biblical scholarship, the philosophies of structuralism and deconstruction are very significant, especially as much as textual translation and interpretation are concerned. Several proponents have shared their scholarly views on how they individually appreciate these philosophical concepts. In an attempt to unravel some of such works without neglecting the authors and their central discussions, this paper employed a methodology through the construction of annotated bibliographies of such works. Findings indicated that while structuralism mainly studies the meaning of a text independently of its history and culture, deconstruction considers the world of the audience in line with the author’s intention and how that intention could be relevant to the new audience, taking into account the history of the text and the culture of the audience. Also, some of the key proponents of structuralism and its philosophical development include de Saussure, Levi-Strauss, Sasková and Titchener. Key proponents of deconstruction include Derrida, Norris, Ekem, Kuwornu-Adjaottor, Mugambi, and Nida. Significantly, with a maximum word count of 150 words and not less than 50 words, readers would understand key information contained in the sampled works of the authors through the annotations.

Keywords: Referencing, Annotated Bibliography, Structuralism, Deconstruction

INTRODUCTION
In showing a reputable acknowledgement of the source(s) of an idea used in one’s academic task, referencing becomes the nonnegotiable means. Academic referencing, though very significant in scholarship, has not been an easy task for both students and researchers especially when one is restricted to following a particular referencing style either as instructed by one’s educational institution or by a publishing house through which one seeks a publication. In biblical scholarship, the philosophies of structuralism and deconstruction are very significant, especially as much as textual translation and interpretation are concerned. Several proponents have shared their scholarly views on how they individually appreciate these philosophical concepts. In an attempt to unravel some of such works without neglecting the authors and their central messages or findings, this paper has employed a methodology through the construction of annotated bibliographies. Essentially, readers would understand how an annotation is added to a bibliography, structuralism and deconstruction and their key

1 Ahamed Shibly, “Referencing and Citation,” 2016, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/305911163_Referencing_and_Citation.
proponents, and the key information contained in the sampled works of the authors according to the titles.

**Annotated Bibliography**

Gleaning from various scholars and papers, annotated bibliographies can be said to be bibliographies to which notes (added information) are given to further explain what the reference and the work of the author(s) are about. An annotation thus refers to a descriptive paragraph on what a citation is about. Simply, it comprises a concise overview of a particular source. While a reference is limited to sources used and cited in a research or study, a bibliography is an extension of reference. It comprises both used and unused sources which respectively are either used in the study or related to the study.

Therefore, an annotated bibliography is simply a respective list of study sources and citations on or related to a topic followed by a concise descriptive paragraph on the source, not more than 150 words. Therefore, it contains a summarized description of the work in words not more than 150 counts and not less than 50 counts. In terms of its design, it begins with the citation, and the annotation comes below it in an indented style. The summary should be relevant to the work, stating the author(s)’ methodology and position or findings. The work could be a book, journal article, or any academic publication from which an annotation to the citation is required.

**Structuralism**

Historically, the theory of structuralism was a linguistic concept. Its conceptual proposition is attributed to the Swiss linguist, philosopher and semiotician, Ferdinand de Saussure. The development of several interrelated fields and changes from social structure to linguistic structure gave birth to de Saussure’s concept of structuralism. He theorizes that a linguistic sign comprises two elements, namely: signifier (text) and signified (impression). Even though the two constitute the linguistic sign, Saussure argues that the signified is not the reality, but only a psychological imprint/representation; the signified matters.

This in most cases makes structuralists study text solely without reference to the world of the reader in front of the text. The text, but not the intended meaning, wins the attention and occupies the centre seat.

**Deconstructionism**

Derrida critiqued the works of Plato, Ferdinand de Saussure and Martin Heidegger, and that set the philosophical basis for his deconstructive thinking. Etymologically, the term deconstruction has a relationship with the French verb – ‘deconstuire’ which means “to take to pieces or undo the development or improvement.” Genealogically, the term ‘deconstruction’ is associated with Heidegger. However, Derrida did not adopt Heidegger’s term ‘destruktion’ which means destruction or de-building. Instead, he chose the preferable term ‘deconstruction’ as his creative approach to his philosophical thought, and this term became a literary, political and philosophical vocabulary.

