

## **THE PHILOSOPHY OF LANGUAGE IN AL-FARĀBĪ'S THOUGHT: BETWEEN LOGIC, SYMBOL, AND REASONING**

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**Abstract:** *Al-Farābī's contributions to Islamic philosophy extend deeply into the philosophy of language, yet scholarly attention to this dimension remains limited. This study re-examines al-Farābī's linguistic philosophy by focusing on three interrelated dimensions: logic, symbol, and reasoning. The background of the research lies in the need to reassess classical frameworks in light of contemporary debates on language, cognition, and meaning, where non-Western traditions remain underrepresented. The objective is to explicate how al-Farābī conceptualizes language not merely as a communicative tool, but as an epistemic system for organizing rational thought and symbolic representation. Using a qualitative method, the study employs textual-philosophical analysis of al-Farābī's major works, including Kitāb al-Ḥurūf, Kitāb al-Alfāz al-Musta'mala fī al-Manṭiq, and his commentary on De Interpretatione, supported by recent scholarly findings. The results reveal that al-Farābī understands language as a structured expression of the intellect, capable of conveying both demonstrative propositions and imaginative constructs. His classification of syllogisms into demonstrative, dialectical, rhetorical, poetic, and sophistical shows the multiplicity of language functions, each with distinct epistemological and moral purposes. Furthermore, his reflections on metaphor, rhetoric, and prophetic discourse demonstrate the cognitive and ethical role of symbolic language in shaping society and cultivating virtue. The study concludes that al-Farābī's philosophy of language integrates logical rigor with symbolic depth, offering an early model of semiotic realism in which words, concepts, and referents form a triadic relationship grounded in reason and truth. This synthesis provides a foundational contribution to the Islamic intellectual tradition while also enriching contemporary philosophy of language, hermeneutics, and*

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*intercultural dialogue.*

**Keywords:** *Al-Farābī, Philosophy of Language, Logic, Reasoning, Symbol.*

**Abstrak:** Kontribusi al-Farābī dalam khazanah filsafat Islam mencakup secara mendalam aspek filsafat bahasa, meskipun dimensi ini masih relatif kurang mendapat sorotan dalam kajian akademik kontemporer. Penelitian ini mengkaji ulang filsafat bahasa al-Farābī dengan menitikberatkan pada tiga dimensi utama yang saling terkait, yaitu logika, simbol, dan penalaran. Latar belakang kajian ini berangkat dari kebutuhan untuk merekonstruksi kerangka klasik dalam terang perdebatan modern mengenai bahasa, kognisi, dan makna, di mana tradisi non-Barat masih sering terpinggirkan. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk menjelaskan bagaimana al-Farābī memahami bahasa bukan semata sebagai sarana komunikasi, melainkan sebagai sistem epistemik yang mengorganisasi pemikiran rasional sekaligus representasi simbolik. Metode yang digunakan adalah kualitatif dengan analisis filosofis dan tekstual terhadap karya-karya utama al-Farābī, seperti *Kitāb al-Ḥurūf*, *Kitāb al-Alfāz al-Musta'mala fī al-Manṭiq*, dan komentarnya atas *De Interpretatione*, yang didukung oleh temuan penelitian terkini. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa al-Farābī memandang bahasa sebagai ekspresi terstruktur dari akal, yang mampu menyampaikan proposisi demonstratif maupun konstruksi imajinatif. Klasifikasinya mengenai silogisme—demonstratif, dialektis, retorik, puitis, dan sofistik—menunjukkan keragaman fungsi bahasa dengan tujuan epistemologis dan moral yang berbeda. Selain itu, refleksinya tentang metafora, retorika, dan wacana profetik menegaskan peran kognitif sekaligus etis dari bahasa simbolik dalam membentuk masyarakat dan menumbuhkan kebajikan. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa filsafat bahasa al-Farābī menyatukan ketepatan logis dengan kedalaman simbolik, sehingga menghadirkan model awal realisme semiotik yang menempatkan kata, konsep, dan referen dalam relasi triadik berbasis akal dan kebenaran. Sintesis ini tidak hanya memperkaya tradisi intelektual Islam, tetapi juga memberikan kontribusi penting bagi pengembangan filsafat bahasa, hermeneutika, dan dialog lintas budaya kontemporer.

**Kata-kata Kunci:** *Al-Farābī, Filsafat Bahasa, Logika, Penalaran, Simbol.*

## **Introduction**

The philosophy of language occupies a central role in classical Islamic thought, particularly in the works of al-Farābī (d. 950), whose synthesis of logic, metaphysics, and epistemology laid the groundwork for subsequent intellectual developments in the Islamic world. This intellectual trajectory was further expanded by Avicenna's metaphysical and linguistic inquiries (Janssens 2021, 290), while recent perspectives such as Kamil (2023, 416) have reconnected Islamic philosophical principles with the epistemology of modern scientific explorations. Further comparative studies—such as Bakker (2018, 557), who traces the reception of Arabic philosophical traditions in the Renaissance, and Özturan (2019, 6), who analyzes the practical philosophy of al-Fārābī and Avicenna—demonstrate the continuity of these ideas across intellectual epochs. While modern linguistic philosophy often treats language as an autonomous structure or a product of social convention, al-Farābī's approach anchors language within the broader framework of

human cognition (*'aql*) and metaphysical reality. Comparable classical perspectives on the scientific and philosophical traditions of the Islamic world have been explored by El-Bizri (2018, 271), who revisits the intellectual legacy of Ibn al-Haytham, and Tahiri (2018, 137), who highlights the challenges of modern reinterpretations of Arab intellectual heritage. Despite the increasing interest in Islamic logic and metaphysics, his linguistic contributions have often been marginalized or treated only in passing (Altaev et al. 2020, 82; López-Farjeat 2019, 20).

The contemporary philosophy of language, especially in the West, has evolved through major shifts—from the formal semantics of Frege and Russell, to the ordinary language philosophy of Wittgenstein, and the later rise of hermeneutics and post-structuralism. Yet, in this rapidly expanding field, non-Western conceptions of language remain underrepresented (Agab 2023, 63; Bahrani 2023, 81).

Recent contributions in Islamic philosophy and the dialogue between religion and science—such as those by Daneshgar (2020, 972), who explores the philosophical foundations of Islam and science, and Benevich (2020, 10), who examines questions of individuation and identity in Islamic metaphysics—further underscore the continuity of intellectual reflection from the classical to the modern period. Scholars such as Stefaniuk (2022, 65) have called for a broader, intercultural engagement with early Islamic thinkers who offered complex reflections on language, cognition, and meaning far before these issues became central in modern philosophy. Al-Farābī is one such figure whose insights remain strikingly relevant, especially given his unique attempt to integrate linguistic analysis, logical rigor, and symbolic imagination.

