

## INTERFACES BETWEEN LINGUISTICS, TERMINOLOGY AND DOCUMENTATION

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### ABSTRACT

Presents reflections on the interface between Linguistics, Documentation and Terminology, highlighting the aspects that are related to the proposal of pedagogical procedures aimed at the education and training of the documentalist. The superiority of natural language is underscored as the original place of the signified to show its privileged role for accessing knowledge, to which teaching and learning methods should correspond, leading to an understanding of the place of specialist languages as well as those of documentalist activities. The proposal of Documentary Linguistics is discussed which, in dialogue with Terminology, seeks to highlight the functions of onomasiological paths – from emission to conceptualization (from the concept to the term) – alongside semasiological ones – from reception and interpretation (from the term to the concept), in the education and training of the documentalist. This is followed by a brief synthesis of a didactic-pedagogical experiment.

**Keywords:** Linguistics; Documentation; Terminology; Documentary Linguistics; Documentalist's Education and Training.

### 1 INTRODUCTION

Since 1990, studies carried out at the interface between Linguistics, Documentation and Terminology has sought the elaboration of methods for the treatment and retrieval of information as well as for the construction of documentation languages. In the realm of Information Science, a similar interface is found in the sub-field denominated Documentary Linguistics, the initial objective of which has been strongly associated to the elaboration of languages and procedures for the

treatment of information, more recently moving into the direction of proposals for the organization, representation and dissemination of information. The studies carried out in this area have permitted the consistent treatment – unimaginable at the time of the use of instruments of a universal nature – of specific questions on culture and reception, instituting the information order in its social dimension. In view of this, documentation activities have not only altered their scope but also their nature. However, in practice, what is observed is that it is only theory, since the efforts made in the constitution of the sub-field have not been accompanied by teaching methods compatible with the operationalization of knowledge produced with this sub-field. In that sense, the present text presents, in five parts, some fundamentals of Documentary Linguistics that allow the gap between theory and its translation into educational ends to be overcome.

In the first part, we refer to the superiority of general or natural language as the original site of meaning, showing that the different terminological-documentation methods, on privileging certain aspects of language, do not corroborate the general conception of the semiotic system, proposing different languages as disjoint sets. However, the recognition of general language as a means of accessing knowledge justifies the teaching and learning methods proposed by Documentary Linguistics, which are founded on the conception of general language into which the functioning of specialist language is integrated. As a result, in the second part, we present a proposal for the composition of an interface between Documentation Linguistics and Terminology, the focus of which on Documentation allows the elaboration of frameworks of reference committed to documentation activity. Following that, we briefly relate an experiment of a didactic type that mobilizes knowledge from Terminology and Documentation. Then, we succinctly present an experiment arising from the preceding one in which, by means of an undergraduate scientific initiation research project, concepts in which there exists great conceptual variation were worked on. By way of conclusion, indicators are presented that demonstrate that the experiments undertaken contribute not only to advances in the professional development of the documentalist, but also to the contemporary discussion in Terminology regarding its own object of study.

## **2 GENERAL LANGUAGES**

The idea that language is the original site of meaning is as consensual as the notion that we live surrounded by several languages, which necessarily leads to the admission that there exists a relation between meaning and linguistic context. This social aspect of language does not only configure it as an object of study, but also permits its investigation from points of view associated with different methods that reveal apparently different aspects of the same event.

From the point of view of the social history of language, for example, the observation of different interpretation modes leads to, not uncommonly, the idea of the existence of a hierarchy amongst the languages used by one given community. The importance of such studies is associated to the reflections made on the relations between language and power, which in turn, need to be analyzed in the realm of the actual distribution of language, that is, in that of teaching and use policies. Also part of the studies of this nature is those that deal with written languages that exercise some special power, as is the case with religious discourse.

Specialist languages and the language for information treatment, although being the object of more technical studies, are also found in this category and are often considered artificial languages, because they are not adequately interpreted by society. Alongside this exclusionary aspect of linguistic activity, it is also necessary to recognize that the definition of the field of Linguistics that aligns sign systems and cultural reality attributing to them fundamentally the function of *re-creating* - “[...] creating that reality again” (LOPES, 1987, p.16) indicates in a quite objective way the creative and translational functions of language.

