

## Analyzing the alleged Priority of Thought over Language in al-Fārābī's Philosophy of Language\*

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### ABSTRACT

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In the present article relationship of thought and language for the priority aspect, from al-Fārābī's point of view is discussed. Based on the three meanings of nuṭq (: speech), speaking is a process in which human soul is concerned with the three levels of intellectual faculty, apprehended objects in the mind as well as the expression by language. Then, this reveals a close and inseparable relationship between language and thought. Again it is suggested that relying on the tripartite theory of word, world, and intelligibles, by Al-Fārābī, at the time of the process of speaking, human soul makes use of all knowledge either acquired previously, or the knowledge obtaining as the content of experience in the actual speech situation. Thus, in connection with the priority aspect of the relationship between thought and language, I suppose, in an analytical aspect of priority, there is no priority relation between them, namely, they are interdependent. It can be supported by this view that thought and gaining knowledge are continued even while speaking. Besides, it has been argued that the human soul, as the chief agent of thinking and obtaining knowledge, is not completely passive; then human thought cannot have transcendental supremacy over language.

#### Keywords:

process of acquiring knowledge, human soul, nuṭq (speech), intelligibles, process of language, interdependence.

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## Introduction

Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī (870 - 950) was a great and renowned Muslim philosopher. It is reported that al-Fārābī's philosophical writings have been enormous. As it is said that if al-Fārābī's works are divided into two equal parts, one will be dealt with logic and the other part will be on other subjects (Madkour, 2019: 252). Also, another author claims that the largest portion of al-Fārābī's writings is on logic and philosophy of language (Black, 2008: 335).

It is popular that al-Fārābī is one of the originator of the relation between logic and language. In this regard, it is important to guess about his motivation to develop this topic. One of his stimuli is considered to be his concern: 'to adapt Aristotelian logic to an Arabic context' (Black, 2012). And his second motive may be assumed to be superficial defeat of logic in the famous disputation of Abū Bishr with Siyrāfī on the connection between logic and grammar (Street; Germann, 2013). Then, it is probably that these have caused him to strive to make a deep scholarship on the topic and have, also, led him to redefine logic, and language as well to reinterpret the relation between logic and language.

Philosophy of language in modern time investigates the nature of language, the nature of meaning, reference, concepts and thought, so on and so forth. It, also, studies the connection between language and the world, as well as the relation of language and language users, again the connection between language and thought. An important problem, in this connection, is that to what extent language influences thought and vice versa. In other words, whether or not thought is prior to language?

Based on my search, there is no work on al-Fārābī's philosophy of language in Persian. But in Western countries, the researches on the subject are not in the small amount; I think the best example is the article of "Imitation – Ambiguity – Discourse: Some Remarks on al-Farabi's Philosophy of Language". I suppose the mentioned article has a comprehensive discussion about the main characteristics of al-Farabi's philosophy of language, besides, nature and structure of language, the origin of language and the relationship between language and the mind or thought. My article, however, does a research on, merely, one topic of al-Farabi's philosophy of language in details, through al-Farabi's original texts.

In the present article to do a research on the relation of language issue and thought in addition to, the priority of thought over language or vice versa, based on al-Fārābī's standpoint is a difficult task. This difficulty is due to his puzzling original texts, furthermore, the intricate adaptation of his philosophy of language to the modern realization of the theme.

To examine al-Fārābī's opinion on the nature of "thought", the process of earning knowledge, here, is briefly brought up. Also, the nature of "language" is a necessary discussion which is included in the article.

## 1. Process of acquiring knowledge

Acquiring knowledge is a basic human demand. Since, in order to interact with the world, we need to know what is going around us. This section of the paper seeks to address the following question: ‘how human being acquires knowledge from al-Fārābī’s perspective’.

Introducing the ways knowledge about things are acquired, Al-Fārābī writes that it (*ilmu al-shiy*) sometimes is at the level of sense-perception (*bi-l-’ihsās*), and in other time as an imaginative knowledge (*bi-l-mutakhayyila-a*), as well as occasionally knowledge is acquired by intellect (*bi-l-quwwa-a al-nāṭiqa-a*) (al-Fārābī, 1995: 85).

Then, these principal cognitive faculties are counted as sensitive, imaginative and rational; they are ordered hierarchically to one another. So obtaining knowledge from al-Fārābī’s point of view is a process. Gaining knowledge begins at first level by sensitive faculty, and then continues by the help of imaginative faculty and other faculties of internal senses, as the second level. At the third grade, gaining knowledge is through the intellectual faculty.

### 1-1. Sensitive Faculty

Al-Fārābī believes in a key matter that human being commences her gaining knowledge of environment in the external world through the sense-perception. As he points out, after the need of growth for human being or nutritive faculty (*al-quwwa-a al-ghādhīya-a*), the first faculty that human being requires knowing the world is the faculty of sense-perception (*yaḥis al-malmūs*) (al-Fārābī, 1995: 82).

