

Research Article



Interpretation and Semantic Plurality

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Abstract: The significance of interpretation as a cognitive and existential act that goes beyond conventional interpretation and involves the reconstruction of meaning within an open horizon of plurality and reflection is revealed by this study by following the concept of interpretation and semantic plurality in Paul Ricoeur's thinking. The study demonstrated how interpretation in a hermeneutic context is not just text analysis but rather a means of concurrently comprehending language, reality, and the self.

The study has demonstrated that interpretation is an existential act that reflects the relationship between the self and the world, between language and meaning, and between the past and the present, rather than just being a linguistic or textual mechanism.

It became evident from an examination of Paul Ricoeur's ideas that semantic plurality is a philosophical horizon that captures the diversity of texts and their resurgent capacity for meaning-making, rather than merely a fleeting linguistic phenomenon.

Whether in its theoretical realm or in its practical applications, interpretation is inextricably linked to the problem of terminology, particularly when it comes to the act of translation, which is an interpretation in and of itself. Translation is a place to test the boundaries of meaning and its potential for expansion because language is not a neutral medium for conveying meanings; rather, it is a space where understanding is created and renewed through the reader-text interaction.

Keywords: Interpretation, semantic plurality, self and world.



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Introduction

In essence, discussing interpretation involves discussing the text and the web of enquiries that surround it as a result of the cognitive interaction between literary analysis, philosophy, and linguistics. Extracting the apparent meaning is only one aspect of interpretation; another is investigating the latent semantic possibilities that reappear whenever the text shifts context or engages in dialogue with a new audience. According to this viewpoint, the text's original meaning is not fixed or a closed entity. Instead, it is an open structure, and the different cognitive and interpretive frameworks that people use to read it give it multiple meanings.

According to this perspective, tackling the problems of interpretation and semantic plurality leads to a number of epistemological issues that are crucial to the study of hermeneutics. These issues include the paradox between the immanent and the manifest, the tension between the subjective and the objective, the problem of production and consumption, and the problem of circulation and understanding. Since reading is an interpretive act (Herméneutique) that is inextricably linked to the reader's horizon as well as the cultural and existential contexts surrounding the act, all of these problems are closely related to the problem of understanding itself.

Here, interpretation is seen as a useful methodological tool for monitoring meaning and charting its development and evolution. Because of this, it has acquired a prominent place in the progression of text reading and comprehension approach in modern philosophy, particularly in the connection of debates about the text's many definition and its capacity for limitless interpreting.

Paul Ricoeur stood out for his deep philosophic approach to understanding, which went over and above straightforward linguistic analysis to an epistemological and temporal horizon where character, narrative, and language are all embroiled in a complicated and interconnected semantical network. Because it is not simply a linguistic phenomenon but rather a vista of understanding based on openness and engagement, where meaning is not decreased to a single or final interpretation but preferably unfolds through the ongoing conversation between the lecturer and the reader, the concept of semantic variety in his thinking thus takes on relevance significance.

The objective of this study is to examine the duality of interpretation and semantic plurality through an analysis of Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutics thought and its theoretical and practical applications. The research is structured around two main axes:

1. **The problem of interpretation:** the term's ambiguity and diversity of meanings; it tackles clarification in relation to the meaning and conceptual framing issues, highlighting the term's nature and vicissitudes in the linguistic and philosophical areas.

2. **Three primary stations comprise Interpretation and Semantic Pluralism:** The Openness of the Text and Challenges of Meaning

- Discussing the origins and uses of semantic plurality in Ricoeur's thinking.
- A reading that is interpretive in light of the text's flexibility and depth of meaning.
- Tayeb Salih's novel "Season of Migration to the North," which embodies the problematic of meaning and identity in the context of post-colonialism, offers a rich narrative model for analytical applications through the study of the interpretive dimension of identity discourse.

By examining the Ricoeurian historiography project and the theoretical and practicable opportunities it stands for comprehending modern texts in light of customization in understanding and context, the investigation thus seeks to offer a cognitive input to understanding the interaction between interpreting and polysemy.

