

BBT Curation Committee Meeting

2 March 2022 (on Zoom)

Participants

Athina Kritsotaki (FORTH-ICS); **Blandine Nouvel** (FRANTIQ-CNRS); **Bruno Almeida** (ROSSIO Infrastructure); **Camilla Colombi** (DAI); **Christos Georgis** (FORTH); **Chryssoula Bekiari** (FORTH-ICS); **Eleni Tsouloucha** (FORTH); **Gerasimos Chrysovitsanos** (Academy of Athens); **Helen Goulis** (Academy of Athens); **Helen Katsiadakis** (Academy of Athens); **Lida Harami** (FORTH – CCI); **Patritsia Kalafata** (Academy of Athens); **Yorgos Tzedopoulos** (Academy of Athens)

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1. New BBT term “language systems” relabelled “communication systems (language)”.

In agreement with the decision reached in the BBT Curation Committee Meeting (26 January 2022), the group revisited the label of the newly introduced BBT-term. According to reviewer, Thanasis Karasimos, who supervises terms relating to the study of language and linguistics (his domain of specialty), “language systems” is a far too restrictive label that can only classify human languages and no other form of communication.

Proposal: resolve the clash in scope by means of labelling the term “communication systems (language)”. This way, computer languages and other systems of communication can all be classified by this term, while at the same time there is no confusion with the use of the term “communication systems” in information science.

A vote was called, everyone was in agreement.

Decision: The term will be relabelled ‘communication systems (language)’. Furthermore, Thanasis Karasimos will offer examples of narrower terms.

2. “Named Entities” -instantive relations and how to deal with them.

Proposal:

Taking into consideration input from DAI and FRANTIQU, Eleni Tsouloucha proposed to discuss suitable high-level generalizations for the named entities that form the leaf nodes of systems implemented by DAI and FRANTIQU. While said leaf-nodes are not of interest from the point of view of the BBT, the hierarchies of types they fall into can be of interest. Conceptual areas of seeming conflict with the BBT include: Types of Epochs, People, Places

for “Types of Epochs” a suggestion was to propose narrower terms (implemented as guide terms) like:

<periods by absolute dating>, <periods by scientific and technological advances>, <periods by artistic movements and styles>, <periods by social organization>, which would serve as links for the local thesauri terms

for “People” the outcome of the vote for Qualities/properties of individuals vs Groups/organizations will determine what these narrower terms could be

for “Places”: establish specializations of geomorphological features, sites or administrative units that can be linked to the BBT (implemented as guide terms) that maintain the IsA relationship

Discussion

- There needs to be a method for classifying named entities into their corresponding types that will be applied to actual and mythical/legendary named entities alike.
- Not every identifiable thing which can be assigned a proper name is an instance of a named entity. Broadly speaking, the label should be applied to things identified as

named entities by the average NERC: people, organizations, places, dates and non-indexical temporal expressions, numerical expressions (currency, f.i.). otherwise, anything that is described with enough specificity can be rendered a truly unique individual, and qualify for a named entity.

- the BBT should be kept at a high-level. Grouping the named entities in local thesauri by their type and finding the appropriate node to map to the BBT sounds like the best option. Some of the local thesauri generalizations could even enter the bbt or could be marked as narrower terms to a bbt leaf node.
- while ISO allows instantive relations for very specific kinds of entities, it is not advisory to use instantive terms for intermediate nodes in a hierarchy. They can be used as leaf nodes. Still gazetteers, authority lists etc can be used for named entities.
- DAI: has a gazetteer for places, but they cannot implement one for persons and types of epochs at the moment. They would be using the named entities as leaf terms, not as intermediate nodes.
- FRANTIQU: same issue with DAI. Place names have been moved to a different system. But people and types of epochs are necessary and they have not started a new system. They like the proposal.

Agreement on the method. Next steps:

- (1) provide examples for each broad kind of named entity (for Types of Epochs, People, Locations). Local thesauri maintainers to add lists of examples [here](#) by end of April.
- (2) Discuss high-level terms for the BBT that will serve to map relevant hierarchies of local thesauri (abstractions of the types of named entities in local thesauri)
 - (a) or discuss alphabetical lists of terms for named entities that have no structure but are linked to some concept that groups them (what PACTOLS has been doing). It is a very interesting solution because with places especially (that have part of relations and form different hierarchies), one can do away with instantive relations altogether.
 - (b) for place names in particular we will need to look more closely, and pick up notions from CRMgeo
- (3) implement the mappings

Overall time frame:

Reconvene in the beginning of May (see how the work progresses).

