Knowledge Representation from Amazonian Narratives: Culture and Oral Tradition

Abstract: Knowledge representation is related to several disciplines, as a field of interdisciplinary knowledge. The article presents a study including the text, the culture and the geographic space. The objective of the work is to show the representation of the knowledge studied in texts from popular verbal narratives to rescue culture with mapped terminologies in specific spaces of the Paraense Amazonia. The analysis is carried out both in the study of the term in narrative speeches as well as in the identification of the culture and the space where the history takes place. The classification of the codes of culture, its relation of the sign to the signs and the systems of signs is part of the collective cultural conscience to retrieve the information in the Age of knowledge to reach the universality.

1. Introduction

The integration of knowledge throughout borders is a concern in the current moment to assist better the needs of several societies. A great amount of information has been available through electronic media for the generation of new knowledge. The progress in text digitalization and the homepages are contributions for the society of knowledge. However, the great challenge is the retrieval of information via communication system, in order to generate knowledge. The retrieval of the information is one of the steps to a reflection on ways of how to represent the knowledge and organize the information to reach the universality. Many questions have appeared for a reflection and studies due to the change of society and of the concept of representation and organization of knowledge, in relation to the universality. How can that universality be represented in conceptual structures and integrated with specialized knowledge of cultures and geographical areas? This and other subjects are concerns that need to be studied in order to assist the several societies in the world.

In this work the model and the concept of knowledge representation come from a qualitative analysis in Amazonian narratives, showing the representation of the knowledge as an interdisciplinary field and as a communicative system in collective memory, starting from what people tell in different areas and cultures, having the aim of rescuing the popular culture, with mapped terminologies in the specific spaces of the Paraense Amazonia.

2. Knowledge Representation

The representation of the knowledge has been studied, for many specialists in the subject, to assist universality. It is an interdisciplinary field as well as a communicative system in collective memory. As a field of interdisciplinary knowledge, it has several conceptions and is linked to several disciplines, defined in function of their use. Oliveira (2001a) observes that the term representation of knowledge is present in different contexts, with several significances, implying
several forms of knowledge and representation. The knowledge comes from the information in order to be represented. The information is documented, both in the written text and in the subject's memory which is part of a certain world. The text, through the signs, transmits the thought of the people that writes or lives together in a certain space-time.

In that way, human beings produce knowledge that needs to be represented, to be retrieved and transferred to the society. However, as Morin (1996) observes, "the human cognitive system produces knowledge by building from the treatment of signals/signs/symbols, the translations which are the representations, speeches, ideas, theories". In that sense, knowledge is understood as action, built to be activity and product of its cognition, represented by a language of a certain culture. Man uses signs that represent his thoughts to communicate and to elaborate his culture. Therefore, the representation of the knowledge is a complex subject that demands a reflection in relation to the text type, the culture and the space where that culture develops, to get at the communicative system as collective memory.

In the communicative system, it is observed that in each space of human beings, a regime of signs is developed, a specific semiotic. Lévy (1998) shows that the sign is part of the being, and the being of the sign as well, in the world in which he lives. The speeches become acts, owing powers and man goes on developing the universe of significance. This is how the subject of knowledge learns and transmits from generation to generation, keeping the duration of knowledge. However, when knowledge is distributed in the collective subject (the net of the nets) it can be taken even further, independent of the territorial knowledge that is a reserved domain that leaves the peasants and the illiterate ones out (Lévy, 1998).

In the cultural policy, the territory is like that, one of the determinants of the cultural identity, beside of the constitution and preservation of collections. The territory is, let's say, the fact of having the individual who was born in an area still living in it. The individual establishes coexistence, by means of linguistic elaboration, the daily behavior and the cultural works, forming a symbolic construction, that is sometimes identified with certain elements, other times with different ones (Coelho, 1999, p. 201).

3. Narrative, Culture, Oral Tradition

The narrative is a text type in which the knowledge is studied to be represented. On it the culture and the oral tradition can be observed. This is because the oral narratives of people or social segments of traditional cultures, either from tribal or popular tradition, such as the myths, the legends, the tales, life histories, according to Borges (2001), can be considered genders of the verbal art. They are part of societies, both in the aesthetic and cultural formational of the peoples.

