

# Language and Culture

# Linguistic Anthropology

- ▶ Language both reflect and influence humanity, society, and culture.
- ▶ The study of human language is one of the four traditional branches of anthropology
- ▶ Linguistic anthropology:
  - The study of how language interacts with and shapes social structure and culture
  - Interested in social organization and cultural meaning as they are reflected in the structure, lexicon, and conventions of a given language
  - Based on the idea that speakers use language to represent their natural and social worlds

## (1) Time and money

*Spending* time

*Wasting* one's time

*Investing* time in a project

*Budgeting* out one's time

# Kinship Terms

## (2) Kinship terms in Seneca

Father: [haʔnih]

Father's brother: [haʔnih]

Father's sister: [ake:hak]

Son: [he:awak]

Nephew: [hehsōʔneh]

Mother: [noʔyēh]

Mother's sister: [noʔyēh]

Mother's brother: [hakhnoʔsēh]

Daughter: [khēawak]

Niece: [khehsōʔneh]

Grandfather: [hakso:t]

Grandfather's brother: [hakso:t]

Grandson: [heya:teʔ]

Grandmother: [ʔakso:t]

Grandmother's sister: [ʔakso:t]

Granddaughter: [kheya:teʔ]

### (3) Seneca terms for siblings and cousins

Older brother: [hahtsiʔ]

Father's brother's son (older): [hahtsiʔ]

Mother's sister's son (older): [hahtsiʔ]

Younger brother: [heʔkẽ:ʔ]

Father's brother's son (younger): [heʔkẽ:ʔ]

Mother's sister's son (older): [heʔkẽ:ʔ]

Older sister: [ahstiʔ]

Mother's sister's daughter (older): [ahstiʔ]

Father's brother's daughter (older): [ahstiʔ]

Younger sister: [kheʔkẽ:ʔ]

Mother's sister's daughter (younger): [kheʔkẽ:ʔ]

Father's brother's daughter (older): [kheʔkẽ:ʔ]

Other cousin [akya :ʔse  
:ʔ]

(mother's brother's son/daughter, or father's  
sister's son/daughter, of any age)

## (4) Kinship terms in Kaqchikel

The gender of the speaker is important

Mother:	[teʔeh]
Father:	[tataʔah]
Son (regardless of speaker's sex):	[akʔwal]
Son (female speaker):	[al]
Son (male speaker):	[kʔaholaʃel]
Daughter (male speaker):	[meʔaleʃel]
Grandmother:	[atit]
Grandfather:	[mamaʔah]
Grandchild (female speaker):	[ij]
Grandchild (male speaker):	[mam]
Brother (female speaker):	[ʃibʔalon]
Sister (male speaker):	[anaʔ]
Young sibling (same sex as speaker):	[tʃaqʔlaxel]
Older sibling (same sex as speaker):	[nimalaxel]
Youngest sibling (regardless of speaker's sex):	[tʃʔip]

# Communicative Competence

- ▶ Communicative competence: the ability to interact and communicate according to cultural norms
- ▶ Politeness
- ▶ Speaker Roles
- ▶ Turn-Taking Rules
  - Pause/silence in American English vs Western Apache
- ▶ Greetings

(5) (File 11.1.3, p.457)

<i>Part 1 of Adjacency Pair</i>	<i>Part 2 of Adjacency Pair</i>	<i>Speech Act</i>
a. What time is it?	Three o'clock	Question
b. Can you pass the salt?	Of course	Request
c. Would you like some help?	Yes, please	Offer
d. Hello	Oh, hi!	Greeting

(6) (File 11.1.3, p.457)

<i>Part 1 of Adjacency Pair</i>	<i>Part 2 of Adjacency Pair</i>	<i>Language</i>
a. What's up?	Not much	English
b. ¿Como estas? 'How are you?'	Bien. 'Good.'	Spanish
c. Ça va? 'How's it going?'	Oui, ça va. 'It's going well.'	French
d. Wawuka? 'Have you woken (well)?'	Nawuka. 'I have woken (well).'	Kasigau
e. Ni chi le ma 'Have you eaten?'	Hai mei chi. 'Not yet.'	Mandarin Chinese



## (7) Example of Wolof Greeting

**Sal** A: Salaam Maleekum.  
B: Maleekum sallam.  
A: B's name.  
B: Naam, A's name.

**Q** A: Na nag def?  
B: Maa ngi fii rek.  
A: Mbaa ja'mm nga am?  
B: Ja'mm rek, namm.

A: Ana waa keur gi?  
B: Nu nga faa.  
A: Ana [name of B's family member]? **Where is [name]?**  
B: Mu nga fa.

A: Mbaa feebaru loo?  
B: Maa ngiy sant yalla.  
A: Mbaa ken feebarul?  
B: Nu ngi sant Yalla.

