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Epistemic LOCI: linguistic and critical meta-methodology in Knowledge Organization

Abstract
The present research seeks to apply a cultural approach in the epistemological and historical construction of representational language practices. We have conducted a remote meta-methodological study of KO, specifically, by adopting a meta-methodological orientation plan from Emanuele Tesauro (1670), which highlights the importance of production in KO. This approach, herein understood as epistemic loci, seeks to reposition the concept in a specific discursive dynamic, revealing its actions to be the result of collective social data, in a given space, at a given time. The present study aims, overall, to understand the environments within which concepts are formed, consolidated, dispersed and appropriated. Thus, the purpose of the study focuses on the relationship between KO methodology and the construction of thought in KO, from a reflexive meta-methodological point of view. From Tesauro (1670) through to García Gutiérrez (2011), the basis for constructing epistemic loci has been framed within a philosophy of language, central to the development of a critical and discursive approach to KO. We can observe how discursive approaches to KO have an epistemological and historical root linked to the theory of commonplaces. In the same way, we can say that political and social questions, as well as the critical approach to sciences and their classification (an epistemological critique), find in the theory of commonplaces a clear power of argumentation and historical revision. In other words, using the notion of loci, we hereby construct another meta-methodological category for reflection on science, and on the epistemology of KO itself, namely epistemic loci.

1. Introduction: from loci to epistemic loci
How is it possible to recognize the role of culture in the epistemological-historical foundation of knowledge organization (KO)? Can we understand the historical presence of cultural elements in remote sources of KO construction? What methodologies in KO can be used to this aim? And what methodologies have been developed objectively for such a cultural approach?

These concerns arise in the light of key issues regarding epistemology of KO, as summarized below:

a) The contemporary emergence of social and political debate regarding KO practices demonstrates the need for approaches, methods and concepts to understand the cultural dynamics of society (Guimarães, Pinheiro and Milani 2006);

b) The construction of social and critical approaches to social problems, such as the approach to declassification by Antonio García Gutiérrez (2011, 2003).

c) The revision of historical epistemological approaches that contributed to this foundation, as in the case of the review of Ranganathan's work (Saldanha 2014).

The present research seeks to apply a cultural approach in the epistemological and historical construction of representational language practices. We have undertaken a
remote meta-methodological analysis of KO. Specifically, we have discovered in Emanuele Tesauro (1670) a meta-methodological orientation plan, which highlights the importance of production in KO.

In Tesauro (1670) we find a dynamic intersection of approaches merging the lines of analytical and discursive comprehension (a reading of Aristotle's Organon, and Aristotle's Rhetoric / Poetic), including *loci*, a rhetorical method developed by Aristotle concerning common objects of ethics, epistemology and other branches of knowledge.

The *loci* approach, used this way, is not new in Information Science or in KO. It can be found, for example, in the classification of knowledge in Conrad Gesner (Araújo 2017), in baroque thinking in the organization of knowledge (Almeida and Crippa 2009) and in contemporary reflection on KO itself, as seen in García Gutiérrez (2011).

In this sense, the purpose of the study is based on the relationship between KO methodology and construction of thought in KO, from a reflexive meta-methodological point of view.

2. Epistemic *loci* as a meta-methodological approach to KO

The approach here, understood as epistemic *loci*, seeks to reposition the concept in a specific discursive dynamic, which reveals its actions as the result of collective social data, in a given space, at a given time. It aims, overall, to understand the environments within which concepts are formed, consolidated, dispersed and appropriated.

The notion of epistemic *loci* (the conceptual basis underlying the context of the present study) enables an approach to KO that supports the relationship between an analytical and a socio-discursive approach to the object. The strategic notion of place is an idea worth discussing here, as it takes the concept of space beyond its immediate scope, seeing it as extension or even duration.

Epistemic places depart, in rhetorical terms, from the demarcation of “tropes”, forms of fixation of language and its configuration in verbal signs. According to the Foucauldian definition, rhetoric is the primordial function of language, in dialogue with grammar:

> [...] Rhetoric, which deals with figures and tropes, that is, how language is spatialized in verbal signs; [...] Rhetoric defines the spatiality of representation, as it is born with language […] (Foucault, 2002, p. 116).

The notion of "space(s)" or "place(s)" has a constraint on the structure of language: it is a question of identifying in space-time the modes of fixation in a given discourse, concept, approach, method – or simply, in Foucault’s lexicon, the "spatiality of language". The present study therefore aims to study the tropes that demarcate KO today, an approach already indicated by Tesauro (1670).

Commonplaces or tropes thus highlight the essential "primitiveness" of a concept, as well as its experience in the contingent actuality that underlies its delicate organic
structure, its spatio-temporality always being at risk. Here, again, notions of space-time do not have absolute equivalence with questions of extension-duration. Rather, the theoretical plan of such a discursive cultural approach potentially enables one to understand the sociocultural environments of the manifestation of a given concept and its modes of repercussion and appropriation.

In this way, the processes of contextualization that mark discursive approaches are not merely based on language itself. Discourses are positioned, that is, situated in a space-time historicized by a set of social determinations.

3. The construction of social and critical approaches to social problems in KO practices

In the context of KO, various studies have demonstrated the ideological condition of documentary language construction. This is the case of the academic studies by Olson (1999, 2001), which address diversity and cultural issues in KO; Pinho (2010), which examines the representation of male homosexuality in documentary instruments, and Simões (2010), which discusses modes of understanding the development of the notion of "ethnicity" and its unfolding in categories with respect to Universal Decimal Classification (UDC). Critically, we can identify a political positioning arising from the construction of a social memory legitimized by an aggregate of discourses that represent authority.

