

Linguistic Anthropology



Prepared by Anth 246 at Bryn Mawr College (March 2020)
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What is Linguistic Anthropology?

- ❖ Let's break down the term...
 - Linguistic(s) - scientific study of languages
 - Anthropology - scientific study of humans
 - Ex: Behaviors, Societies, Cultures!
- ❖ “The study of language as a cultural resource and speaking as a cultural practice”

(Duranti)



What is Linguistic Anthropology? (Cont.)

- Linguistics
 - System of a particular language
 - Ex: sounds (phonetics), meanings, syntax
- Sociolinguistics
 - Study of different dialects in a hierarchical setting
 - Usage of quantitative methods
- Linguistic Anthropology
 - Pays attention to context
 - Usage of smaller sample groups, observation and interviewing

Language reflects & produces social relations/hierarchies...

Linguistic Anthropology poses this question: What can you learn from paying close attention to how people use language?

Important Concepts!

Speakers' agency - People use language to assert their belonging to different social groups/categories, and their adherence or resistance to norms.

Language Policing - Can happen overtly or covertly, through educational or government policies, or everyday interactions.

Social Indexicality - how language connect to a context

Prestige VS Stigma

Standard VS Vernacular or “slang”

Youth Language Project

- Choose a popular word or expression that you observe (and even use) regularly
 - term of address “bro”
 - expression “that’s tough”
 - particular usage “yknow”
 - distinct pronunciation “maed” (vs. mad)
- Thinking deeper...*how* it is said, to *whom*, and *for what purpose*? How does it impact social relationships? How does it connect to, or even reject, stereotypes?

Data Collection

- Ethnographic observation
- Interviewing
- Cultural analysis

Data Analysis

- Qualitative & Quantitative
- Identifying trends of purpose, impact, speaker/addressee, and innovative use of language