Despite his monumental status in the Islamic philosophical tradition, al-Farābī's view on language has been treated unevenly in scholarship. Many studies focus heavily on his political theory, metaphysics, or epistemology, leaving the language dimension underdeveloped. Even foundational texts like *Kitāb al-Ḥurūf* are often read solely through their Aristotelian or Neoplatonic influences, without exploring their implications for a distinct Islamic theory of meaning and symbol (Berman 1967, 268; Zonta 2011, 112). Furthermore, al-Farābī's reflections on metaphor, imagination, and rhetorical discourse—particularly in relation to poetry and prophecy—have only recently begun to receive the attention they deserve (Aouad and Schoeler 2002, 185; Laywine 2023, 121).

This article aims to contribute to the growing discourse by providing a comprehensive analysis of al-Farābī's philosophy of language, with a focus on three interrelated dimensions: logic, symbol, and reasoning. These categories not only reflect al-Farābī's own thematic emphases but also serve as useful heuristics for bridging his classical framework with contemporary questions. How does al-Farābī understand the relationship between thought and expression? In what ways does language embody

rational structure, and how does it also function symbolically through metaphor and imagination? How do these insights inform ethical and political communication? These are the core questions driving this study.

At the heart of al-Farābī's conception of language is a commitment to universality. While he acknowledges the diversity of linguistic systems and socio-cultural expressions, he maintains that underlying them is a shared cognitive architecture grounded in human reason. This belief in conceptual universals—translatable across languages yet anchored in rational principles—stands in contrast to certain modern linguistic relativisms that deny any fixed meaning beyond context. However, al-Farābī also anticipates the concerns of hermeneutics: he is sensitive to ambiguity, rhetorical strategy, and audience reception. As Leezenberg (2021, 88) notes, this double orientation—toward rational universals and cultural particularities—makes al-Farābī a key figure for modern comparative philosophy of language.

Moreover, al-Farābī's model cannot be understood apart from his ethical and political concerns. For him, language is not merely epistemic—it is normative. Misuse of language, particularly in public discourse, can mislead the soul, corrupt reason, and damage civic life. Hence, his emphasis on logical clarity is not just technical but moral. Language that aligns with reason contributes to individual flourishing and collective justice; language that distorts reason leads to error, chaos, and tyranny. This insight has particular relevance in our current age of rhetorical manipulation, ideological polarization, and algorithmically amplified disinformation.

The significance of this study thus lies in two main contributions. First, it offers a systematic reading of al-Farābī's philosophy of language by bringing together his writings on logic (*Kitāb al-Qiyās*, *Kitāb al-Burhān*), metaphysics (*Iḥṣā' al-'Ulūm*), and symbolic discourse (*Kitāb al-Khiṭābah*, *Kitāb al-Shī'r*), supported by insights from contemporary scholarship. Second, it situates al-Farābī's thought within current philosophical debates on language, meaning, and communication, arguing for the continued relevance of classical Islamic thought in constructing integrative, ethical, and rational frameworks for understanding linguistic phenomena.

This article adopts a qualitative method through textual-philosophical analysis. It draws on al-Farābī's original works, supported by recent studies in Islamic philosophy and modern linguistic theory. The structure of the article is divided into five thematic sections: the first outlines al-Farābī's theoretical framework on language and its relation to knowledge; the second analyzes his conception of logical language and syllogism; the third explores the symbolic and imaginative aspects of language in poetry and rhetoric; the fourth discusses his semiotic insights on meaning; and the final section offers a synthesis and implications for contemporary discourse. Through this framework, the article aims to position al-Farābī

not only as a logician or metaphysician but as a foundational figure in the global philosophy of language.

To address these concerns, this article proposes to investigate al-Farābī's philosophy of language as a structured integration of logic, symbolic meaning, and rational inquiry. The study builds on both his primary works and key contemporary interpretations, aiming to elucidate the cognitive and epistemological role of language in his thought. Particular attention will be paid to *Kitāb al-Ḥurūf*, *Kitāb al-Alfāz al-Musta'mala fī al-Manṭiq*, and his commentary on *De Interpretatione*, which offer rich insights into his theory of signification, the architecture of propositions, and the ethical dimensions of discourse.

1. Accordingly, this article is guided by the following research questions:
2. How does al-Farābī conceptualize the relationship between language, logic, and reasoning in his philosophical system?
3. What role do symbolic and rhetorical expressions play in al-Farābī's model of epistemology and communication?

How can al-Farābī's linguistic theory be situated within both classical and contemporary philosophical discourses on meaning and language?

The objective of this study is to critically examine these questions by analyzing al-Farābī's use of logical structures, symbolic forms, and semantic mechanisms. The article also aims to position al-Farābī's philosophy of language as a significant yet underexplored contribution to both the Islamic intellectual tradition and broader debates in the philosophy of language. In doing so, this study offers a systematic interpretation of his linguistic thought as a unified and coherent system.

Before turning to the main discussion, the following section will present a review of previous studies to establish the scholarly context of al-Farābī's philosophy of language.

While al-Farābī is widely recognized as a central figure in classical Islamic philosophy, the scholarly treatment of his philosophy of language has remained relatively limited and often fragmented. Much of the academic literature tends to focus on his political theory, metaphysics, or logical treatises, with fewer works systematically addressing his linguistic philosophy as a coherent and distinct domain. When language is discussed, it is often as a byproduct of his logical or epistemological concerns, rather than as a subject worthy of study in its own right.

Foundational efforts to explore al-Farābī's view of language and logic appear in the works of Muḥsin Maḥdī, particularly in his edited edition of *Kitāb al-Alfāz al-Musta'mala fī al-Manṭiq* (1986, 7) and his influential essay *Language and Logic in Classical Islam* (1970, 51). Maḥdī argues that al-Farābī constructed a "technical philosophical language" through a careful fusion of Greek logical categories and Arabic linguistic forms. In doing

so, al-Farābī not only translated terminology but redefined the epistemic structure of logic to fit the Arabic-speaking intellectual context. Maḥdī (1970, 56) notes that “language for al-Farābī is not only a medium but a prerequisite for logical analysis and the production of knowledge.” This perspective is foundational to understanding how al-Farābī approached *lafz* (word), *ma‘nā* (concept), and *musammā* (referent) as a triadic relation with epistemic implications.