On this way, the verbal art will take us to a discursive chain, giving sense to the histories by means of the social imaginary and acting as element of identity connection, among various generations, as imaginary memory (Borges, 2001). Thus, the oral narratives, in the report conditions are good to understand the constitution of human societies, in its discursive materiality, the territory of the relationship, important for human beings and their temporalities. The populations of traditional culture can be analyzed as signs of the historical-ideological formation, noticed in the linguistics of the statement itself. Besides, we can notice that the
narratives repair the past where the notion of nature is not in opposition to the notion of culture. The cultural identity will point to:

"a representation system (symbolic elements and procedures of the acting of those elements) of the relationships between the individuals and the groups and between these and their reproduction and production territory, their habitat, their space and their time" (Coelho, 1999, p. 201).

In relation to culture it can be observed that it possesses several significances. Ferreira (1994/95) understands culture as memory. This author in her studies about Lotmam, as the thinker of the Târ tu School and pioneer in the study in the field of the typology of culture, observes that her thesis as regards to typology of culture is that:

"it is possible to adopt, a priori, as a table of classification of the codes of culture, its relation to the sign to the signs and the systems of signs - and that the succession of dominant codes of culture will be, at the same time, a deeper and deeper penetration of the collective cultural conscience, in the principles that rule the systems of signs". (Ferreira, 1994/95, p. 116).

That thought transmits some ideas to the readers, as the one that says culture is a complex mechanism. Lotmam (1996) also defines the essence of culture as information and he works the semiotic of culture and the text concept. He places the problem of rapport between the culture and the fundamental categories of its transmission and conservation and the notions of language and text. His concept of cultural text talks about culture as a system of signs that somehow organizes the received information. Culture for him is formed from several languages that are part of Semiotic systems. To translate a reality in language, to transform it in a text, coded in a certain way and to introduce it in the collective memory is important for the humanity, making us think that culture is information, coding, transmission and memory.

4. Knowledge Representation in Amazonian Narratives

The Amazonian narratives are gathered by researchers of the project IFNOPAP - The imaginary in the Paraense Amazonia Popular Oral Narrative Forms, transcribed and documented in a database. The analysis of the cultural elements of the narratives is carried out by the project RESNAPAP - The Symbolic Representation of the Paraense Amazonia Popular Narratives as Language of Information. Thus, for the representation of the knowledge it was chosen the study of text of the Amazonian narratives collected from the oral tradition, in the State of Pará. The areas chosen for this study were: Abaetetuba, Belém, Bragança and Santarém. The analysis started from the narratives by means of the cultural term, considered as lexical unit of the natural language, that represents the elements of the narrator's culture, that goes on forming the cultural terminological vocabulary, good to guide us to the definitions of the terms in relation to the context of the histories. It was initially published the terminological vocabulary of the Abaetetuba, Belém and Santarém areas (Oliveira, 2001 b).

In the histories, there are the myths, the domestic and work utensils, the beliefs, the means of transportation, foods, fauna, flora and many other items that characterize the Amazonian culture. The terms removed to form those categories
are mapped, forming the terminology to specific areas, in relation to culture and space by means of geographical names, of the histories collected, taking to the integration of the knowledge for the communicative system as collective memory.

The space defined as the area of the Paraense Amazonia is formed by rivers, forests, fauna and flora as elements which are present in the imagination of the native people of the area. They even personify mythical beings. Thus, the oral histories that characterize the popular culture of the Amazonian man are replete of mythical characters that use the geographical space to make their actions. And, the narrators, this way, establish an intense identity with the place and the place with the characters. In the histories, by means of the speakers' imagination, there are cultural terms, together with the identification of the space, forming the representation of the information through some knowledge. Some examples can be observed in the following terms from Amazonian narratives:

**CURUPIRA** - it is a mythical character and his habitat is the forest. The term represents the category MYTH in the space of his actions. This term is defined as a fantastic entity that inhabits and protects the forests, whose characteristic is to have the feet in a backwards position, he can assume the form of any human being to fool his victims. Depending on the histories he can appear in several situations.

For example:

"(...) O curupira deixou a mulher sair e veio no corpo da mulher(...)."

Criança desaparecida. Historia de Maria Rosa Leal. (Abaetetuba).

"(...) The Curupira let the woman go and came in her body (...)" *The Missing Child.*

"-Não é a curupira que chamam, né? (...) . Diz que um pretinho. História de Dona Flora. (Belém).

"-It isn’t the Curupira who they call, is it?” A little black boy.