In this case, the potential of information retrieval, that is, the relation between precision and recall, is met by the constant increase of inequality manifested in the impossibility of identifying non-hegemonic contents in databases.

A fundamental theoretical resource in this dialectical panorama of information retrieval is found in the "declassification" discourse of García Gutiérrez (2011), which seeks to understand an epistemology capable of overcoming the fractures of inequality manifested and multiplied by documentary languages. The Spanish author indicates metonymics as a tool that identifies a part within a set.

In his critique of the Western view of classification, which focuses directly on how we structure theoretical and applied elements in KO in order to optimize information retrieval, García Gutiérrez (2011) demonstrates how the metonymic resource is used as a political tool of forgetfulness. It is a principle of metonymic reduction that simplifies and fragments the plurality of cultural expressions, dissolving the processes of comprehension in their amplitude and favoring the dominant view of a given established rationality.

As the Spanish researcher has shown, we are generally guided by a starting point that is wanted and said to be non-ideological or neutral, supported by a technical-scientific discourse separating truth and culture. The proposal of a declassification point of view is, according to García Gutiérrez (2011), the inclusion of the pluralism of
knowledge and expressions in the logic of the organization of knowledge. In his words,

It is a metacognitive and non-automatic operation that, in each action of the classifier, requires a complete awareness of incompleteness, bias, and explicitable subjectivity. With current technology, it is possible to elaborate procedures and systems of classification based on declassification. But such techniques and tools will also have to undergo an epistemological revolution in all their protocols and strata (GARCÍA GUTIÉRREZ 2011, p.10).

The act of "declassifying" is not, contrary to what a preliminary view may conclude, the denial of "classification" or the nihilistic conditioning of information retrieval, which posits the absolute inaccessibility of data in any and every informational search. No: "declassifying" is only, García Gutierrez (2011) explains, the anti-dogmatic and partial affirmation of the dialectical (and not contradictory) relationship of the practices of knowledge organization

4. From methodological practices to meta-methodological study in KO

It is well known that KO itself is composed of several processes and activities that provide the means to analyze, organize, represent or classify any domain of knowledge, theme or mission-problem. In this way, we will appropriate the concept of meta-methodology in order to accomplish this task.

The recent meta-methodological practice necessarily relates already existing techniques, sophisticating and expanding its applications. The metamethodologies challenge uniform traditional practices, question some standard procedures to objectively present new experiments. There are no limits on the interactions, only those of the capacity of realization of its researchers (Miranda 2003, p. 162).

Based on the previous propositions, we will appropriate the concept of meta-methodology in order to analyze KO through its own processes and theories.

From Emanuele Tesauro (1670), the epistemic loci put forward discursive questions such as who speaks, where they speak, when they speak, to whom they speak (all of them being treated here as "places" where "commonplaces" are consolidated in language, or discursive spaces).

The dynamics of epistemic loci demonstrate that the construction of a "place" is based on a network of conditions of discourse, which are empirically manifested by characteristics such as institution, ownership, gender, social class, financial capital and theoretical trajectory. The place of a concept is only the apparent spatial figuration of a constant movement, our (in)ability to see “dance in immobility”. In the social and interpretative context of cultural reality, words and things of the epistemic loci, that is, of social, historical and contingent dimensions that (temporarily) determine the affirmation of one and the negation of another concept, the similarity or identity between the terms, the struggle for a "Space", for a "highlight in the landscape". The epistemic loci are the opening for the pre and post-analytical understanding of the concept, without denying its conceptual intentionality.
These conceptual demands and their approaches have been placed within the long tradition of methodological demarcation from so-called "discourse analysis" – as discussed by Olson (1999). Before discussing the effects of discursiveness from recent theories of discourse, such as that of Michel Pêcheux, the present study seeks to shift presuppositions of rhetoric itself onto another metamethodological plane, following the lead of Tesauro (1670).

5 Final remarks: a linguistic and critical epistemic metamethodology

The premises for the construction of epistemic loci are structured in a philosophy of language, central to the development of a critical and discursive approach of KO, from Tesauro (1670) to García Gutiérrez (2011).

As far as discourse is concerned, we recognize the existence of a contemporary body of research, involved with the approximation between discourse analysis and KO theories. In general, the notion of social indexation tends to embrace such approaches. In our case, it is about recovering the rhetorical thinking of tropes and rethinking the appropriation of the notion of commonplaces in a broad critical-discursive plane. We are, however, attentive to the epistemological-historical point of view of Emanuele Tesauro, already influenced by the Aristotelian perspective, as well as to current epistemological approaches, such as those envisioned by Rafael Capurro, García Gutiérrez and Holpe Olson.

Our research has followed two paths of thought until the point where they intersect. The convergence of the two metametodological dimensions will lead to a critical-historical understanding of the national development context of KO.

We can see how discursive approaches to KO have an epistemological and historical root linked to the study of loci. In the same way, we can say that political and social questions, as well as the critical approach to sciences and their classification (an epistemological critique), find in the theory of commonplaces a clear power of argumentation and historical revision. In other words, from the notion of loci, we construct here another metametodological category for reflection on science, and on the epistemology of KO itself, namely epistemic loci.

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