Anthropology 4:
Culture and Communication

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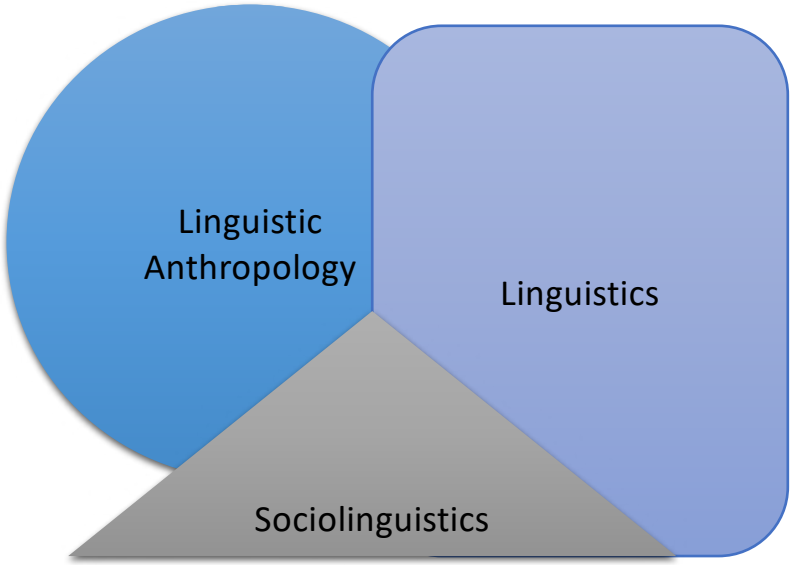
Winter 2021