In al-Fārābī’s view sensory perception is of great value, since to him five human senses are the first way of acquisition of knowledge (al-Fārābī, 1984: 27). In fact, senses are the first path through which human being has a relationship to the natural world and she can know the existent world. In this regard he follows Aristotle, in that without external senses human being can know nothing.

Although these five fundamental senses or external senses have key roles in the process of acquiring knowledge in general, cannot save and memorize even the form of sensible objects when the objects are not present. For this deficiency, there is a need for another cognitive faculty; since faculty of perception operates in case the objects are present at the senses.

Therefore, al-Fārābī believes that the Sensitive faculty has two powers: 1. External or corporeal senses (i.e., the five external senses). 2. Internal senses or senses of the mind which include common sense (*al-ḥis al-mushtarak*), imagination (*al-quwwa-a al-khiyāliya-a*), memory (*al-quwwa-a al-ḥāfiẓa-a*), estimative (*al-quwwa-a al-wāhima-a*) powers. The important difference between these two categories of senses is that the external senses use corporeal organs, i.e. the eyes for sight, the ears for sound, etc.; whereas the internal senses do not have an organ (al-Fārābī, 1995: 83-4).

Also al-Fārābī writes, there is a sense faculty that marks the borderline between internal and external senses that is the “common sense” (*al-ḥis al-mushtarak*) to which all senses are leading, where the sense-perception, actually, happens for human being (al-Fārābī, 1985: 83).

Accordingly, senses and what received by senses, necessarily, are not knowledge. But in the case, forms or images of sensible things are formed in the common sense, sense-perception and knowledge at this level is acquired by this power of human soul. In this connection, Al-Fārābī in his *Ta līqāt* writes: *al-'idrāk 'innamā hum li-l-nnafs wa laysa li-l-ḥāssa-a* (al-Fārābī, 1992: 372), it can be translated as: The perception generally is just the soul's action, and it is not of sense organs. Then, he remarks that the real agent of acquiring knowledge is the soul. But the only function of sense organ is passivity as well as sensation or feeling of sensible thing, without receiving knowledge of sensible thing. Al-Fārābī argues that on occasions sense organ affected by a sensible thing, whereas human soul is unaware and inattentive of this affection, so in this case, the sensible thing would remain unperceived.

### 1-2. Imaginative Faculty

The second grade of process of acquiring knowledge is operated through different faculties of the internal senses. One of these faculties is the imaginative faculty which deserves special attention for al-Fārābī. It is a faculty as mediate state between the sense faculty and the intellectual faculty (*al-quwwa-a al-mutakhayyila-a mutawassiṭa-a bayna al-ḥāssa-a wa bayna al-nāṭiqā-a*) (al-Fārābī, 1995: 103).

The maintenance and keeping of the sensible images when the sensible objects are not present to the senses, also composing as well dividing the images to form new images are the two tasks of imaginative faculty. Again, al-Fārābī considers a third function for this faculty which is *muḥākā-at*.

According to al-Fārābī, the imaginative faculty has an ability of innovation and creativity to form new images, and in such manner that human being can obtain new knowledge. This innovation happens by composition and dividing forms of sensible things which have been stored in the faculty of memory (al-Fārābī, 1995: 104-107). Anyway, an offered equivalent for the word *muḥākā-at* is “imitation”, but I think when al-Fārābī's text in original language on the *muḥākā-at* and its examples<sup>1</sup> are studied, it is agreeable to say that “imitation” is not an appropriate equivalent for it in English. Instead, I suggest that “embodiment”<sup>2</sup> may be a suitable translation of *muḥākā-at*.

Al-Fārābī writes that the third function of imaginative faculty, i.e. *muḥākā-at*, is a specific mental activity among all mind or soul's activities. Imaginative faculty through this activity is capable to embody sensible qualities received through the five external senses and the sensible qualities saved in the memory. This embodiment contains not only sensible qualities, but also new images of composing and dividing forms stored in the memory faculty. Again this faculty by *muḥākā-at* is able to embody intelligibles, nutritive faculty, desire faculty, also bodily temperaments and dispositions (al-Fārābī, 1995: 104).

1. For instance, ‘wa matā kāna mizāj al-badan yābisā, ḥākat yubūsa-a al-badan bi-al-maḥsūsāt al-latī sha'niḥā 'an tuḥākī biḥā al-yubūsa-a (al-Fārābī, 1995: 104). And ‘fatuḥākī al-ma' qūlāt al-latī fī nihāya-a al-kamāl, ... bia'fdal al-maḥsūsāt wa a'kmalihā, mithl-o-al-a'shyā' al-ḥasana-a al-manzar (al-Fārābī, 1995: 107).

2. Embodiment: a tangible or visible form of an idea, quality, or feeling.

Then, al-Fārābī continues his illustration of the third function of imaginative faculty, that this faculty actually, embodies bodily dispositions, for instance, body moisture to sensible forms suitable to moisture, as he gives the example of ‘embodiment of body moisture to water’ (al-Fārābī, 1995: 104).

