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DISCUSSING ON THE SEMIOTIC FOUNDATION
OF AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL DICTIONARY

Introduction

My proposal is aimed to demonstrate the ability of a set of techniques and operations pertaining to a cognitive and constructivist semiotics to contribute in the task of performing the Dictionary of usage for the description of lithic objects. Some of these criteria arise from the reelaboration of the classic authors of semiotics, such as F. de Saussure (1916) and Ch.S. Peirce (1931/1965), while others come from their updating through Foucault's views, specially in the *L'Archéologie du savoir* (1969) and even from the interpretations of the latter by others (as in the formulation of Magariños, J., 1996). They can allow me to set forth a number of statements that have helped me in the production of my dictionary and that are also useful for explaining certain characteristics of such production:

1) the object is conceptually constructed in the production of the discourse and the meaning arises from the textual materiality of the discourse, what can be stated as: there is no semantics without syntax;

2) what is not said within a text (but read or perceived beyond it by an interpreter) is said in another possible text; this excludes the subjective interpretation and the requirement of basing the construction of the meaning on the textuality is reasserted;

3) knowledge does not consist on showing what several phenomena have in common, but on showing the dispersion of interpretations that a phenomenon receives when constructed from a certain set of discourses (referring here provisionally to discourse as a text with semantic interpretation and, recursively, referring to text as a discourse without semantic interpretation; Magariños J., 2003);

4) no unique and true meaning for each term is the purpose of the investigation; the meaning recovered by means of the analysis of the corresponding discourse is the one that is in force at the very moment and place of that discourse (Wittgenstein L., 1953, § 138).

Terminological framework

The Spanish archaeological dictionaries are elaborated following at least a terminology built *a priori* and both, in them and in congresses or other archaeological events the concern is to "find" the best way of saying the concept. But what is really made is to build it from such debates. This question has not been discussed in archaeology.

Yet the debate set forth between usage and *a priori* (or conceptual) value of the term is approached by the field which studies the construction of the meaning of the specialized languages, that is to say, terminology.

The aim of terminology as a science is, for the authors that follow the traditional trend created by E. Wüster (1955), the study of the naming of concepts and the purpose of its application is the elaboration of vocabularies, nomenclatures, dictionaries, etc., and also the establishing of usage norms for the terms (Cabré M.T., 1993, p.82).

This old paradigm was challenged in the last years by terminologists and linguists. This shift was due in part to the stressing needs of communication, specially related to areas such as economics, advertising, marketing, tourism, media, etc. Some of the terminologists who had been previously working near the Wüsterian trend (Cabré M.T., 1999) began to consider the importance of the relation of the terms with the text in the terminological work. J. Sager (for instance, Sager J., Nidi-Kimbi A., 1995) has introduced the communicative dimension in terminology; as a result, terms are studied in texts "and not as context-independent labels for things" (Temmerman R., 2000, p.23). On the other hand, closer to my approach, theoretical renewals are proposed: to consider the term as a construct or result of the analysis, and the text as the departure point of its description, and even to soften the concept of *normalisation*: "C'est ainsi qu'on parle de *normalisation*, no plus au sens que la planification terminologique donne au mot, mais au sens ou la communauté d'experts "enterine" des signifiés comme des termes du domaine" (Bourigault D., Slodzian M., 1999, p.29).

Besides, the sociocognitive approach of terminology considers the knowledge of the world as experiential, that is to say, it places rationality heavily on the perceived, and does not take into account the transformations that the different semiotic systems (iconic, indexical, symbolic in the Peircean conception) impose to perception. For example, Temmerman states that: "Much of what we know and understand about the world is embodied (Johnson, 1987), is the result of our sensory perceptions. It should be added that the other part is the result of our reasoning, which is interactive with the input via

on the one hand sensory perception and on the other hand the transfer of other language users' ideas which we take in via discourse (written and spoken) for which language is the medium." (Temmerman R., 2000, p.61).

The specificity of language

When terminologists focus on the study of the so called "specialized language", the question of delimiting and defining the terms generally arise in these linguistic works as one of its major problems. This problem has been approached through different views and specialists agree on the fact that one of the differential characteristics of the specialized languages or discourses, lies in their vocabularies, in their scientific or technical terminologies (Desmet I., 2001).

