

Language Philosophy in the context of knowledge organization in the interactive virtual platform

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ABSTRACT

Over the past years we have pursued epistemological paths that enabled us to reflect on the meaning of language as information, especially in the interactive virtual environments. The main objective of this investigation did not specifically aim at the identification or development of methodological tools, but rather the configuration of a theoretical discourse framework about the pragmatic epistemological possibilities of study and research in the Science of Information within the context of information actions in virtual technology. Thus, we present our thoughts and conjectures about the prerogatives and the obstacles encountered in that theoretical path, concluding with some communicative implications that are inherent to the meaning of information from its use, which in turn, configure the informational activities on the Internet with regard to the existing interactive platforms, better known as Web 2.0, or Pragmatic Web.

Keywords: Philosophy of language, Information science, Knowledge organization, Pragmatic Web, L. Wittgenstein, J. Habermas.

INTRODUCTION

The research demands and needs in Information Science are wide-ranging. Information, as the central scope of this area, can be designed from different perspectives and for different purposes. When we set out to deliberate on the factual context of search, production and use coupled to the virtual technology plan, we first decided that some of the epistemological starting points of that science might not be sufficiently flexible to assist us in understanding the relative rhizomatous movement of meanings in the Web. Thus, we sought cognitive matrices that could be designed in a more comprehensive and less analytical design concerning the categorization processes of informational meaning. And hence, we arrived at Pragmatics. However, this epistemic direction was not coincidental. While observing the constituting actions of virtual information, we understood that its feedback is also established from the social use of language. With such an application no longer mediated entirely by controlled information systems.

The development of interactive computing platforms expanded conditions in such a way that information could be researched and produced based on the everyday use of language. Pragmatics is the philosophical line that recognizes and justifies the validity of everyday language use as a practical action for the construction of knowledge. Thus, we approached this philosophy in search of some theoretical contributions to enable us to acknowledge certain conditions of interactive validation

of knowledge and that could be associated to the validation of information in the Web. The purpose was to discuss certain issues relating to the position of information science in some of its theoretical applications and practical developments.

In the current context of information actions, the relevance of information science inclusion in a social paradigm became clear. Information has a community transformation status and its validation and activation is possible from its social use by the community's participation. When information is disconnected from physical and cognitive paradigms, a social transformation capacity is then added.

When the prerogatives and barriers of language design in information systems were analyzed, our objective was to locate the representative and structuring role of language that corresponds to the proposals of the articulated systems of information retrieval. However, the descriptive condition of the language used in this systemic environment becomes limiting when viewed as more open and flexible information fields, as the virtual interactive domains. The Internet has allowed, and at the same time has raised a repositioning of individuals and the use of language. Hence, our search for references to promote resources in understanding the complex and dynamic relationship of individuals with language and its meaning.

The platforms developed by current computer systems increasingly make possible that the knowledge produced in parallel or at the boundaries of institutional centers that treat information may be manifested and validated. A recent Web configuration that promotes this function is the interactive platform known as Web 2.0 or Pragmatic Web [1], [2]. This platform holds as its key engine the collaborative participation of individuals in the drafting, editing, selection and validation of community-based content feedback through these actions. The interactive and daily use of language in this process is the main instrument for knowledge construction. The language in action becomes information and at the same time information acquires its meaning when activated.

In this reconfigured universe both computationally as well as socially, we believe in information searching. In this respect we encounter information science works, known as Information seeking, aimed at identifying the steps and routes in light of researchers' information seeking concerning Information Technologies. Many of these studies indicate and categorize common behaviors of information seeking in order to translate them into computing designs, aiming at the need for information retrieval actions. However, it was not possible to devise such models as applicable to the multicultural and polyphonic scenario of the Web. These conditions lead us to more attentively consider the need to understand the

virtual atmosphere according to an epistemological prism that systematically proceeds any model-setting practice of information seeking. In the Web pragmatic, for example, we can see that the linguistic tools generated from the use of the network itself, as support in the process of information retrieval, are established *a posteriori*. As for instance Tags that become collaborative tagging (folksonomy) and that openly and boldly, represent situations and contexts of language use in information operations.

