

The inadequacy of the classical information measurement for linguistic meaning: a historical analysis.

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Abstract: Notwithstanding proposals for a definition of "semantic information" the intricate relation between meaning and information is still largely unresolved. Starting from the debate that arose in linguistics during the 50s and 60s, I argue that meaning in a linguistic sense is quite different from both information and semantic information.

In order to support this claim I will first make a comparison between the semantic theory of the Prague Circle of Linguistics (esp. Roman Jakobson (1896-1982)) and the Copenhagen Circle of Linguistics (esp. Louis Hjelmslev (1895-1965)). Supported by George Kingsley Zipf (1902-1950) and Benoît Mandelbrot (1924) Jakobson tried to equate code with *langue* and message with *parole*. Hjelmslev instead argued for what he called the Form of Content.

Then I will explain how the parallel between quantum measurements and - what can be called - meaning measurements, is an important reason for the failure to integrate meaning and information. In fact, linguistic meanings like quantum measurements can only be revealed after measurement. Therefore, I conclude that in language it is the message that reveals the meaning while the code is only a set of relations. For this reason statistical measurements of meaning are not 'real' linguistic meanings but only - what Hjelmslev called - norms.

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