**METHODOLOGY**

In addressing the research and writing challenge of referencing, especially applying the proper style for an annotated bibliography, this study explored the Chicago referencing style (17th edition) for the two above-discussed philosophical theories. Seven (7) works in total were sampled. These include three (3) for structuralism and four (4) for deconstruction. The annotation format was followed to finally construct seven annotated bibliographies. These annotations prioritized the works of some proponents of these philosophies. Finally, the contextual meaning and application of structuralism and deconstruction in biblical scholarship – biblical studies and biblical theology, were explored. This exploration aimed at enhancing a biblical

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hermeneutical approach to the philosophies so that inasmuch as they are linguistic, they could be biblically employed, especially in the area of Biblical translation and interpretation.

**Bibliographies in Chicago Style (17th Edition)**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Books</th>
<th>Journal Articles</th>
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**The Annotation Format**

The University of California, Los Angeles, explains that an annotated bibliography gives a source citation, source summary and source evaluation on a topic or work. A concise summary and evaluation should be given on the reference (citation). The Germanna Community College describes an annotated bibliography as one that comprises a researched citation and a concise evaluation of the source in a descriptive paragraph not exceeding 150 words in which the bibliographer demonstrates quality, relevance and accuracy of the source in relation to the work.

**Example of Annotated Bibliography in Chicago Style**


*In the book “Women in German History,” Frevert provides historical information on women in Germany, their role and reliance in light of their campaign for equality. He cleverly shares the historic birth of German feminism as he carefully examines the lives and roles of indigenous (traditional) German women. He considers the eighteenth century’s age of bourgeois emancipation and outlines in detail the feminist campaign and struggle for gender equality. Frevert then discusses the situation of the twentieth-century German woman in the age of sexual liberation.*

**STRUCTURALISM AND BIBLICAL SCHOLARSHIP**

In exploring the works of grammarians, theologians and biblical scholars regarding their definitions of the philosophical theory of structuralism, five of them have been engaged, namely Ferdinand de Saussure, Bill Stancil, Robert Polzin, Claude Levi-Strauss and Edmund Leach.

Ideally, ‘structuralism’ studies the meaning of a text independently of its history and culture. It does not identify or include history as a determinant of textual meaning. Being a significant figure in the development of structuralism, Saussure posits that in literature, the text (the signifier) in its structure should be prioritized over the impression one may derive. Therefore, according to him, the text, but not the derived or intended meaning, should be the centre and focus of any linguistic task.

Looking at its influence in non-biblical disciplines, Stancil asserts structuralism as one that is frustrating and most puzzling when viewed from its cryptic language, grids and charts. However, he indicates that it has become adoptable in biblical scholarship and critical studies recently. Polzin is puzzled by its taste for obdurate expressions, lacking flexibility. From its development, Structuralism focuses entirely on the literature (text), not on the intended meaning or impression. Understandably, structuralism is a philosophical theory in literature that concerns a discipline about a formal format along or in which a process follows. In his understanding of theories of binary oppositions in relation to the philosophical discussions on structuralism, Claude Levi-Strauss, a French anthropologist, related human behavior and responses to the structure of grammar. According to him, just as linguistics follows a certain set of grammatical rules and therefore one cannot produce a correct meaning of something without first understanding and following the structure of the rules guiding it, so it is that human

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8 Annotated Bibliographies. [https://history.ucla.edu/sites/default/files/assets/annotated_bibliographies.pdf](https://history.ucla.edu/sites/default/files/assets/annotated_bibliographies.pdf)


life is structured around such binary opposition.\textsuperscript{13} Being one of the earliest users of structuralism on biblical texts, Edmund Leach posits that the texts of the Scriptures are sacred and mysterious. However, their meanings are encrypted within the texts themselves, and the interpreter has to decode the text by considering its overall structure to arrive at such hidden meanings.\textsuperscript{14}

In biblical exegesis, structuralism engages the exegete and translator to strictly follow the exact framework and arrangement of the words in a text without imposing or suggesting personal arrangements or thoughts. The structure is fixed and therefore interpretation and translation should be by taking each word as it is and keeping its arrangement word-for-word, hence translating directly as such. In biblical hermeneutics, structuralism is the philosophical principle for the translation theory of formal equivalence, also known as word-for-word equivalence.

