

A close-up photograph of a person's hands holding a large, round, woven basket. The basket is intricately decorated with horizontal bands of colorful beads in shades of blue, yellow, orange, red, and green. The person holding the basket is wearing a vibrant, patterned garment with geometric designs in yellow, red, and black. The background is softly blurred, showing more of the person's attire and some greenery.

An Introduction to Linguistic Anthropology

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Preliminary:

**Language is not just language.
It is always does a mental and
socio-cultural work.**

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- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uKxd30IQ1f0>

Course description

- The course outlines the fundamental concepts of linguistic anthropology
- Upon successful completion of this course the students will
 - Define anthropology and its academic reality
 - Know the basic concepts of linguistic anthropology
 - Be able to account for the place of linguistic anthropology within the field of anthropology
 - Account for the nexus between language and sociocultural reality as studied by linguistic anthropology
 - Account for the methods used in linguistic anthropology study
 - Apply the course to one specific issue in linguistic anthropology

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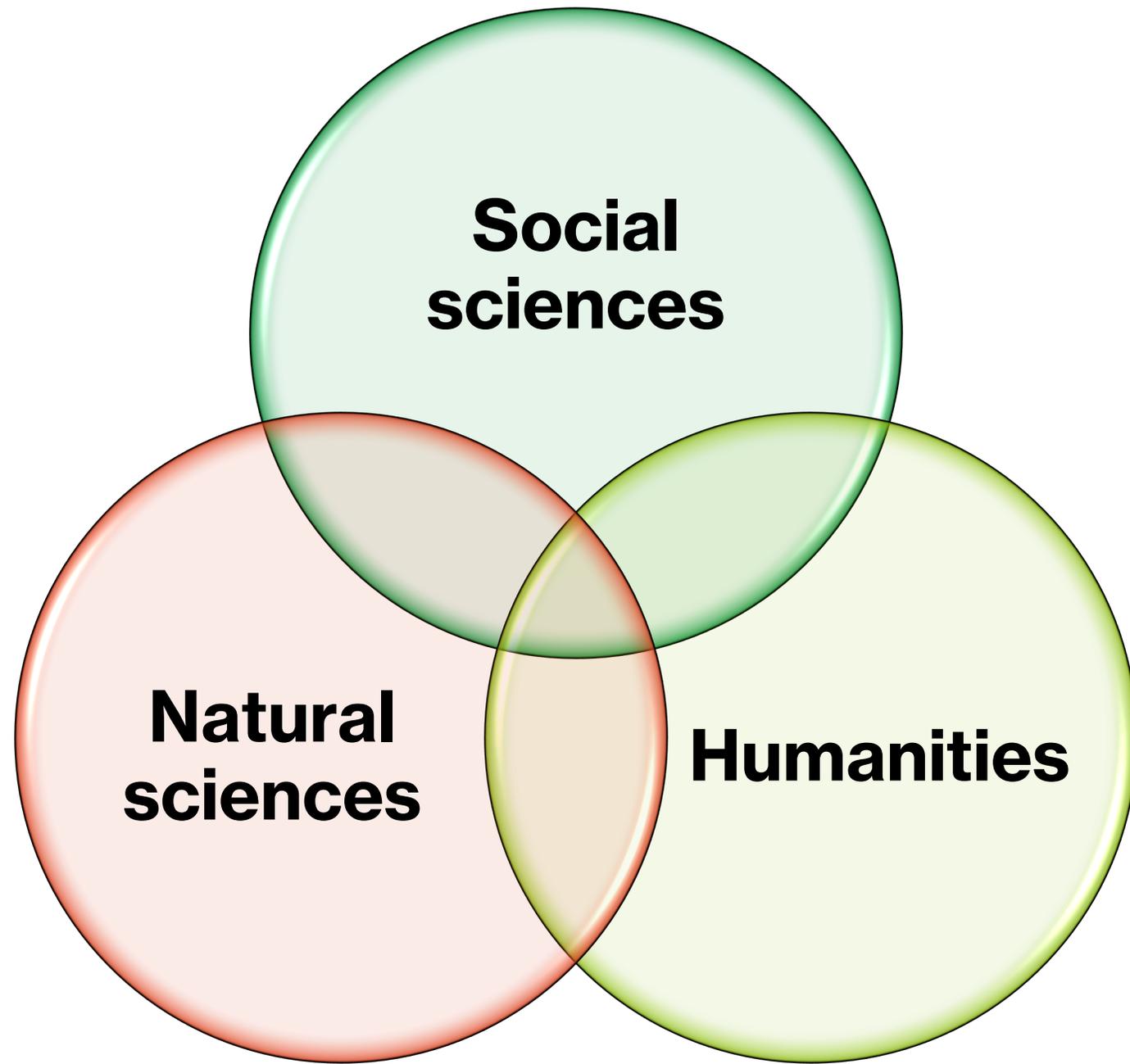
What is Anthropology?