Lecture 2: Boas' Method, Transcription

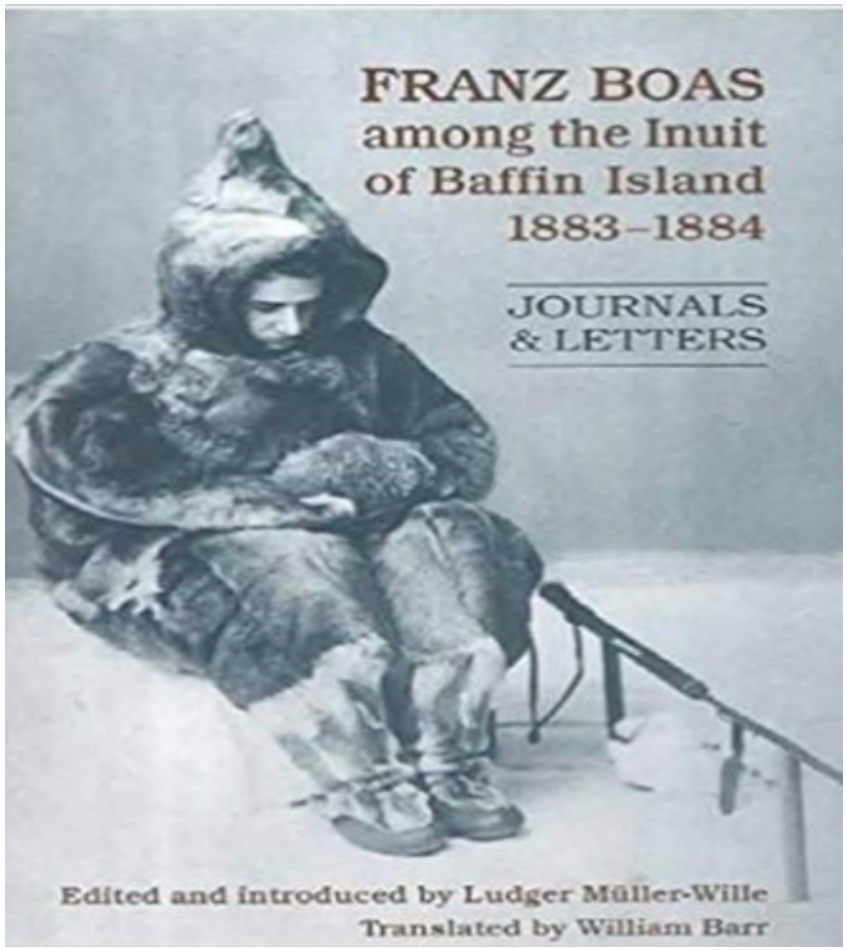
Today's topics

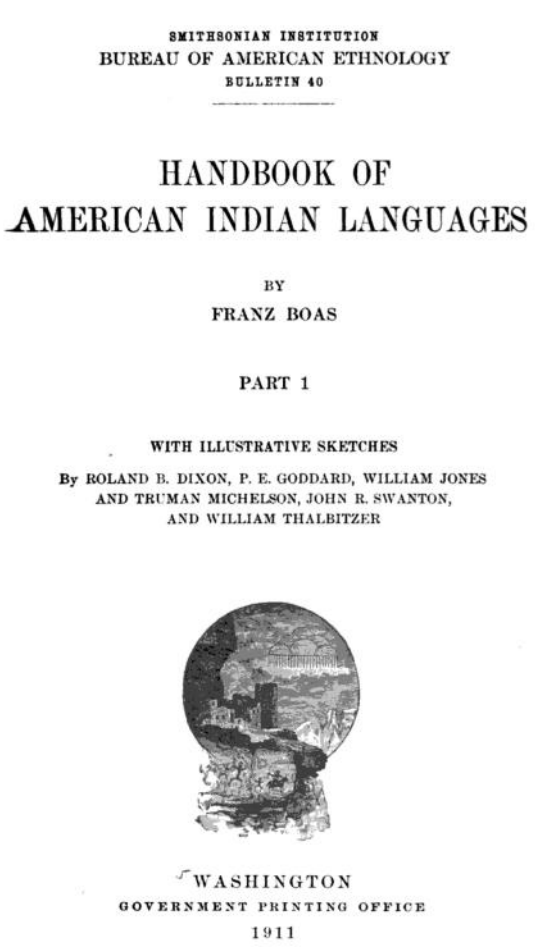
1. Brief review of Lecture #1
2. Boas' goals, methods, and contributions
3. Collection of data – texts, grammars
4. Transcription – example of elicitation of Aymara words and sentences
5. Malinowski (we didn't get there – next time)



Related but distinct fields of inquiry interested in language documentation

The Boasian Plan




SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION
BUREAU OF AMERICAN ETHNOLOGY
BULLETIN 40

HANDBOOK OF
AMERICAN INDIAN LANGUAGES

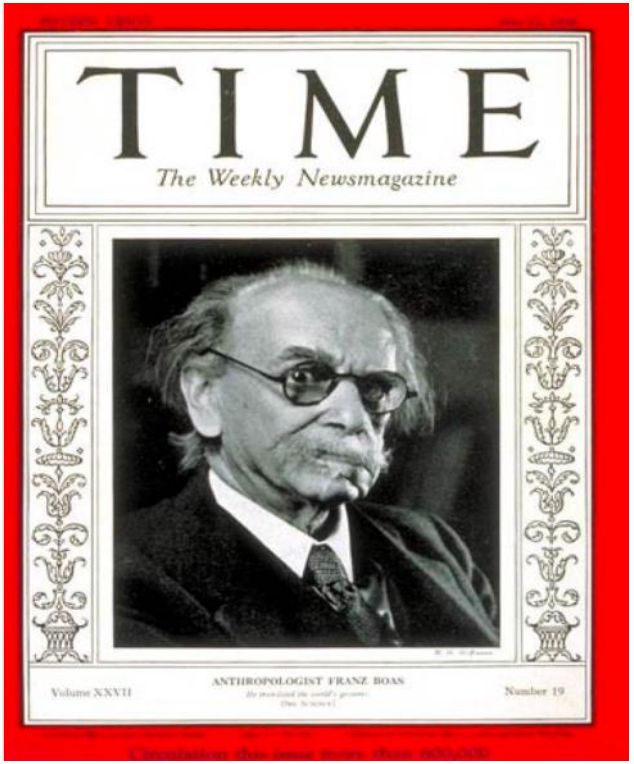
BY
FRANZ BOAS

PART 1

WITH ILLUSTRATIVE SKETCHES

By ROLAND B. DIXON, P. E. GODDARD, WILLIAM JONES
AND TRUMAN MICHELSON, JOHN R. SWANTON,
AND WILLIAM THALBITZER

WASHINGTON
GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE
1911



Boas working on American Indian languages

Boas and other fieldworkers were fascinated by the differences between American Indian languages and European languages.