\textbf{Proponents of Structuralism}

This theory has a long list of proponents spanning from linguists, theologians, biblical scholars, and sociologists, among others. These include Ferdinand de Saussure, Wilhelm Wundt, Edward Bradford Titchener, Claude Levi-Strauss, Jacques Derrida, Roland Barthes and Silvie Sasková. While Saussure is known for linguistic structuralism, Wilhelm Wundt and Edward Titchener are known for psychological structuralism or structural psychology in the early 20\textsuperscript{th} century. Titchener was a student of Wundt. Both are Germans.\textsuperscript{15} Levi-Strauss relates human behaviour to the structure and principles of life and the pattern of actions. Derrida supported structuralism. Nonetheless, he further added that while conceptual structures need a center to maintain their stability, this center is paradoxically always outside the chaos of signification itself. Thus, according to Derrida, though meaning may be contained in the structure, meanings may be in and from a context that may be differed and not contained.\textsuperscript{16} That is, he argued that one may derive meanings from external factors linked to the context irrespective of the structure sometimes. In dealing with mythologies, Barthes adopted structuralist methods and helped to found the modern science of semiology (signs) which considers that anything in culture can be a sign and send a specific message.\textsuperscript{17} Simply, Barthes agrees with Saussure that structure has a role in understanding certain messages through its system of relationships.\textsuperscript{18} Sasková agrees with structuralism in the sense that, through his commentary on natural and artificial orders, he introduces the Old French narrative lays, manuscripts of the lays, structure, theoretical context and unity of the narrative in his work The structural arrangement of the Old French narrative lays.\textsuperscript{19}

\textbf{DECONSTRUCTION AND BIBLICAL SCHOLARSHIP}

Regarding biblical literature, deconstruction is a philosophical concept of interpreting a text by breaking the textual structure, rearranging the wording according to the ideology of the author and making it applicable to the new audience which the author initially did not include. One of its proponents in Africa, Jonathan Kuwornu-Adjaottor, investigated the similarity and peculiarity between the Greek word Kristos and the Dangme spelling Kristo. After having deconstructed the words by assessing the individual letters, the historical development of the words, the pronunciations and the meaning of the words in these two languages, his investigation objectively reveals that Ghanaian Biblical Scholars in the New Testament can teach New Testament Greek with the Ghanaian mother-tongue translations. He champions the use of a creative approach, which employs the translation theory of dynamic equivalence – thought for thought.\textsuperscript{20}

\textbf{Proponents of Deconstruction}

Although there are other proponents all over the world championing the philosophical concept of deconstruction, Kuwornu-Adjaottor\textsuperscript{21} is making a massive impact in Biblical Studies and Bible translation and

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{13} Claude Lévi-Strauss, \textit{Structural Anthropology} (Basic books, 2008).
  \item \textsuperscript{14} Edmund Leach and D Alan Aycock, \textit{Structuralist Interpretations of Biblical Myth} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,1985).2.
  \item \textsuperscript{15} Masaud Ansari, “Structuralism: Contribution of Wundt and Titchener” (Darbhanga: L. N. M. University, 2020).
  \item \textsuperscript{17} Fuller, “Roland Barthes: Structuralism, Post-Structuralism, and the Pleasure of the Writing Subject,” 425.
  \item \textsuperscript{18} St. Bonaventure University, “Handouts on Structuralism,” http://web.sbu.edu/theology/bychkov/handout%_.n.d.
  \item \textsuperscript{19} Silvie Sasková, \textit{The Structural Arrangement of the Old French Narrative Lays} (University of Canterbury. School of Languages, Cultures and Linguistics, 2009).
  \item \textsuperscript{21} Jonathan, Edward, Tetteh, Kuwornu-Adjaottor, PhD is an Associate Professor of New Testament and Mother-Tongue Biblical Hermeneutics in the Department of Religious Studies, Kwame Nkrumah University of science and Technology, Kumasi, Ghana.
\end{itemize}
interpretation in Ghana, across Africa, and the world at large. Currently, he champions the religious discipline of Mother-Tongue Biblical Hermeneutics in Ghana, precisely at the Department of Religious Studies, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi-Ghana. Also, he is an external examiner in the discipline of several local and foreign universities and seminaries. As a deconstructionist, Kuwornu-Adjaottor posits a dynamic equivalence for Bible translation. He emphasizes that unlike formal equivalence (F-E), dynamic equivalence translation focuses on the natural receptor response but not on the form of the source message. Also, by deconstructing through dynamic equivalence (D-E), the biblical scholar seeks “the closest natural equivalent to the source-language message.”

