

# Chapter 1

## The Nexus Between Philosophy of Language, Film, and Literature: A Hermeneutic Approach

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The work explores the fields of philosophy of language, film, and literature with the aim of establishing the intrinsic nexus between them on one hand, and to establish their existential relevance to humanity and society. Man as an existential, social, and cultural being, and no doubt finds this expression in his use of language and artistic creations. The imperative question is, how is it possible to use language to communicate what is not real and what is real? The work argues that though language somewhat sets the limit or demarcate the boundary between what is real/meaningful and what is not/meaningless according to the view expressed by Wittgenstein and the logical positivists, is that enough to abandon or jettison human artistic works as constituting nothing but mere entertainment? The work submits that consideration of film and literature as ersatz and which sole purpose is amusement is mistaken. Rather, the work advanced the argument that film and literature and every other human artistic works represent existential reflections of man's true self in the "life-world."*

### **INTRODUCTION**

The corporeal nature of the human person sets him/her as part of the natural order. The human person, from a naturalistic outlook, could be seen or viewed as a material or physical substance. Certain traits displayed by man, not only sets him as superior specie among the hierarchy of beings but also far above other species of creation. Humans are believed to exhibit a superior communication ability which distinguished them from other animals. His language ability which is seen in speech construction and cognitive capacity to learn, decode and use language attests to man's organizational skill and this confers on

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him a social nature, “hence by giving man the gift of speech nature intends him to live in a community” (Omeregbe, 1991, p. 159). By and large, language makes it compulsory for humans to necessarily exist in a society. This peculiar characteristic coupled with a very developed rational mental faculty bestows control and mastery on man which has not only aided him to relate with his kind but also made him to assert his subjugation or dominance of his environment and the universe in general. This follows from the level of civilization humans have evolved over time. It may not be surprising given the remarkable manner humans have organized their society and set order in the global sphere, inevitably may have elevated humans to the level of intelligent and rational beings.

Humans, in comparison to other animals, though arguable, have a highly developed mental faculty. This display of intelligence and mental cognition is demonstrated in his inventiveness and creativity. Human being is believed to be the only species who is able to entertain himself and other humans through artistic creations such as film and literature. Whether in written or unwritten form, the intention or message is usually conveyed through language. Hence, language is vital to film and literature if their usefulness or pragmatic relevance is to be felt by their intended audience. Film as well as literature is not a creation for itself. It is not an end in itself but a means to an end. For the end to be completely grasped and understood; the language must be clearly devoid of any form of ambiguity or esoteric coloration. Not only are syntax and semantics important in language, meaning and clarification are also fundamental in the matrix of communication. This informed why philosophy of language *ab-initio*, from the ancient time to modern and contemporary epochs has continuously apt on the distinction between language that is meaningful/useful/sensible and language that is meaningless/useless/nonsensical. Consequently, if the idea/message of film and literature are largely conveyed using language, then these ideas/messages must be subjected to the scrutiny/interrogation and interpretation of philosophy of language.

One of the focuses of this paper is centered on the question how well are ideas in the mind of the novelists/playwrights and filmmakers exactly replicated using language/words in their works such that the imagery and the motive of the playwrights/filmmakers are conveyed without ambiguity to the audience? For scholars of philosophy of language, the relationship between ideas and reality is a fundamental question that must be approached if the knowledge of film and literature are to serve the aesthetic purpose of humanity. The approach to this work begins with conceptual clarification of main terms, the nexus or connection between philosophy of language, the analysis of film and literature and their relevance to man and societal development, followed by the role of language in distinguishing what is real and what is not and the argument(s) to refute the idea that film & literature are for mere amusement/entertainment.

## **CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION OF TERMS**

The concepts or terms to be clarified here are philosophy of language, film and literature. We shall begin with philosophy of language. Philosophy of language as the name implies is philosophy examining language. It is “concerned with four central problems: the nature of meaning, language use, language cognition, and the relationship between language and reality” (Philosophy of language, 2019). Generally, it is an inquiry or investigation into the origin, nature and the use of language. Basically, with reference to “Philosophy of Language” (2019), scholars of language, especially in the domain of philosophy, would like to understand what speakers and listeners do with language in communication, and how it is used socially. Secondly, would like to know how language relates to the minds of both the speaker and the interpreter and finally, they investigate how language and meaning relate to truth and the world.

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