

Course: LIN 421/521 Linguistic Anthropology
Semester: Spring 2013
Instructor: Jürgen Bohnemeyer
Text: Foley 1997

Overview: This course provides an introduction to linguistic anthropology, the study of the relation between language and culture. As a discipline, linguistic anthropology is at the intersection of cultural anthropology and linguistics. Linguistic anthropologists seek to understand language as an integral part of *culture* - the sum total of the knowledge and *practices* (socially shared habitual behavior) that an individual partakes in by virtue of being a member of a *community*. This perspective makes it possible for linguistic anthropologists to use linguistic evidence and methods of linguistics to illuminate the culture of the speech community and to bring cultural evidence and anthropological methods to bear on the study of those aspects of language that are culture-specific. Such culture-dependent traits pervade every part of language, from phonology and phonetics through morphology and syntax to semantics and pragmatics.

Linguistic anthropology has developed two broad themes, each branching off into numerous different lines of inquiry. **Cognitive anthropology** focuses on the meanings expressed by the lexical items and grammatical constructions of a language, asking to what extent these reflect culture-specific conceptualizations of the speech community. For example, *ethnobotanists* and *ethnozoologists* study indigenous terminologies for life forms, seeking to determine what aspects of these vary from community to community, depending on the particular use of and significance attributed to a life form, and what aspects are shared across cultures, reflecting the shared biological and cognitive heritage of humankind. Similar research has targeted terminologies for color, kinship, emotions, tastes and smells, and so on. The most controversial idea in cognitive anthropology is the **Linguistic Relativity Hypothesis** - the hypothesis that the language habitually used by the members of a community may influence the way they memorize and conceptualize reality. The **ethnography of speaking** (or *ethnography of communication*), the other major sub-field within linguistic anthropology, examines culture-specific aspects of language use, viewing speaking itself as a cultural practice - from simple *speech acts* such as greetings and leave-takings via more complex "scripted" *speech events* (e.g., religious ceremonies, political speeches, court room proceedings) to the *ethno-poetic* study of verbal art and to culture-specific norms of linguistic politeness.

Goals: The course aims to familiarize students with some of the key ideas, methods, approaches, and findings within linguistic anthropology. At the end of this course, students should have a working understanding of these issues that is sufficient to allow them to determine, when confronted with a phenomenon in their future academic or non-academic practice, the basic questions a linguistic anthropologist might ask about this phenomenon and where to look for existing research that might have addressed the phenomenon. The general learning goal for this course is to properly understand the

central ideas of linguistic anthropology. A partial list of the ideas discussed in the course is provided in the Appendix.

Classes: M/W 4:00-5:20pm in 110 Knox

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Coursework:

- Reading assignments and reading comprehension questions - there'll be a reading assignment from the textbook and/or primary sources in preparation of each class. Students are encouraged to post questions about the readings on the UBlerns blog. The questions must concern the content of the particular reading, must be specific ("What is this chapter/p234/the third paragraph about?" doesn't fly), and they must be genuine questions the student has when trying to understand the particular reading and thinking about the implications of the points made there. Good, valid questions will be answered on the blog. **Both the number and the quality (in terms of thoughtfulness/incisiveness) of the questions submitted count towards the participation grade.**
- In-class participation. I grade participation as follows: Regular active participation – A; regular attendance and occasional active participation – B; regular attendance, no active participation – C; irregular attendance, no active participation: D; poor attendance, no active participation: F. **Attendance will be taken at the beginning of every lecture.** Attendance counts as irregular if the student missed more than one lecture unexcused and as poor if more than three lectures were missed unexcused.
- Three multi-week projects, each to be completed in multiple stages. The stages constitute separate homework assignments and will be submitted and graded as such There will be eight such assignments altogether. The first project involves the analysis of an American English discourse. For the second and third assignments, students collect and analyze data from a language other than their native language. The first project involves two stages, the remaining two projects three stages each Students are given one week for the completion of each stage. The projects as a whole will be graded, the individual stages not.
- A take-home final exam, consisting of a set of questions to be answered in single-paragraph essays (e.g., "What generalizations emerged from Berlin & Kay's 1969 study of Basic Color Terms"?). The exam will be assigned in the final week of classes and must be completed within two weeks. Students may elect to write a short (maximally 10 pages) term paper in lieu of the final exam. The topic of the paper must be accepted by the instructor at least three weeks in advance of submission.
- Lit review presentations: Students may present a summary and discussion of one of the primary readings on the syllabus in class during the lecture for which the reading is listed. Presentations should be 10-20 minutes long and must be accompanied by a handout. Undergraduates may do a lit review presentation in

lieu of the final exam; grad students may do one to improve their assignment grade.