The effective understanding of such functions is related to the essential property of the sign behaving as much like the sign-object as like a meta-sign. A similar property underlies not only the notion of unlimited semiosis but also that of the hierarchization of semiotic systems, postulating the notion of modelization. Natural languages, or common languages, “[...] occupy the predominant hierarchical position among all semiotic systems because they constitute the *only immediate reality for*

*each of our thoughts*” (LOPES, 1987, p.20). Given this capacity to translate any other sign system, natural languages receive the name of semiotic system or primary modeler.

In this sense, any specialist language is an integral part of general and natural language. Specialist vocabularies share equally that characteristic, in such a way that the linguistic sign can be realized either as a word or as a term, either as a descriptor, in the case of language for information treatment or a documentary language. It is precisely this conception of sign that underlies theoretically Documentary Linguistics and structures the form by which it operates with the word, the term and the descriptor, that is, the way by which it articulates the different levels of meaning.

Coseriu (1969, p.17) makes use of a metaphor to explain the relation between the levels of abstraction – for example, the concept in the specialist language – and the level of the concrete phenomenon of speech.

And another fundamental point is that the botanist understands that the ideal types which he has reached do not have an autonomous existence in a world apart, they do not exist outside the concrete flowers and independently of them; that the abstract forms resume and generalize that which is concrete, but they are not in opposition. That is to say that it is highly important not to consider abstraction as another reality, but only as a proven formal and systematic aspect, for scientific needs, in the same concrete phenomena, as a way of facing that unique and indivisible reality that is human language.

By means of this argument, Coseriu shows that there exists a linguistic dynamics that corroborates the primary modeler function of natural language (also called general or common language) that makes knowledge of one type of language sustain knowledge of another. He thus reinforces the idea that we live a culture of communication in which contact between different languages underlies not only the increase in interpretative forms but also consolidates the communication flows in society.

In a similar vein, Sager (1993) emphasizes that, aware of the importance of terminologies in the contemporary world for the promotion of efficient communication among specialists; for the general public the specialist vocabulary constitutes “[...] nothing more than jargon amongst specialists to deceive, confuse or impress with

superior knowledge [...]” (SAGER, 1993, p.11). Such an ambiguous situation arises from the idea alluded to of the separation between languages. With it succumbs the possibility of terminologies promoting an effective and practical mediation for access to techno scientific knowledge.

Sager considers that such difficulty with terminology is associated to the incipient knowledge that exists on the mechanisms of information and communication that is reflected in turn, in the autonomous study of the different languages and lexicons. With this, the common property shared by linguistic systems is hidden. The concept of general language that takes on board this common property presupposes:

- a) the primary modeler functioning of natural language – the learning of specialist languages is carried out through it;
- b) the existence of different levels of knowledge of specialist language – translators and interpreters, for example, understand specialist texts on the production of cars but are incapable of producing them (SAGER, 1993, p.14).

The teaching of a specialist language, especially the methodological resources used for this, depends on the level of knowledge demanded by the documentalist's education and professional development. According to Documentary Linguistics (LTD), the point of departure is general language in order to understand the functioning of specialist languages and of how these relate to the language for information treatment. Specifically, LTD should harmonize the word's descriptive, the term's prescriptive and the descriptor's normative, functions, integrated into general language. It is thus understood that any practical mediation that documentalists will exercise presupposes their mastering of a practical mediation that should be built up during the teaching-learning process.

### **3 DOCUMENTARY LINGUISTICS AND TERMINOLOGY**

By not attributing relevance to the integration proposed by the conception of general language and of the conception of the sign adopted by LTD, the teaching of

Terminology for the professional education and training of the documentalist has been taking place in a disjointed way.

The theoretical field of Terminology, as was proposed by Wüster, predominated for a long time in terminological studies through the General Theory of Terminology. Based on the dichotomies term and word, onomasiology and semasiology, such theory proposes the vocabulary of the specialist area – denominated terminology – as a system of concepts – considered universal. What is important, then, is the establishment of a bi-univocal relation between concept and term for the effectuation of efficient communication between peers.

