Conceptual Catch-22 in RSD for Novice Learners
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in RSD for novice learners

Dr Karey Harrison
Social Justice & Philosophy
Research Skill Development

- Embark
- Evaluate
- Organise
- Find
- Analyse
- Communicate
Standard One

1. Recognise need for information, nature & extent

i. Define need
   • Key concepts
   • Define

ii. Purpose, scope, primary vs. secondary sources

iii. Clarify, revise, refine

iv. Multiple perspectives

Alan Bundy 2004 Australian and New Zealand Information Literacy Framework (ANZILF)
Definitions: categories as boxes

- Non-living
  - plants
    - insects
    - reptiles
    - birds
- Living
  - mammals
    - dogs
    - cats
  - humans
  - horses
Law of non contradiction

mutually exclusive categories
**Definition: X is Y**

**Penguins are Birds**

Birds have feathers & can fly

Source bird flock: George Hodan, CCO-BY-NC

Source penguin: Andrew Shiva, Wikipedia, CC BY-SA 4.0

**Vowels are Letters of the alphabet**

Vowels: aeiou

Penguins have feathers but cannot fly

(Some) dinosaurs have feathers & can fly

Source Pterodactylus: Thomas Chamberlain, Wikipedia, expired

Harrison 2017, Finding information & cognitive models lecture
Arahsamna is a month of the year. Categories defined relative to domain.
Getting started – Catch 22

Problem definition

- ‘Commonsense’
- Tradition
- Profession (librarians)
- Discipline

Unknown unknowns

Alternate Category systems

Embark

Communication

Find

Analyse

Organise

Students rely on
Sociology assignment

First assignment in first year introductory Social Science course at USQ

Instructions:

Social science can be loosely defined as the critique of commonsense

Task:

Prove ‘commonsense’ statement is not true

Read:

Charles Wright Mills 1959, Sociological imagination pp. 6-8

Scaffolding:

Practice sample statement
Prove $X$ is NOT $Y$

Welfare recipients are free loaders
(or bludgers, or leaners - as opposed to lifters)

Definitions (tend to) rely on ‘common sense’

1. Use internet to collect data
   - Find ‘commonsense’ use
2. Use academic information
   - Find (counter) evidence
Data analysis

Statements tested:

1. Australia is a democracy.

2. Political correctness is stupid.

3. Today’s society is more enlightened than societies of the past.

4. Indigenous people are closer to nature.

5. We should pay more attention to scientists.

103 essays
Problem definition

Not independent

33% essays relied on definitions

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- Discipline (mostly wrong one)
- ‘Commonsense’
- Tradition
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33% essays relied on definitions

1. Australia is a democracy.
2. Political correctness is stupid.
3. Today’s society is more enlightened than societies of the past.
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2. Political correctness is stupid.
3. Today’s society is more enlightened than societies of the past.
4. …
5. We should pay more attention to scientists.

18% essays relied on authority
Mostly not from sociology
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58% relied on ‘commonsense’ meaning
Prior understanding

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35% relied on ‘commonsense’ meaning.
Environment vs. society dualism

Mastery of a clockwork universe

We are outside of nature & can control it

Humans as part of nature

What we do to nature we do to ourselves
Ladder of progress

animal  human

Closer to nature
## Contextual sensitivity

### Demonstrated in 8%

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**Getting started**

**Unknown unknowns**

**Problem definition**

- ‘Commonsense’ 58%
- Tradition 33%
- Profession (librarians) 33%
- Discipline 18%

**Alternate Category systems** 8%

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Definitions
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Wrong one
```
Getting started – Catch 22

Identify key concepts
Find relevant information

Understand concepts
Familiar with Context