THE FIRST PART: THE PROBLEM OF INTERPRETATION: MULTIPLE MEANINGS AND IMPRECISE DEFINITIONS

The term 'interpretation' is considered one of the most problematic concepts in modern thought due to its numerous meanings and usage in different fields of knowledge. This concept has changed in complication over time, shifting from philosophical and theological settings to more general fields that encompass the humanities, literate as literary criticism, philology, and cultural studies. The fugacity of the term is the problem, Depending on the methodical and methodological framework used to approach it, it can be interpreted in a variety of ways and does not fall into a closed or stable semantic field.

The semantic flexibility that defines the concept of interpretation, along with its diverse real-world applications, reveals a fundamental difference in how its essence is comprehended. Some scholars see it as a creative act that expands the semantic horizon beyond the text's apparent meaning, while others reduce it to an interpretive task focused on eliminating ambiguity and revealing the latent meaning. Because each epistemological approach helps to reshape the concept according to its own premises, it is impossible to fully comprehend the concept within a single, all-encompassing definition. As a result, interpretation became a rich field for critical analysis, demanding that its underlying assumptions be dismantled and its limits and purposes re-examined.

The researcher is therefore forced to have a critical awareness of the theoretical contexts that govern its discourse and the epistemological stakes upon which it is founded in every field, rather than giving in to semantic chaos by acknowledging the plurality and flexibility of interpretation. In the end, interpretation is a cognitive process that discloses a particular understanding of language, meaning, truth, knowledge, and even of humanity in its relationship to the outside world. It is not just a means of approaching texts.

Terminology and Interpretation Issues

Since it describes an interpretive process meant to go beyond the obvious meaning of texts or phenomena in order to arrive at deeper or more complex significances, interpretation is regarded as one of the key ideas in the domains of philosophy, language, and religion. Nevertheless, despite its importance, there are problems with this concept's theoretical definition, terminology, and applications. It is inherently problematic to define interpretation as it is a horizon of understanding that constantly changes and adapts to different fields of knowledge.

Translation presents significant epistemological problems that are closely connected to interpretation when dealing with translating philosophical or cultural terms between languages. To translate is to interpret something that requires a thorough understanding of the original text's meanings and a deliberate interpretation that changes the meaning in the receiving language. It is not a neutral mechanical process. Given the difficulty of locating exact equivalents in the target language, which leads to semantic multiplicity that requires constant revision of the assumed meaning, translating philosophically significant terms is one of the most significant challenges (Amtoosh,2014:36).

The lexical Arabic language, which refers to the traditional dictionary, and the contemporary Arabic language, which is constantly changing through translation and absorbing new terms that might not have exact equivalents in classical Arabic, are the two categories of language that Mohammed Abed Al-Jabri distinguished (al-Jabri,35). This problem is exemplified by the term "hermeneutics," which is an interpretive concept that necessitates several explanations depending on the philosophical or epistemological context in which it is used. It is challenging to translate literally without diluting or oversimplifying its complex meaning (al-Jabri,35).

According to Martin Heidegger, every translation is essentially an act of interpretation since it reveals what is "silent" in the source text by reshaping it in light of the new language's possibilities rather than just expressing the apparent meaning (Gadamer,2001:384). As a result, translation is simply a two-way process of understanding and interpretation, wherein the text is first read within its cultural context and then its meaning is reproduced within a new context, which is not without conflict and difference (Ricoeur,2006:10). According to Martin Heidegger, translation is the same as interpretation because it translates the implicit and unsaid into a new language that reproduces meaning in a different cultural context: Check out Umberto Eco's article "The Limits of Interpretation: A Reading of Umberto Eco's Critical Project," published in 2008 by Arab Science Publishers in Beirut (Hans-Georg,2004:389).

This viewpoint holds that there are two complementary phases to translation: the rephrasing stage, in which the meaning is reconstructed in the target language, and the comprehension stage, in

which the translator receives the text. This is what Paul Ricoeur expressed when he described translation as "the highest degree of understanding," because it embodies the openness of language to multiple semantic possibilities, and it is measured not by the degree of conformity, but by the richness of interpretation.