Again imaginative faculty, for al-Fārābī, whilst embodies intelligibles it also has some relevance to human tendencies, desires and emotions. Human being by this faculty embodies her anger, for example, sometimes to an ugly form or image and may in other time to a cute image. Thus, by this faculty human desire is directed to different dispositions (al-Fārābī, 1995: 105-6). To clarify, as I understand from the text, that this type of embodiment of imaginative faculty about human desires can be related to the intelligibles that the person has created by the intellectual faculty, probably in a previous time. Based on this suggestion, in the above mentioned example, anger of a person if becomes composed of a positive concept and thought in her intellect, so imaginative faculty will embody anger as a cute image. And if her anger is composed of a negative concept in her intellect, then anger is embodied as an ugly form or image.

Therefore, based on al-Fārābī’s notion, imaginative knowledge is acquired by the help of different internal senses and powers, especially through the imaginative faculty, as a power of human soul.

### 1-3. Intellectual Faculty

The third stage of acquiring knowledge process is fulfilled by intellectual cognition. It is said that al-Fārābī’s version of intellectual cognitive faculties has stemmed from Aristotelian tradition (al-Fārābī, 1938: 15), though he has added his own contribution to the topic of different levels of intellect. In his theory of intellect, al-Fārābī classifies theoretical intellect into the different levels: Potential, Actual, Acquired and Active Intellect.

#### 1-3-1. Potential Intellect (al-‘aql bi-l-quwwa-a)

Regarding this level of intellect Al-Fārābī points out that:

The intellect ... whose essence is ready and prepared to abstract the quiddities of all existing things and their forms from their matters, so that it makes all of them a form for itself or forms for itself. And those forms which are abstracted from their matters do not become abstracted from their matters in which their existence is unless *they become forms for this essence [the intellect in potentiality]*. Those forms abstracted from their matters which become forms in this essence are the intelligibles<sup>1</sup> (al-Fārābī, 1938: 12-13).

1. (My italics) Trans. Hyman (1987: 215).

Then, he explains that the intellect in potentiality attains the forms of existing things, he means that the potential intellect itself becomes those forms of things. In other word, the intellect in potency identifies with the form and image of material thing<sup>1</sup> (al-Fārābī, 1938: 14).

### 1-3-2. Actual Intellect (al-‘aql bi-l-fi l)

However, once intellect receives the essences or forms of existing things, as divested of their matter, it becomes the actual intellect, or intellect in act. Intelligibles which previously were inherent in matter at this level are free of all material conditions of time, position, quality, quantity, etc (al-Fārābī, 1938: 16). Al-Fārābī on this intellect states:

In accordance with [what has been said earlier about the Potential Intellect], you must imagine the coming to be of the forms of existing things [*al-mawjūdāt*] in that essence which Aristotle in the *De Anima* calls intellect in potentiality. And as long as there are not within it any of the forms of existing things, it is intellect in potentiality. However, when there come to be in it the forms of existing things ... then that essence becomes intellect in actuality. This is the meaning of intellect in actuality. And when there come to be in it the intelligibles which it abstracts from the matters, then those intelligibles become intelligibles in actuality<sup>2</sup> (al-Fārābī, 1938: 15).

Therefore, the intelligibles which in the first level of intellect were inherent in sensible things, at this level after abstraction move to the mind. In fact, perception and abstraction are the significant operations of the mind, which change intelligibles from potentiality to actuality; and when these intelligibles are conveyed to the mind, the potential intellect is transformed to an actual intellect (Madkour, 2019: 259).

### 1-3-3. Acquired Intellect (al-‘aql bi-l-mustafād)

Al-Fārābī on this level of intellect notes: ‘When the intellect in actuality thinks the intelligibles which are forms in it, in so far as they are intelligibles in actuality, then the intellect of which it was first said that it is the intellect in actuality, becomes now the acquired intellect’<sup>3</sup> (al-Fārābī, 1938: 20).

However, this gradual ascending of the intellect is not spontaneous; since the intelligibles and intellect commence their movements from the intellect in potency, ‘and its transition from potentiality to actuality can never be effected except through the influence of a prior actuality whose action is appropriate to it. This actuality is the agent intelligence, the last of the ten intelligences’ (Madkour, 2019: 260).

1. My translation.

2. Trans. Hyman (1987: 215-216).

3. Trans. Hyman (1987: 217).

### 1-3-4. Agent or Active Intellect (al-‘aql al-fa‘‘āl)

At this point, al-Fārābī continues to give an explanation of the active intellect that is an immaterial form ‘which never existed in matter nor ever will exist in it’. In this regard in a translation of al-Fārābī’s text is seen:

The agent intellect which Aristotle mentioned in the third treatise of the *De Anima* is a separated form which never existed in matter nor ever will exist in it, and it is in a certain manner an intellect in actuality close in likeness to the acquired intellect. And the agent intellect is that principle which makes that essence which was an intellect in potentiality, an intellect in actuality and which makes the intelligibles which are intelligibles in potentiality, intelligibles in actuality<sup>1</sup> (al-Fārābī, 1938: 24-5).

