The use of the three fold mimesis
New Approaches, Old Realities

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Abstract

This article aims to illustrate how mimetic interpretation methodology in humanities research can be viewed as a creative continuous process of interpretation. The article offers a deepened and philosophically anchored understanding of processes that go on in many interpretative and reflective research processes, by shedding light on crucial dimensions of interpretation. The research question addressed is how the mimetic processes of interpretation can be used for generating novel and useful knowledge.

By revealing the creative element in mimetic interpretations exemplified by interpretation of empirical data, the article sheds new light on the processes of generating novel and useful knowledge. It is argued that a Ricoeurian-inspired mimetic hermeneutics reflective process of interpretation is not only about textual interpretations carried out by the researchers, but also about readers' or listeners' interpretations. It is concluded that a Ricoeurian-inspired interpretative mimetic process is a process of creativity, adding new or extended knowledge to the readers of the text

Keywords Narratives, mimesis, creativity, methaphors, plots

Introduction

The mimetic process offers a complex elaboration of the relation between narrative and life (Verhesschen, 2003). The method is suitable for combining informants' perspectives with those offered by researchers' composition and interpretation. According to Polkinghorne (1995), there are two kinds of narratives; narrative as research data (also known as analysis of narrative), and narrative as a research outcome (named narrative analysis). In this article, both types of narratives are used. This combination of narratives in the method allows the researcher to transcend the meaning generated by informants with the composed meaning in the written text. It is a process where informed creativity and imagination is revealed in the textual composition and organization of events. In that sense, the composed narrative is meaningful to the extend it portrays features of experience (Ricoeur, 1984, p. 3). This method takes temporality, sociality and place into consideration (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) throughout the mimetic process of prefiguration, configuration and refiguration.

In human science, Ricoeur´s approach to analyzing and interpreting a text is widely used, for instance, in research carried out by Kristiansen (1998), Ghasemi, Taghinejad, Kabiri & Imaniand (2011)and Coomb (2012). Ricoeur´s phenomenological approach to narratives and narrative interpretation has thus had major attention in the last decade, especially in health care research and in particular within the field of nursing (Fried, Öhlèn & Bergbom 2000). Nevertheless, many mimetic processes of interpretations appear to be limited to the researchers' own processes of interpretation, as for example in the study by Tan et al. (2009). Several researchers in nursing, e.g. Ôhman & Sôderberg (2004) and Dreyer & Pedersen (2009), pay attention mainly to structural analysis where they to some extent leave the creation of narrative, instead seeming to separate the text into minor themes and failing to take advantage of the whole of the narrative. Furthermore, many researchers' use of a Ricoeurian-inspired mimetic process of interpretation lacks attention to the refigurative parts going on outside the "researcher's desk". Instead, they merely add theoretical and existing knowledge to their interpretations in an attempt to gain a comprehensive understanding e.g. Lindahl, Sandman & Rasmussen (2003), Lindseth & Norberg (2004) and Pusa, Hägglund, Nils-

son & Sundin (2014). An exception is Flaming (2005), who mentions that readers are also interpreters.

Despite many researchers' use of a mimetic-inspired analysis and interpretation, there has been less focus on narrative inquiry as a process of creativity.

Therefore, the question raised is: How can the mimetic processes of interpretation be used for generating novel and useful knowledge?

In an attempt to answer this question, the article offers a description of mimesis as a creative process of imitation, followed by an example of interpretations and ending with a conclusion and discussion.

Three fold mimesis process in Ricoeur´s philosophy and methodology

The methodology of threefold mimesis draws on both phenomenology and critical hermeneuticstradition and acknowledges the influences of semantics, structuralism and pragmatism. Ricoeur´s philosophy combines Greek tradition with both German traditions, and with Anglo-Saxon philosophy of language and structural linguistics (Vigsø, 1996, p. 150). Ricoeur uses Aristotle´s concept of ´muthos´ and translates it to ´emplotment´ (Ricoeur, 1991, p. 20), which is the composition of a narrative in mimesis 2. This emplotment gets its characteristics from its intermediate position between mimesis 1 and mimesis 3. It is a creative art of composing coherent plots of elevated human actions into an emplotment. In this sense, Ricoeur´s use of semantics addresses the essence of not dividing the phases into single components, but seeing the phases as a whole. Hence, meaning is built into this whole (Vigsø, 1996, p. 157, Ricoeur, 1999, p. 9, Ricoeur, 1989, p. 63), and the mimetic process does not copy-paste words into themes, as sometimes seen in different kinds of hermeneutical thematic analysis.

In the following section, I will describe how mimesis can be viewed as a creative process.