- Anthropology is:
 - the science of humanity;
 - the study of humans and human diversity.
 - the study of humankind in all times and places.
 - the study of what it means to be human [the objective and systematic study of humankind in all times and places.

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- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G9xfaW8tXul&t=34s>

What do anthropologists do?





**Social
sciences**

**Natural
sciences**

Humanities









r/Enduring Voices Project







The four fields

- Anthropological Archeology
- Cultural Anthropology
- Biological Anthropology
- Linguistic Anthropology

Anthropological archeology

- Archeology investigates the human past through the excavation and analysis of material remains, and the study of recent past and present material culture
- Through analyses of material culture, anthropological archeologists explore changes in the social, economic, and symbolic organization of human societies over time.
 - Historical archeology, bioarcheology, contemporary archeology, paleoanthropology, primatology ...

Biological anthropology

- seeks to answer fundamental biological questions about humans, our relatives, and our ancestors
- investigates human evolutionary history, the causes of present-day genetic diversity, and the biology of human behavior
- draws on genetics, paleontology, developmental biology, primate behavior, nutrition, and ecology (multidisciplinary)

Sociocultural anthropology

- aims to grasp sociocultural existence across all its dimensions
- describes, analyzes, and interprets the full range of human social relations and cultural forms.
- It looks at kinship, gender, religion, politics, economy, and artistic traditions, all with the goal of understanding how they work, why they differ across time and space, and how they change on local and global scales.

Linguistic anthropology

- focuses on the interrelationships between language and other aspects of a people's culture.
- studies language as a form of social action.
- It looks at how language makes us who we are, and how we make language what it is.
- It considers language in the context of human evolution, social relationships, and cultural forms, and
- it explores the role of languages and ways of speaking in creating, sustaining, and undermining sociocultural differences and divisions.

Applied Anthropology

- **the application of the methods and theory of anthropology to the analysis and solution of practical problems**
 - **Educational anthropology:** how culture shapes educational processes, how culture is acquired by individuals and groups through such processes, as well as how people create changes in and through their educational environments.
 - **Organizational anthropology:** understanding the social behaviors and meaning that makes up organizational culture and dynamics
 - **Forensic anthropology:** applying skeletal analysis and techniques in archaeology to solving criminal cases
 - **Anthropology of development:** a term applied to a body of anthropological work which views development from a critical perspective.
 - Development anthropologists critique and contribute to projects and institutions that create and administer Western projects that seek to improve the sustainable development of marginalized communities, and to eliminate poverty.
 - Human rights, community development, museums, health and medicine (epidemics...), disaster management, environmental issues ...

Ethnocentrism and anthropology

- Ethnocentrism is a belief that the ways of one's own culture are the only proper ones.
- It is the idea that your own way of doing things is the correct way of being human

The problem of biological and environmental determinism

- Why are other people the way they are?
 - People are the way they are because of their biology (biological/racial/genetic determinism)
 - ... because of where they live (parts of the world)



Boas 1901, 1911

- *The Mind of Primitive Man*. The Journal of American Folklore , Jan. - Mar., 1901, Vol. 14, No. 52 (Jan. - Mar., 1901), pp. 1-11

- One of the chief aims of anthropology is the study of the mind of man under the varying conditions of race and of environment. **The activities of the mind manifest themselves in thoughts and actions**, and **exhibit an infinite variety of form among the peoples of the world**. In order to understand these clearly, the student must endeavor to **divest himself entirely of opinions and emotion upon the peculiar social environment into which he is born**. He must adapt his own mind, so far as feasible, to that of the people whom he is studying. The more successful he is in freeing himself from the bias based on the group of ideas that constitute the civilization in which he lives, the more successful he will be in interpreting the beliefs and actions of man. He must follow lines of thought that are new to him. He must participate in new emotions, and understand how, under unwonted conditions, both lead to actions. **Beliefs, customs, and the response of the individual to the events of daily life give us ample opportunity to observe the manifest of the mind of man under varying conditions**.
 - Address of the retiring President before the American Folk-Lore Baltimore, December
-

Ruth Benedict 1934

- *Patterns of Culture*
- Cultural integration (configuration) occurs in the pattern of ideas and emotions characteristic of any given culture
- What ties a culture together exists in the minds of the members of the culture
- These patterns make cultures into “articulated wholes” consistent within the members of the community sharing them.



