Planet-Wiki? Translation, Language and Power on Wikipedia

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PART ONE

The Humanities and Digitality
Humanity
Species
Language
What characterizes a Language?

- grammar: the structural relationships between the signs in a system
- pragmatics: the context within which signs are used
- semantics: the content and context which give signs meaning
Orality/Presence
Writing/Re-presentation
Humanities
History
Literature
Philosophy
Reading and Writing
Encoding and Decoding Signs
The Linguistic Sign functions through Analogy
Analog Code
When the epoch of analog (which was to say also of the richness of language, of analogy) was giving way to the digital era, the final victory of the numerate over the literate.”

Analog and Binary Code
Cary Collection
RIT

2010

circa 2400 BCE
PART TWO

Wikipedia and Distributed Authorship
What is an Author?
Authorship and Identity
The Romantic Author
Identity and Creation
creation
authorship
individuality
property
Cultural Production begins and ends with the Individual
Culture of the Individual
Product
over
Process
Author > Reader
What does it matter who is speaking?
From author to author-function

- What are the modes of existence of this discourse?
- Where has it been used, how can it circulate and who can appropriate it for himself?
- What are the places in it where there is room for possible subjects?
- Who can assume these various subject positions?
• collaborative (edit)
• continuous (discussion)
• constant (history)
Reader/Writer/Editor
Serial Collaboration
Eft since Seven Vials with pious wrath,
To feckly Nature more medicinal
That what o’ft balm the weeping good man pours
Into the lone defpoiled traveller’s wounds!

Thus from th’ Eelic, regenerate thro’ faith,
Th’ dark Passions and what thirstily Cares
Drank up the spirit and the dim regards
Of selfish, Lo they vanquish for acquire
New names, new features — by imperal grace
Enrobed with Light, and naturalized in Heaven.

As when a Shepherd on a dawning morn
Thro’ lone tryst, the ag rest of flow foot,
Drizzling he lights on th’ immediate road
His downward eye; all else of fairest kind
Hid or deform’d. But lo, the hurrying Sun!

Mortal, thou fey morrow of a dawning morn
The earth’s full to the breast with morning dews
Thou art not without a chainless mark
That none but God can bear.
Distributed Creation
Crowdsourcing
Anthropology of Free Software Production
• Highly Organized
• Transparent
• Meritocratic
Massively Distributed Collaboration
Commons-based Peer Production
“Free as in Freedom”
Free Software
Recursive Publics
Community
Digital Palimpsest
PART THREE

“Planet-Wiki?”
Language,
Translation,
Power.
Currently more than 270 languages. According to Alexa, as of May 2010 Wikipedia was the 6th most visited site on the planet.
a multilingual free encyclopedia

Wiktionary
[ˈwɪkʃənərɪ] n.,
a wiki-based Open Content dictionary

WikiBooks

Think free. Learn free.

Wikiquote

Wikipedia

Wikimedia Commons

WikiSpecies
free species directory

Wikipedia

Wikinews

Wikiversity
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30 languages have more than 100,000 entries
61 languages have more than 10,000 entries
96 languages have more than 1000 entries
NEW BABYLON
the Wikimedia translators' portal/noticeboard

English: The Babylon is the Meta translations portal and noticeboard. For general discussions about translations see the talk page.

Getting started
- Introduction
- What languages do you speak?
- Translation FAQ
- Editing tutorial
- Work together

Translation requests
Automagical page listing all translation requests on meta: go there for request-related links.

Direct links:
- Urgent needs
- Need to copyedit/proofread
- Requests from communities
- MediaWiki Localization

Submission help
- Foundation-level issues
  - Read more...
- Submit your own request!

Communications
- Meta talk:Babylon
  If you have questions, doubts, proposals and anything else about translations you want to ask, write at this page.
- translators-I
  The official Wikimedia translators' mailing list. Sign up!
- #wikimedia-translators
  The official translator's IRC channel. Visit us when you need help, just want to chat, or for

Transcom
- About us • Contact us

Go to meta index
The End of History ?
Sources for translation are languages of power
Distributed outwards from the Anglosphere.
Natural Language

• humans are distinguished as a species by their advanced capacity to use language

• language is the means for connecting the internal world of the organism to the external world of natural and social phenomena
“Universal Grammar”
Humans have innate capacity for grammar.
For a long time, the idea that language might shape thought was considered at best untestable and more often simply wrong. Research in my labs at Stanford University and at MIT has helped reopen this question. We have collected data around the world: from China, Greece, Chile, Indonesia, Russia, and Aboriginal Australia. What we have learned is that people who speak different languages do indeed think differently and that even flukes of grammar can profoundly affect how we see the world. Language is a uniquely human gift, central to our experience of being human. Appreciating its role in constructing our mental lives brings us one step closer to understanding the very nature of humanity.

**HOW DOES OUR LANGUAGE SHAPE THE WAY WE THINK? [6.12.09]**

By Lera Boroditsky

LERA BORODITSKY is an assistant professor of psychology, neuroscience, and symbolic systems at Stanford University, who looks at how the languages we speak shape the way we think.

Lera Boroditsky's **Edge Bio Page**
Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis

- theorizes that thoughts and behavior constructed and influenced by language
- linguistic relativity: “the variance of cultural concepts and categories in different languages affect the cognitive classification of the experienced world in such a way that speakers of different languages think and behave differently because of it”
- languages are “arbitrary systems of symbolism”
Linguistic Imperialism?
Translation is not a faithful act of reproduction
Translation is interpretive
What kinds of communities?
The Internet and the politics of development
The Green Revolution
Top Down
Universalist and Totalizing
Techno-deterministic
Unintended Consequences
one laptop per child

A2K access to knowledge
...to protect and enhance [expand] access to knowledge, and to facilitate the transfer of technology to developing countries. (A2K Treaty Draft 9 May 2005)
Freedom

- Technological threshold conditions enable greater practical human agency

- Individual action, both commercial and noncommercial, and social sharing & exchange emerge as major modalities of economic production

- Greater individual autonomy, an appreciably more participatory public sphere, and newly emerging practices of a more participatory and critically self-reflective culture
information and access automatically convert into empowerment
irreducible diversity of language
design heterogeneity
Networked Cultures of Information and Identities

- The humanities, like all disciplines, must recognize the shift to digitality. In doing so, it must begin to explore the intermingling between natural and machine languages, between analog and binary code.

- The forms of interaction produced by the interactive web necessitate new ways of understanding modern concepts such as authorship, identity, property, credit, expertise and knowledge.
Beyond Development

- Despite networked technologies that long predate the web, the liberal humanist subject continues to serve as the locus of identity, despite all evidence to the contrary.

- The proliferation of communications technologies threatens to re-enforce rather than undermine long-standing histories of colonialism and domination. Like economic imperialism, cultural imperialism displaces heterogeneity and complexity with mechanistic, undifferentiated, essentializing approaches. These approaches extend not just to technology, but information, knowledge and what constitutes ‘understanding’.