Distinctions were made, qualified, challenged (e.g., “Primitive” vs. “civilized” societies)

Ultimately, Boas and his students came to the conclusion that even the groups that used to be called “primitive” had complex languages, in some respects with semantic distinctions that are more sophisticated than those found in European languages.

There are no “primitive languages.”

Each language in its own terms

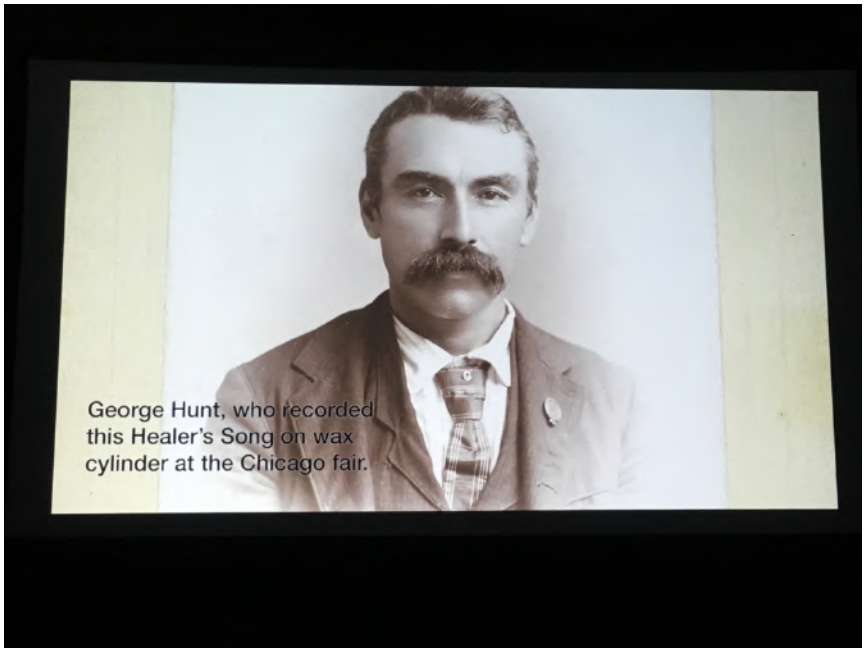
"In accordance with the general views expressed in the introductory chapters, the method of treatment has been throughout an analytical one. **No attempt has been made to compare the forms of the Indian grammars with the grammars of English, Latin, or even among themselves**; but in each case the psychological groupings which are given depend entirely upon the inner form of each language. In other words, the grammar has been treated **as though an intelligent Indian was going to develop the forms of his own thoughts by an analysis of his own form of speech**." (Boas *Introduction to the Handbook of American Indian* Languages, 1911: 81, emphasis added)

Boas carried out fieldwork in Alaska, British Columbia, Oregon

Among the **Kwakwaka'waku** (earlier known as the **Kwakiutl**) indigenous people of the Pacific Northwest Coast (Vancouver Island).