Mimesis - a creative process

Creativity is defined in several ways and from several traditions, but many of these definitions agree that it is a process of creating some novel outcome (Parkhurst 2011). I will not dig deeper into

the different definitions in this article, but solely clarify that mimesis is an artistic creation process going on in textual inquiry. In that sense, it is not limited to an individual person's creative abilities or to unchangeable outcomes.

Mimesis is instead a poetic action of imitation portraying peoples actions. It is a discursive practice linked to a concrete actor's context through understanding, explanation and interpretation (Ricoeur, 1996, p. 159). Metaphors and plots create new complex meaning in discourses as metaphors are ways of portraying reality in concepts, images and symbols (Olds, 1992, p. 55). It is a creative textual re-ordering of events. "The basic condition of creativity is the intrinsic polysemy of words that is the feature by which words in natural languages have more than one meaning" (Ricoeur 1981, p. 11). Within the narrative lies a semantic innovation by the inventing of a synthesis in a plot. The plot brings the narrative close to metaphors. The as-yet unsaid and unwritten appear in the text as productive imagination (Ricoeur, 1984, p. ix). Thus, the narrative represents humans' actions and experiences and is revealed in the three stages of interpretation in the mimetic process of prefiguration (mimesis 1), configuration (mimesis 2) and refiguration (mimesis 3). Accordingly, the mimetic process contains a prefigured time that becomes a refigured time through the mediation of a configured time (Ricoeur, 1984, p. 54). Mimetic creative activity has a threefold relationship with praxis: it presupposes it, represents it and renews it and in that sense it creates novel outcomes.

In the next sections, I will give an example of my interpretations inspired by the mimetic process. This is followed by a conclusion and discussing of the interpretative value of mimesis within interpretative and reflective research processes.

Mimesis in use

The use of mimesis 1 is in this article exemplified by data as pre-narratives gathered among informants in radiography education. The informants' experiences and actions are portrayed by the transcription of all interview data. The quotes are presented as a representation of the informants' narrative about implementation of blended learning.

The informants experiences and actions (past) are presented as stories in the time of the interviews (another past representing a pri-

or past) and written in a present form pointing backwards to these data but also forwards to further analysis and interpretation. Thereby, there is a shift from the narratives of the informants (analyses of narrative) to the narrative of the author/researcher in the move from mimesis 1 to mimesis 2.

Mimesis 2 is exemplified by the construction of the case and the mimetic structured narrative of radiography education. The case is described before the methodological examples of mimesis 1, 2 and 3 in an attempt to give the reader an insight in the context. Spaces in blended learning are portrayed by the metaphors; tradition-space, disturbance-space and non-space. The different metaphors and plots become situated in the emplotment taking both the elements and the whole of the text into an overall description with some response to whom, how and where.

In mimesis 3 a refiguration is made by the author/researcher (also a reader) and new perspectives are added. The narrative is taken into a level of theoretical interpretation displaying a new stage of time. In mimesis 3 the past, the present and the future are captured by explanatory and more general concepts. Informants, other researchers and people involved in the reading can question or expand the field of inquiry and add further events, experience and data to the mimetic interpretation, and thereby the process continues. This is for instance the case, when I bring the interpreted data back to informants and when I present papers and write articles for peer review and publication.

In the following section my process of inquiry is illustrated by an introduction to the case (inseparable from the following mimesis 2), and some selected examples of the mimetic process.

Introduction to the case of implementing blended learning in radiography education

In spring 2012 a model of blended learning was developed by lecturers in radiography education at UCN. Blended learning is a well-planned combination of face-to-face learning and online learning with the use of information technology (Garrison & Vaughan, 2008, p. 148). One of the main purposes of implementation of blended learning had its origins in a wish to recruit students from rural areas. As a result, local educational stations were established with rooms equipped with technology such as Smartboards and

computers, available for local residents. Mentors were hired to take care of students' access to the technology offered at these educational stations.

Students were enrolled in the educational programme in autumn 2012. Radiography students were all in the age-group 19 to 25, except for four students between the ages of 35-49. Some of the students were residing in rural areas.

At the end of 2012, a half year after students' enrolment, students, lectures, practitioners and mentors were interviewed in focus groups, revealing their common understandings and experiences of the implementation of models of blended learning. Throughout these interviews it became significant that the different spaces of blended learning offered different possibilities and constraints. The classroom environment was expressed as a room for sociality and as a familiar environment for well-known activities such as instruction and learning. In other words, a traditional space for learning activities. The home environment, in contrast, was regarded as a space of disturbance, as the home space triggered unintended leisure activities, making it hard for students to participate in studying either online or offline. Furthermore, the educational stations were rejected as a space for learning both in the present and for the future. They were a kind of non-space.