Building on this foundation, Shukri Abed (1991, 119) explores al-Farābī’s synthesis of Aristotelian logic and Arabic linguistic theory. Abed demonstrates that al-Farābī viewed the Arabic language as a rational system capable of articulating universal concepts, provided that the logical relationships within expressions are clarified and structured. In his reading, al-Farābī saw syntax and semantics as logically analyzable, bridging the grammatical traditions of *naḥw* and the formal structures of *mantīq*. Abed’s study importantly positions al-Farābī as a precursor to later efforts in reconciling natural language with logical formalism.

Nadja Germann (2015, 161) further elaborates on this by examining al-Farābī’s classification of logic as “the path to happiness,” whereby the refinement of language enables the refinement of thought and ultimately leads to human perfection (*sa‘ādah*). Language, in this context, is both a cognitive and moral tool. Germann’s work contributes to the view that for al-Farābī, linguistic clarity is not only epistemologically necessary but ethically imperative.

More recently, Asghar and Shahzad (2020, 51) re-examined al-Farābī’s theory of language in the light of contemporary linguistics, particularly universal grammar and cognitive semantics. They argue that al-Farābī’s belief in a universal conceptual structure underlying all languages parallels modern theories in generative grammar, especially regarding innate cognitive structures for language acquisition. However, they also note that al-Farābī goes further by embedding this universality within a metaphysical and ethical framework—something absent in modern linguistic theories.

Beyond the logic-language nexus, Wilfrid Hodges and Manuela Giolfo (2022, 214–240) assess al-Farābī’s critical engagement with the Arab grammarians, particularly regarding the limits of syntactic analysis in philosophical discourse. Their contribution shows that al-Farābī challenged purely grammatical accounts of language for their inability to capture logical necessity and ontological reference, suggesting instead a hierarchy in which logic governs grammar.

Zimmermann’s (1981, 11) critical edition of al-Farābī’s commentary on Aristotle’s *De Interpretatione* provides further insight into his linguistic thought. In particular, it highlights al-Farābī’s efforts to bridge semantics and logic by discussing *mawḍū‘āt* (subject matter) and *ḥukm* (judgment) in propositional language. Zimmermann’s editorial notes

reinforce that al-Farābī's linguistic analyses were not derivative but original rearticulations of the Aristotelian tradition.

Additionally, Kees Versteegh (1997, 80) places al-Farābī within the broader Arabic linguistic tradition, emphasizing how his philosophical vocabulary was developed in conscious dialogue with both Greek sources and Arabic grammatical heritage. Versteegh's treatment helps clarify the terminological innovations in al-Farābī's works, such as his transformation of the term *ḥarf* (particle) from a grammatical category into a logical operator.

Despite these valuable contributions, several gaps remain in the current scholarship. First, there is a lack of integrated studies that treat al-Farābī's philosophy of language as a system involving logic, symbol, and epistemology. Second, much of the scholarship tends to focus on his logical works in isolation, without connecting them to his broader metaphysical and pedagogical concerns. Third, while comparative discussions have gained popularity, few have attempted a sustained analysis of how al-Farābī's model of linguistic meaning can contribute to current philosophical debates, including those in semiotics and hermeneutics.

This article addresses these gaps by providing a structured analysis of al-Farābī's linguistic thought across three interrelated domains: logic, symbolism, and reasoning. It draws on both primary sources—such as *Kitāb al-Alfāz*, *Kitāb al-Ḥurūf*, and his commentary on *De Interpretatione*—and major scholarly works cited above. Unlike previous studies that treat his linguistic ideas as secondary to logic or politics, this article presents his philosophy of language as a distinct, integrated field with enduring relevance.

### **The Triadic Function of Language: Logic, Symbol, and Reasoning in al-Farābī's Philosophy**

Al-Farābī's philosophy of language cannot be fully appreciated without situating it within the triangular relationship between logic, symbol, and reasoning—three core elements that define his broader philosophical system. Language, for al-Farābī, is not merely a passive medium for communication but an active instrument for constructing knowledge (*taḥṣīl al-'ilm*) and guiding the soul toward truth and happiness (*sa'ādah*). This section explores how al-Farābī develops a layered theory of language that bridges formal logical analysis, symbolic-imaginative expression, and cognitive reasoning.

The structure of this discussion follows the internal architecture of al-Farābī's thought. First, we examine the logical structure of language, as elaborated in *Kitāb al-Alfāz al-Musta'mala fī al-Manṭiq* and *Kitāb al-Burhān*, where al-Farābī classifies types of propositions and analyzes their epistemic functions. Second, we investigate his treatment of symbolic

and imaginative language, particularly in *Kitāb al-Khiṭābah*, *Kitāb al-Shi'r*, and his theory of prophetic discourse. Third, we analyze the semiotic and rational processes involved in the generation of meaning, especially in *Kitāb al-Ḥurūf*, focusing on how the intellect interacts with linguistic signs to form judgments and concepts. These three strands converge to form a unified philosophical model in which language both expresses and shapes rational understanding.

By structuring the discussion along these lines, this article seeks to clarify how al-Farābī systematically connects linguistic form (*lafz*), conceptual content (*ma'nā*), and referential truth (*musammā*)—a triad that mirrors the cognitive process of human reasoning. The following sub-sections will elaborate on each dimension in turn.

### **The Theoretical Framework: Al-Farābī and the Foundations of Language Philosophy**

Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī (d. 950 CE), often hailed as “the Second Teacher” after Aristotle, occupies a seminal position in the intellectual history of Islamic philosophy. His works form a critical juncture where Greek logical traditions and Islamic metaphysical inquiry converge, particularly in the articulation of language as a central epistemic tool. Unlike many of his contemporaries, al-Farābī did not treat language merely as a medium for communication or rhetoric, but as an ontologically grounded structure for expressing conceptual thought (Altaev et al. 2020, 98). His engagement with Aristotelian logic, particularly through *Kitāb al-Qiyās* and *Kitāb al-Burhān*, reveals a deep concern for the linguistic articulation of rational processes, positioning language as the outward manifestation of inner intellectual operations.

In al-Farābī's epistemology, language is not neutral; it is a structured system designed to mirror the logical architecture of human cognition. This idea is especially evident in *Kitāb al-Ḥurūf* (*The Book of Letters*), where he explores the semantic relations between words, concepts (*ma'ānī*), and mental representations. Al-Farābī distinguishes between conventional linguistic signs (*alfāz*) and the meanings they denote, emphasizing the primacy of rational understanding in assigning meaning to words (Aouad and Schoeler 2002, 186). Words, in his system, are placeholders that rely on the intellect's capacity to abstract and categorize. Hence, language becomes an indispensable tool in the acquisition and transmission of knowledge, forming a triadic relationship between speech, thought, and existence.