3. Persons/Groups and Collectivities -reminder of the vote

Members are invited to vote on the 3 proposals by March 11th.

4. Qualities expressed through Adjectives and Adjectival Participles

Issue raised by DAI.

Background information:

There are many adjectives describing objects like broken, curved etc. For the moment, they are classified as physical characteristics. These adjectives only characterize objects and materials. f.i. native vs. non-native classifies the provenance of an object, fired vs. unfired, and characterized the treatment of pottery. Strictly speaking they are not all physical characteristics. Some can be transformed to their respective nouns, but this is not the case for the lot.

Link to DAI thesaurus: <http://thesauri.dainst.org/46c2d50b>

- geographical features [encode types of provenance and style]
- interpretative features [native non native...]
- form [broken, curved etc...] {conflates condition and form}

Discussion points:

- According to ISO, adjectives are allowed as qualitatives or as parts of compounds (modifying a noun). The word “apotropaic”, for instance, would be admissible if it modifies a noun (object) but not so much otherwise.
- DAI does not want to duplicate the objects for as many times as it appears modifying a noun. They want to implement something that resembles post-coordination
- Alternatively, define object shapes and list the nouns under that. Shapes would be geometrical concepts, not features of physical objects. For instance mobile objects defined by form (round objects, rectangular objects, random shaped objects etc.). An amulet would be a more specific term for “mobile object”. It could be subdivided by shape.
- Or define adjectives separately and add symmetrical relatedTo relations to the objects that they characterize.
- Or, if these descriptions are about specific objects, the shape could be added as a type to the object rather than become part of the classification system itself. A particular instance of a mobile object could have type of function “amulet”, type of provenance “grave goods”, and have a type of shape “round”. No need to classify the particular object in the thesaurus, but classify the characteristics assigned to the object in the thesaurus.
- “apotropaic” does not primarily refer to shape, but to the presumed function. Guide terms could be useful for that. But there are probably cases where the adjective can only acquire meaning through the noun it modifies (a detached ornament vs a detached house, would fall under different BBT categories: mobile object vs built environment, f.i.)

Next steps:

1. collect examples (problematic ones and commonsensical as well).
2. assign the types to
 - a. <objects by shape> [round objects, rectangular objects, oddly shaped objects]
 - b. <objects by function> [amulets, apotropaic objects, military equipment, jewelry]

- c. <by provenance> [native, non-native]
- 3. feedback for how it goes

5. Reorganize the Activities facet

Proposal:

Drop the concept of intentionality from the Activities facet that will give rise to the following structure.

- Activities (facet) {change scope note}
- - activities (top term) {change scope note}
- - - human interaction (BBT term) {change scope note}
- - - - events (BBT term) {bbt new}
- - - - sociocultural processes (BBT term) {bbt new}

Definitions were provided as well.

Activities (facet) proposed scope note:

The “Activities” facet comprises types of ~~intentional~~ human actions that result in the preservation, creation, production, modification or destruction of an entity (living beings, conceptual/material objects, social, cultural, natural etc. structures).

Note: Activities can be: **(a) fully intentional**, in the sense that are in accordance to clearly formulated goals, which are thought to be met with the fulfillment of the action (e.g. the establishment of an industry), **(b) non-intentional**, in the sense that [they] are not committed deliberately (e.g. unintended killings), and **(c) complex phenomena** that cannot be directly attributed either to one agent or to specific agents (individuals or groups) with common and clearly set objectives (e.g. industrialisation).

activities (top-term) proposed scope note:

The “Activities” facet¹ comprises types of human actions that result in the preservation, creation, production, modification or destruction of an entity (living beings, conceptual/material objects, social, cultural, natural etc. structures).

Note: Activities can be: **(a) fully intentional**, in the sense that are in accordance to clearly formulated goals, which are thought to be met with the fulfillment of the action (e.g. the establishment of an industry), **(b) non-intentional**, in the sense that [they] are not committed deliberately (e.g. unintended killings), and **(c) complex phenomena** that cannot be directly attributed either to one agent or to specific agents (individuals or groups) with common and clearly set objectives (e.g. industrialisation).

human interactions (term) proposed scope note:

This term classifies activities carried out by at least one actor, which cause or change phenomena or states of affairs on the social, political, economic, and cultural level.

¹ typo, we must not forget to fix that in the definition IF we go for this proposal.

The slight modification of the term's scope note is in accordance with the modification proposed for the facet "Activities". Both are based on the discussion during the BBT curation meeting (Athens, 13/11/2019), where it was decided to "rephrase the rigidity of the free will notion which is debatable in many kinds of human activity." (Quote from the meeting's Minutes.) We revised the Greek translation of the term as well. The translation of the scope note will be provided after an eventual agreement on the modification.