In his observation that "understanding precedes translation," Hans-Georg Gadamer goes even further, arguing that a translation cannot be considered complete without an interpretive process that reinterprets meaning in light of new knowledge.

The term's polysemy is the first of several ways that the interpretation problem presents itself. The word "interpretation" has different meanings depending on the context, which can range from philosophy to religion to literature. While interpretation in the religious context refers to the comprehension of sacred texts, in the philosophical context it is associated with the interpretation of texts and existential phenomena. It has to do with the study of texts' intricate structures in literary criticism. It is challenging to come up with a thorough and conclusive definition of the concept because of its multiplicity.

The problematic relationship between "interpretation" and "exegesis" is the subject of the second dimension. While the terms are sometimes used interchangeably, exegesis refers to a deeper investigation of layers of meaning and the opening of a horizon for indirect or non-literal understanding, whereas interpretation is typically understood as an explanation of the apparent meaning. These theoretical limits are still adaptable, though, and shift depending on the context and field.

In Western thought, the concept of interpretation evolved within what is known as "hermeneutics," which evolved into a philosophy of understanding and interpretation with philosophers like Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger, and Gadamer. In Islamic thought, on the other hand, interpretation is linked to the exegesis of the Quran and Hadith within various theological and philosophical frameworks. The concept of interpretation is shaped by the cultural and historical context in a fundamental way.

From a methodological perspective, the issue of subjectivity and objectivity in the interpretation process arises. By starting with their own cultural and cognitive backgrounds, the reader or interpreter creates their own reading of the text. This begs the question of whether a "final" or "objective" meaning can be arrived at. It also raises the question of how the reader's authority and the text's authority relate to one another: should interpretation stay inside the text's bounds or is it acceptable to go beyond them in search of a more expansive interpretive horizon?

Ultimately, it can be argued that the problematic of interpretation is an appearance of the deep separation between the personality and the world, between language and supposed, and between meaning and meaning, rather than impartial a linguistic or terminological one. Fundamentally, interpretation is a dynamic process that evolves with every reading, changing the reader-text relationship and reflecting the historically and diversity of understanding rather than reducing it to a single, definitive interpretation.

PART TWO: INTERPRETATION AND SEMANTIC PLURALISM: THE TEXT'S OPENNESS AND MEANING'S DIFFICULTIES

Semantic pluralism in the ideas of Paul Ricoeur

Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutical philosophy, which aimed to transcend the one-dimensional view of meaning and adopt an approach that views meaning as an open and multifaceted potential, is centred on the idea of semantic plurality. This vision is derived from Ricoeur's philosophical project, which holds that interpretation serves as the foundation for comprehending language, texts, and human reality by using narrative to mediate the relationship between the self and the outside world.

Ricoeur holds that reading is an interpretive act that reproduces the text, and that meaning cannot be reduced to the text's apparent structure but rather necessitates an interpretation that explores its deeper layers. His book "Time and Narrative" is notable in this regard because it attempts to construct a philosophical framework that connects narrative, language, and time. It goes beyond the literary purpose of storytelling to a cognitive horizon that enables the reconstruction of human experience within semantic narrative structures (Ricoeur,2005:118).

By using terms like "hermeneutic distance" and "textual autonomy," Ricoeur argues that meaning arises from the reader's interaction with the text within the horizon of reception rather than being dictated by the author's intentions or the original circumstances of utterance. By contributing to the text's regeneration rather than consuming it, the reader opens up comprehension to a variety of semantic possibilities that vary depending on the context and reading (Ricoeur,1988:60) . Ricoeur also highlights the text's independence as a prerequisite for interpretation.

Because organising experience in a narrative form aims to interpret events through a structure that reconstructs time and meaning together, rather than just recounting them, narrative plays a crucial role in embodying this plurality. By tying the past and present, the individual and the collective, together in a semantic unity that does not deny plurality, narration takes on a philosophical significance.

