# Module 8: Performance and Performativity

## Introduction

The concept of **performance** is one of the most useful we have in linguistic anthropology. This week, we will consider three distinct approaches taken by linguistic anthropologists to the concept of performance: performance defined in **opposition to competence**, **performativity**, and performance as **a display of verbal artistry**. I have also assigned a peer-reviewed journal article for you to read alongside this chapter. Although the article is fairly challenging (it was published in a very prestigious journal, *Anthropological Linguistics*), it is also really, really interesting –did you know there was a fully-developed Plains Indian Sign Language? As you read it, you should think about the concepts learned in this module as well as the **four key terms** that Ahearn reminds us to always keep in mind (**multifunctionality**, **practice**, **language ideologies**, and **indexicality**). Think about how much of our everyday behavior is performative, and how some of the phenomena we have studied thus far, like **code-switching**, **literacy events**, and aspects of **language acquisition** might be productively studied in terms of performance.

## Objectives

At the end of this module, you will be able to:

* Summarize different approaches taken by linguistic anthropologists to concept of performance and performativity.
* Explain the key differences between performance and performativity, including which linguist or theorist is associated with each concept.
* Analyze the ethnographic examples presented in the book, article, and lecture using performance and performativity theory as analytical tools.

## Time Management

This course is designed to maximize benefits gained from our weekly f2f meeting. In order for our class meeting to enhance and further deepen your understanding of course materials and help you achieve our module objectives, I suggest you manage your time wisely. An efficient example of how you can best utilize your time for this course is as follows:

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| --- | --- |
| **Day** | **Suggested Action** |
| Monday | Read assigned reading and module content |
| Tuesday | Finish assigned reading and module content |
| Wednesday | Original post due in the weekly graded discussion |
| Thursday | F2F Meeting |
| Friday | Response to another’s original post due by midnight tonight |

## Assigned Reading

This week, you will complete the following readings. Please do the reading as you complete the module content. You must have the required reading done prior to our f2f class meeting on Thursday.

* Ahearn, Laura. 2012. *Living Language.* “Chapter 8: Performance and Performativity.”
* Farnell, Brenda. 2002. [“Dynamic Embodiment in Assiniboine (Nakota) Storytelling.”](http://www.jstor.org/pss/30028824) *Anthropological Linguistics.*