The General Theory of Terminology (GTT), on making viable the univocal relation between the concept and the term, presents a seductive solution for the linguistic problems faced by Documentation. With it, in fact, is consolidated, for example, the idea of the univalent sign, important for conferring credibility to information treatment and trust worthiness to information retrieval systems. However, a similar proposition could not only be applied to the autonomous conception of specialist language – promoting the tightening of the interpretative “*locus*” – but it also compromises the understanding that the selection of documentation units – descriptors and non-descriptors – is carried out in the light of the discursive context.

However, it is necessary to go further to understand the reach of such a procedure. Although today terminology is considered the linguistic knowledge on a subject, it is necessary to recognize that for the GTT, that proposition is not sufficiently clear. For Wüster, in fact, terminologist and specialist are synonymous terms: specialists are “[...] the only ones that possess enough knowledge on a subject to find the most adequate terms” (CABRÉ, 2005).

The primacy of the concept over the term – or of the meaning over the signifier –, in the alluded case is feasible because it is up to the specialists to elaborate their own vocabulary. In fact, only the specialist can operate with knowledge of the concepts of a subject for the selection of the most adequate denominations. Thus, the onomasiological concept that governs the terminological task cannot be universalized as a practical resource. It is enough that it might be submitted to deeper reflection so that its fragility comes to light.

Documentation found itself in a similar situation when it adopted the thesaurus as an instrument for information treatment for retrieval ends. Documentation takes that idea from Peter Market Roget's work titled *Thesaurus of English words and phrases, classified and arranged so as to facilitate the expression of ideas and assist in literary composition*, published in 1852 (ROGET, 1970). Since it is a dictionary of general language, Roget aligned concepts and expressions, values and their forms of expression. Because of that dictionaries of an onomasiological nature are also called terminological, ideological or analogical dictionaries.

The strong relation between Terminology and Documentation has been traditionally established from an onomasiological orientation. This tendency, however, is an off-shoot of Logic, and fundamentally recognizes only the naming role of language. Such a conception tends to consider conceptualization processes as independent and anterior to their expression in language. Documentary Linguistics, however, on recognizing the linguistic nature of documentation procedures, suggests the combination of both procedures – onomasiological e semasiological – motivated by and based on the practical experience of documentary language construction as well as the recognition, as Béjoint (1989) suggests, that the terminologist carries out, almost simultaneously, the activity of inventorying the feelings of each form and of circumscribing them with reference to the formulated concepts in the explored domain.

Onomasiology is understood to be linguistic activity that departs from the idea or meaning and identifies the possible words to express it. This procedure allows the description of the several forms by which the idea finds its expression in words. Thus, the denomination processes – from the idea to the sign – are at the base of studies of an onomasiological nature.

An onomasiological orientation is important for Terminology because it supplies a basis for the prescription of the concept-term relation. For Documentation on the other hand, the comparison operates that is at the base of normalization, as, for example, with the equivalence relation in thesauri. However, it is an innocuous relation as a learning methodology. It is not unusual to hear that the development of

documentation activities associated to the structuring of the conceptual system is the responsibility of the specialists. Such an affirmation is effectively grounded in the prioritizing of the onomasiological procedure, routine in the terminologist's activity.

Pottier (1992) understands that the course of enunciation involves relative positions as much to the enunciator (emitter) as to the receptor that correspond to the onomasiological and semasiological trajectories, respectively. In this sense, from the concept to that which is said, we have onomasiology, and from that which is said to its interpretation, semasiology. Thus, the onomasiological orientation is of the category of the enunciator and that of the semasiological one is from the category of reception.

It is understood, therefore, that the proposal of a terminology or of a thesaurus is based, primarily, on the onomasiological orientation. The point of departure is the conceptualization of an idea, from the referential world, afterwards expressed in signs, according to the means supplied by the general language system. In hjelmeslevian terms, the point of departure is from the content substance to the content form, based on designation processes.

For learning ends, on the other hand, such an orientation is not adequate. For the success of this process it is necessary to make viable a semantic orientation in harmony with the reception category that is of the interpreter, who, faced with the discourse, conceptualizes it. It is observed that for Pottier, independently of the point of departure, communication is carried out on a conceptual level. It is also important to highlight that both orientations are based on a strong relation between language and thought. This is because onomasiology covers the transformation of mental representations into texts, enunciations and discourses – part of the concept – while semasiology orients the interpretation of these same objects – arriving at the concept. For this, the semasiological orientation makes available two stages: the first is related to the contexts in which the unit appears and following that, its insertion into paradigms.