Another African proponent is Professor Jesse N. K. Mugambi of Kenya who extensively posits that it is high time African religious and theological studies became African and are taught and practiced in the African context. Well known for African Christianity and Phenomenology of Religion, Mugambi, like Kuwornu-Adjaottor, is a deconstructionist and a reconstructionist who sees the form and structure of the biblical text as Western-dominated and which fails to speak to and address pure African situations. In his classic Missiological Research of Globalization, he frowned at how Fredrich von Hegel perceived and asserted that “Africans were incapable of self-perception and self-description and had to be “civilized” by Europeans, as though our indigenous culture, society, religion and languages are not proper.”

Other proponents include Jacques Derrida, Christopher Norris, John David Ekem, Paul de Man, Nicolas Royle, Geoffrey Hartman, J. Hillis Miller and Harold Bloom, and the father of dynamic equivalence – Eugene Nida. Regarding its development and introduction, Jacques Derrida (1930-2004 AD) is globally known to have developed the philosophical thought of deconstruction. He was an Algerian-French philosopher. He however takes a side with structuralism as well. Therefore, Derrida seems to take the middle line. He is neither extremely a deconstructionist nor extremely structuralist. Like Aristotle, he takes the centre – partly a deconstructionist and partly a structuralist.

**ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHIES OF STRUCTURALISM**

Sasková, Silvie. *The structural arrangement of the Old French narrative lays.* University of Canterbury, 2009. This work is a 382-page thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in French at the University of Canterbury by Silvie Saskova in 2009. He introduces the Old French narrative lays, manuscripts of the lays, structure, theoretical context and unity of the narrative. He discusses the subjects of natural and artificial orders, abbreviation and emphasis, amplification, digression and refining, and repetition and parallels. Silvie makes critical argumentation, reasoning and persuasion. He acknowledges the several authors of the lays and reveals how they achieved unity in their narrative.

Levi-Strauss, Claude. *Structural Anthropology.* Volume 1. New York: Basic Books, 1963. Levi-Strauss gained much understanding in philosophical studies. He was influenced by the philosophical schools of Structural Linguistics, championed by Ferdinand de Saussure, and Roman Jakobson. He followed also the writings of Emile Durkheim and Marcel Mauss. Levi-Strauss has demonstrated his understanding of the field of structuralism in this book on Structural Anthropology with the guidance of the above-mentioned philosophical thoughts. In this first Volume, he emphasized synchronic relationships over diachronic relationships and sought to present linguistics as an ideal model for other social sciences. He relates the behavior of human beings to the rules and structure of grammar. Levi-Strauss follows the theory of binary opposition and therefore explains that human life follows a structure just as one cannot produce or speak an accurate meaning to something unless they first demonstrate their understanding and compliance to the various grammatical rules in such binary oppositions.


23 Jesse, Ndwiga, Kanyua, Mugambi, is a Professor of Philosophy and Religious Studies – University of Nairobi. He has also a professional training in philosophy and religion and education.


25 Jacques Derrida (1930-2004 AD), father of deconstruction, was an Algerian-French philosopher.

In this book, Polzin emphasizes how a synchronic relationship considers time as frozen and unchanging. Therefore, in terms of biblical interpretations, he posits that there is a life-long perpetual structure or path along which biblical meaning to texts should follow. The reader cannot read their thoughts and insights into the text. Also, history and future cannot change the meaning of a text. The text is above cultures, seasons and generations, and is eternally applicable. Polzin argues that one does not need to inquire about the historical construction of a building (how it was built) before one knows what the building is made up of. Instead, in steadily examining the structure of the building, the constituents will become known. For Polzin, the components of a thing are in itself, but not behind it or in front of it. Therefore, a text’s meaning is as it is in its structure.