Al-Farābī's model stands out for its layered approach to language. On the one hand, it embodies a *logical function*, where language is governed by the rules of syllogism, inference, and proposition-building. On the other hand, it contains a *symbolic function*, enabling the expression of abstract and imaginative realities, such as in poetry and metaphor (Cohen

2002, 58). This dual capacity challenges the dichotomy between analytic and expressive language, suggesting that even symbolic utterances—when properly contextualized—possess cognitive and philosophical significance. Therefore, understanding al-Farābī's theory of language entails grappling with both its formal-rational mechanics and its metaphorical-experiential dimensions.

Furthermore, his approach reflects a philosophical optimism in the possibility of achieving universal knowledge through properly structured language. While he acknowledges the diversity of languages and cultural expressions, he maintains that the intellectual content they aim to convey remains universally accessible through rational inquiry (Halper 2025, 241). Thus, al-Farābī situates language within a metaphysical and epistemological continuum, where it mediates between the individual intellect and the intelligible order of reality. In doing so, he provides a framework that anticipates later developments in Islamic logic, rhetoric, and even semiotics.

To appreciate the enduring relevance of al-Farābī's linguistic philosophy, it is crucial to position it not only within the medieval Aristotelian tradition but also within contemporary debates about language and meaning. His view that language is both rational and symbolic opens space for dialog between analytical philosophy, Islamic metaphysics, and modern linguistic theories. This integrative potential will be further elaborated in the following sections of this article.

### **Language as Logic: Structure, Syllogism, and Epistemology**

Al-Farābī's theory of language is inseparable from his broader commitment to logic (*mantīq*) as the foundation of philosophical inquiry. Logic, in his system, is the instrument (*ālah*) that organizes thought, guards against fallacy, and guides the mind toward truth. It is both a theoretical science and a methodological tool—serving as the gateway to all other disciplines, including natural sciences, metaphysics, and political philosophy. Language, as the outward articulation of thought, must therefore conform to logical structure to faithfully express knowledge (Chatti 2014, 167; Lamprakis 2024, 236).

In this context, al-Farābī makes a critical distinction between *qawl* (utterance or statement) and *ḥukm* (judgment or assertion). A statement in itself is not necessarily meaningful unless it contains a logical relation that produces knowledge. For example, the phrase “the sky is blue” becomes epistemically valuable when it asserts a proposition whose truth value can be evaluated. This demonstrates how, for al-Farābī, logic is embedded in linguistic form, and linguistic form is the vehicle of knowledge (Halper 2025, 231).

Al-Farābī's reliance on Aristotelian logic is evident, but he adapts it in creative ways to fit within an Islamic epistemological framework.

He classifies syllogisms into various types based on their purpose and epistemic strength: demonstrative (*burhānī*), dialectical (*jadālī*), rhetorical (*khiṭābī*), poetic (*shi'ri*), and sophistic (*mughālaṭī*). Each of these has its own structure and function in discourse. Demonstrative syllogism, which moves from universally accepted premises to certain conclusions, is the highest form of reasoning and is central to science (*'ilm*). Dialectical and rhetorical syllogisms, by contrast, rely on plausible or persuasive premises and are used in debate, politics, and education (Aouad and Schoeler 2002, 187; Makhlouf 2024, 8).

Poetic syllogisms are unique in al-Farābī's system. Though they lack demonstrative force, they still serve a cognitive function by stimulating the imagination and moral sensibilities. This reveals his broader view that language is not only a vehicle of syllogistic precision but also of emotional and symbolic resonance. Such classification shows that al-Farābī anticipated later debates about the expressive versus referential functions of language—debates that would surface prominently in 20th-century philosophy of language.

Importantly, al-Farābī does not treat grammar (*naḥw*) and logic (*manṭiq*) as competing systems, but as complementary. Arabic grammar, while based on conventions and linguistic usage, reflects an implicit logic of sentence formation. Al-Farābī sought to make this logic explicit. He reinterpreted basic grammatical categories—noun (*ism*), verb (*fi'l*), and particle (*ḥarf*)—in terms of their logical roles in a proposition. For instance, a noun denotes a substance or quality, a verb expresses a relation or action, and a particle connects meanings. These categories correspond to the ontological and logical categories found in Aristotle's *Categories*, but are articulated through the lens of Arabic linguistic structures (Neria 2013, 74).

In *Kitāb al-Ḥurūf*, al-Farābī maps the relationship between spoken language and mental concepts. He explains that spoken utterances (*alfāz*) signify concepts (*ma'ānī*), which in turn refer to real or imagined things (*musammayāt*). Thus, the process of knowledge formation begins with sensory perception, moves through conceptual abstraction by the intellect, and culminates in linguistic expression. Language is both the product of cognitive processes and the tool for transmitting them (Khalidi 2024, 707). Therefore, a breakdown in language is not merely semantic but epistemological—it impedes access to knowledge.

Al-Farābī also outlines a theory of concept formation. He explains how the human intellect abstracts universals (*kulliyāt*) from particulars through repeated experience. These universals are then stored as mental concepts and expressed through words. For example, after encountering many individual trees, the mind forms the concept of "tree," which can then be named in language. This process, while simple in description, forms the philosophical basis for language as the expression of abstract

thought. The more precise the abstraction, the more accurate the linguistic expression—and thus the more reliable the knowledge (Altaev et al. 2020, 99).

Interestingly, al-Farābī links this theory of concept formation with education and the development of reason. Language, especially in its logical use, becomes a tool for training the intellect. He advocates for a curriculum that begins with grammar and rhetoric, proceeds to logic, and culminates in metaphysics. This progression mirrors the development of language from conventional usage to rational discourse. In this way, logic is both a discipline and a developmental process, and language is its external trace.

Al-Farābī's emphasis on proper linguistic use also extends into ethics. Misusing language—whether by fallacious reasoning, deceptive rhetoric, or careless ambiguity—constitutes a moral failing. This position reflects the integration of epistemology and ethics in Islamic philosophy. For al-Farābī, rational discourse is not merely a technical exercise; it is a virtuous act. As Michel (2019, 713) argues, al-Farābī's philosophical system is teleological: language must serve the end of human perfection and happiness (*sa'ādah*), not mere persuasion or domination.

When compared to Aristotle, al-Farābī demonstrates both fidelity and innovation. While Aristotle confined logic largely to formal inference, al-Farābī expanded it into a holistic theory of cognition, language, and ethics. This move aligns him more closely with the integrative tendencies of Islamic philosophy, which does not sharply divide logic, metaphysics, and theology. Language, in this paradigm, is a means of accessing divine truth through structured thought. This theological orientation is absent in Aristotle but central to al-Farābī's vision.