Then, al-Fārābī (al-Fārābī, 1938: 25) through an example resembles relation of the active intellect to the potential intellect to that of the sun to the eye. He describes this similarity to the extent that the eye will be potentially unable to vision and sight, as long as darkness exists, ‘and will only become actually seeing once the light of the sun dissipates the darkness, so is the Active Intellect in relation to the potential intellect, to which it imparts that power of apprehension analogous to the light of the sun’ (Fakhry, 2002: 74).

Thus, al-Fārābī emphasizes that darkness means potential lighting, or darkness is the lack of lighting and illumination. Then, once the light appears for the eye, it becomes actually seeing, it is because of what has been obtained in the eye \_ i.e. the forms and images of visible things \_ through actual illumination. It [that the eye becomes actually seeing] is not because the light illuminates actually the eye<sup>2</sup> (al-Fārābī, 1938: 25-6). I suppose the mentioned phrase is of great significance and value, since it is the main point in al-Fārābī’s theory of intellect and epistemological system. That is, although the active intellect as an immaterial form makes the potential intellect and intelligible, an intellect and also intelligible in actuality, and consequently it has a very key role in this direction; here, this phrase emphasizes the importance of the potential intellect role likewise. Since, the eye (in the example) or the potential intellect is changed to actual seeing or the actual intellect by virtue of the actual illumination which the forms obtain in the eye or in the intellect. I mean the importance of the potential intellect is due to its activities for obtaining the forms of the things. Again, the two other levels of the intellect have some activities to be worthy of receiving the radiation of the active intellect.

In this connection, another al-Fārābī’s phrase which supports my suggestion is that when in *Risāla-a fī al- ‘Aql* he remarks that the active intellect is not active continuously, but it at times operates and sometimes does not (al-Fārābī, 1938: 32).

1. Trans. Hyman (1987: 218).

2. My words from original text.

As a result, it is coherent to say that according to al-Fārābī, all cognitive faculties of human being are both active and passive. They are active with regard to the activities of abstraction and so on, during the process of perceiving knowledge; also they are passive with regard to their demand for the radiation of the active intellect.

## 2. The Nature of Language

Al-Fārābī's philosophical point of view on language may be achieved and understood through the study of three topics of "Definition of Speech or Language", "The Relationship between Word, World and the Intelligibles" and "the Relation between Language and Logic".

### 2-1. Definition of Speech or Language

Since, in Arabic '*mantīq*' is the name for 'science of logic'; and *mantīq* is derived from a root meaning "speech" (*nuṭq*); al-Fārābī, in an introduction to the science of logic, elucidates different meanings of *nuṭq*. He quotes his predecessors about three meanings or uses of *nuṭq*: 1. Exterior speech (*al-qawl al-khārij bi-l-ṣawt*), namely the expression by language of what is in the mind. 2. Interior speech (*al-qawl al-markūz fi-l-nnafs*) which is the intelligible obtained in human mind through understanding, in other words, it is intelligibles which imply the words. 3. Intellectual faculty (*al-quwwa-a al-l-nnafsāniya-a al-maftūra-a*) that is a faculty through which human being can reason and she, also, can be distinguished from the animals; also it is a faculty by which human being acquires disciplines of knowledge and arts, as well she can distinguish between admirable and deplorable actions (al-Fārābī, 1994: 36). The point worth noting here is that al-Fārābī through the description of different meanings of *nuṭq* wants to present three levels of language. These three levels of language expose the existing connection between expressions of words on the one hand, and cognitive faculties inside human being, on the other.

In his *Sharḥ al- Ibāra-a*, al-Fārābī again writes on speech (*nuṭq*) that the word *nuṭq* in Arabic discontinuously means a faculty by which human being thinks on intelligibles, and other time it means the act of thinking on intelligibles. Also, from time to time to him *nuṭq* significance is "speaking" (*takallum*) (al-Fārābī, 1960: 34). In *al-Ḥurūf*, he holds that the *nuṭq* is the very using of words and it is verbal expression by language to indicate what is in the mind (al-Fārābī, 1986: 163).

In short, the different definitions of *nuṭq* are such: "faculty of intellect", "the act of thinking on intelligibles", "the action of speaking", and sometimes it is "words expressed by language", or "intelligibles which indicate the words".

From definition of the word "speech" (*nuṭq*), may it is understandable that words and their expressions reveal what human being has apprehended, i.e., they reveal the content of the mind. The words and their expressions, also, give out how the apprehended objects relate to the intellectual faculty; since the apprehended objects on the one hand have some relations to the intellectual faculty and on the other hand they are related to the sensible and outside (meta-mental)

world. The relation between word, world and the intelligibles is discussed in the following subsection (3. 2.).