Assessment: Participation (determined by attendance, in-class participation, and the reading comprehension questions the student posted), each of the three homework project, and the final exam each count for 20% of the final grade.

Learning outcomes: The following table identifies the intended learning goals of the course and maps them to the instruments that will be used for the assessment of the students' success. **Keep in mind, however, that all of these assessment instruments are designed not only to test attainment of the learning goals, but simultaneously also to solidify, enhance, and refine them.**

Project	stage	Outcomes
I: The ethnographic analysis of speech events: President Obama's second inaugural address as a speech event	1 (HW #1)	Learn how to analyze and describe familiar speech events ethnographically in the framework of the SPEAKING model.
	2 (HW #2)	Learn to compare speech events from across cultures in terms of their similarities and differences within the theoretical context of the ethnography of communication. At a more abstract level, turn the focus of the study of culture from the exotic to the familiar so the role of culture as a fundamental aspect of human cognition and sociality becomes visible in both.
II: The ethnographic analysis of interaction: social deixis and politeness	1 (HW #3)	Learn to elicit, transcribe, and gloss utterances in a language other than your native language for the purpose of an ethnographic analysis of interactional strategies and the social roles and identity categories they involve.
	2 (HW #4)	Learn to code the utterances collected during the first stage for the expressions of social deixis they contain – honorifics and terms of address – and to analyze the distribution of the latter in terms of the factors that may condition their use, in particular the various dimensions of the social relations among the interlocutors and the cultural significance of the speech event.
	3 (HW #5)	Learn to apply Brown & Levinson's (1987) theory of linguistic politeness by first coding the utterances collected during the first stage for redress strategies other than those social indexicals identified in stage 2 and then derive conclusions from the outcomes of this analysis and those of stage 2 regarding the politeness ethos of the speech community of the speaker you collected the utterances from.
III: The	1 (HW #6)	Learn to elicit and transcribe genealogical data and

semantic analysis of culture-specific concepts: kinship terms		kinship terms from a speaker of a language other than your native language for the purposes of ethnosemantic analysis.
	2 (HW #7)	Learn to carry out an extensional semantic analysis of the kinship terms you collected during the first stage and to represent the results using the simple common metalanguage of kinship term studies.
	3 (HW #8)	Learn to conduct an analysis of the lexical meaning and underlying conceptual categories lexicalized in the kinship terms you collected during the first stage and to typologically classify the kinship term system.
Final exam		Develop an awareness for key research questions and debates (see Appendix) within the field of Linguistic Anthropology and learn how key landmark studies have contributed to these debates.

Paperless class: Lecture notes will be posted on UBlerns/Course Documents two hours ahead of class. Additional readings will be posted on UBlerns/Course Documents two days ahead of class. Homework projects will be posted on UBlerns/Assignments. Students upload the stages of the project to UBlerns/Assignment Tool. Accepted formats: MS Word doc and PDF. Be sure to click on “Send”, not on “Save”, to post! Annotated and graded assignments will be returned via UBlerns/Assignment Tool. The same holds for the final exam.

Outline: Unless otherwise noted, reading assignments refer to the textbook, Foley 1997. All other readings will be downloadable from UBlerns (*) or from the online course reserve site of the UB Libraries (^). Syntax of the reading assignments:

- *a; b* – read *a* and *b*
- *a; (b)* – read *a* plus optionally *b*
- *a/b* – read *a* or *b*, depending on which one was selected for discussion in class (and read the other optionally in addition if you’re interested)

Part	Week	Day	Topics	Reading
1 – basic concepts and questions	1	1	Linguistic anthropology; culture, language, practice, meaning, network models of sociality; overview of the course	ch1: 3-7, 11-12, 21-29; (29-40); (^Boas 1911; ^Goodenough 1957)
		2	Mind, knowledge, representation, learning, innateness, cognitivism, enactionism	ch1: 7-11, 12-21; (^Boas 1911; ^Goodenough 1957)
	2	1	MLK Day	
		2	nature vs. nurture, universalism, relativism	*Levinson 2003; (*Duranti 1997: 1-9)
	3	1	Identity, ideology, power, and language	*Bucholtz & Hall 2004
2 – ethno-		2	From speech acts to speech events	*Duranti 1997: 214-227, 288-290; (^Hymes