Throughout several years I have been working in the terminology of lithic analysis elaborating, as one of its products, the dictionary of usage which was started in 1999. This led me to realize the importance of organizing a research that explains certain problems of such specific language. But the basic issue that arises in the very beginning of this task is the question of accurately establishing what makes the specificity of a specific archaeological language. It is generally considered that the archaeological object gives its specificity to the scientific domain. From this perspective, the knowledge is prior or external to the language, whose purpose is to name concepts or things and organize the system of concepts representing them. In fact, traditional terminology states that terminologies (as vocabulary of a language) are the set of names that designate things or concepts.

This way of considering scientific language opposes to the view I am arguing for, in which the subject matter of scientific knowledge is the result of interpreting perception. It is the way of being uttered what actualizes a sign and it is not sign before it is uttered, because in this initial moment, it was not but chaos. That is to say, the meaning of the external thing, in this case, the archaeological meaning is given by the language while naming it. Archaeological language can be thought of as the construction of a strategy of utterance (Foucault M., 1969, p.85). When perceiving the same object (in our case, a lithic one), researchers from different fields of knowledge employ different strategies of utterance in order to build archaeological, geological, technological or other meanings.

Using the terminology in the specificity of a field requires, in Foucault's words, the selection of a "point of diffraction" (1969, 87) where the utterance strategy goes from one direction to another one. This diffraction is what I show in the entries of my dictionary, in which the different meanings give archaeological sense to the identification and/or description of the object (which can be said in other strategies as different).

This strategy includes terms, that acquire sense while integrating them in utterances.

Working hypotheses

The delimiting and defining of the terms as pertaining or not to a scientific domain, are related to the identification of the terms that are used in the texts of a scientific field (that of the lithic analysis, in the present case).

But far from thinking in a "scientific field" in which we can find the terms that may correspond to it (and reject the ones that do not), it is this field what is under debate here so as to consider that the sense of the terms is produced within the language i.e. in the texts where its usage is materialized.

This material ground of the language is the place where the specificity of the terms used in it can be determined (or, perhaps, the degrees of specificity when compared with the other scientific languages or even with the natural or colloquial language). What should be delimited or studied is the specificity of each term, in order to reconstruct the degree and the ways of the pertinence of the terms of a corpus to a coherent strategy. The archaeological quality of an object is given by the language that constructs it as subject matter of knowledge.

That is to say, the archaeological quality does not preexist neither conceptually nor in an other level of meaning which would be undoubtedly metaphysics, but it comes from the usage of the language (Wittgenstein L., 1953, § 43). An empirical concept of meaning requires to consider it as a textualized interpretation which does not exist before such textualization (mental or verbal).

The fact that the archaeological meaning is constructed by usage, makes the science to construct its own terminology in two levels. The first is that of the production, which is done by the archaeologists in their texts (in a broad sense, in any support): natural language is used by the archaeologists in their writings, delimited and fixed by them, as it generally happens in social sciences. The terms are being selected from different sources (other sciences, technology, everyday speech, etc.) and specified, delimited, adjusted to the needs of the discipline.

The second level encompasses the readers as individual interpreters of texts, but also the academies and the authorities.

Among this perpetual renewing of the language by each of its producers (which is a constant feature of every language not only due to its being natural language, but also because of it) and the delimitations put by the academies and authorities out of the research context of usage of language, there is a permanent struggle, a dialectics between the moment of transformation of a living terminology and the moment

of fixing its limits and expansions in order to maintain control and hegemony of the discourse. That is to say, between the key instance of its usage and its authorization, between the usage and the norm.

The usage of a term is related with its being historically in force, with the being in force of certain associate ways of thinking. The norm is related with the academic or political or scientific agreement.

I consider here as definition of a term the paragraphs under the word entry in my dictionary, which consists of the synthetic record of the different usage options taken by the authors of the corpus. So, what I call here definition of each term used in a given text, is an essential item of the rationality of the field. It allows the identifying of the historical variations or regional differences of the semantization of a term.

The analysis can show the way language has been used and how the terms in the same context are specified. The production of the different archaeological senses of the words taken by archaeologists from natural language or from other fields, is made by employing the rules of that natural language, but redefining the terms so as to have one or more meanings.

Empirical side

An adjective, an adverb, a noun, a determined word that would not be considered specific *a priori* when used in an archaeological text acquires specificity because it has been used associated with other determined terms although it has the same semantic field as in natural language. Even though its role is to modalize other terms (to place, locate, relate the different elements of the lithic object) of long history in this science (such as "lasca", "núcleo", etc., that in consequence have already been incorporated to its terminology and stabilized with their definitions and usages), they acquire special sense since they are used to construct those determined relations.