In the virtual configuration of information, establishing models to search information seems unfeasible. This is mainly due to the fact that the guarantees for these types of information practice models- conceived in systemic environments- were dispersed with the expansion of sociovirtual conditions of information production and use. The mixing of institutionalized and public content added to the voices of experts and everyday individuals, broke down the intensity of the guarantees, which before were followed for the representation and organization of knowledge. Therefore, we also believe that the guarantees to validate information in the network need to be considered in a broader outlook that precedes structuring by the experts' discourses, and that would be in line with communication design and the use of language. Such circumstances strongly indicated that a broadening of the cognitive environment of the science of information would be needed in order to expand our posture to think about the contemporary information scenario with its multiple semiotic expressions and technological implications.

LANGUAGE GAMES IN THE CONTEXT OF INFORMATION ACTIONS

It was the philosophy of language that gave us a range of conjectures related to the meaning of language, which made sense given the concerns about information. The philosophy of language, as it is an open category, includes viewpoints related to the understanding of transcendental, ontological, hermeneutic, and cognitive language, among others. However, the outline we made and that we believe to be adequate regarding our epistemic concerns, deals with a period in which the studies of language go beyond its representative condition and take on a denotative and logical perspective, sustaining the relationship of language with the world. This linguistic turn of philosophy, in which language and the linguistic proposal are conceived as something calculable and capable of logical anticipation, is reflected in the studies of information science, especially in the development of representation and informational tools and information intermediation in systemic centers.

Not only information systems, but the Web as a whole is structured from combinatorial binary logic. Because of this, intermediation and representation tools continue to be developed to meet the demands of information retrieval in the network. However, the significance, if we consider the content produced and recovered from interactive platforms, extrapolate the combinatorial limitations of logic and pure language. The semantic Web minimizes that distance, but still without considering the activity of

contextual, social and personal multiplicities of information searching and production.

Thus, we followed the path of language philosophy until arriving at its second activity, recognized as a pragmatic turn, in which the heterogeneous figures of intersubjectivity in context-based actions are retaken in the language discussions, thus becoming the starting point for its significance. This meaning, during that period, is removed from the hard armor of describing the world and begins the unpredictable condition of acting upon it. The use of language in practical situations of life, which provides the necessary conditions for its meaning. The potential flexibility in language acquired from its pragmatic view and understanding, seemed to come closer to what was understood about the movement of meanings on the Internet at that point.

L. Wittgenstein (1889-1951) is the philosopher, who from his work *Philosophical investigations* (1953), gave us theoretical resources explaining simple everyday situations, from which the significant process depends on. The author theoretically provided the characteristic flow of the language meaning processes linked to its use. Thus, we obtained the needed detachment to consider the relationship of language and its use in the process of meaning, in light of the polyphony that characterizes the Web. We did not seek in Wittgenstein a map to connect the procedures of meaning but rather to recognize its complexity.

We can state that it was Wittgenstein who broadened our perception and understanding about the subtleties of language meaning concerning its use. He also explained and illustrated this movement, particularly from the concept of language games. Even without ostensibly defining that concept, for us he represents the machinery of the Internet's information activity, especially regarding the situational and unpredictable condition concerning meanings. To us, this concept represents the situational and unpredictable articulations of language meaning used in the Internet's information activities. All the articulations, the forms of associations and the approximation conditions between individuals and discourses virtually delivered are, according to our analysis, connected to the conditions demanded by Wittgenstein's language-games with regards to rules, grammar, and family resemblance.

Blair [3], [4], Frohmann [5] and Hjørland[6] include certain authors from the information science that have discussed these theoretical and conceptual Wittgensteinian philosophical approaches, but linked them to the information systems. They suggest the openness of these systems for the inclusion of computational mechanisms that recognize, accept and articulate the movement of language use in information seeking as a constitutive course of action in the information retrieval process.