graphy of communication	4	1	Speech events across cultures	1972) ch13; (*Duranti 1997: 290-294; ^Sherzer 1989)
		*** HW Project #1 out ***		
3 – language and identity	5	2	Network analysis of linguistic variation * Discussion: HW project #1 Stage 1	ch 16: 328-333; *Milroy 1987: ch1; (^Milroy & Milroy 1992)
		1	Variation and identity * HW project #1 Stage 1 due	Eckert 1988
		2	Language and gender * Discussion: HW project #1 Stage 2	ch15; (*Kulick 2000; *Eckert 2002)
4 – power, solidarity, and face	6	1	Social deixis * HW project #1 Stage 2 due	ch16: 313-333
		2	Politeness and face	ch14: 260-273; (^Brown 2001; *Brown & Levinson 1987: 101-129)
	7	1	Politeness across cultures	ch14: 273-280; (^Matsumoto 1988; *Ishiyama in press; ^Keenan 1989)
		*** HW Project #2 out ***		
5 – ideologies in multi-lingualism	8	2	Language choice and code switching * Discussion: HW project #2 Stage 1	ch16: 307-313, 333-343
		1	Contact-induced change * HW project #2 Stage 1 due	ch19: 381-392; (Jackson 1989; Gumperz & Wilson 1971)
		2	Language shift and language death * Discussion: HW project #2 Stage 2	ch19: 395-397; *Dorian 1983: ch3; ^Schmidt 1985
6 – ethno- semantics	9	1	Spring recess	
		2		
	10	1	Universalism, relativism, and the Linguistic Relativity Hypothesis * HW project #2 Stage 2 due	ch10: 192-208; (ch3: 81-84, 86-90; ch8: 169-175)
		2	Cognitive anthropology Discussion: HW project #2 Stage 3	ch5: 106-115; (ch4)
	11	1	Ethnobiology * HW project #2 Stage 3 due	ch5: 115-130; (^Berlin, Breedlove, & Raven 1974: ch3; ^Berlin 1992: ch1)
		2	Kinship term systems	ch6; (^Lounsbury 1964)
			*** HW Project #3out ***	
12	1	Color terminologies *	ch7; (^Levinson 2000)	

			Discussion: HW project #3 Stage 1	
7 – linguistic relativity		2	Whorf's ideas and the Neo-Whorfian paradigm* HW project #3 Stage 1 due	ch10: 208-214; (^Kay & Kempton 1984; *Lucy 1992: 85-135)
	13	1	Deep impact: Spatial frames of reference in language and cognition * Discussion: HW project #3 Stage 2	ch11: 215-225; (^Pederson <i>et al.</i> 1998)
		2	Language between culture and cognition: the Levinson-Gleitman debate * HW project #3 Stage 2 due	*Majid <i>et al.</i> 2004; (*Li & Gleitman 2002; *Levinson <i>et al.</i> 2002; Bohnermeyer & Levinson ms.)
	14	1	Metaphors in language and thought * Discussion: HW project #3 Stage 3	*Boroditsky 2001 (ch9; *Gentner & Gentner 1983; *January & Kako 2007; *Boroditsky, Schmidt, & Phillips 2003)
		2	Thinking for speaking * HW project #3 Stage 3 due	^Slobin 1996; (*Belloro <i>et al.</i> 2008)
	15	1	Culture- and language-specificity in language acquisition	ch11: 225-229; ^Bowerman & Choi 2003
8 – how we got here		2	Language socialization	ch17
	*** Final out (due Tuesday May 8th) ***			
	16	1	Co-evolution of language, culture, and brain	ch2; (^Deacon 1992)

Reading list

- Bauman, R. & J. Sherzer (Eds.) (1989). *Explorations in the ethnography of speaking*. [2nd Edition!] Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
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- Boas, F. (1911). Linguistics and ethnology. In F. Boas (Ed.), *Handbook of American Indian languages (BAE-B 40, Part I)*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution. 59-73. [Reprinted in Hymes (Ed.) 1964: 15-22.]
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- Boroditsky, L., L. Schmidt, & W. Phillips. (2003). Sex, syntax, and semantics. In D. S. Gentner & Goldin-Meadow (eds.), *Language in Mind: Advances in the study of language and cognition*. 61-80.
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- Bourdieu, P.; B. Thompson (Ed.); G. Raymond (Translator); & M. Adamson (Translator) (1991). *Language and symbolic power*. Cambridge: Polity Press. [Reproduced in excerpt in Jaworski & Coupland 1999: 502-513.]
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- Brown, P. (2001). Politeness and language. In N. J. Smelser & P. B. Baltes (Eds.), *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences. Volume 17*. (Section Editor for Linguistics: B. Comrie). London: Elsevier. 11620-11624.
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- Buchholtz, M. & K. Hall. (2004). Language and identity. In A. Duranti (ed.), *A companion to Linguistic Anthropology*. Malden, MA: Blackwell. 369-394.
- Clyne, M. (Ed.) (1985). *Australia, meeting place of languages*. Pacific Linguistics Series C No. 92. Canberra: Australian National University.
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- Deacon, T. W. (1992). Brain-language coevolution. In J. A. Hawkins & M. Gell-Mann (Eds.), *The evolution of human languages*. Redwood City, CA: Addison-Wesley. 21-48.
- Dennett, D. C. (1996). *Darwin's dangerous idea*. [Penguin Paperback Edition!] London: Penguin Books.
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- Duranti, A. (1997). *Linguistic anthropology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
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Appendix: Learning goals - Some of the central ideas of linguistic anthropology to be discussed during the course

