

Anthropology 4 – 2021 - Assignment # 1 (10 points)

Answer the following question:

Which of the observations, generalizations, or hypothesis made by Boas, Malinowski, and Whorf can you use to support the claim that there are no “primitive” languages? (Make sure to cover all three authors in your answer and be as specific as possible – but do not fill out your answer with lengthy quotes from the readings, see below about number of words).

Up to 750 words. Due by Monday January 18, at midnight (lengthy quotes from the readings will be excluded from the count of words). There can be **no exception to this deadline**. As specified in the syllabus, there will be no make-ups for the assignments. If you miss the deadline, this will be the one (and only) assignment out of the six that won't be counted for the final score.

The TAs will set up an “assignment” on CCLE in their TA site where you will be able to submit your answer.

Remember to type YOUR NAME and the NAME of your SECTION on the top of the first page of your answer.

Hints: The exercise is to look through (or go back to) the readings and find statements that can be used to show that a particular author presupposed, discovered, or tried to demonstrate that “there are no primitive languages.” The difficulty is that the point about the absence of primitive languages (or the statement that the language being investigated should not be thought of as “primitive”) might have been made in explicit or implicit ways. For example, it might be entailed by the way in which an author made comparison between the language of the “primitive” and the language of the “civilized.” An author might have speculated about whether there was something fundamentally different in the ways in which the “natives” spoke as opposed to the way “civilized” (read “European” or “North American”) speakers used language. You can answer this question by focusing on the highlighted portions of the chapters as well as my PowerPoint slides, and my recorded lectures. You might also want to consider whether one or more of these authors explicitly or implicitly reversed the terms of the comparison and showed or hinted at the fact that the “primitive” languages were more “complex” than the languages of the so-called “civilized” (spelled “civilized”) people.

Estimated time needed for the assignment. If you have done the readings and watched the lectures, this is the kind of question that you should be able to answer in about an hour. If you need to go and consult *some* of the readings, it will take you longer, perhaps a few hours. If you haven't done the readings at all, it will probably take you two or three days.