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHIES OF DECONSTRUCTION
Witnessing an ongoing philosophical debate and having noticed the massive influences of and followership to the diverging theories of deconstruction and pragmatism, Chantal Mouffe decided to create an intellectual platform to engage the champions of these philosophies, namely, Jacques Derrida and Richard Rorty. This work is a product of the deliberations from a symposium he organized in 1993 at the College International de Philosophie on deconstruction and pragmatism. In this edited work, Mouffe outlines his methodology including stage debate, critical confrontations and philosophical responses between Derrida and Rorty. He stages the debate between Derrida and Rorty in his introductory papers in light of reviews by Simon Critchley and Ernesto Laclau on the characters. Mouffe then engages the philosophical responses of Derrida and Rorty and closes his entire volume with their individual stances. Interestingly, he opens his papers with a general overview of the debate by way of a preface.

In this study, Kuwornu-Adjaottor has made extensive scholarly arguments for the case of mother-tongue biblical hermeneutics as a new methodology to be adopted in doing Biblical Studies in Africa, beginning from Ghana. He indicates the vulnerability of mother-tongue Bibles in Ghana having enough evidence for a need to consider mother-tongue Bible translations using the newly proposed scientific approach of Mother-Tongue Biblical Hermeneutics. Sincere to earlier contributions by other Biblical scholars such as R.W. Tate, the author acknowledges the existence of other methodologies for Biblical Studies. However, he indicates that Tate’s third and latter method of studying the meaning of the text from the world in front of the text gives a necessity for another methodology in Biblical Studies using the mother-tongue translations of the Bible. Significantly, the author outlines the methodology for his proposition for consideration in Universities and Departments of Religious Studies and Biblical scholarship.

This work is a 208-page edition with commentary by John Caputo from the Roundtable Conversations with Jacques Derrida, at Villanova University in 1994, on the subject of Deconstruction. It has two parts, Part One comprises the Villanova roundtable conversations with Derrida. Part Two opens a commentary on the summary of deconstruction, hence deconstruction in a nutshell. Caputo discusses the very idea/concept of deconstruction, its aporetics, axiomatics of indignation, apologia and six of the nutshells. He further looks at the right to philosophy, the messianic twist in deconstruction, faith without religion, and the gramophone effect. Derrida refutes the charges that deconstruction promotes relativism and negativism. He defends his philosophical work unwaveringly with so much affirmation and ethical support. Caputo engaged in this Roundtable Conversation because he is often a follower and proponent of Derrida’s writings.

In this teamwork, Kuwornu-Adjaottor et al. demonstrate the need for Mother-Tongue Bible translators to consider the philosophical concept of deconstruction and the translation theory of dynamic equivalence since the receptor culture and audience are dynamic – different from the source culture and audience of the Biblical text. Since Bible translation, to them, involves interpretation, the structured text needs further dismantling and adjustment for it to fit best in the receptor culture. Again, the inability on the part of local people to speak the source languages of the Bible – Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek, makes it necessary for Bible translations to consider Mother-tongue translations. Culture is dynamic, yet there are cultural equivalences. Therefore, if Ghanaians and African theologians and translators expect indigenes to appreciate the word of God, it is undeniably true that the text should marry the people’s culture. Deconstruction is the philosophical tool for doing that.

CONCLUSION
Structuralism mainly studies the meaning of a text independently of its history and culture. Deconstruction, however, considers the world of the audience in line with the author’s intention and how that intention could be relevant for the new audience by taking into account the history of the text and the culture of the audience. Therefore, deconstruction principally breaks the textual structure, rearranges the wording according to the ideology of the author and makes it applicable to the new audience which the author initially did not include. Ferdinand de Saussure, Wilhelm Wundt, Edward Bradford Titchener, Claude Levi-Strauss, Jacques Derrida, Roland Barthes and Silvie Sasková, among others, are some key proponents of structuralism. Among the key proponents of deconstruction include: Jacques Derrida, Christopher Norris, John David Ekem, Jonathan Kuwornu-Adjaottor, Jesse N. K. Mugambi, Paul de Man, Nicolas Royle, Geoffrey Hartman, J. Hillis Miller and Harold Bloom, and Eugene Nidda. Lastly, the annotations were within a maximum word count of 150 words but not less than 50 words.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


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