

Interactionism

Mrs. Kulwant Kaur^{1*} Dr. Sangeeta²

¹ Research Scholar, Sociology Department, Desh Bhagat University, Mandi Gobindgarh

² Assistant Professor, RIMT University, Mandi Gobindgarh, Panjab

-----X-----

INTERACTIONISM OR SYMBOLIC INTERACTIVISM APPROACH

“Symbolic Interactionism is a school of thought in sociology that explains social behaviour in terms of how people interact with each other via symbols. This approach was formulated by Blumer (1969). It is the process of interaction in the formulation of meaning for individuals. Symbolic Interactivism is an American theory that develops from Practical considerations and alludes to people’s particular Utilization of dialect to make images, normal implications, for deduction and correspondence with others. In addition, interactionism is the study of how individuals shape society and is shaped by society through meaning that arises in interactions.”

Herbert Blumer set out three basic premises of the perspective:

- “Humans act toward things on the basis of the meanings they ascribe to those things.”
- “The meaning of such things is derived from, or arise out of the social interaction that one has with others and the society.”
- “These meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretative process used by the person in dealing with the things he/she encounters.”

The first premise includes everything that a human being may note in their world, including physical objects, actions and concepts. The second premise explains the meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of the social interaction that one has with other humans.

Five central ideas behind symbolic interactionism:

1. “The human being must be understood as a social person. It is the constant search for social interaction that leads us to do what we do. Symbolic interaction focuses on the activities that take place between actors.”

2. The human being must be understood as a thinking being. Human action is not only interaction among individuals but also interaction within the individual. It is not our ideas our values that are as important as the constant active ongoing process of thinking.
3. Humans do not sense their environment directly, instead, humans defines the situation they are in. An environment may actually exist, but it is our definition of it that is important.
4. The cause of human action is the result of what is occurring in our present situation.
5. Human beings are described as active beings in relation to their environment. Words such as conditioning, responding, controlled and formed are not used to describe the human being in symbolic interaction.

MAIN FEATURES OF THE APPROACH

1. Interactionists focus on the subjective aspects of social life, rather than on objective, macro-structural aspects of social system.
2. They base their theoretical perspective on their images of humans, rather than on their image of society as functionalists do.
3. For the interactionist, society consists of organized and patterned interactions among individuals.
4. Research by interactionists focus on easily observable face-to-face interactions rather than on macro-level structural relationship involving social institutions.

That is why it is called micro approach.

1. The approach focuses on interaction and on the meaning of events to the participants in

those events shifts the attention of interactionists away from stable norms and values towards more changeable, continually readjusting social processes.

2. For Interactionists, humans are pragmatic actors, who continually must adjust their behavior to the actions of other actors. We can adjust to these actions only because we are able to interpret them.
3. For interactionists, negotiation among members of society creates temporary, socially constructed relations which remain in constant flux, despite relatively stability in the basic framework governing these relations.

"In this way, this approach focuses attention on interactions between groups- peers, teacher-student, teacher-principal, on students attitudes and achievements, on student's values, on their self-concepts and their effect on aspiration and the relationship between student's socio-economic status and their achievement.

Theories of Interaction

In sociology of education, two theories are of great importance. These are Labeling theory and Exchange Theory.

1. **Exchange Theory**- It emphasizes the idea that social action is the result of personal choices made by considering relative benefits and costs. A key component of this theory is the postulation of the "comparison level of alternatives" Which is the actor's sense of the best possible alternative based on the assumption that there are costs and rewards involved in our interactions. Reciprocal interactions bind individuals and groups with obligations. As a reaction to 'macrocosmic' approaches which had little emphasis on interaction, interactionists have based their ideas on symbolic interaction.
2. **Labeling Theory** – The labeling theory is concerned with how self-identity and behavior of individuals may be determined or influenced by the terms used to describe or classify them. It is associated with the concept of a self-fulfilling prophecy and stereotyping. For example, if a child is repeatedly told that he or she is stupid or lazy, he/she will make the 'label' a part of his/her self-concept and behave accordingly.
3. **Participation Observation** – Interactionists study interaction through participant observation, rather than surveys and interviews. They argue that close contact and

immersion in the everyday lives of the participants is necessary for understanding the meaning of actions, the definition of situation itself and the process, by which actors construct the situation through their interaction. Given this close contact, Interactionists cannot remain free of value commitments.

REFERENCES

- Blumer, Herbert (1969). Symbolic interactionism: Perspective and method. Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press.
- Bohannon J.R. and Blanton P.W. (1999). Gender role.
- Kuhn, M.H. (1964). "Major trends in symbolic interaction theory in the past 25 years."
- Mead. G.H. (1934). Mind, Self, Society. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Corresponding Author

Mrs. Kulwant Kaur*

Research Scholar, Sociology Department, Desh Bhagat University, Mandi Gobindgarh

E-Mail – kulwant1970k@gmail.com