According to Paul Ricoeur, narrative is more than just a means of expression; it is a cognitive tool that enables semantic plurality in the comprehension of time and meaning in the human experience. In hermeneutic theory, narrative is crucial in establishing understanding as an interpretive act with a variety of semantic possibilities. Reading's role as an interpretive act that reproduces the text is crucial in this context due to the openness of language to multiple interpretations and possible meanings.

According to Ricoeur, semantic plurality is the richness and variety of meaning that emerges from reading and interpretation, not a chaotic state. His hermeneutical project provides a framework for interpreting texts that is flexible to multiple interpretations and their historicity, allowing for more than one interpretation to be considered, resulting in a shift away from unilateral judgments.

Semantic Pluralism and Interpretation: A Perspective on Interpretation

Interpretation is no more just a way to decode texts or go over and above the threshold of apparent significance in a world where concerns about the border of comprehension and the possibilities of terminology are becoming more prevailing. It has evolved into a philosophical discipline that explores the depths of the cognitive and cultural systems that create and reproduce the text. Here, semantic plurality is viewed as a philosophical horizon that reflects a fundamental crisis in the relationship between language and thought, as well as between the self and the world, rather than merely as an emergent linguistic phenomenon or a multiplicity of meanings.

This crisis shows up as the inability to understand the "full meaning," which is caused by both the pluralistic nature of language and the fact that every attempt at interpretation essentially re-establishes meaning within new understanding conditions, making interpretation itself both conditional and open. According to Paul Ricoeur, "every reading is a kind of rewriting" (Paul,2006:84), meaning is created through interpretation rather than revealed. All ideas of interpretive closure are upended by this change from meaning as a present entity to meaning as a constant possibility, which also challenges traditional ideas of stability and normativity.

According to this viewpoint, semantic plurality helps dispel the myth that the text and the author's intention are one and the same. Both Ricoeur and Derrida contend that the instant a text enters the game of reading, it transcends the author's intention. According to Derrida, "writing does not refer to presence, but rather establishes a continuous postponement of meaning," which means that each signification is created in a particular context and alludes to another, but it is never fully realized

(Jacques,1976:63). Instead of being a tool for representation or direct reference, language here becomes a space of difference and fragmentation.

Derrida focusses on the differential nature of language, in which a sign refers to an endless chain of references rather than a fixed presence.

It's interesting to note that, contrary to popular belief, this viewpoint restores the ethics of understanding, which requires the interpreter to converse with the text in order to "listen to its openness" rather than "possess" it. Pluralism recognizes that meaning is not predetermined but rather is obtained through the act of interpretation itself, and that this process cannot be neutral or definitive. It does not imply complete relativism or meaninglessness (Hans-Georg,2004:278).

This move from the text to the reader, where meaning is not fixed but rather formed within a variable "horizon of expectation," has been supported by contemporary reading theory, particularly that of Wolfgang Iser and Stanley Fish. The ability of great texts to inspire new interpretations, rather than just their internal organization, is what keeps them relevant in a variety of historical and cultural contexts (Wolfgang,1978:22).

Because of this, semantic plurality is no longer a threat to meaning but rather a structural component of the modern text. Instead, the acknowledgement of this diversity is what sustains the text and transforms interpretation into a new philosophical activity that is not limited to linguistics or rhetoric but rather involves a struggle of interpretations in which identity and power collide (Paul,2010:15).

The problem of interpretation is no longer a theoretical luxury but rather an existential and cognitive necessity as we live in the post-truth era, where language is used to create alternate worlds of meaning. Semantic plurality becomes an act of resistance in this situation, opposing both the removal of meaning to a procedural language devoid of symbolic dimension and the predominance of unilateral interpretation.

In this way, Ricoeur's hermeneutical project—which begins with "suspicion" but does not end there—represents a compromise between Derridian scepticism and the Gadamerian quest for knowledge. Without descending into nihilism or naivete, an interpretative possibility that is marked by dialogue and the recognition of multiple voices arises between the infinity of deconstruction and verification in traditional hermeneutics (Ricoeur,45).