When considering this conjecture, we limit ourselves to suggesting that the instruments for controlling vocabulary used to represent and intermediate systematized content, allow for the inclusion of concepts as they are used daily, supplementing explanations and examples of some of the

possible uses. According to Wittgenstein, in the explanation, there are uses of language that show many of the conditions of meaning of such concept and this could enable including different uses and their relationships. In short, it would not be necessary to exhaust the use of synonyms and hierarchical unfoldings to represent some of the possible meanings of concepts. However and from our perception, Wittgenstein cannot be considered from the point of view of his application because, according to the philosopher, his work does not show any theory or methodology. He, in particular, allowed us to re-examine the biases we have on the significance of language and which we follow, especially in our practice as information scientists. He warns us in time about such conditions of meaning, so that we may navigate virtual information more safely.

COMMUNICATIVE ACTION IN THE CONTEXT OF INFORMATION ACTIONS

However, we continue to seek for a theoretical contribution that could minimally recognize and articulate the process of language meaning in use, but that at the same time could be more “operational”. It was the formal Pragmatics by Habermas (1929 -) that indicated, within a consistent communicative theory, the parts and actions that would need to be articulated even before initiating the use of language [7]. By using Habermas’ theory of communicative action (1986) [8], we did not intend to detail its assumptions. We seek to acknowledge, in the completeness of its proposal, the key elements we believe relate to the fulfillment of these fundamental demands in order to have communication and, thus, to deliberate as a condition for communication, interaction in the Web. Mainly, because this computational platform of information is increasingly configured by the interactive actions of language use by the users. For us, the world of institutions (with specific rules and specialized jargon) transverses into the living world (public knowledge, everyday language) in virtual information and is the subject, the one responsible for this transversal movement, by means of its communicative actions.

It is the inter-subjects that take on the initial illocutionary commitment that sets in motion a communicative action. And from such minimal commitment, governed by communicative rationality, in favor of its emancipating nature, will make the subject want to understand the other, hence obtaining agreements or not. It is this commitment that leads them to fulfilling the goals of the communicative validation of intelligibility, justification, truth and veracity, with this commitment needed to begin the communicative action.

And as today collaborative, cooperative and associative human interaction is the main searching “tool” for knowledge building in the Web, it is justifiable that we recognize some of the conditions of significance that can enable such a pragmatic action of information. Accordingly, Habermas gave us some support measures to deliberate on the first steps of significance and meaning. From this, we believe that many of the analyses and practices related to the treatment of information in the cyber multicultural concept can be considered more

broadly and dynamic, but, aware that behind the movement of meaning there are communicative assurances than do not make them aleatoric and hence enables individuals understanding one another other, as well as the world, and within that process, produce knowledge, whether it is in the “physical” or virtual reality.

In summary, we can say that the core of our concluding remarks for this discussion, that the practices of collaboration, cooperation and association between the network partners, have been a validation criterion for many of the retrieval information actions on the Internet. In the games set in this interactive process, overall implications of language meaning in use suggested in the Pragmatics of Wittgenstein’s Investigations could take place. And in light of what we learned with Habermas, one attitude shares such interlocutions: the illocutionary commitment made by the communication participants in the pursuit of understanding, which is achieved as the minimum requirements for communicative validation are met by the interlocutors.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

From our arguments we can state that, currently, the Web could be a fabric that has as its central design, the social commitments established by communication through the use of language. And this design could be considered as *a priori* basis for the semantic and logical entanglement that transpire (and created as additional support for information searching actions).

Wittgenstein’s brilliant allusions on the game of meaning, added to the cautious and consistent articulation of communicative validation proposed by Habermas, convinced us that pragmatic thinking about information is possible and necessary. If Pragmatics raises methods, techniques or models for the meaning of language, which could be instrumentalised by the science of information, still remains to be substantiated. However, whether or not these structures are possible, we allow ourselves to be deadened by the philosophy of language, because it has opened our eyes to the impossibilities, all too human, of focusing and forecasting on the meaning of information (mediated by technological artifacts or not).

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