Boas carried out fieldwork

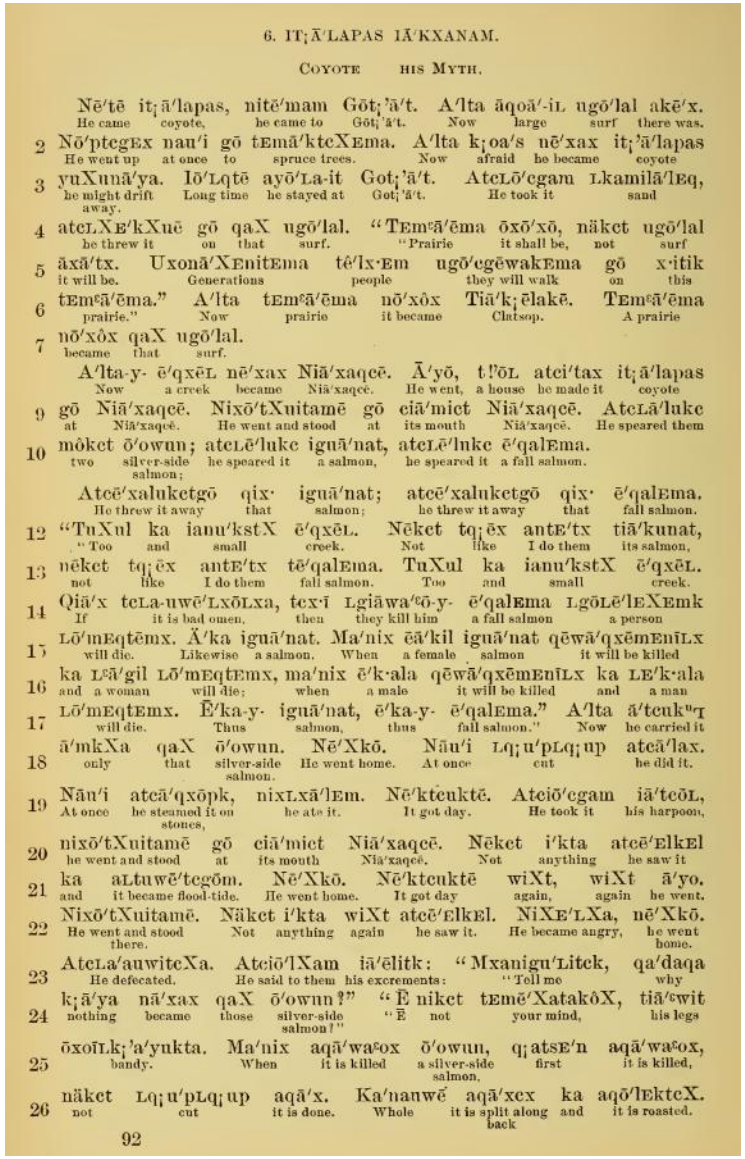
Boas was helped by George Hunt to record customs, rituals, myths, and artifacts. Boas wrote a grammar of the Kwakiutl language (now called Kwak'wala language).



Franz Boas' Methods

Boas was inventing **phonetic** symbols, conventions to represent **linguistic sounds** that are not used to speak English or German (his native language). (In fact, he was also teaching himself linguistics, coming up with classifications of sounds as he was learning American Indian languages)

He published the list of phonetic **symbols** he had used in the texts (like a chemist or physicist would do). He was establishing a **coding** scheme.



6. IT¡Ā'LAPAS IĀ'KXANAM.

COYOTE HIS MYTH.

Nē'tē it¡ā'lapas, nitē'mam Gōt¡'ā't. A'lta āqoā'-iL ugō'lal akē'x.
He came coyote, he came to Gōt¡'ā't. Now large surf there was.

2 Nō'ptcgEx nau'i gō tEmā'ktcXEma. A'lta k¡oa's nē'xax it¡'ā'lapas
He went up at once to spruce trees. Now afraid he became coyote

3 yuXunā'ya. Iō'Lqtē ayō'La-it Got¡'ā't. AtcLō'egam Lkamilā'lEq,
he might drift away. Long time he stayed at Got¡'ā't. He took it sand

4 atcLXE'kXuē gō qaX ugō'lal. "TEmᶜā'ēma ōxō'xō, näkct ugō'lal
he threw it on that surf. "Prairie it shall be, not surf

5 āxā'tx. Uxonā'XEnitEma tê'lx·Em ugō'egēwakEma gō x·itik
it will be. Generations people they will walk on this

6 tEmᶜā'ēma." A'lta tEmᶜā'ēma nō'xôx Tiā'k¡ēlakē. TEmᶜā'ēma
prairie." Now prairie it became Clatsop. A prairie

7 nō'xôx qaX ugō'lal.
became that surf.