The narrative's interpretive component

According to Paul Ricoeur, interpretation encompasses narrative as a philosophical understanding of the human condition in addition to language and texts as linguistic structures. According to him, narrative is a semantic horizon that organizes human experience in time and permits the reconstruction of meaning, rather than just being a literary medium. With this comprehension, narrative creates a model interpretive framework that transforms the relationship between the past and present, as well as between the self and reality.

In Ricoeur's philosophy, narrative is viewed as a constructive act that creates meaning not only by chronologically arranging events, but also by reconstructing an internal logic of these events, making them understandable and interpretable. The narrative understanding of time is inextricably linked to the temporal narrative of understanding, as both serve as dimensions of the other in a dialectic that results in the creation of an open and renewed meaning (Paul Time&Narrative,45).

One could argue that Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutical project revolves around the intimate connection between narrative and time. According to Ricoeur, narrative is the ultimate interpretive structure that allows the self to reshape its relationship with reality. According to this perspective, the only way to comprehend time is through narrative, and comprehension of

narrative and temporal perception are inextricably linked; time becomes narrative and narrative becomes a means of temporal understanding through an interpretive relationship.

Because it enables one to retell one's own story through storytelling and to reinterpret one's existence within narrative structures that give time a semantic dimension, narration in this context becomes a tool for simultaneously interpreting the self and history. Narration is a thoughtful interpretation of events rather than a simple retelling of them, which allows for the creation of new meaning patterns that go beyond the obvious (Ricoeur,2005:132).

According to the researcher, narrative gives the human experience a comprehensible semantic structure and reinterprets it. As a means of comprehending humanity in its temporal extension, narrative participates in Ricoeur's hermeneutical endeavour. This narrative receptivity to various levels of meaning yields semantic plurality. Meaning is constantly rebuilt in the horizon of reading, interpretation, and reflection rather than being boiled down to a single utterance or the author's intention.

The "Season of Migration to the North" discourse on identity is interpreted semantically.

Tayeb Salih's novel "Season of Migration to the North" is regarded as one of the most well-known narrative models that require semantic interpretation because of its numerous symbols, culturally charged allusions, and a linguistic structure that can be dissected and read again. The novel is based on a binary structure that can only be interpreted as a semantic network with overlapping levels of interpretation: between the North and the South, between the narrator and Mustafa Saeed, and between presence and absence.

For instance, Mustafa Saeed is portrayed as a transcendental symbolic structure that represents a cultural, moral, and civilizational conflict rather than as a stereotypical character. His statement, "I am like Othello – an Arab African – but I am not a slave," (Salih,1980:74) captures a lifetime of symbolic conflict between Eastern identity and Western representation. In this instance, the character is evoked as a counter-symbol or an embodiment of resistance within a colonial epistemic framework, blending in with the Western cultural text. I believe that Tayeb Salih links Mustafa Saeed's character in this text to a colonial heritage that extends beyond the book's confines into the domain of culture and identity.

Instead of focusing only on examining the text's surface meaning, the semantic interpretation of this and other dialogic or narrative passages in the book aims to reveal the symbolic structure that generates meaning through contrast and paradox. The novel's ongoing conflict between the self and the other, between the visible and the hidden, allows for a reading that sees the narrative language as a space for interpretation rather than merely a tool for telling stories.

Phrases like "I thought he would say something decisive, but he fell silent" become empty spaces in the text in this context, requiring the reader to fill them in with their own interpretation (Salih,1980: 101).

Here, silence is not just the absence of sound; rather, it is a semantic structure that creates a new meaning while simultaneously pointing out the boundaries and the limits of interpretation. One could argue that the novel's silence serves as a narrative sign that breaks the rhythm of clarity and invites the reader to interpret it, as well as a warning about the boundaries of understanding.