Furthermore, al-Farābī's influence can be traced in later thinkers such as Avicenna, Averroes, and even in Jewish philosophers like Maimonides, who adopted Farabian models of syllogistic theology and linguistic theory (Cohen 2002, 104; Griffel 2012, 11). His insistence on the interdependence of language and rationality set a standard for subsequent Islamic philosophy, which treated eloquent speech not as ornamentation but as the disciplined unfolding of reason.

In conclusion, al-Farābī's conception of language as logic offers a robust framework that links grammar, semantics, and epistemology into a single philosophical vision. Language, when properly structured and logically deployed, becomes a reliable guide to truth. It reflects the operations of the mind, mediates between perception and concept, and serves the ethical and political life of the community. In the Farābīan paradigm, to speak clearly is to think rightly, and to think rightly is to live justly.

## Symbol and Imagination: The Poetic and Rhetorical Dimensions of Language

While al-Farābī's philosophy of language is often praised for its logical rigor, an equally important dimension is his sophisticated treatment of symbol and imagination. These are not marginal to his linguistic theory; rather, they are integral to how language functions in human cognition, society, and the pursuit of virtue. For al-Farābī, language must not only inform—it must move, inspire, and guide the soul. To achieve this, symbolic and imaginative forms of discourse such as poetry (*shi'r*) and rhetoric (*khiṭābah*) are indispensable.

Al-Farābī's classification of syllogisms into demonstrative, dialectical, rhetorical, poetic, and sophistical forms reflects a nuanced view of language's varying cognitive functions (Aouad and Schoeler 2002, 185; Makhoul 2024, 4). Demonstrative syllogisms yield certainty and are reserved for philosophical and scientific discourse. Poetic and rhetorical syllogisms, however, operate through analogy, metaphor, and emotional resonance. Though these forms do not produce certain knowledge, they shape belief, character, and communal values—making them essential for governance, education, and religious leadership.

Building on Aristotle's *Poetics* and *Rhetoric*, al-Farābī reinterprets poetic expression not as irrational or inferior, but as an epistemically valid form suited to specific audiences. He defines poetic syllogism as an imaginative representation of truth, structured in a way that appeals to the emotions and faculties of the soul (*nafs*). Unlike Aristotelian logic, which aims at the intellect, poetic expression targets the imaginative faculty (*al-quwwah al-mutakhayyilah*)—bridging the gap between abstract concepts and concrete experience (Laywine 2023, 4; López-Farjeat 2019, 181).

This emphasis on imagination (*al-khayāl*) is crucial. For al-Farābī, imagination is the power that synthesizes sensory input and intellectual abstraction, forming mental images that make meaning accessible. In prophetic language, for example, divine truths are revealed not as pure rational propositions but as imaginative visions—symbols and parables that engage both heart and mind (Baizhuma et al. 2025, 4). Language, in such cases, becomes an intermediary between the unseen (*al-ghayb*) and the human realm, enabling metaphysical realities to be apprehended symbolically.

Al-Farābī argues that poets, when guided by wisdom, contribute to the moral education of society. Far from corrupting the youth—as Plato feared—poetry becomes a means of cultivating virtues through emotionally resonant symbols. In the virtuous city (*al-madīnah al-fāḍilah*), poets and orators are valued not for entertainment but for their pedagogical power. Their role is to reinforce the ideals of justice, courage, and moderation through allegory, rhythm, and imagery (Michel

2019, 704). In this view, language is not merely didactic but formative—it shapes dispositions and inclinations, not just beliefs.

Moreover, al-Farābī locates rhetorical and poetic discourse within a broader political framework. He recognizes that not all citizens possess the capacity for philosophical demonstration. Therefore, rulers and educators must employ rhetorical and poetic tools to communicate ethical truths in accessible forms. This is not manipulation, but accommodation—a pedagogical strategy rooted in respect for human diversity. Rhetoric becomes a means of approximating truth for the many, while philosophy remains the domain of the few. Importantly, al-Farābī holds that rhetorical and poetic expressions must be subordinated to rational truth, lest they devolve into sophistry or demagoguery (Siddiqi 2024, 590).

In *Kitāb al-Khiṭābah*, al-Farābī discusses the structure and function of rhetorical speech. He outlines various modes of persuasion—ethos, pathos, and logos—echoing Aristotelian principles while adapting them to Islamic contexts. He insists that effective rhetoric must be based on rational content, even if it appeals to emotion. This dual demand for emotional resonance and logical integrity underscores his commitment to integrating form and substance in all language.

Similarly, in *Kitāb al-Shi'r*, al-Farābī analyzes the symbolic logic of poetry. He categorizes poetic expression into types, including eulogies, elegies, and parables, each with its own moral and cognitive function. For instance, elegiac poetry evokes compassion and remembrance, while parables instruct indirectly through example. These forms are not simply artistic; they are pedagogical and civic. Poetry, when rightly composed, can elevate the soul and harmonize the city—thus contributing to both individual and collective perfection (Azzuhri 2022, 4; Cohen 2002, 8).

This integration of poetic symbolism and moral education anticipates modern theories of narrative ethics and symbolic pedagogy. Contemporary thinkers such as Paul Ricoeur and Martha Nussbaum argue that literature and art are essential for cultivating moral imagination and empathy. Al-Farābī, writing a millennium earlier, laid the philosophical foundation for this view by showing how symbolic language can mediate ethical insight and social harmony.

Furthermore, al-Farābī's theory of symbolic language has profound implications for theology. He offers a rational explanation for the metaphorical language of sacred texts. Prophets, in his model, receive intelligible truths through the Active Intellect and express them in imaginative terms comprehensible to the masses. This process involves translating metaphysical knowledge into culturally resonant symbols—dreams, visions, and parables—that serve both epistemic and spiritual purposes (Griffel 2012, 6; Khalidi 2024, 712). Thus, prophetic language is neither irrational nor arbitrary; it is the highest form of symbolic communication grounded in metaphysical truth.

In this light, al-Farābī prefigures a theory of *hermeneutics*—the art of interpreting symbolic and sacred texts. He suggests that truth is layered: philosophers may grasp it through demonstration, while others access it through narrative and metaphor. Both levels are valid, though hierarchically ordered. This pluralism, far from relativism, allows for a pedagogical diversity that honors both intellect and imagination, reason and faith.

The educational implications are considerable. In al-Farābī's view, a just society must cultivate not only logical reasoning but also symbolic understanding. Children, for instance, should be introduced to virtues through stories and parables before they are capable of formal logic. This layered pedagogy ensures that the soul is gradually habituated to the good, moving from affective response to rational assent. Language, as both symbol and syllogism, is the medium of this moral ascent.