This understanding of the processes of meaning and interpretation – terminological-linguistic filters – that TDL carries out, allows the compatibilization of the practical mediations with the communicational objectives of terminologies and of



information retrieval using documentary languages. It is recognized, in this way, that onomasiological and semasiological procedures are associated and interdependent and that the learning methodologies in the realm of Documentation should interconnect them.

#### **4 ELABORATION OF VOCABULARIES OF A SEMASIOLOGICAL ORIENTATION: A DIDACTIC-PEDAGOGIC EXPERIENCE**

As we have already discussed in previous publications (LARA; TÁLAMO, 2006, a, b, c) and (TÁLAMO; LARA, 2007) the exploration of the Terminology-Documentation interface, with a focus on the professional education and training of the documentalist, is made viable by means of a course module in the undergraduate course in Librarianship<sup>i</sup>. The course module introduces the scope of Terminology highlighting the possibility of the appropriation of knowledge for Documentation operating, alongside the examination of theoretical texts, from the exploration of small *corpora* in increasing degrees of specialization. In the process, terminological and documentation instruments are used, aiming for the identification of the conceptual and functional vocabulary<sup>ii</sup> and the use of procedures for terminological description. Simultaneously, working on the typologies of texts in the general language is sought – texts in day-to-day, dissemination and specialist languages – and the characteristics and functionalities of the word, term and descriptor. It is intended that the student gets to understand the different levels of language and its characteristics.

The students' practical works are on thematic contemporary texts which are analyzed with the aim of identifying notional, similarity and difference characteristics as well as relations between concepts, comparison of attributes and semantic traces, underlining the conditions of use or the communicational contexts, as a place of terminologization (up-to-datedness of the term) and up-to-datedness of the word.

The experienced process allows the students not only to interpret the discourses but also to assimilate the concepts under scrutiny and propose a scope note, close to an operational definition for the term. In this way, it is confirmed that from the semasiological procedure, the students have available to them elements to

interpret the collected information, being able to propose, afterwards, the expression of the conceptualization (onomasiological process). That is the condition to understand theoretically the organization of concept systems, since the expression of the domain obtained by increasing abstraction de-links them from the texts of origin. In the same way, this abstraction allows the proposal of the organization of concept trees corresponding to the studied domain, or part of it. Such trees, in turn, allow working documentation concepts of categories and categorization, essential notions to link the results of terminological procedure to the aims of information organization and representation according to the intended information systems. From the intuitive notion of set and degrees of generality, logical-linguistic notions of fit, of association by space-time contiguity and of synonymy are reached.

The experience allows us to show that the articulation of the semasiological onomasiological courses create conditions for students to propose a relational network for a documentation thesaurus, realizing in a consistent way the distribution of terms according to the levels of super ordination, subordination, association and equivalence. The observation of the terms in their contexts of use substitutes empirical organization with another strongly connected to the specialist literature.

## **5 THE APPROPRIATION OF THE COURSE MODULE RESULTS: WORK ON A *CORPUS* OF CONCEPTUAL VARIATION**

The results of the didactic-pedagogical experiment are reflected in the professional development of the students and can be observed in the work that they subsequently developed. It should be highlighted that the function of the degrees of complexity of the terminological work and the level of professional development of the students – undergraduate placement and basic professional development – were chosen on purpose, at first, texts in which the variation is not so expressive, since its manifestation would call for deeper work. However, the appropriation of the terminological and linguistic concepts post-course module was verified, revealed particularly in the elaboration of scientific initiation research studies, a form of individual research supervised by the teacher, promising for subsequent work on texts in which variation occurs with greater intensity.

To cite an example, we present a small part of an experiment with texts related to the concepts “museum, museology, museography”, highlighting some records of the term “museum” whose contexts show the coexistence of notions and modes of divergent delimitation as a function of the transformations that occur in the field of knowledge and of practice. Similar cases demonstrate, with greater emphasis, the importance of the association between semasiological and onomasiological procedures, given that restricting, in Documentation, operations exclusively to onomasiological procedures would mean taking away the foundation that leads to the possibility of interpretation. Put another way, the student has an opportunity to verify, through the comparison of the texts, the elements for their understanding, identification, as well as the variation in understanding of the concepts over time and/or according to different approaches, which gives them the opportunity to appropriate, effectively, the produced knowledge.