Could it be said that there are terms that are almost normalized (as "lasca", "núcleo", etc.)? That is to say, terms which allow the recovery of similar concepts, that are kept fixed in the corpus under study?

Moreover, are there terms specifically created to describe the object of the lithic studies? In other words, lexemes that have been produced for a specific usage and which are not used in another language? It can be stated that no term has its origin in the archaeological field, but either in the general language or in languages of other sciences, specially geology and botanics. Nevertheless, archaeological language creates morphological variants of the lexemes (such as, for instance, verbal modes: "lasquear", "lasqueo", "lasqueado" or adding prefixes like "bi", "micro", "mono", "multi", "uni", etc., to some nouns).

Generally the term preexists to its archaeological usage, but it has to receive a particular nuance. Most of the archaeological language constructs a specifically archaeological semantics while employing each of the terms that in other languages remain with the possibility of covering broader semantic expansions.

My central question is: what makes this language to be different from everyday language?

It speaks about certain things and has a terminology that permits the naming of a certain kind of objects. This would be a mere collectionists' index, but not archaeology. This descriptive language of lithic analysis can not be approached merely as a museum index, but as a tool that is useful for a description of the pieces which explains different aspects in other levels of archaeology: to differentiate designs or morphological characteristics, to infer the technology applied in the production of the tools, or to infer usages or activities performed in a site, the mobility of a group or simply preferences belonging to a certain human group, etc. It needs a terminology that could account for variations and specify the characteristics which separate the elements of the generic designations. Not having its own terms, it ressorts to rethoric forms, to contextual associations aimed to produce certain shiftings of sense when it takes other terms used in another way, in other fields or in everyday discourse.

For example, can the term "ocupar" ("to occupy"), be considered as not specialized because of its common usage in natural language? Usage, not term, acquires the specialization. If a semantic network that is able to show the usage of the term can be elaborated and if a concept related in lithic analysis to the statement "something occupies something on the lithic object" can be identified, then the term is acquiring archaeological specificity. The fact that the sense of the term coincides or not with the rest of its sense in natural language, i.e. with the remaining meanings in the dictionary entry where it is broader, simply points out that in the archaeological language recorded to construct the entry, only a narrow portion of its senses (one of the meanings of the language dictionary) has been chosen to be used as an archaeological meaning of the term. Cognitively, this term permits an iconic representation of the piece, in such a way that it conveys the information that one of its elements covers in some extent any of its parts. But this corroboration does not turn the verb "to occupy" into a specialized term. Is it convenient to speak about specialized terms? This debate is not pertinent to our subject matter since it assumes that the function of the terms or the linguistic expressions is to identify referents or objects of the world.

In my hypothesis I argued that specificity of language, in this archaeological case, is due to usage, as it is what permits the construction of those features or relations that identify it as such. Any term can be used in

natural language in any other way; it is only a matter of degree. We say that the usage of a term is specialized when it clearly acquires specific sense in the corresponding field. Terms like "núcleo", "lasca", "hoja" ("core", "flake", "blade") have a very broad sense in natural language and even "lasca" ("flake") has several usages in it. But when used by the specialist it has a different scope because it permits to consider different phenomena.

Usage structures but not definitions give the applicability of the term when speaking of lithic analysis. To expose and to demonstrate, to explain the effective usage acquired by a term in a determined language, increasingly challenges (even among the researchers of terminology since a few years ago, for instance, Bourigault D., Slodzian M., 1999, p.29) the old concept of definition.

The question, in the dictionary, is not to get a unique definition for each term, but to know how many and which meanings can be recorded for it in a determined corpus; to establish a semantic field, delimiting an area from the variety available in natural language and in other languages that each science has taken as its own; to delimit among the wide extent of senses available, those that archaeology chooses, to determine its permanence throughout a text or a corpus.

This would be a set of specific senses that are being gathered and interrelated so as to build a system of specialized terms, that, in the present case, sets up the lithic analysis. It does not mean that this system, in most of the archaeological texts, turns out to be dully consistent, as we can see in the archaeological texts of Latin America. It could be considered perhaps as a characteristic of the field as it has been developed in this broad region. Does this lack of terminological accuracy interfere with the ability of explaining the phenomena it studies? It is not a problem pertinent to this paper, although its importance. What is important to justify the analytical task of elaborating the dictionary, is that the way of uttering that specificity would be contrastable with the specificity that this term acquires in non archaeological texts, so that its inappropriateness could be proved if corresponds (according to the Popperian falsability).

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