What is important is that intentionality is not a prerequisite for some action to count as an instance of *human interaction* (or activity).

sociocultural processes (term) proposed scope note:

This term classifies a series or set of human activities evolving on a long-term level, which interact in a non-predetermined way and result in the making and/or unmaking of established social, cultural, economic, institutional, and natural structures. Examples of narrower terms: industrialisation, globalisation, acculturation.

events (term) proposed scope note

This term classifies human interactions of a distinct nature which occur within a limited period of time and have a specific start and end date. Examples of narrower terms: weddings, wars, concerts.

Discussion points:

- the proposed distinction btw events and sociocultural processes rests on the documentalists' knowledge of the beginning and final endpoints of a stretch of time during which something occurred. By offering precise approximations of the beginning and final endpoints, the ontological distinction collapses. Is it wise to have separate hierarchies for such a trivial distinction?
- there is a substantial overlap of facets Activities, Natural Processes and Types of Epochs in the sense that they all refer to temporal entities (entities that can acquire an identity through the timespan they are anchored in). They all begin and end in time, is this feature enough to distinguish them from one another? Maybe the reorganization should unify said facets and propose a method to distinguish among them on ontological grounds.
- for sociopolitical processes: one cannot attribute them to one individual (or a set of identifiable individuals), cannot (or need not) anchor them to a place where they occurred or to a specific timescale, and one can only detect a concrete result (a change in the world). On the other hand, for events, one can attribute them to identifiable individuals, anchor them to a place and a specific timespan. It seems that they form a specialization of the sociopolitical process.
- it is possible that some of the individuals involved in an overall process (f.i. industrialization) can be identified (not only pioneers that made mass production of goods possible, but also individual workers who worked the factories, merchants etc.). It is also possible to identify the places where industrialisation first occurred (Western Europe, in particular England, the Netherlands, Belgium) and the appropriate time frame (mid 18th century). What cannot be done is ascribing each of these identifiable individuals' actions the end/goal "brought about industrialization". That's what the "sociocultural processes" brings about. An event has an intrinsic intentionality on behalf of the individuals that bring them about.

- couldn't processes, events and activities fall under a general term like the phenomena that we observe?
- Sociocultural processes and Times of Epochs seem to conflate with one another. Maybe the notion of intentionality should serve to distinguish between the two. Epochs cannot be understood as a set of human activities; rather as structures. What is classified is time periods. What sociocultural processes classifies is types of activities

Next steps:

The issue cannot be resolved in the meeting. React to the submissions through the BBTalk (IDs: 2164, 2165, 2166, 2167, 2145).

6. Mythical Entities

Background:

3 alternative proposals

- cover term "narrative entities" [BBT new]
- multiple terms in the BBT all IsA propositional objects
- map types of mythical/legendary entities and types of literary characters to BBT propositional objects (skos:broadMatch)

Discussion points:

- cover term "narrative entities" [BBT new]

objections were raised on the grounds that the classification of entities should not be dependent on the form of art/representation that they appear in. this duplicates entries for each entity, based on whether they appear in literature, or legend/myth or religion. DAI: fictional and supernatural characters [hierarchy under Conceptual Objects], but it makes sense to restrict it to propositional objects

- multiple terms in the BBT all IsA propositional objects

Objections were raised on the grounds that the distinction between

- divinities vs. suprahuman entities (=gods), and
- figures vs. literary characters:

is not clear. Also the top terms for hierarchies of supernatural entities seem too specific for the BBT.

For the moment, FRANTIQU has introduced the term **puissances suprahumaines** in PACTOLS; its leaf nodes contain Named Entities

- map types of mythical/legendary entities and types of literary characters to BBT propositional objects (skos:broadMatch)

For the moment we will work with this option.

7. Membership, MOU

Proposal to include Bruno Almeida in the BBT Curation Committee: everyone in agreement
The MOU needs updating (and a bit of polishing too). Must be done in due course, FORTH
to set it in motion again.

- this is an agreement among the institutions the members of which collaborate on the maintenance of the BBT.
- open this up to the Thesaurus Maintenance Working Group: update the procedural aspect of the MOU as a document appended to the wiki of the WG. Emphasis to the methods followed and the collaboration process.
- Draft a document that describes the commitment the members of the WG undertake.
- Legal documents (MOU), needs to be updated because the previous document lists by name people who no longer work at the participating institutions.