

Seminar SAW History of Science, History of Text, 2011-2016

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Parts of texts and writing by compilation

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Harris' sublanguages: intermediary objects for text processing

Abstract – Harris worked out the notion of sublanguage in the wake of the revival of interest in international auxiliary languages, machine translation interlingua, and language of sciences which prevailed in the 1950s. Harris considered that the sublanguage of a given science had an identical structure whatever the natural language in which its statements were produced, so that it could be used by all scientists, regardless of their native language. Appeared in 1968 as abstract mathematical systems, sublanguages have been used as soon as the early 1970s as intermediary languages for machine translation (of weather bulletins). In the 1990s, Harris and his research group undertook the analysis of the sublanguage of immunology in order to define its informative grammar and determine the informative structure of the sublanguage texts. In my presentation, I will trace this evolution and show how sublanguages, as they became objects for Natural Language Processing, progressively lost their abstract character and their theoretical specificities while gaining empirical features.