See also...

- Bronislaw Malinowski
- Edward Sapir
- John Gumperz
- Margaret Mead...

Contemporary anthropological perspective

- **Relativistic**: Any truth is relative! So we seek to understand another person's beliefs and behaviors from the perspective of their culture rather than our own.
- **Empirical**: empirical evidence in the formation of ideas
- **Holistic**: integrate all that is known about human beings and their activities. Studying the whole of humanity.
- **Adaptative** (or Evolutionary): changes and adaptation to changes
- **Comparative**: what humans have in common, how we differ, and how we change

The Concept of Culture

- Culture is “that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.” (Tylor, 1871, p.28)
- culture: a society’s shared and socially transmitted (learned) habits, ideas, values, and perceptions, which are used to make sense of experience and which generate behavior and are reflected in that behavior.
- an integrated system of symbols, ideas and values that should be studied as a working system, an organic whole (Kuper 1999:56)

What is Linguistic Anthropology?

- The study of the diversity of human language in the past and present, and its relationship to social groups, practices, and values
- How speaking, singing, reading, joking, texting, arguing and so on, makes us who we are.
- How interactions create social relationships, political inequalities, cultural forms, and historical change.
- We can “hear” culture only by “listening to” language in a certain way. (Silverstein 2004: 621)



History of Linguistic Anthropology

Franz Boas

**Ruth Benedict,
Patterns of
Culture**

Margaret Mead

Edward Sapir

**Benjamin Lee
Worf**

Harry Hoijer

Dell Hymes

John Gumperz

- Franz Boas: cultural relativism (1900)
- Bronislaw Malinowski: against ethnocentrism, ethnographic methods, functionalism (Trobriand Islands 1915-1918)
- Edward Sapir: linguistic relativity, the psychology of culture
- Edward Sapir, Benjamin Lee Whorf, Harry Hoijer: Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis (Sapir 1921, 1929, Whorf 1940, Hoijer 1954)
- Ruth Benedict, Margaret Mead: Patterns of Culture, cultural configurationalism (Benedict 1934)
- Claude Levi Strauss: Structural Anthropology
- Dell Hymes, John Gumperz and Ethnography of Communication / interactional sociolinguistics (, Gumperz 1958, Hymes 1964, Hymes & Gumperz 1972)
- William Labov: Variationist Sociolinguistics (Labov 1961, Labov 1972...)



Language, Cultural Indexicality, and Sociocultural Action

Indexicality

- See C. S. Peirce's three sign modalities:
 - Icon: likeness, shared features
 - Index: factual correspondent, pointing to something
 - Symbol: imputed characteristic, interpretive habit
- First order indexicality
- Second order indexicality
- Higher order indexicality (Silverstein)

- Implicit meaning
 - Meaning that we don't say or write, but express.
 - The index points away from what you say to the context in which it fits.
 - We produce more indexicality than simple meaning when we speak.
 - We are more implicit than explicit (Jan Blommaert)
 - Indexicals are **context-sensitive** or **context-dependent** units or expressions.
-

- Through indexicality, every utterance tells something about the utterer, the co-speaker, and the relation between interactants, the sociocultural context of production
 - Indexical meaning anchors language usage into social and cultural patterns. (see Blommaert 2005)
 - the social effects mediated by speech are highly context-bound or **indexical** in character: they are evaluated in relation to the context or situation at hand (Agha 2007:14)
-

Indexicality, cont.

- An index is a sign that shows evidence of the concept or object being represented.
- **An index indicates or points at something.**
- Indexicality refers to the pervasive context-dependency of natural language utterances **pointing at specific features, ideas, peculiarities...**
 - Regional accent indexing speaker identity or origin
 - Verbal etiquette marking deference and demeanor
 - Dexis pointing at specific space and time facts (shifters... I, here, you, now...)
 - Demonstratives – this, that
 - Tense and aspect
 - Modality
- As Peirce put it, and indexical sign **stands in a relation of “dynamical coexistence” with its object**