A'lta-y- ē'qxēL nē'xax Niā'xaqcē. Ā'yō, t!'ōL atci'tax it¡ā'lapas
Now a creek became Niā'xaqcē. He went, a house he made it coyote

9 gō Niā'xaqcē. Nixō'tXuitamē gō ciā'mict Niā'xaqcē. AtcLā'luke
at Niā'xaqcē. He went and stood at its mouth Niā'xaqcē. He speared them

10 môket ō'owun; atcLē'luke iguā'nat, atcLē'luke ē'qalEma.
two silver-side salmon; he speared it a salmon, he speared it a fall salmon.

Atcē'xaluketgō qix· iguā'nat; atcē'xaluketgō qix· ē'qalEma.
He threw it away that salmon; he threw it away that fall salmon.

12 "TuXul ka ianu'kstX ē'qxēL. Nēket tq¡ēx antE'tx tiā'kunat,
"Too and small creek. Not like I do them its salmon,

13 nēket tq¡ēx antE'tx tē'qalEma. TuXul ka ianu'kstX ē'qxēL.
not like I do them fall salmon. Too and small creek.

14 Qiā'x tcLa-uwē'LxōLxa, tcx·ī Lgiāwaᶜēō-y- ē'qalEma LgōLē'lEXEmk
If it is bad omen, then they kill him a fall salmon a person

15 Lō'mEqtēmx. Ā'ka iguā'nat. Ma'nix ēā'kil iguā'nat qēwā'qxēmEnīLx
will die. Likewise a salmon. When a female salmon it will be killed

16 ka Lᵉā'gil Lō'mEqtEmx, ma'nix ē'k·ala qēwā'qxēmEnīLx ka LE'k·ala
and a woman will die; when a male it will be killed and a man

17 Lō'mEqtEmx. Ē'ka-y- iguā'nat, ē'ka-y- ē'qalEma." A'lta ā'tcukᵘ'ɪ
will die. Thus salmon, thus fall salmon." Now he carried it

18 ā'mkXa qaX ō'owun. Nē'Xkō. Nāu'i Lq¡u'pLq¡up atcā'lax.
only that silver-side salmon. He went home. At once cut he did it.

19 Nāu'i atcā'qxōpk, nixLxā'lEm. Nē'ktcuktē. Atciō'egam iā'tcōL,
At once he steamed it on stones, he ate it. It got day. He took it his harpoon,

20 nixō'tXuitamē gō ciā'mict Niā'xaqcē. Nēket i'kta atcē'ElkEl
he went and stood at its mouth Niā'xaqcē. Not anything he saw it

21 ka aLtuwē'tcgōm. Nē'Xkō. Nē'ktcuktē wiXt, wiXt ā'yo.
and it became flood-tide. He went home. It got day again, again he went.

22 Nixō'tXuitamē. Näket i'kta wiXt atcē'ElkEl. NiXE'LXa, nē'Xkō.
He went and stood there. Not anything again he saw it. He became angry, he went home.

23 AtcLa'auwitcXa. Atciō'lXam iā'ēlitk: "Mxanigu'Litck, qa'daqa
He defecated. He said to them his excrements: "Tell me why

24 k¡ā'ya nā'xax qaX ō'owun?" "Ē niket tEmē'XatakôX, tiāᶜwit
nothing became those silver-side salmon?" "Ē not your mind, his legs

ōxoīLk¡'a'yukta. Ma'nix aqā'waᶜox ō'owun, q¡atsE'n aqā'waᶜox,
bandy. When it is killed a silver-side salmon, first it is killed,

25 näket Lq¡u'pLq¡up aqā'x. Ka'nauwē aqā'xcx ka aqō'lEktcX.
not cut it is done. Whole it is split along back and it is roasted.

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From Boas (1894) *Chinook Texts, Coyote Myth*, first page of transcript & first page of free translation.

← word-by-word interlinear phonetic transcription of narrative provided by Chinook speaker.

