

## Introduction

This first volume of the journal *Signifiances (Signifying)* brings together the written texts of the 1<sup>st</sup> International Conference Language and Enaction – Sense-making, embodiment, interaction, organized in Clermont-Ferrand from the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2016 (LangEnact 1). The growing interest for enaction among linguists, researchers on didactics, and specialists in other fields of research related to language was a sign to promote this conference. This meeting also aimed at making researchers specialized in convergent fields interact with each other. In this respect, we would like to thank the participants of the conference Langenact 1 and all our partners, through whom the crystallization of the multi-disciplinary approach « Language and Enaction » is starting to show. The recent projects and the on-going prospects pertaining to the conference Langenact 2 (25-27 September 2017) organized at the University of Southern Denmark (Odense) and the thematic issue to appear in December 2017 in the journal *Intellectica* (n°68) make new collaborations stronger among researchers who had not known each other until very recently. A greater scientific communication is coming up.

Enaction, (from the English verb *to enact* – « to perform »), corresponding to a recent line of thought in cognitive sciences, specifically applying to the emergence of cognition, was initiated by the Chilean neurobiologist Francisco Varela and Humberto Maturana. They brought new perspectives in the study of biological, cognitive and social phenomena, among which language, postulating that « [...] cognition is not the representation of a pre-given world by a pre-given mind but is rather the enactment of a world and a mind on the basis of a history of the variety of actions that a being in the world performs » (Varela et al. 1993 : 35).

In the field of cognitive sciences, enaction is presented as a « science of the lived experience », which refers to the production of worlds that are both collectively and individually experienced by the living bodies of members of a given species (that is not necessarily human). For the living subject, the experience of some « real » reality and that of the stage of some action does not refer to the decoding of some information carried by a signal following some system of representations, nor is it some reasoning process through the manipulation of abstract and symbolic entities. But it is the production of an experienced world, which is constrained by the exterior sphere that motivates it (the gravitation and notably the resistance of objects in space) and by the interior of the dynamic body, which forms a figuration of it according to its own constraints and bodily needs (exploration, feeding, reproduction, etc.). Enaction explores the way ethological coordination of the bodies contributes to producing the conscience of the experienced reality, among which its own reality and that of others – this reality being presented as a field of involvement, intervention, exploration, and modification collected through all the modalities of action, among which language. From Kant's works, enaction retains the imperceivability and the interior, intrinsic absence of knowledge of the world. From von Uexküll, enaction holds biological species' propensity to extract specific worlds (*Umwelt*), among which living bodies that can act to survive. Finally, enaction retains from Merleau-Ponty's work the determinative role of models of bodily involvement, which are both bodily and social, echoing the idea of some real world that is « enacted » by the living body, and « perçacted » in Berthoz terminology.

As enaction apprehends cognition as the concurrent production of the conscience of a world that is modifiable through both individual and collective intervention, this model envisages human language through one specific angle, as a field of activity – *linguaging* – in the terminology of Maturana. The questions are: how does this original ethology single out the

« human world » as some *Umwelt*? To what extent the fact of being a speaking subject can orient individual participation to the framing of some shared and collective world? How does languaging affect species' coevolution, that of society and that of the environment? How does speech experience contribute to both modify the on-going process of worlds that are lived and worlds that are meant to exist through creative and imaginary worlds – the latter more or less distinguishing themselves from the « non-spoken » world, while being related to it in different ways (through reference or imaginary projection for example). Finally, how does languaging make it possible for the community to intentionally influence its « autopoïesis » – its own evolution reflexively profiled and becoming a report, some temporal future linguistically supported. This general questioning puts languaging at stake and makes a multi-disciplinary topic of it; one subject at the crossroads of philosophy, language sciences, linguistics, biology, anthropology, psychology, neurophysiology...

For language sciences, a series of specific questions such as the nature of linguistics' significance, its relation to the lived experience, its automatization through symbolic forms, its degree of interactive integration or that of distinction as a generator of autonomous knowledge. The question related to the nature of linguistic meaning acts in their embodied and interactive dimension (words as units of phonatory actions, syntactic and prosodic constructions as models of linkage...) comes up, along with that of the emergence of abstract systems, which are provided with their own coherence – both profiled and liberated through constraints on embodied and situated interaction. Enaction reconsiders notions of the speaker, the enunciator, the speaking subject and allocution, inter-subjectivity. Themes such as enunciation, polyphony, and mediativity are thought over. Semantics and pragmatics relationships are scrutinized. All speech categories are questioned: semantic categories and formal ones, when apprehended from the points of view of the speaking subjects « in foreground » and from models « in background » through some other patterns, as underlined by Culioli: morpheme, word, construction, lexical items, phraseme, sentence – all these established entities will go through evolution patterns.

It apprehends the notions of language and dialects as self-organized social processes, regulated from the interior through the contribution of each – contributions through acts of creation and politic linguistics (literature, academicism) and through emergent systems that free themselves from this embodied, interacted, and situated existence. It also introduces some radical and original questions, mainly relying on the ongoing reflection through the existing theories in fields of enunciation, cognition, generativity in its various conceptions or formalization. Enaction finally modifies the constitution, modelling and the interpretation of linguistic facts and language phenomena.

The first issue of *Signifiances (Signifying)* aims at bringing some of these thematic topics in a theoretical or applied perspective. The goal of each contributor is to demonstrate how enaction constitutes a novel reading grid in language analysis. More than gathering specialists of various disciplines, the goal consists in contributing to the opening of a new paradigm in language science, with its own questioning and privileged perspectives. The big fields of the question made us opt for a triple issue :

**The first issue** entitled « **Reflection on the theories in language science through the light of enaction** » gathers studies related to theoretical aspects pertaining to language science and education – both being likely to be re-assessed through the enaction model and through *languaging*.

**The second issue**, « **From body to cognition: experience, sociality and enaction** », brings together works dealing with the questioning between body and cognition in a linguistic perspective, while taking into account the notion of the lived experience and of the embedding

in social and ecological environments. The involvement and the embedding of the body are seldom worked through in language sciences, in communication, and in education. These investigations insist on the importance of movement and bodily experience, which is associated with linguistic production.

**The third issue** is entitled « **Enaction, emergence of language, production of meaning** ». It presents articles dealing with enactive emergence of language, a topic very often worked through the analysis of the signified units, conceived as *sensorimotor acts constrained by language*. Diachronic, synchronic, sub-morphemic, morpho-syntactic, or metalinguistic approaches in this second issue aim at illustrating the on-going processes in the production and in the identification of what can be designated by « meaning » ; pointing at some coherence with the ecological, social, and bodily dimension of the linguistic act.

Through the diversity of these approaches and the variety of the different languages chosen, we hope to promote the extent of this new paradigm, making it possible for readers to better go through their own research.

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