Also it may help us to obtain a definition of language, when Al-Fārābī construes about language that once human being had required, for the first time, to acquaint others with what she has in the mind, or what is her intention of what is in her mind; first she pointed at things to indicate what she wants, and then she used sounds (al-Fārābī, 1986: 135-6). The notable point here is to interpret al-Fārābī's phrase "*maqṣūdahū biḍamīrih*" (human being intention of what is in the mind). To explicate the phrase, I assume that "language" for al-Fārābī is not only the expression of what human being has in the mind (*mā-fī-al-ḍamīr*), but also a part of language is the expression of human being's intention and comment of what she has in the mind.

To sum up, it seems to me that al-Fārābī presents no definite definition of language, but language to him consists of three levels of "the intellective faculty", "intelligibles" or what has in the mind, and the "verbal expression" of what is in the mind along with human being's purpose of what she has in the mind. Thus, according to al-Fārābī "language" is not just a tool to convey contents of the mind and her intention of them, but the intellective faculty itself as well as intelligibles and, in general, content of the mind are, likewise, parts of the language.

## 2-2. The Relationship between Word, World and the Intelligibles

Al-Fārābī in *Sharḥ al- Ibāra-a* writes, Aristotle believes that the words are directly indicative of what are inside human soul, and then he comments that Aristotle did not say that the words denote intelligibles, but they indicate what are gotten inside human soul. Afterwards he explains his view in this regard that what human being obtains inside the soul, contains all apprehended objects of intellective faculty and imaginative faculty, are gained in human soul while sensible objects disappeared. Here is the translation of al-Fārābī's text, when he says:

He [Aristotle] said those which occur in the soul (*al-āthār allatī fī-l-nnafs*), and he did not say the intelligibles (*ma'qūlāt*), because he meant by "*al-āthār allatī fī-l-nnafs*" all that are achieved in the soul after disappearance of sensible things from the sense organs. It is the soul in which the intelligibles and imaginative forms of the sensible things (as they are sensed) are attained, for instance, imagination of [a person like] *Ziyd* present to the senses (*khīyāli Ziyd fī al-ḥis*) and other imaginations which the soul creates by the activities of division and composition. Aristotle meant to include all these forms [not only the intelligibles but also different levels of knowledge], so he named it "*al-āthār allatī fī-l-nnafs*"<sup>1</sup> (al-Fārābī, 1960: 24).

It is coherent from al-Fārābī's statement that after the perception of sensible objects, the other two faculties (of imaginative and intellective) operate on the perceived objects in the soul.

1. My translation.

Therefore, accordingly when naturally human being is in contact with the world, through sense organs and then internal senses, different levels of knowledge (i.e., sense-perception, imaginative and rational knowledge) are obtained inside human soul. And these are “*al-āthār allatī fī-l-nnafs*” which are significations of words expressed by language.

Continuing his interpretation on Aristotle, Al-Fārābī writes that what have been produced in the soul are representative (*mithāl*) of \_ and not indicative of \_ what are in the external and sensible world. Al-Fārābī holds that in fact, Aristotle did not state about the connection between intelligibles and actualized external existents. Then, he elucidates his opinion in this regard that the reference of intelligibles, or what have been produced in the soul, to the external sensible existents is not the type of indication that words give of the intelligibles. But to him intelligibles, or what have been produced in the soul, define (*mu'arrifa-at mā huwa al-mahsūs 'aw ghayri dhālik min 'anḥā' al-tta rīf*) the external existents, as a kind of definition (al-Fārābī, 1960: 24-5). He describes that the relation of intelligibles which are in the soul (*al-ma'qūlāt allatī fī-l-nnafs*) with the external existents (*al-mujūdāt khārij al-nnafs*) is a relation arising from human nature (*ḥāshila-a bi-l-ṭṭab*) (al-Fārābī, 1960: 27). Accordingly, it seems, it is a common principal among all human beings that apprehended objects in their soul naturally can represent the external world, so this do make possible the dialogue and conversation among entire human beings in all over the world.

Al-Fārābī, however, believes that the relation between intelligibles and the words expressed by language, and vice versa, are based on the agreement among people of a society or a nation. He argues in favor of conventionality of the origin of language, considering different nations have different languages as well as scripts; but the intelligibles are common among all human beings (al-Fārābī, 1960: 27). Thus, I suppose what makes the intelligibles different among people of different nations is transformation of intelligibles to words which are conventional.