The disturbance space, the tradition space and the non-space are used as metaphorical terms in the mimetic process. These main metaphors are here derived around plots concerning the meaning of different spaces in blended learning. The metaphors create new complex meaning in discourse. They are a part of the whole (the case and the narrative) and a part of the parts. I will in the following section extract how emplotments, plots and metaphors are derived as a part of the three levels of mimesis.

Example of the use of mimesis

For the purpose of consistency in the reading of this article I will draw attention to the 3 metaphors of spaces along with the three fold mimesis. These metaphors are constructed by the author, but has emerged, though the narratives gained from informants in mimesis 1.

The level of prefiguration is retrieved from the full transcript of four focus group interviews of radiography students, radiography

lecturers, practitioners and mentors. As it isn't possible to recall all empirical data in this article, only selected quotations of relevance will appear. Mimesis 1 is schematically illustrated in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Mimesis 1

Mimesis 1	Tradition Space:	Disturbance Space:	Non-Space:
Quotes from empirical data	"Here (at UCN) you are 100% focused" (Students). "I think we all prefer to meet… that's what you are used to from high school… it is easier to discuss something when you are up here" (students). "It is safer (to meet face to face)" (students). "The social contact (at UCN)" (Lecturers).	"There are thing that constantly distracts me… you sleep more, watch television and there is a couch to lay on… and things like that" (Students).	"It´s frustrating me a little bit, that this project, it seems invisible". (Mentors). "… There are some things about FlexVid (stations) that is completely out of touch with flexibility" (Lecturers).

In mimesis 1 the first metaphors appears, as informants use them to make their points more clear. For instance metaphors such as "it is safer…" invisible" and "out of touch" are a part of the plot conceptualized in the tradition space and the non-spaces. In this first distancing there is a movement from of the words of the world in the past to the words of the text in the present. There is a progression of the metaphors derived from mimesis 1 moving towards new forms of metaphors and plots in mimesis 2. These metaphors are configured by emplotment into a narrative structure in mimesis 2. This is illustrated in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Mimesis 2

Mimesis 2	The narrative of spaces in blended learning – plots and emplotment
Metaphor: Tradition space	At the beginning of radiography students' enrolment in the blended learning environment the students faced both new and old learning environments. They experienced the classrooms as a well-known safe space for social connections, discussions and learning. The students were familiar with the classroom as a space for focused working. The classroom was considered as the traditional space of learning due to students' prior experiences from high school. However, the blended learning approach demanded that the students also had to use their home as a space for studying both online and offline but the students did not seem to do so adequately. They faced troubles when they were away from the traditional classroom space of well-known activities. It seemed that the home was triggering leisure activities as relaxing instead of study activities. The home, as a disturbance space, made it difficult for students to focus on online and offline study activities. As an alternative, the educational institution had offered students a possibility to study in spaces outside their home. Unfortunately, many of the students did not live near to the educational stations offered. Furthermore, both students and lecturers did not acknowledge these stations as a proper place for studying, because the stations did not contribute to the intended flexibility of the blended learning approach. The educational stations were regarded as non-spaces, because they were neither used nor useful. Instead the students were left studying online and offline at home and in the school environment, despite the troubles they faced.
Metaphor: Disturbance space	
Metaphor: Non-space	

The tensions between past and present are revealed in mimesis 2 where there is 'concordant discordance' in the students' confrontation with different spaces, their own references and the spaces offered by the institution. The blended learning environments require new activities in various spaces with inherent traditions or none.

In mimesis 3, explanations from the whole of the text are coupled with theoretical considerations and concepts. Thereby, a further distancing is added by the author/researcher who is also, in this case, a reader of the text. This refiguring is exemplified in table 3.

Table 3: Mimesis 3.

Mimesis 3	Tradition Space:	Disturbance Space:	Non-Space:
Points towards the future and the readers of the text. Explanations occur from the world of the author (e.g. Theory) and the world of the readers. Plots expand to a higher level.	The referential whole in the familiar environments in classrooms at UCN affords certain actions, cognitive processes and emotions (Turner, 2005). The affordance of the space is both perceived and real (Norman, 1988), as the sociality is fundamental in the knowledge creation process (Krogh, Ichijo & Nonaka, 2000).	The familiarity of the home environment gives rise for activity of daily living instead of study activities. The backgrounds affordance (Dohn, 2009) misleads the participants to other kinds of well-known, but non-study-related actions. The mediating artifact (Engeström, 1987) of the couch or the television has a stronger impact of the participant than the computer and the homework. The disruption is a part of the non-intended affordance of the (home-study) environment (Gibson, 1979). Embodiment and enmindment counts in the situated activity (Ingold, 2000). The embodied mind drives the activities (Fredens, 2012).	The educational stations have no real or perceived affordance (Norman, 1988). They seem to be invisible and of no use. They appear to be non-spaces. Thereby there is a correct rejection of the space (Gaver, 1991) as the affordance is not only hidden, but also perceived as false. This is illustrated when the participants speak of them as without meaning.