RECORD	CONTEXT	SOURCE
1	The museum is a permanent institution, non-profit making, at the service of society and of society's development, open to the public, that acquires, conserves, researches, disseminates and exhibits, for study, education and leisure ends, material and immaterial witnesses of peoples and their environment.	International Council of Museums (ICOM). <i>Ethics code for museums</i> . Trans. Brazilian Committee of ICOM, 2005.
3	The American Association of Museums presents a slightly more detailed definition: the museum is a “non-profit making established institution that does not occupy itself primarily with temporary exhibitions, open to the public and administered for the public good, with the aim of conserving, preserving, studying, interpreting, collecting and exhibiting to the public, for its instruction and fruition, objects and species of educational and cultural value, including artistic and scientific (animate or inanimate), historical or technological material. Museums thus defined should also include botanical gardens, zoos, aquariums, planetariums, and historical societies that fulfill the aforementioned requirements.	COELHO, Teixeira. <i>Dicionário crítico de política cultural: política e imaginário</i> . São Paulo: Iluminuras; FAPESP, 1997. p.272.
5	The Museum, in turn, corresponds to the institutional model destined for the construction and administration of memory, from the study, treatment, keeping and extroversión of material and immaterial cultural indicators (references, fragments, expressions, remnants, objects, collections) via the fulfillment of three basic functions: scientific, educational and social.	LEÓN, A., 1978, cited by BRUNO, M.C. O.). <i>Museologia e Museus: os inevitáveis caminhos entrelaçados. Cadernos de Sociomuseologia. n.25, 2006</i>

8	Museums, in recent decades, have developed a relevant and specific role in the field of democratization of culture, breaking the barriers of their traditional spaces, seeking new publics and creating exhibitions that incorporate mixed languages. These institutions undergo new management models, interconnect in network and system programmes without, however, losing sight of the notion of their essential field of action.	BRUNO, Maria Cristina O. Principais campos da ação museológica, p.7, 2004. (Didactic text of the discipline "Museologia: comunicação/Educação")
10	Intense discussions have been carried out with the aim of defining or foreseeing the future paths of museums. Traditionally, in modernity, as a collection the museum had (and has) the function of preserving and presenting cultural artifacts selected as representative of the high points of a given culture. From this aspect, the museum was guardian of a heritage at the same time as it created canons, marked by the establishment of frontiers between that which was "outside" and that which was admitted to the cultural scenario.	COELHO, Teixeira. <i>Dicionário crítico de política cultural: política e imaginário</i> . São Paulo: Iluminuras; FAPESP, 1997. p.272.
15	The traditional museum had, with indisputable exceptions, the character of souvenir, marked by the idea of prestige and of a pharaonic complex. The modern museum intended to become society's memory and influence and instruct the world. The museum of the future, in its existing form, aims to adopt a dynamic attitude regarding the present and the future, seeing the past as a source of valuable inspiration for a total commitment with the day-to-day. The aim of such a museum (or better, of such an attitude, since we are not talking now only of museums, at least not in the usual acceptance of the term) is to create such a relationship between man and the universe that might be a harmonious one, where by which the awareness raising would become awareness itself. The modern museum was created in response to a need to establish identity [...]	SOLA. Tomislav. Contribuição para uma possível definição de museologia. <i>Cadernos Museológicos</i> , v.2, n.3, 1990.

**Figure 1: Records with the Contexts Related to 'Museum'.**

Source: Prepared by authors.

On elaborating the collection records, the students intuitively select the segments that refer to that which is being spoken about. In this sense, they operate with up-dates of nominal expressions, which in the light of the dynamic character of discourse, are submitted to reformulations and transformations. It is in these updates that knowledge is acquired. Subsequently, the student develops an activity that consists of the elaboration of conjunctions on heterogeneity according to the logic of categorization, as shown in the following example:

RECORD	INSTITUTIONAL MODEL	ACTIVITIES/ FUNCTIONS	REACH (Coverage)
1	[...] it is a permanent institution, non-profit making, at the service of society and society's development, open to the public [...]	[...] that acquires, conserves, researches, disseminates and exhibits, for study, education and leisure ends, material and immaterial witnesses of peoples and their environment.	
3	[...] established institution, non-profit making, that does not occupy itself primarily with temporary exhibitions, open to the public and administered for the public good.	[...] conserving, preserving, studying, interpreting, collecting and exhibiting to the public, for its instruction and fruition, objects and species of educational and cultural value [...]	[...] Museums thus defined should also include botanical gardens, zoos, aquariums, planetariums, and historical societies [...]
5	[...] institutional model reserved destined for the construction and administration of memory [...]	[...] from the study, treatment, keeping and extroversion of material and immaterial cultural indicators (references, fragments, expressions, remnants/remains, objects, collections) via the fulfillment of three basic functions: scientific, educational and social.	
8	Museums, in recent decades, have developed a relevant and specific role in the field of democratization of culture, breaking the barriers of their traditional spaces, seeking new publics and creating exhibitions that incorporate mixed languages.		
10		[...] the function of preserving and presenting cultural artifacts selected as representative of the high points of a given culture.	[...] the museum was guardian of a heritage at the same time as it created canons, marked by the establishment of frontiers between that which was "outside" and that which was admitted to the cultural scenario.
15	The traditional museum had, with indisputable exceptions, the character of souvenir, marked by the idea of		The aim of such a museum (or better, of such an attitude, since we

	<p>prestige and of a pharaonic complex. The modern museum intended to become society's memory and influence and instruct the world. The museum of the future, in its existing form, aims to adopt a dynamic attitude regarding the present and the future, seeing the past as a source of valuable inspiration for a total commitment with the day-to-day.</p>		<p>are not talking now only of museums, at least not in the usual acceptance of the term) is to create such a relationship between man and the universe that might be a harmonious one, where by which the awareness raising would become awareness itself. The modern museum was created in response to a need to establish identity [...]</p>
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**Figure 2: Term: Museum/Characteristics.**

Source: Prepared by authors.

The interpretative trajectory that conducts the synthesis of reading – which will serve as a basis for the elaboration of the documentary language – recognizes the modeler function of general language and the investigative and exploratory nature of the activity of categorization. For that reason it allows students to examine the contexts in which the designative expression is inserted and to elaborate syntheses from the analyses instead of reproducing concepts that are simply presented to them.

## 6 FINAL OBSERVATIONS

The advances of theoretical studies, of research shared by different areas of knowledge, are tested and gain visibility when integrated into teaching-learning strategies. Documentary Linguistics, as a field of Information Science, seeks the harmonization of theories for the elaboration not only of methodological procedures

for the construction of systems for the organization and retrieval of knowledge, but also of teaching strategies.

The proposal here presented results basically from a critical re-reading of TGT procedures in the light of documentation practice and of advances in Linguistics, especially regarding studies of processes of meaning involved in the constitution of the lexicon.

The concept of general language inspired by the notions of modeling and interpretations of semasiological orientations, shows itself to be sufficiently explanatory, not only for underlying the way by which the documentalist operates with different languages, far from the idea of the disjunction of languages, but also to corroborate the integrative or multidisciplinary nature of Information Science itself.

In this sense, the contribution of Documentary Linguistics is of extreme importance, since it integrates interdisciplinarity into teaching processes, along with the notions of general language, of the term and of the word as the site of the manifestation of traces which, although different, serve as a vehicle for the interpretative passage. The present discussion in Terminology consists of the difficulty in harmonizing a plural or polyhedral object, as is the case of the term, into a unitary concept. Put another way, how to cover the unity of the object from different angles (CABRÉ, 2005). This quite common situation in the applied social sciences has, in the proposal here presented, a possible solution in the association of the notion of multiplicity or difference to the manifestations typical of semiotic systems, thereby making possible an effective relation between them by means of their translational functionalities.

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<sup>i</sup> “Introduction to Terminology for Documentation” is an optional course module on the Librarianship and Documentation Course at Escola de Comunicações e Artes – Universidade de São Paulo.

<sup>ii</sup> Conceptual vocabulary is relative to the terms which, by their form or meaning, denominate the specific realities of the speciality; the functional vocabulary, in turn, is constituted of expressions in natural language that are part of the specialists' vocabulary (DUBUC, 1999).