"-Então, o caçador foi caçar e se perdeu nas matas. Quando foi ali, uma meia-noite, ele viu aquele barulho e disse:/- Ah! Possível. Isso pode ser curupira. (...) A curupira. História de José Travassos da Cruz. (Santarém)

"-So, the hunter went out for hunting and got lost in the woods. Around midnight, he saw a noise and said: - Ah! Possibly it’s the Curupira (...)*The Curupira.*

**BOTO** - it is a mythical character that inhabits in river and in land. As Amazonian fauna, it inhabits the river. As seductive man inhabits in land. It represents the category MYTH and the category FAUNA. Depending on the histories it can be man or woman, seductive or audacious.

For example:

"Então, o pai entendeu que a filha estava sob o encanto do boto”. O boto. Historia de Ruth Helena. (Abaetetuba).

"So, the father understood the daughter was under the boto’s spelling”. *The Boto.*


"It was a beautiful boy, wasn’t he? White, blond, blue-eyed. His hat was a ray. Those rays! The cane was a needle-fish. That was the Boto. Beautiful Boto.

E o boto, ele sempre aparecia , é ... pra homens também. (...) Um boto diferente. Historia de Maria Oliveira da Cunha. (Santarém)
“And the Boto, he used to appear, eh... to men too. A different Boto.

DEER - it is a term of the category fauna. It is a ruminant mammal, of ramified horns, belonging to the family Cervidae. The space that it inhabits is the varzea areas and the firm lands of the Amazonia forest. It represents the category FAUNA. It is defined as game animal and it is good for the feeding of the population that inhabits the forest. It is usually hunt at night with torches due to the darkness of the forest.

For example:
“E eu a esperar esse veado. Eu com ele, esperando o veado, e o veado nada de sair, sabe?” Caçando veado. História de Manoel Paulino da Fonseca. (Abaetetuba)

“I was waiting for that deer. He and I, waiting for the deer, and the deer didn’t want to come off, you know? Hunting deer.

MANIVA - it is a term of the category flora. The scientific term is Manihot utilissima. A plant whose roots are used in several types of flour, the tapioca and the tucupi. The leaves of the cassava, when grinded, are used to prepare the maniçoba, an exotic food very consumed in the Cirio de Nossa Senhora de Nazaré (a regional religious party) epoch. The space is the firm land for plantation. It is defined as the leaves of the cassava and it is good to elaborate a typical regional meal denominated maniçoba, that is an indigenous name.

For example:

“(…) Then he took the mandioca – the maniva – and cut it”. Stubborn.

In relation to the places mentioned in the history, many times they are identified as concrete and some others as abstract. Those places have a denomination, that is a geographical name that is understood as the proper name of places and geographical accidents. With the reading of the narratives various geographical names are identified and, for methodological reasons, they were divided into identifiers of:

a) Places. They refer to the geographical points crested or frequently used by the man for the satisfaction of his work needs, leisure, habitation, transport, such as: avenues, districts, communities, highways, municipal districts, squares, highways, streets and others. As an example, the avenue Alcindo Cacela. Avenue is the name of the place and Alcindo Cacela is what identifies the place. Name given in allusion to a historical politician and to remind the fact happened in the history.

b) Geographical Accidents. They correspond to the natural geographical points of the landscape, as: rivers, bays, islands, streams, lakes, beaches and others. For example, the Marajó Island. The island is the geographical accident and Marajó is what identifies the island.

In that way, the specialized knowledge interacts by means of the signs and of the collective cultural conscience, mapped by the Amazonian cultural terminology, for specific geographical areas of the Parense Amazonia for the universality.

5. Final Considerations
Knowledge representation is studied, starting from popular oral narratives, informed by narrators that live in Amazonian areas, is an indicator of culture type.
It demonstrates that the semiotic is able to reveal the complexity of the social life, relationships that are established among human beings and the nature that surrounds them. The units of knowledge for the socio, geographical, cultural and linguistic study will approach culture, history, geography and communication as a semiotic product. The result aims at the integration built for the classification of the terms obtained from culture and space by means of the signs, in a great oral and popular text. The system of signs will work to help the user to understand the organization and the representation in order to retrieval the information. Therefore, in the Knowledge Era the user will be prepared to integrate the universality. The mapping of the terms in their classification will give conditions to the socio-communicative function of the text in relation to the process of communication. The collective memory comes from several narrators and from the cultural tradition to form the great text and also to be placed in the great communication net for the access of no-borders Societies.

References
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