In contemporary times, al-Farābī's theory offers a powerful response to the crisis of meaning and the fragmentation of discourse. In an age dominated by images, memes, and rhetorical performance, his insistence on the ethical grounding of symbolic language is both urgent and illuminating. Language must not only express but edify; not only persuade, but purify.

In conclusion, al-Farābī's treatment of symbol and imagination reveals a linguistic philosophy that transcends rigid dichotomies between logic and rhetoric, truth and metaphor. He affirms that symbolic language, when rightly guided, is not opposed to reason but is its extension and fulfillment. Through poetry, rhetoric, and imaginative expression, language becomes a bridge between the visible and the invisible, the rational and the emotional, the civic and the divine. This vision remains deeply relevant today—as a model for education, ethics, and intercultural understanding.

### **Semiotics and Meaning: From Conceptual Terms to Socio-Cultural Contexts**

Among al-Farābī's most original and underappreciated contributions to the philosophy of language lies his proto-semiotic theory—a reflection on how words (*alfāz*), concepts (*ma'ānī*), and referents (*musammayāt*) form a triadic structure that enables human cognition and communication. This model is elaborated most clearly in *Kitāb al-Ḥurūf* (*The Book of Letters*), where al-Farābī seeks to clarify the metaphysical and epistemological underpinnings of linguistic signs. Long before Ferdinand de Saussure or Charles Sanders Peirce articulated structural or pragmatic semiotics, al-Farābī was already theorizing language as a layered system of signification, embedded in both reason and culture (Chatti 2014, 170; Zonta 2011, 39).

Al-Farābī's model bears striking resemblance to Peirce's triadic model of the sign (representamen, interpretant, object). In Farābīan

terms, *lafz* (spoken or written word) corresponds to the *representamen*, *ma'nā* (concept) to the *interpretant*, and *musammā* (the actual thing or referent) to the *object*. However, al-Farābī's innovation lies in rooting this triadic structure within a metaphysical and epistemological hierarchy: concepts are not arbitrary mental constructs but emerge from the intellect's engagement with reality through abstraction. Language is not only a symbolic tool—it is the expression of intellectual access to being (*mawjūd*).

In contrast to Saussure's view of language as a system of arbitrary signs defined by internal differences, al-Farābī holds that signs are meaningful precisely because they mirror ontological realities. That is, while different languages use different *alfāz*, they aim to express universal *ma'ānī*. For example, the Arabic word *'ilm* (knowledge), the Greek *epistēmē*, and the Latin *scientia* are different signs referring to the same universal concept. This belief in conceptual universality grounds al-Farābī's approach to translation and cross-cultural philosophy (Halper 2025, 233; Khalidi 2024, 708).

In *Kitāb al-Ḥurūf*, al-Farābī gives a detailed account of how words acquire meaning. He explains that language originates in human attempts to name observed realities. Over time, these linguistic signs are conventionalized and codified, yet their intelligibility depends on the shared experience of reality and the rational faculty that abstracts from it. For instance, the word *shay'* (thing) is used to denote any existing object, and its meaning is not merely conventional but grounded in the intellect's grasp of existence (*wujūd*). Thus, semantic clarity depends not just on linguistic agreement but on metaphysical coherence (Altaev et al. 2020, 98).

This ontological dimension of meaning has ethical and political implications. Al-Farābī warns that signs can be misused—detached from truth and employed for manipulation. Sophists, demagogues, and corrupt rhetoricians may use language to obscure rather than reveal. Therefore, semiotics is not morally neutral. The philosopher must cultivate *ḥaqīqah al-lafz*—the true use of language—to align speech with being, and meaning with truth (Siddiqi 2024, 594). This position anticipates later Islamic concerns about *tahrīf* (distortion) and the epistemic responsibility of language users.

Al-Farābī's insight into the cultural specificity of language is equally significant. He recognizes that while universal concepts exist, their linguistic expressions are shaped by socio-historical contexts. For example, he observes that Greek philosophers used terms such as *ousia* (substance) and *logos* (reason) in ways that do not have direct equivalents in Arabic. Thus, the translator or philosopher must “philosophically adapt” rather than mechanically translate. This dynamic theory of translation is not simply linguistic but hermeneutical—it requires interpreting conceptual

frameworks across civilizations (Forcada 2020, 5; López-Farjeat 2019, 184).

A vivid example of this appears in his discussion of the term *jawhar* (substance). Al-Farābī notes that Arabic speakers may associate this term with material essence, while in Aristotelian usage it refers to that which exists independently (*ousia*). Thus, to translate Aristotle accurately, one must reinterpret *jawhar* within a logical-metaphysical framework. The same applies to terms like *mawjūd* (being), *nafs* (soul), and *ḥikmah* (wisdom), which vary in meaning across disciplines and cultures. This awareness makes al-Farābī an early theorist of cross-cultural semiotics.

In modern terms, al-Farābī may be said to advocate a *semiotic realism*: signs are meaningful insofar as they correspond to intelligible realities, yet they are also culturally conditioned. Meaning, therefore, is both discovered and constructed. It is discovered through rational inquiry and shared human experience, but constructed through language, context, and community. This integrative stance offers a middle path between linguistic determinism and metaphysical essentialism (Griffel 2012, 7; Leezenberg 2021, 5).

Al-Farābī also explores the psychological dimension of meaning. He argues that understanding a word requires not only logical analysis but also cognitive association and affective familiarity. This anticipates modern views in psycholinguistics and semantic field theory. For example, the meaning of *justice* (*‘adl*) is not grasped merely by dictionary definition, but through lived experience, cultural narratives, and moral education. Thus, meaning formation is both mental and social, both rational and emotional.

Further, al-Farābī acknowledges the role of context (*siyāq*) in determining meaning. A word may carry different connotations depending on grammatical structure, pragmatic intention, and audience expectation. This pragmatic insight aligns with contemporary theories of speech acts and linguistic relativity. However, al-Farābī goes beyond pragmatics by embedding context within ethical rationality. Language must not only be effective—it must be true and just.

These ideas culminate in al-Farābī’s theory of the *virtuous city* (*al-madīnah al-fāḍilah*), where language functions as a medium of both instruction and moral formation. Philosophers, poets, and orators all play roles in constructing public meaning. The philosopher articulates truth through demonstrative discourse; the poet through symbolic imagery; the orator through persuasive clarity. Each must use language responsibly, aligning words with truth and purpose (Azzuhri 2022, 5; Michel 2019, 706).

This view of language as a communal act—anchored in both metaphysics and ethics—has striking relevance today. In a world increasingly shaped by digital media, fragmented identities, and algorithmic speech, al-

Farābī's insistence on the alignment between sign and truth offers a timely reminder of the ethical stakes of communication. Language is not only a mirror of thought; it is a force that shapes reality. It can clarify or confuse, uplift or deceive, liberate or dominate.