When applied to this kind of novel, semantic interpretation goes beyond character or event analysis to address the text's intricate structure and how meanings are created. How do they proliferate? How do they circumvent being resolved? In this instance, the novel itself becomes the focus of reading, both in terms of its substance and its style.

Conclusion

This study's findings indicate that interpretation is a philosophical and intellectual activity that transcends conventional interpretive procedures and becomes a crucial tool for concurrently comprehending texts, the world, and identity.

The significance of interpretation as a intellectual and existential act that goes beyond traditional interpretation and encompass the reconstruction of multiplicity within an open horizon of idea and reflection is thought by this study by thought the concept of thought and semantic plurality in Paul Ricoeur's thinking. The study demonstrated how interpretation in a hermeneutic context is not just text analysis but rather a means of concurrently comprehending language, reality, and the self.

The study has proven that interpretation is an experiential act that reflects the relationship between the personality and the world, between language and significance, and between the past and the present-day, rather than just being a languages or textual mechanic.

Upon studying Paul Ricoeur's ideas, it became apparent that semantic plurality is a philosophical horizon that encompasses the diversity of texts and their resurgent capacity for understanding, rather than simply a fleeting linguistic phenomenon.

The problem of terminology is a crucial component of interpretation, whether it's in its theoretical realm or in its practical applications, particularly when it comes to the act of translation, which is itself an interpretation. Translation is a place to test the boundaries of meaning and its potential for expansion because language is not a neutral medium for conveying meanings; rather, it is a space where understanding is created and renewed through the reader-text interaction.

One could argue that interpretation, as a philosophical and intellectual activity, goes beyond the bounds of conventional exegesis and becomes a means of concurrently comprehending texts, the world, and identity. The study has demonstrated that interpreting is an existential act that reflects the relationship between the self and the globe, between language and meaning, and between the past and the present-day, rather than just creature a linguistic or textual process. Paul Ricoeur's ideas show that linguistic multiplicity is a philosophical perspective that inclusive of the variety of texts and their renewed ability to produce significance, rather than simply a linguistic occurrence.

The research indicates that interpretation is dynamic and varies with each reading, giving texts life and the possibility of being reinterpreted in different contexts. According to Ricoeur, interpretation is a way for the reader to participate in the process of making meaning rather than closing it, as it opens up various semantic possibilities. The process of interpretive dialogue involves the reader and the text engaging in an ongoing process of comprehension and re-understanding.

Ricoeur states that narrative is one of the most common manifestations of this pluralism, an interpretive practice that reconstructs the human experience over time instead of just rearranging events. Narrative serves as an interpretive framework for shaping one's sense of self and time, while also reinforcing a semantic connection between the past and present that enables new avenues for comprehension.

Through the literary use of the innovative "Season of Migration to the North," it has stand demonstrated that semantic understanding allows the text to convey issues of history, identity, and discrepancy by exposing the symbolic layers that reach it up. The book's reading is done at the depth of its structure, where meanings, voices, and symbols come together to form an open interpretive network, not just at the level of the story.

'Season of Migration to the North' reading is an example of how literature can be a valuable source of practical semantic interpretation. The symbolic network conveys issues of colonialism, history, and identity through a variety of interpretations that extend beyond the obvious meaning.

By reading the novel, one can examine the relationship between writing and meaning, speech and silence, and the self and the other, instead of just recounting events.

Semantic interpretation can uncover the text's complex symbolic and cognitive layers in a literary context, as demonstrated by reading the book 'Season of Migration to the North'. Interpretation is not limited to just examining events or characters; it also examines the cultural and identity structures that form the text and allow for different interpretations.

Furthermore, it can be asserted that interpretation, as a literary and philosophical practice, is still a significant tool for understanding the complexity of the modern world. In a time of increasing cognitive and cultural challenges, interpretation is becoming a tool for addressing understanding and identity issues and reshaping the relationship between the self and the world. This study suggests that semantic plurality is a sign of meaning's depth and willingness to learn new things, not a threat to it. Interpretation is still a process that transcends boundaries and creates lively forums for discussion and engagement, as a result.

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