"Free" Translation in English →

gaLā'k¡auk¡au. ē'ka Lmē'mElōct kɪk'ɪōcgā'liL, ē'ka Lqēlā'wulX, 1
a murderer, thus corpses who takes [them] always, thus girl first menstruating,

ē'ka LqLā'Xit, ē'ka LE'pL'au. Ka'nauʷā-y- ē'ka tgā'k·iLau tê'lx·Em 2
thus menstruated woman, thus widow and widower. All thus their taboo people

nuxunā'xEnitEma tê'lx·Em. 3
generations of people.

Translation

Coyote was coming. He came to Gōt'a't. There he met a heavy surf. He was afraid that he might be drifted away and went up to the spruce trees. He stayed there a long time. Then he took some sand and threw it upon that surf: "This shall be a prairie and no surf. The future generations shall walk on this prairie." Thus Clatsop became a prairie. The surf became a prairie.

At Niā'xaqcē a creek originated. He went and built a house at Niā'xaqcē. He went out and stayed at the mouth of Niā'xaqcē. Then he speared two silver-side salmon, a steel-head salmon, and a fall salmon. Then he threw the salmon and the fall salmon away, saying: "This creek is too small. I do not like to see here salmon and fall salmon. It shall be a bad omen when a fall salmon is killed here; somebody shall die; also when a salmon is killed. When a female salmon or fall salmon is killed a woman shall die; when a male is killed a man shall die." Now he carried only the silver-side salmon to his house. When he arrived there he cut it at once, steamed it and ate it. On the next day he took his harpoon and went again to the mouth of Niā'xaqcē. He did not see anything, and the flood tide set in. He went home. On the next day he went again and did not see anything. Then he became angry and went home. He defecated and said to his excrements: "Why have these silver-side salmon disappeared?" "Oh, you with your bandy legs, you have no sense. When the first silver-side salmon is killed it must not be cut. It must be split along its back and roasted. It must not be steamed. Only when they go up river then they may be steamed." Coyote went home. On the next day he went again and speared three. He went home and made three spits. He roasted each salmon on a spit. He had three salmon and three spits. On the next day he went again and stood at the mouth of the creek. He did not see anything until the flood tide set in. Then he became angry and went home. He defecated. He spoke and asked his excrements: "Why have these silver-side salmon disappeared?" His excrements said to him: "I told you, you with your bandy legs, when the first silver-side salmon are killed spits must be made, one for the head, one for the back, one for the roe, one for the body. The gills must be burnt." "Yes," said Coyote. On the next day he went again. He killed again three silver-side salmon. When he arrived at home he cut them all and made many spits. He roasted them all separately. The spits of the breast, body, head, back, and roe

Boas, Franz
1900. "Sketch of the Kwakiutl Language."
American Anthropologist
2.4: 708-721.

This system may be represented as follows:

	Sonans	Surd	Fortis	Spirans	Nasal
Velar	g	q	q!	x	–
Palatal	g(w)	k(w)	k!(w)	X	–
Anterior Palatal	g·	k·	k·!	x·	–
Alveolar	d	t	t!	s	n
Dental	dz	ts	ts!	–	–
Labial	b	p	p!	–	m
Lateral	ɪ	ʟ	ʟ!	ɬ	–
Laryngeal catch	ʿ				
	h, y, w.				

The velar series are k sounds pronounced with the soft palate. x corresponds to ch in German *Bach*. The palatal series correspond to our g (hard) and k. X is like x, but pronounced farther forward. g· and k· sound almost like gy and ky (with consonantic y); x· is the German ch in *ich*. d, t, and s are almost dental. ɪ, ʟ, and ʟ! are pronounced with tip of tongue touching the lower teeth, the back of the tongue extending transversely across the hard palate, so that the air escapes suddenly near the first molars. In ɬ the tip of the tongue is in the same position, but the back of the tongue is narrower, so that the air escapes near the canine teeth. The sound is at the same time slightly less explosive than ʟ. l is the same as the English sound. ʿ is a very faint laryngeal intonation. The exclamation mark is used throughout to indicate increased stress of articulation.