Therefore, I think there is no difficulty to describe conventional as well natural relation of word, intelligibles and the world. Although, according to al-Fārābī, intelligibles in the soul have the type of natural relation with the external world; in fact, he holds that relationship between the intelligibles or what apprehended in the mind and the expressed words is conventional. Here, a comment on al-Fārābī's position states that al-Fārābī, as a Peripatetic, following Aristotle in that they believe ‘language is not a natural or divine given, but simply an arbitrary human convention. Consequently, for Aristotelians, there is no necessary link between words and thoughts’ (Germann, 2015-2016: 146). But this comment can be criticized for the reason that the relationship merely between intelligibles (either as the third level of thinking, or as the second level of language) and the external expression of words (as the third level of language) is based on human convention.

Again al-Fārābī, in *Kitāb al-Hurūf*, talks about these relationships between the world, and what produced in the human soul, as well as the words expressed by language; where he puts it:

... then the words are indicative of, firstly, what are produced inside the soul,  
and what is inside the soul is representative (*mithāl*) or embodiment (*muḥākā-at*)

of what is in the external existents.’ Next, he writes, ‘and the words are more similar (*’ashbah*) to the intelligibles (*bi-l-ma ’qūlāt*) which are in the human soul than to be like what is in the external world<sup>1</sup> (al-Fārābī, 1986: 76).

Here, he illustrates the tripartite relationship between the world, the intelligibles and the word<sup>2</sup>. However, according to al-Fārābī the human soul defines or represents the objects in the world, and this relation is a natural one; so it is common among all human beings. Yet, intelligibles or what is in human soul has a conventional relationship with the words expressed by human being. Thus, the word has an indirect relation with the world and a direct relationship with the soul.

### 2-3. The Relation between Logic and Language

Al-Fārābī has, mainly, discussed on language in his different writings while speaking on logic. Historical context allows al-Fārābī to bring up the relation between language and logic. It is observed that ‘in the ancient and medieval traditions, the study of logic was closely tied to the philosophical consideration of language’ (Black, 1998).

Thus, here, what we need to regard is the connection between logic and language, and not logic and grammar, it means “language” as a philosophical concept.

There have been different definitions of logic and its subject matter by Muslim logicians. It is believed that these definitions show their views on the relationship between logic and language (Druart, 2016: 71).

It is famous among ancient Muslim logicians that the advantage of using rules of logic is to distinguish between correct and incorrect thinking. But al-Fārābī considers additional function for logic that it also, corrects others’ thinking, as well it correct our thinking by others (al-Fārābī, 1994: 29). This additional advantage of logic is concerned with language, since the correction of others’ thinking occurs when one expresses her thought by language, again the correction of our thinking by others (Zargar, 2019: 136). Thus, I think his philosophical approach to logic is, probably, clear; as he sees language as a philosophical concept.

Additionally, logic is related to language directly, since it provides general rules concerning the correct use of expressions of all languages. It means, when logic deals with language, it refers to a universal language insofar as it signifies intelligibles. In fact, logic is related to the universal characteristics of all languages that, in Black’s word, ‘reflect their underlying intelligible content’ (Black, 1998). Here, the relation between language and logic is, in fact, based on the relation between language and the intelligibles.

Rather, for al-Fārābī, language is one of the two subject-matters of the art of logic. He puts it:

1. My translation.

2. As opposed to Adamson and Key who write: ‘But the tripartite theory of meaning consisting of sounds, thoughts, and things (...) based on Aristotle’s *De interpretatione* was not universally welcomed. An autochthonous and pre-existing Arabic bipartite theory of meaning, consisting solely of vocal form (*lafẓ*) and mental content (*ma hā*), provided an alternative’ (Adamson & Key, 2015: 74).

The subject-matters of logic are the things for which [logic] provides the rules, namely, intelligibles in so far as they are signified by expressions, and expressions in so far as they signify intelligibles (al-Fārābī, 1968: 74).

Then, he clarifies his position in this regard that, to correct thought in the mind we need to think on intelligibles in the mind, but to correct thought of audiences we have to express them in words. Afterwards, he comes to this conclusion that as for amendment of audience's thought and judgment we need specific intelligibles, likewise, to convey those specific thought or intelligibles in words, we have to use specific words (al-Fārābī, 1994: 34).

Accordingly, al-Fārābī holds that in logic we require the rules which correct both intelligibles and expression of them. He says that predecessors construed both of them as *nuṭq* and *qawl*. Next, he declares that they took the intelligibles as “*nuṭq* and *qawl*” which are within the soul and the expression of them as “*nuṭq*” and “*qawl*” which are expressed by words (al-Fārābī, 1994: 34). Here, I suggest that the intelligibles and words are one thing in two templates, one in mental form and the other in vocal form. So the importance of expressions or words as well as intelligibles is connected to the relationship of word and intelligibles.

Al-Fārābī thinks that an introduction for learning logic is to obtain knowledge of sensible objects as well as knowledge of all existents of extra-mental world. According to him, another introduction for learning logic is gaining knowledge of intelligibles and imaginative forms which exist in human soul. And the third introduction to him is considered as knowledge about words and scripts. This is because, he writes, a logician who studies intelligibles, is related, on the one hand, to the external world; and is pertained to the expressed words on the other (al-Fārābī, 1960: 24). Now, it is coherent to observe a tripartite relation between the world, intelligibles and the word in al-Fārābī's philosophical aspect.

