

Language is first and foremost our living environment (milieu)

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Language is predominantly thought of a communication tool

- It is **my** tool to express **my** thoughts
 - => **Thought** comes first and **language is its expression**
 - => **Individual** approach to language

- **Problem** : how to explain **intercomprehension** ?
 - => Strong hypotheses on **universals and syntactic rules**
 - By divine grace (Descartes)
 - By the grace of the genome (e.g. Chomsky's UG)

Origin of this approach

- **Ontological existence of the individual**
 - Adam and Eve were human before living in society

- Society has **no ontological existence**
 - « The **origin of human society** largely remains a mystery » (Kauffman 2004)
 - Contradicted by **paleoanthropology** and **primatology**

- Society is an explicit social construction (e.g. Rousseau's « Contrat social »)
 - **Individuals communicate their inner states**
 - => **Language is a tool**

Alternative

=> Admit that **society** comes first

(Frath & Daval 2019: *Cogito vs ubuntu*)

- **The individual** is largely the product of the **community**
 - Family, community, school, work, etc.
 - All **interactions** take place using **language**

Society is humanised by language

(Anthropological aspects of language)

- Language to establish **links between us**
 - Baby-talk
 - Small talk
 - We are **in language like fish in water**
 - => **Intellectual communication** takes place against the **backdrop** of this **anthropological environment**
-

Our world is humanised by language

(Referential aspects of language)

- **Powerful link between world and language**
 - **We** suppose that all objects **have a name for us**, even if **I do not know it**
 - **We** suppose each **word** corresponds to **something which exists for us** (ex. loquis, moschifère, incrassate, hamdudgeon)
 - For each **object/name** there is discursive **knowledge**

Demiurgic power of language

- **Language** plays a part in the **existence of objects**
 - Example : « **marche blanche** »
 - In 1996, in Belgium, a march for the victims of a ruthless murderer
 - Directive : no signs, wear something white
 - => **Désignation discursive** : une marche qui était blanche
 - Re-used by journalists for other marches for victims of crime or accidents (usually « innocent »: children or women)
 - => **Lexicalisation**: appears in dictionaries
 - => **The existence of the name (dénomination) generates this sort marches**

- => **Real world and language** are closely tied in an anthropological framework

Language is our living environment

- Language links us our two other environments, **society** and **nature**
- **Anthropological aspects**
 - Establishes links between humans
 - Locus of **ethics**, education, politics,...
- **Referential aspects**
 - Link with nature and society
 - Locus of **action**, work, the economy, ...
- **Cognitive aspect (brought about by the former)**
 - Producing our personal features
 - Locus of **thought**, creativity, quests, ...

Develop multilingualism

- Our **understanding** of the **world** and of **society** is determined by **language**

 - **Risk of getting entrapped in our community**, of resting on the truths inside language
 - « It is what human beings *say* that is true and false; and they agree in the *language* they use. That is not agreement in opinion but in **form of life** ».
 - (Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §241)

 - **=> Multilingualism**
 - => Opening to other views on world and society
 - => Decentering, relativisation, tolerance, ...
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Bibliography

- ❑ Frath Pierre & Daval René, 2019, *Cogito versus ubuntu. Les rapports entre individu et société analysés dans un cadre anthropologique et linguistique*. Publié par *Sapientia Hominis* (www.sapientia-hominis.org).
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- ❑ Kaufmann Jean-Claude, 2004, *L'invention de soi. Une théorie de l'identité*. Armand Colin 2004, Hachette 2008, Paris.
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