- Both languages and cultures can be viewed from three complementary perspectives:
 - cognitively, in terms of (declarative or procedural) knowledge
 - semiotically, in terms of (systems of) signs and their interpretations
 - socially, in terms of conventions of social behavior or *practices*
- In each of these respects, the language(s) spoken by the members of a community emerge(s) as a *part* of the larger culture shared by this community
- Cultural knowledge is learned - as opposed to *innate* - knowledge. It is diffused in two ways:
 - through the observation of practices enacted by other members of the community
 - through the use of external representational systems such as language, gesture, and art
- As learned cultural knowledge is complementary to the innate knowledge stored in the human DNA, so cultural evolution has taken over from biological evolution in the development of humankind.
- Given the key role that language plays in the transfer of cultural knowledge, it has been hypothesized that language, culture, and the complex brain that enables humans to learn and use linguistic and cultural knowledge have co-evolved.
- It is an open question what aspects of cognition are innate, biologically determined, and what aspects are learned and culturally diffused. In other words, it is an open question where in the mind the dividing line between *nature* (biology) and *nurture* (culture) is. An important boundary condition on answers to this question is set by the extent to which cognition - e.g., memory, inferences, and similarity judgments - is influenced by language use. The possibility of such influences is claimed by the *Linguistic Relativity Hypothesis* (LRH).
- In the first half of the 20th Century, various authors proposed *strong, deterministic* versions of the LRH, according to which the categories and terms in which people think are (almost) exclusively those of their native language. Under this view, there is a strong influence from language onto internal cognition, but no influence from cognition onto language. Consequently, it is assumed that linguistic categorization varies from language to language “arbitrarily”, i.e., without non-trivial non-linguistic constraints. Historically, this view has been associated in particular with the work of Benjamin Lee Whorf.
- Through its lexical items and constructions, every language expresses a highly complex system of categorizations of reality. This includes categories of the natural world - categories for plants and animals, colors, emotions, kinship relations, and so on. These categories vary somewhat from language to language, reflecting in part differences in cultural significance (e.g., the same plant is

- cultivated as a food resource in one culture, collected in the wild for medicinal use in another, and considered a weed in the third).
- Evidence for cognitively motivated universals in *ethnosemantics* - the linguistic categorization of the natural world - discourage the strong = deterministic version of the LRH. But a *weaker, non-deterministic* interpretation, according to which non-linguistic cognition exists and functions independently of language, but may nevertheless be influenced by it, is very much debated today.
 - The use of language is highly culture-specific. Different cultures recognize different *speech events* - conventional, "scripted" activities in which language plays a constitutive role. These range from simple *speech acts* such as greetings and apologies via economical, political, and judicial transactions and religious or curing rituals to verbal art forms. They can be classified and compared across cultures in terms of, above all, the linguistic expressions and *registers* and the roles of the participants they involve.
 - Languages, dialects, registers, and even particular lexical items and grammatical constructions acquire cultural meanings by indexical association with particular groups of people - defined in terms of class, ethnicity, gender, age, and so on - viewed as stereotypically using them. These indexical values in turn become the objects of attitudes both in the users of a particular variety or expression and in other members of the community. Speakers may choose a variety or expression and thereby identify themselves with the stereotypically associated group or choose an alternative and distance themselves from the stereotyped group. These choices constitute secondary indexical associations.
 - One of the most important aspects of social interactions is the maintenance of the social ties between the participants. *Politeness* is the cover term for a myriad of linguistic and non-linguistic practices with this goal. The role of politeness is pervasive in all aspects of linguistic structure and language use. The strategies of showing respect and solidarity used in a language are sensitive to fine-grained distinctions in the cultural conceptualization of power and personhood.