In conclusion, al-Farābī's semiotic theory reveals a rich and multilayered philosophy of meaning. He offers a model in which linguistic signs are grounded in reason, oriented toward truth, shaped by context, and embedded in culture. By situating language within a continuum of thought, reality, and ethics, al-Farābī anticipates many debates in modern semiotics, hermeneutics, and philosophy of language. His work affirms that to speak meaningfully is to think justly and to live truthfully—an ideal as urgent now as it was in his time.

### **Integrative Synthesis: Implications for Contemporary Philosophy of Language**

Al-Farābī's multifaceted philosophy of language, as explored in the previous sections, presents a coherent synthesis that integrates logical clarity, symbolic expression, semiotic insight, and ethical orientation. This synthesis is not merely a historical curiosity—it carries enduring relevance for the contemporary philosophy of language, particularly in addressing the fragmentation of meaning, the erosion of rational discourse, and the ethical crises of communication in modern society.

One of the most important contributions of al-Farābī is his vision of language as a bridge between rational universals and cultural particulars. While many modern linguistic theories lean toward either extreme—universal formalism or radical relativism—al-Farābī maintains a balance. He affirms the existence of *ma'ānī* (universal meanings) accessible to reason, while acknowledging that *socio-cultural contexts shape alfāz* (*verbal expressions*). This duality makes his model uniquely suited for engaging with today's multilingual and multicultural realities, where both semantic translation and intercultural dialogue are essential yet challenging (Halper 2025, 235; López-Farjeat 2019, 186).

Furthermore, al-Farābī's insistence on the unity of thought and language provides a foundational response to the postmodern skepticism toward meaning. In a world where language is often reduced to power games, identity markers, or marketing tools, al-Farābī offers a counter-narrative: language is not arbitrary but meaningful insofar as it reflects structured thought and ethical intention. His semiotic realism reaffirms that words are more than sounds—they are signs of intelligible realities, tied to the human capacity for truth (Cohen 2002, 9; Griffel 2012, 8).

This philosophical stance has deep implications for education and curriculum design. Al-Farābī envisions a developmental sequence in which learners progress from exposure to symbolic language (poetry, narrative, metaphor) toward mastery of logical and demonstrative discourse. Such

a model parallels contemporary theories of cognitive development (e.g., Bloom's taxonomy), but with the added dimension of ethical formation. Language education, in this light, must aim not only at communicative competence, but also at intellectual and moral refinement.

Moreover, al-Farābī's integration of logical and symbolic language challenges the dichotomy often found in modern academia between "analytic" and "continental" traditions. Analytic philosophy tends to prioritize clarity, precision, and formal validity; continental philosophy emphasizes context, narrative, and meaning. Al-Farābī shows that both dimensions are necessary. Logical reasoning and symbolic representation serve different but complementary functions. The former leads to certainty; the latter, to insight. The philosopher must master both to communicate effectively across levels of intellectual ability and cultural experience (Baizhuma et al. 2025, 6; Leezenberg 2021, 7).

In the realm of political philosophy and public discourse, al-Farābī's insights remain profound. His classification of syllogisms corresponds to layers of communication within the city: demonstrative discourse among philosophers; rhetorical speech among leaders and citizens; poetic expression for education and moral persuasion. In the modern context, where political rhetoric is often reduced to populist soundbites or technocratic jargon, al-Farābī's model calls for a reintegration of speech, ethics, and truth. Public language must not only mobilize but enlighten, not only persuade but elevate.

Additionally, his reflections on prophetic language—symbolic, visionary, and emotionally compelling—offer a philosophical framework for religious discourse. Rather than opposing rationality and revelation, al-Farābī argues that prophetic language translates metaphysical truths into symbolic forms suited for the public imagination. This approach allows for a theological semiotics that respects both the integrity of reason and the mystery of faith. It opens possibilities for interreligious dialogue and scriptural hermeneutics based on shared semiotic principles rather than dogmatic exclusivity (Khalidi 2024, 713; Makhoul 2024, 8).

Al-Farābī's model also contributes to theories of media and digital communication. In the digital age, where linguistic signs are compressed into tweets, memes, and algorithm-driven content, meaning is increasingly fragmented and weaponized. Echo chambers and misinformation thrive on rhetorical manipulation and semiotic distortion. Al-Farābī's ethical semiotics reminds us that the health of public discourse depends on the alignment of language with truth and the cultivation of rational virtue. Philosophers, educators, and communicators must assume the moral responsibility of curating meaning, not just transmitting data.

From an epistemological standpoint, al-Farābī's insistence that language expresses conceptual hierarchies offers a counterweight to contemporary nominalism and linguistic reductionism. For him, concepts

are not mere words but intellectual realities (*ḥaqā'iq*) that exist in the soul and reflect aspects of being. Language enables access to these concepts through a structured process of abstraction and articulation. This view can inform current debates in cognitive science and AI, where questions about the relationship between language, thought, and reality remain central.

Finally, al-Farābī's philosophy of language affirms a theocentric orientation. While he does not invoke theological terms dogmatically, his vision of language, intellect, and truth points toward a metaphysical order grounded in the Active Intellect. Language becomes a means of ascending from the multiplicity of expression to the unity of meaning, from the diversity of cultural signs to the universality of reason, and ultimately, to the contemplation of the divine. In this sense, al-Farābī's linguistic thought is not merely philosophical but spiritual.

In conclusion, al-Farābī offers a rich, integrative philosophy of language that speaks to the most urgent issues of our time—semantic confusion, ideological polarization, ethical relativism, and communicative breakdown. His model unites logic and imagination, reason and rhetoric, universality and particularity. It offers not only a theory of language but a vision of human flourishing through meaningful speech. As such, al-Farābī deserves to be recognized not just as a medieval philosopher but as a perennial thinker whose insights can inform and inspire contemporary philosophy of language in all its complexity.

### **Comparative Reflections: Al-Farābī and Western Language Philosophy**

Positioning al-Farābī within a broader philosophical dialogue on language reveals not only the originality of his thought but also its surprising compatibility with several key developments in modern Western philosophy. Although separated by centuries and cultural frameworks, al-Farābī's reflections on logic, meaning, and symbol find resonances in the works of figures like Aristotle, Saussure, Peirce, Wittgenstein, and Ricoeur. A comparative lens helps highlight both shared intuitions and significant divergences, situating al-Farābī not just within Islamic intellectual history, but within a global tradition of linguistic thought.