### 3. Analyzing Relation between Thought and Language

In connection with what have been said till now, the relation between thought and language from priority aspect, based on al-Fārābī's notion, here, is analyzed.

1) It has been mentioned that knowledge is acquired, as al-Fārābī believes, in different levels of sense-perception (*bi-l-’ihsās*), imaginative knowledge (*bi-l-mutakhayyila-a*), and intellectual knowledge (*bi-l-quwwa-a al-nāṭīqa-a*). And these three grades of knowledge are ordered hierarchically to one another, so gaining knowledge is a process. Also, about language if it is accepted that the three meanings of *nuṭq* (: speech) conveys, on al-Fārābī's view, that speaking is a process which includes three levels: intellectual faculty, apprehended objects in the mind as well as the expression by language; then this will show a close and inseparable relation between language and thought. May this connection is a type that the different levels of language overlap the various grades of thought. Furthermore, it raises the question, whether the different levels of process of thought is distinguishable from the different levels of language process?

2) The important point in al-Fārābī's logical thought is that the subject-matters of logic are intelligibles to the extent that they are signified by expressed words, as well as expressed words to the extent that they signify intelligibles. On that account, opposing to Avicenna<sup>1</sup>, al-Fārābī believes that expression or language has no subordinate role in logic. In point of fact, language for al-Fārābī is one of the two subject-matters of logic, and it has a main and independent role in relevance with logic. Therefore, it may be concluded that language to him is not just a tool to express thought but language is an independent issue, though related to thought and intelligibles.

3) As it has been brought up, the imaginative faculty in the process of gaining knowledge is an important faculty. Since this faculty, through the function of *muḥākā-at*, embodies sensible qualities, intelligibles, nutritive faculty, desire faculty, also bodily temperaments and dispositions in a creative manner; it can be suggested that this type of activities, in realm of obtaining knowledge, again pave the way for the needed change and transformation of different kinds of understood objects to the expressed words. Then, the imaginative faculty, chiefly by the ability of *muḥākā-at*, in the process of speaking may play a significant role too. The need for transformation of intellective or imaginative knowledge into the expressed words is very explicit, and this function may be performed by *muḥākā-at*. It is because the process of thought and language are inextricably bound up in each other.

4) Al-Fārābī believes that the sense-perception is solely the Soul's action, and it is not of sense organs. However, when forms or images of sensible things are formed in the "common sense", sense-perception and knowledge at this level is acquired by the power of human soul. Thus, the sense-perception is a process that human being gains it through activity and association of two powers of external and internal senses, and in fact, the sense-perception takes place eventually by the soul. Moreover, the imaginative faculty as one of the internal senses does its creative function to form new knowledge through composition and dividing stored forms of sensible things. It is obvious that this faculty which is based on sense-perception is also one of human soul's faculties. Naturally, the intellective knowledge is attained too by intellect, as one other faculty of human soul. Thus, the main agent for obtaining knowledge, in general terms, is human soul.

5) During the process of acquiring knowledge and thinking over intelligibles, human soul, as the main agent of cognitive activities, is both active and passive. It is active in regard to what has been mentioned about the activities of intellect in different levels. The Potential Intellect attains the forms of existing things. Then, once intellect receives the essences or forms of existing things, as divested of their matter, it becomes the Actual Intellect. In fact, perception and abstraction are the significant operations of the mind, as a faculty of the soul, which change intelligibles from potentiality to actuality. At the stage of the Actual Intellect, human intellect is capable to think on itself as well as intelligibles acquired from material objects; now it grows to be the acquired

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1. Avicenna (1983: 22) says: the essential requirement demands the consideration of words, and a logician does not concern herself about words unless for conversation.

intellect. Human soul is, also, passive in regard to its demand for the radiation of knowledge emanated by the active intellect. Since, it is the active intellect, which turns the potential intellect into the actual intellect and again turns the potential intelligibles into the actual intelligibles, as well this is the case insofar as the active intellect upraises human soul to the culmination of human intellect in her cognitive process.

6) Considering the three levels of *nutq* (: speech), it is comprehensible that at the process of speaking, human soul is concerned with the faculty of intellect, the intelligibles and all have been appreciated by human soul, likewise with the words. Furthermore, in his epistemological system, al-Fārābī propounds tripartite theory of word, world and intelligibles. Based on this position, at the time of expression of words human soul is concerned not only with within human soul and all its faculties, but also with the experiences gained of things in the external world. Also it is for granted that human being during the process of speaking makes use of all knowledge either acquired previously, or the knowledge obtaining as content of experience in the actual speech situation. Consequently, while the speaking process, human soul is involving the internal and the external world, and it may has ascending and descending movements within the soul in relation with the things in the world.