The explanatory theoretical element in the re-figuration draws on mimesis 2 and 1 and adds theoretical concepts in the explanation process[1]. This level elaborates further explanations and contextual-

ization beyond the primary narratives. It is a critical heretical exploration of the configured story. This is illustrated in Table 3, in column 2 by the referential space and sociality; and in columns 3 and 4 by highlighting the affordance of the environment in designing blended learning. The theoretical conjunctions point towards further considerations of an unknown future. The adding of new interpretations is a continuous process of investigation derived from prior levels of mimesis, without ignoring these. As long as the research progresses, more data can be collected and added to the first encounter with empirical data. It is an ongoing, emerging and progressing action, which might never end. When the research period ends, interpretations in the future will continue. The reader of the text might not only be the researcher, but also communities of researcher, peers and others. These people's readings and interpretations can release new perspectives and feedback to the researcher and feed-forward the research process. In my research, I have continuous delivered access to all published papers and articles to informants, to provide them with possibilities to add their reflections on and action in the educational practice. Similarly, feedback from informants (on the researchers' interpretations in interviews conducted more recently), other researchers and professionals has raised new perspectives for the researcher to take into account.

In the above section, I have on a practical level revealed how a Ricoeurian process of hermeneutic interpretation can be conducted. In the final section, I will draw some conclusions and discuss how the methodology can be regarded as a creative process, expanding and adding new awareness into processes of research.

Conclusion and discussion of the use of threefold mimesis and its interpretative value within reflective research processes.

The illustrated Ricoeurian-inspired method offers a philosophical argumentation for the processes of interpretation by extending the way in which knowledge creation can be articulated as an ongoing process afforded by textual possibilities. These possibilities concern both the authors' and the readers' understanding of the text and plots, adding new interpretative dimensions to their existence. The methodology offers different dimensions of the text: a dimension of authors´ knowledge creation, a dimension of readers' knowledge

creation and a dimension of knowledge created for future activities The mimetic process is a creative process of knowledge development: "… a process of knowledge creation. It is a dynamic process in which the reader (or the listener) interacts with the story and becomes a participant-creator by filling in some gaps in his/her imagination." (Ogilvy, Nonaka & Konno 2014, p. 11). The externalization of tacit knowledge by the textual explication and the subsequent combination with different readers' perspectives followed by internalization is a process of knowledge creation as described by Krogh, Ichijo & Nonaka (2000). Hence, knowledge creation seems to be afforded by the mimetic process. Knowledge emerges which is not only bound to formal procedures of analysis and interpretation, but allows the researcher to bring in experiences, craftsmanship and continuous interrelated holistic perspectives. The use of mimesis expands the narrative, both by adding metaphors and plots in the text and by adding explanatory elements around the plots. It is a discursive journey where the text takes an active role in prefiguring, configuring and re-figuring.

The process of mimesis gives rise to new perspectives of the domain under investigation, making constraints and possibilities visible through emplotment, and it lays foundations for further development. Creativity emerges from the use of metaphorical language in the plots, which are further extended to generality supported by the explanatory elements. The creative process, in the move from prefiguration to configuration and re-figuration, makes it possible to take a scientific step through detachment from the initial understanding, by allowing critical investigations and explanation though exploration.

Based on both the practical and the philosophical revealing of the mimetic-inspired interpretative process in this article, I will claim that it is a commendable methodology to make use of when investigating cases or other kinds of empirical data that ought to be interpreted as a whole, taking all essential elements into consideration. The approach expands the hermeneutic circling-processes of interpretation by pointing towards matters of concern and future innovation, by offering a deepened and philosophically-anchored understanding that goes on in many interpretative and reflective research processes. The methodology offers a conceptualization of research processes where the role of the researchers' imagination in

textual constructions is acknowledged. Furthermore, the methodology offers an understanding of how the text can transfer or refigure both the readers and the author and vice versa. In that sense, it also raises different kinds of textual potential across periods of time, something that seems to be underestimated in recent research use of an Ricoerian mimetic process.

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Notes

1 Ricoeur do not link the processes of interpretation to perspectives using theoretical concept, however, he does make use of concepts of theoretical and philosophical matter in his own descriptive analysis e.g. in his references to Augustine and Aristotle.