The vowels seem to be quite variable. The indistinct ᴇ is very frequent. The two pairs i e and o u probably represent each a single intermediate sound. The whole series of vowels may probably be represented as follows:

ᴇ
i e, î, ê, a, ô, o u
ī ē, – ä, ā, â, ō ū

There are a considerable number of rules of euphony which govern the sequences of sounds. The u vowels do not admit of a following anterior palatal, which is changed into a palatal with

Collections of Texts

Boas analyzed the grammar of each language based on phonetic transcripts of myths, tales, descriptions of local customs, beliefs he obtained from knowledgeable native speakers.

Each word was analyzed and its constituents were separated and classified according to their meaning in isolation and in the context of the story.

Stem	Softened	Hardened
mîx·-, *to strike*	mEn-a′ts!ē, *drum=striking receptacle*	mE′n^{g}xst, *to strike hind end*
sēXw-, *to paddle*	sē′w-ayu, *paddle*	sē′^{g}w-ēnox, *paddler*
ts!ō′ɬ-, *black*	ts!ō′l-is, *black beach*	ts!ō′^{g}l-a, *black rock*
^{g}wun-, *to hide*	^{g}wu′^{g}n-īɬ, *to hide in the house*	^{g}wu^{g}n-a′, *to hide on rock*
dE′nxal-, *to sing*	dE′nxa^{g}l-as, *place of singing*	

Grammatical relations are expressed by means of suffixes and by reduplication. Suffixes affect the word to which they are attached in different ways. A considerable number are attached to the terminal sound of the word, without causing any modifications of the same, except such as are required by the rules of euphony. To this class belong almost all pronominal, temporal, and conjunctive suffixes. Another group of suffixes is attached to the stem of the word, which loses all its word-forming suffixes. It is probable that all nouns are compounds of a stem and of a number of suffixes. The latter disappear entirely when the noun is combined with one of this class of suffixes, and we observe apparently an apocope of the end of the noun, while actually its stem reappears freed from its suffixes. At the same time, the suffix often modifies the terminal consonant of the stem. Thus we have bEgwā′nEm *man*, stem: bEgw-, and from this bEk!u′s *man in the woods;* mEt!ā′nē *clam*, stem: mEt!-, and from this mEdā′d *having clams*. This process is analogous to what has been observed in many Indian languages, and has been termed "decapitation" or "apocope." From the instances with which

N.B. "Softened" = becoming voiced or a continuant;
"Hardened" = (the opposite) becoming voiceless or a stop.

Boas was interested in what is specific, special about American Indian languages:

For example, the information conveyed in English by separate words like articles (*the*, *a*), conjunctions (*and, but*), auxiliary verbs (*have, be*), personal pronouns *(I, you, he/she, him/her, they, them*) in American Indian languages is expressed by strings of morphemes, that is, **prefixes or suffixes** (or morphemes, minimal units of meaning) on a "root" or "stem" (noun or verb).

A morpheme is a minimal unit of meaning, like the suffixes *(e)s* in English to mark the plural (hill-*s,* kniv-*es*),*–ing for* the present participle (look-*ing*), or the prefix *un-* to convey the opposite meaning, e.g., *un-orthodox*.

Boas identified special features of American Indian languages that are not found in European languages. For example, Kwakiutl has a way of encoding whether something is visible or not to the speaker.

speaking, or the pronominal relations. The language has a strong tendency to define every action and every object in all its relations to the persons conversing. These relations are expressed by the personal, demonstrative, and possessive pronouns. The homology between demonstrative and personal pronouns is here perfect. The personal pronoun indicates the person acting or acted upon, as speaker, person addressed, and person spoken of; the demonstrative indicates the location of an action or of an object as near the speaker, near the person addressed, or near the person spoken of. This strict homology appears in many American languages, but in few is the expression of location so rigidly demanded as in Kwakiutl. The location of object or action in relation to the three persons — speaker, person addressed, and person spoken of — must always be expressed. These three positions are further subdivided into two groups, the one expressing objects and actions visible to the speaker, the other expressing those invisible to the speaker.