(A= noble or high-status person, B= low-status person)

**May peace be with you.**  
**May you be at peace.**

**How are you?**  
**I am here, only.**  
**I hope you have peace?**  
**Peace only, yes.**

**Where is your family?**  
**They're there.**  
**Where is [name]?**  
**He or she is there.**

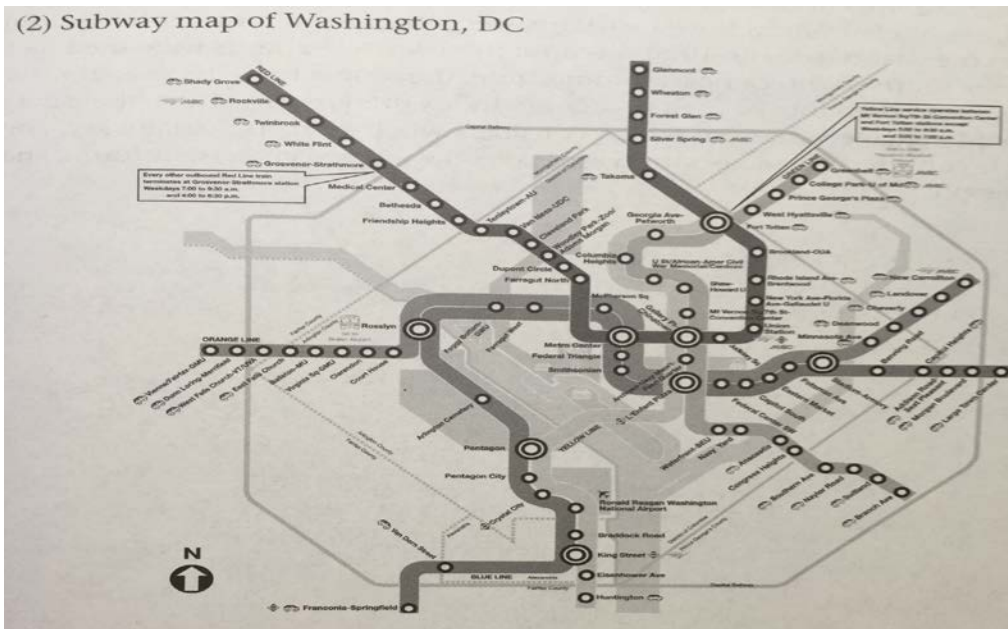
**I hope you are not sick?**  
**I thank God.**  
**I hope no one is sick?**  
**We thank God.**

**P** A: Alxamdulilaay.  
B: Tubarkalla.  
A: Tubarkalla.  
B: Tubarkalla.

**Thanks be to God.**  
**Blessed be God.**  
**Blessed be God.**  
**Blessed be God.**

# Indexicality

(2) Subway map of Washington, DC



- ▶ Symbol: a sign that has an arbitrary relationship between the signifier and its referent and thus relies on convention to signify meaning. e.g. language
- ▶ Icon: a sign whose signifier actually resembles or imitates its referent in some direct way. e.g. onomatopoeic expression, subway map
- ▶ Index: a sign whose signifier does not resemble its referent, but neither is the relationship between signifier and referent arbitrary. e.g. smoke and fire; An association that develops over time, e.g. a specific style of speaking with a certain group of people, a relationship btw language variation and indexicality

# Language and Thought

- ▶ Does language influence thought?
- ▶ Do differences between languages also indicate differences in the thoughts of their speakers?
- ▶ Linguistic relativity: language affects thought
- ▶ Linguistic determinism: language determines thought
- ▶ Sapir-Whorf hypothesis: linguistic relativity
  - ▶ “users of markedly different grammars are pointed by their grammars toward different types of observations and different evaluations of externally similar acts of observation, and hence are not equivalent observers but must arrive at somewhat different views of the world” (1956)

# Linguistic Relativity

The cross-cultural classification of colors (The study conducted in 1969 by Brent Berlin and Paul Kay)

- ▶ About 70 percent of the chips did not fall within the range of any color word in any language.
- ▶ The foci of the color terms for different languages were quite close.
- ▶ Universally, every language has at least two color words: black (covering also most dark hues) and white (covering also most light hues).
- ▶ If a language has more than two basic color terms, then it follows a hierarchy of color terms:
  - Languages with three color terms have *black*, *white*, and *red* (the latter having its focus close to English red);
  - Languages with four terms have *black*, *white*, *red*, and either *green* or *yellow*;
  - Languages with five terms have *black*, *white*, *red*, and both *green* and *yellow*;
  - Languages with six terms have these five plus *blue*;
  - Languages with seven terms have these six plus *brown*;
  - Languages with more than seven terms have these seven plus some of *purple*, *pink*, *orange*, or *gray*.

➤ Spatial Relationships

- English: left, right, front, back

Time is conceived of as stretching either from left (past) to right (future) or from behind (past) to in front (future)

- Tenejapan Tzeltal: (a Mayan language): north, south, east, west

Time "is conceived of as stretching up to the south" (Levinson 1996)

(1) Comparing relative and absolute frames of reference (File11.2.4, p.465)