7) After all these introductory discussions to the priority aspect of relationship between thought and language, now I have to bring al-Fārābī's quotation on this connection: The predecessors do believe that the words actually occur after thinking on things. And the words indicate, firstly, on what is in the mind as intelligibles (al-Fārābī, 1986: 74). This statement may be commented that thought is prior to language. Here, I suppose that he does not mean by the word 'firstly', time priority, but as mentioned before, it denotes close relationship between words and intelligibles. Predicating her notion on al-Fārābī's another statement, Germann believes that according to al-Fārābī, thought is prior to language. She quotes the following passage from al-Fārābī's *al-Hurūf* (al-Fārābī, 1986: 135):

'From his very beginning (*ḥalā min awwal mā yuḥtaru*), a human being embarks and moves toward that to which, by his natural disposition (*bi-al-ḥiṭra*), it is easiest for him to move and in the manner that is easiest for him. Thus, his soul will embark upon knowing (*an ya lama*), thinking (*yufakkira*), forming a concept (*yataṣawwara*), imagining (*yataḥayyala*), or deliberating (*yata aqqala*) everything for which, by his natural disposition (*bi-al-ḥiṭra*), he has a more intense and greater disposition' (Germann, 2015-2016: 146).

Hence, she understands from al-Fārābī's terminology that since human being was 'able to think in an abstract and discursive way' from her very beginning of existence, so, as she concludes, human thought has a priority over her language (Germann, 2015-2016: 147). I think, however, her conclusion about the priority of thought over language is not a profound judgment. Since, Germann herself, describes that al-Farabi, here, talks 'in the quasi-historical account of the evolution of humankind and, in connection with this, of language' (Germann, 2015-2016: 146-7). As a result,

when al-Fārābī talks on the subject of the origin of languages and that how a language develops, in fact, he illustrates a community whose members have concepts or intelligibles (Hodges; Druart, 2019). Here, however, if it is considered from analysis aspect of the content of language as well thought, and not from a historical context, it will not be concluded that thought has a priority over language.

8) On the claim of priority, if *analytical priority*<sup>1</sup> is considered and about the *relative analytical priority* of thought and language<sup>2</sup>, the position of *non priority-interdependence* is chosen, it seems a clear map on the topic will be achieved. In other words, based on analyzing the content of language as well thought, there is no way of giving an account of either of thought or language without bringing in the other one, that is, the two notions have to be analyzed together and interdependently. In favor of this stand, it can be argued that the different levels of language overlap the various grades of thought. And the mentioned comment is supported by this view that thought and gaining knowledge is continued even while speaking, and at this time knowledge is not confined to what is inside human soul but it includes the outside world too. Besides, it has been argued that human soul, as the chief agent of thinking and obtaining knowledge, is not completely passive. In his epistemological picture, al-Fārābī does not presume a passive human being to accept illumination of knowledge. Further, inasmuch as the two processes of thinking and speaking intertwined with one another, then human thought is not prior to language, nor is it separate from language to have a transcendental supremacy over language. Therefore, al-Fārābī releases the language from imposition of thought.

### Conclusion

Al-Fārābī believes that knowledge is acquired in different levels of sense-perception, imaginative knowledge, and intellectual knowledge. Based on the three meanings of *nutq*, speaking is a process which human soul is concerned with the three levels of intellectual faculty, apprehended objects in the mind as well as the expression by language. Then, this reveals a close and inseparable relation between language and thought. May this connection is a type that the different levels of language overlap the various grades of thought.

Besides, it is suggested that relying on the tripartite theory of word, world and intelligibles, by Al-Fārābī, at the time of process of speaking human soul makes use of all knowledge either acquired previously, or the knowledge obtaining as content of experience in the actual speech situation.

1. Martin Davies (1998: 226) writes: 'I suggest that it is useful to distinguish three kinds of priority question: ontological, epistemological, and analytical'.

2. Davies (1998: 227) continues to write: 'Our third kind of priority, *analytical priority*, is priority in the order of philosophical analysis or elucidation. ... then the four possible positions on the relative analytical priority of thought and language can be sketched as follows. (i) Priority for thought: ... (ii) Priority for language: ... (iii) No priority – Interdependence: This is the view that there is no way of giving an account of either intentionality [of thoughts] or linguistic meaning without bringing in the other member of the pair. The two notions have to be explained together. (iv) No priority – Independence: ...'

Thus, in connection with the priority aspect of relationship between thought and language, though it is commented that according to al-Fārābī thought is prior to language; I suppose, in an *analytical aspect of priority*, there are no priority relation between thought and language, namely, they are interdependent. It can be supported by this view that thought and gaining knowledge is continued even while speaking, and at this time knowledge is not confined to what is inside human soul but it includes the outside world too. Furthermore, it has been argued that human soul, as the chief agent of thinking and obtaining knowledge, is not completely passive. And as the two processes of thinking and speaking intertwined with one another, human thought cannot have a transcendental supremacy over language.

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