Location near	1st Person	2d Person	3d Person
Visible to speaker	-k'	-x	–
Invisible to speaker	-g'a	-q!	-a

Cupeño (Uto-Aztecan, California) (from J. Hill 2005)

The language shows concern for truth and positionality of speaker, examples:

-*`ep* = realis

Ku`ut = reported speech, that is, second hand information (the source of information is not the speaker, the speaker cannot vouch for the truth of the news)

Nipeyak`ep

Ni-pe-yak-`ep ‘He said to me’

1SgObj-3Sg-say-realis

*Mu-**ku`ut** wiyika pe-`amu-ngiy-qal*

and-Rep around 3Sg-hunt-MOTG-Pis

ewepe-ka wew-yax-weni-`aw

WEST-TO RAIN-*YAX*-PISi-IMP-AT

Free translation: ‘and it is said that he was always going hunting off to the west in a canyon’ (Jane Hill 2005, *A Grammar of Cupeño*, p. 64)

1=first person
Sg=singular
Obj=direct object
3=third person
realis=not hypothetical
Rep=reported speech
MOTG=motion going away
Aw
Pis=past imperfective singular
i=augment vowel …
Imp=imperfect
YAX=theme class suffix
AT=

Break

Questions? Comments?

Transcribing talk

Without a recording machine, linguists had to ask native speakers to slowly pronounce one utterance at a time. (In fact, the Phonograph was invented in 1877, and various changes were made to record first on wax coated cardboard cylinders and later on flat discs. But it was used to record songs, not talk).

This method is called “elicitation.” One can “elicit” a narrative or a list of words or expressions. It can be done without any recording device or with a recorder.

Some prerequisites for transcription:

1. Be able to hear sounds with which one might not be familiar
2. Have conventions for transcribing those sounds (if the language already has an official orthography, assess it and decide whether to use it)
3. If there are bilingual speakers, a second language (e.g., Spanish, English) can be used as a "metalanguage". Elicitation becomes translation.
4. Awareness of difference between elicited talk when a native speaker is talking to an outsider non-native speaker (e.g., the linguist or the linguistic anthropologist) and spontaneous talk among native speakers (expect different speed of talk and possibly different pronunciation, etc.)

An example of elicitation

Using a metalanguage (Spanish) to learn Aymara (as spoken in Puno, Peru).

Using a list of words to build sentences

‘perro’

‘gato’

‘niño’

‘tengo un niño’

‘yo tengo un niño’

‘nosotros tenemos un niño’

‘tenemos casa’

Breaking down the task, step by step

‘perro’ 

‘gato’ 

‘niño’ 

‘tengo un niño’

‘yo tengo un niño’ 

‘nosotros tenemos un niño’ 

‘tenemos casa/we have a house’ 

Transcribe words & small chunks

‘dog’ anu

‘cat’ phisi

‘baby’ wawa

‘tengo un niño/I have a baby’ wawa nitwa

‘yo tengo un niño’ nayaxa wawa nitwa

‘we have a baby’ nanakaxa wawa niptwa

‘tenemos casa/we have a house’ uta niptwa







Word-by-word Glosses

wawa nitwa

baby I-have

nayaxa wawa nitwa

I baby I-have

nanakaxa wawa niptwa

we baby have-Plural

uta niptwa

house have-Plural

What can we learn about Aymara from these limited data?

1. Some nouns (uta, anu, wawa)
2. Sounds (/a, u, i, w, y, n, t, p, k, x/)
3. Syllables (no word starts with 2 Consonants, words always end in a vowel)
4. Stress (penultimate syllable)
5. Word order (Verb goes at the end of sentence)
6. Ellipsis (Subject can be omitted like in Spanish, see *nayaxa wawa nitwa,* where “nayaxa” ‘I’ can be omitted)
7. Morphology (Distinction between Singular/Plural in the verb – nitwa vs. niptwa - , No indefinite article – English *a/an*)

To summarize so far

Two goals for transcribing linguistic sounds:

1. Getting the sounds right and transcribing them in a consistent way.
2. Getting to the meaning of the words (and its parts, morphemes) as understood by the native speakers.