

Text as Reader Device Improving Subjectivity on the Role of Attestation between Interpretative Semiotics and Discursive Linguistics

Authors : Marco Castagna

Abstract : Proposed paper is aimed to inquire about the relation between text and reader, focusing on the concept of 'attestation'. Indeed, despite being widely accepted in semiotic research, even today the concept of text remains uncertainly defined. So, it seems to be undeniable that what is called 'text' offers an image of internal cohesion and coherence, that makes it possible to analyze it as an object. Nevertheless, this same object remains problematic when it is pragmatically activated by the act of reading. In fact, as for the T.A.R:D.I.S., that is the unique space-temporal vehicle used by the well-known BBC character Doctor Who in his adventures, every text appears to its own readers not only "bigger inside than outside", but also offering spaces that change according to the different traveller standing in it. In a few words, as everyone knows, this singular condition raises the questions about the gnosiological relation between text and reader. How can a text be considered the 'same', even if it can be read in different ways by different subjects? How can readers can be previously provided with knowledge required for 'understanding' a text, but at the same time learning something more from it? In order to explain this singular condition it seems useful to start thinking about text as a device more than an object. In other words, this unique status is more clearly understandable when 'text' ceases to be considered as a box designed to move meaning from a sender to a recipient (marking the semiotic priority of the "code") and it starts to be recognized as performative meaning hypothesis, that is discursively configured by one or more forms and empirically perceivable by means of one or more substances. Thus, a text appears as a "semantic hanger", potentially offered to the "unending deferral of interpretant", and from time to time fixed as "instance of Discourse". In this perspective, every reading can be considered as an answer to the continuous request for confirming or denying the meaning configuration (the meaning hypothesis) expressed by text. Finally, 'attestation' is exactly what regulates this dynamic of request and answer, through which the reader is able to confirm his previous hypothesis on reality or maybe acquire some new ones. Proposed paper is aimed to inquire about the relation between text and reader, focusing on the concept of 'attestation'. Indeed, despite being widely accepted in semiotic research, even today the concept of text remains uncertainly defined. So, it seems to be undeniable that what is called 'text' offers an image of internal cohesion and coherence, that makes it possible to analyze it as an object. Nevertheless, this same object remains problematic when it is pragmatically activated by the act of reading. In fact, as for the T.A.R:D.I.S., that is the unique space-temporal vehicle used by the well-known BBC character Doctor Who in his adventures, every text appears to its own readers not only "bigger inside than outside", but also offering spaces that change according to the different traveller standing in it. In a few words, as everyone knows, this singular condition raises the questions about the gnosiological relation between text and reader. How can a text be considered the 'same', even if it can be read in different ways by different subjects? How can readers can be previously provided with knowledge required for 'understanding' a text, but at the same time learning something more from it? In order to explain this singular condition it seems useful to start thinking about text as a device more than an object. In other words, this unique status is more clearly understandable when 'text' ceases to be considered as a box designed to move meaning from a sender to a recipient (marking the semiotic priority of the "code") and it starts to be recognized as performative meaning hypothesis, that is discursively configured by one or more forms and empirically perceivable by means of one or more substances. Thus, a text appears as a "semantic hanger", potentially offered to the "unending deferral of interpretant", and from time to time fixed as "instance of Discourse". In this perspective, every reading can be considered as an answer to the continuous request for confirming or denying the meaning configuration (the meaning hypothesis) expressed by text. Finally, 'attestation' is exactly what regulates this dynamic of request and answer, through which the reader is able to confirm his previous hypothesis on reality or maybe acquire some new ones.

Keywords : attestation, meaning, reader, text

Conference Title : ICST 2017 : International Conference on Semiotics Theory

Conference Location : London, United Kingdom

Conference Dates : March 14-15, 2017