Perhaps the most direct lineage lies in Aristotle, whose *Organon* deeply influenced al-Farābī's logical system. Al-Farābī extensively studied, paraphrased, and adapted Aristotelian logic, particularly in works such as *Kitāb al-Qiyās* and *Kitāb al-Burhān*. However, unlike Aristotle—who generally confined logic to syllogistic structures—al-Farābī integrated logic into a larger metaphysical and epistemological system. He believed that language should be evaluated not just for its form, but for its ability to express metaphysical truths and contribute to ethical and political

life (Halper 2025, 238). Thus, while both thinkers valued the rational structure of language, al-Farābī endowed it with a more comprehensive philosophical role.

Moving forward in intellectual history, we encounter Ferdinand de Saussure, often credited as the father of modern structural linguistics. Saussure famously defined language as a system of signs where the relationship between the signifier (sound-image) and the signified (concept) is arbitrary. In contrast, al-Farābī acknowledged the conventional nature of words (*alfāz*) but argued that their meaning (*ma'nā*) is grounded in intellectual universals derived from rational cognition. This makes his position closer to a kind of semiotic realism, wherein language is not merely a relational system but a cognitive bridge to external realities (Chatti 2014, 172). Al-Farābī thus offers a metaphysical foundation that Saussure deliberately excluded in his scientific model of language.

A more striking similarity appears in Charles Sanders Peirce's triadic model of signs: *representamen*, *interpretant*, and *object*. Al-Farābī's structure of *lafz* (word), *ma'nā* (concept), and *musammā* (referent) mirrors this tripartite relationship. Both thinkers emphasize that meaning is not confined to the sign itself but is realized through a process of interpretation and reference. However, Peirce builds his model within a pragmatic framework, stressing the function of signs in communicative behavior and inquiry. Al-Farābī, by contrast, embeds his theory in a metaphysical and ethical order—interpretation must align with truth and serve the perfection of the soul. Despite differing foundations, both systems highlight the complexity of meaning-making and affirm the non-linear nature of signification (Khalidi 2024, 715; Griffel 2012, 9).

Another significant point of comparison emerges with Ludwig Wittgenstein, particularly in his later work *Philosophical Investigations*, where he argues that "meaning is use." Wittgenstein rejects essentialist definitions of language, instead focusing on language-games and contextual functions. Al-Farābī similarly recognizes that meaning shifts with context, audience, and intention. In *Kitāb al-Khiṭābah*, he analyzes how rhetorical speech adapts to the psychological state of the listener and the demands of social communication. Yet, unlike Wittgenstein, al-Farābī does not abandon the search for truth conditions—he maintains that certain discourses (e.g., demonstrative syllogism) aim at objective knowledge. Thus, while both value context, al-Farābī seeks to preserve the normative dimension of language as a path to truth.

In the realm of hermeneutics and symbol, Paul Ricoeur's work provides a modern parallel to al-Farābī's symbolic philosophy. Ricoeur explores how metaphors and narratives reveal dimensions of human experience that propositional logic cannot capture. He sees symbols as polysemous, opening layers of meaning and inviting interpretation. Al-Farābī likewise affirms the epistemic function of symbolic language, especially in poetry,

prophecy, and religious discourse. For both thinkers, the symbolic is not irrational—it is a different mode of truth that engages the imaginative faculty and moral intuition (Laywine 2023, 6; Michel 2019, 709).

Importantly, al-Farābī anticipates several debates in contemporary philosophy of language, particularly around the ethics of speech and the crisis of meaning in public discourse. Where thinkers like Habermas seek to ground communicative rationality in intersubjective norms, al-Farābī locates it in the alignment between *qawl* (speech), *'aql* (intellect), and *ḥaq* (truth). His system demands that language not only functions effectively but also ethically. This anticipates and deepens contemporary concerns about speech ethics in media, politics, and education.

Even in AI and cognitive science, al-Farābī's theory offers insights. His view that language mirrors conceptual structures formed through abstraction resonates with symbolic models of cognition. His hierarchy of discourse—from rhetorical to demonstrative—can inspire graded models of machine understanding. Though speculative, such applications affirm that classical theories of meaning still have something to offer to contemporary computational paradigms.

Finally, placing al-Farābī in comparative perspective does more than highlight similarities. It exposes gaps in modern philosophy—notably, the neglect of ethical and metaphysical dimensions in linguistic theory. While modern semiotics often shies away from normativity, al-Farābī insists that meaning must align with reality, truth, and virtue. Language is not just an object of analysis but a means of perfecting the human condition.

In summary, a comparative engagement between al-Farābī and Western philosophy of language reveals a rich field of convergence and contrast. It allows us to appreciate al-Farābī not only as a faithful transmitter of Aristotelian logic, but as an original thinker who developed a comprehensive, ethically grounded, and symbolically sensitive theory of language. His integration of logic, rhetoric, poetics, and ethics offers a model of linguistic philosophy that remains urgently relevant—and underexplored—in today's fragmented intellectual landscape.

## Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that al-Farābī's philosophy of language constitutes a comprehensive and multidimensional framework that integrates logic, symbol, and reasoning within a single intellectual system. Far from limiting language to a vehicle of propositional content, al-Farābī articulates a model in which language serves as both a rational and symbolic medium—capable of expressing logical truths as well as imaginative constructs. His distinction between demonstrative, rhetorical, and poetic forms of discourse reveals an acute awareness of the plurality of linguistic functions and their corresponding epistemological roles.

Central to al-Farābī's model is the idea that language mirrors the

structure of the intellect, with syllogism and conceptual clarity serving as its highest expressions. At the same time, his appreciation of metaphor and symbolic language underscores the human capacity for communicating truth beyond strict formalism. This duality allows al-Farābī to construct a vision of language that is not only analytic but also integrative—linking thought, speech, and ethical purpose. His semiotic insight, particularly in *Kitāb al-Ḥurūf*, anticipates later theories of meaning that foreground the relational and contextual nature of linguistic signs.

Moreover, al-Farābī's philosophical engagement with language carries important contemporary implications. In an age of communicative fragmentation and interpretive relativism, his insistence on aligning linguistic use with rational and moral standards offers a timely corrective. His work challenges the boundaries of modern disciplines by proposing a unified approach to language that bridges logic, ethics, poetics, and socio-political engagement.

Ultimately, al-Farābī's philosophy of language provides an intellectual legacy that is both historically grounded and forward-looking. It invites renewed engagement with Islamic philosophical traditions as sources of theoretical insight and dialogical possibility. His synthesis of logic, symbol, and reasoning serves as a powerful model for understanding language not merely as a tool of expression, but as a medium of meaning-making, world-construction, and human flourishing.

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