“heart”

iconic



symbolic



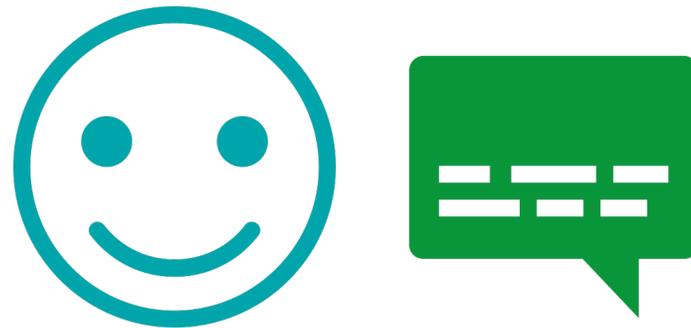
indexical



Nonverbal indexicality



Nonverbal alone



Nonverbal + speech
(multimodal indexicality)









Language and Speech Communities

- Language and speech community are constructs developed by scholars of language to refer to a social aggregate within which language is used.” (Irvine 2006: 689)
- An ethnic group with a single language? (see J. G. Herder)
- *Masse parlante*? Saussure... mass of speakers
- though speech is similar, speakers still maintain linguistic distinction
- Speech community is a “field of action where the distribution of linguistic variants is a reflection of social facts” (John Gumperz 1968: 383)
- Linguistic diversity within speech communities: communicative repertoires, multilingualism, multidialectalism...
- Speech networks and communities of practice: where community is not assumed *a priori* it is achieved. (Irvine 2006)
- Speech community is the “product of the communicative activities engaged in by a given group of people.” (Duranti 1997:882)

Language Socialization

- Two premises:
 - The process of acquiring a language is deeply affected by the process of becoming a *competent member of society*
 - The process of being a competent member of society is realized *through a large extent by language*
- Learning a language and becoming a social actor therefore are a *single process*
- The way children are socialized into language often affects their “trajectories of socialization”
- See early complex structures as a result of early emancipation (white vs black kids in the US. Bryce-Heath 1982)
- Privilege, power, and opportunity are linked to trajectories of language socialization

Language and Social Action

- Vs. language as a mental activity
- Vs. language as a system
- For linguistic anthropology, language and sociocultural reality are inextricably intertwined.
- Language and society are mutually constituted, that is language creates the social world we live in and the social world we live in conditions and shapes the language we use
- Language is a socio-culturally active semiotic system.
- In linguistic anthropology, we study phonology/phonetics, morphology, syntax, semantics and pragmatics as part of social action

Language Ideology

- We discover language ideologies through the study of the metalinguistic/metapragmatic function of language.
- Language ideologies are “Cultural system of ideas about social and linguistic relationships together with their loading of moral and political interests” (Irvine 1989, 255)
- Language ideologies are metalinguistic attitudes which link language use to social identity
 - Official language
 - Standardization
 - Gender (ma petite/mon bois... that woman speaks too aggressively...)
 - Globalization
 - Ethnocentrism and primitive culture
 - Literacy

The ideology of language standard

- Standard variety:
 - Accent-less, region-less, accent/voice from nowhere, neutral...
 - Attitude: pristine, immaculate, clean,
 - Example: Received Pronunciation in UK; General American Accent; Paris Accent...

- Other varieties
 - Dialect, accent, regional, localized voice
 - Attitude: broken accent, incorrect, tainted, scarred (verbal scar, see Silverstein 2011), polluted, stained, deficient, dysfunction
 - Actions: accent cleansing, purification, oral corrective therapy, verbal cosmetic/plastic surgery, verbal/accident bleaching, decontamination (see Prof. Higgins and Eliza Doolittle, Pygmalion/my Fair Lady)
 - Example: AAVE, Cockney, Texan Accent, Brooklynese (NY) (see Labov), Liverpool Accent, Ivorian Popular French, Nouchi, Français de Moussa (Lafage 1991; Kouadio 2007), Le Petit Negre (Kouadio 2007), Naija,

- "A woman who utters such depressing and disgusting sounds has no right to be anywhere – no right to live. Remember that you are a human being with a soul and the divine gift of articulate speech . . . don't sit there crooning like a bilious pigeon." Prof. Henry Higgins, *in Pygmalion* (George Bernard Shaw, 1912)
-

- The negative attitude toward local varieties is also loaded with ideas of
 - Lower status
 - Lower education
 - Less social prestige
 - Lower class
 - ...
-

Language, Sexuality and Gender

- Sex: biological
- Gender: cultural distinction
 - Though this dichotomy may be simplistic
 - See Eckert and McConnell 2003:10 “There is no obvious point at which sex leaves off and gender begins, partly because there is no single objective biological criterion for male or female sex.”
 - Sex is a complex combination of anatomy, hormones, and chromosomes
 - Ref. sex or gender verification in sports or sex test or hormone test... (Caster Semenya, South Africa ,)
- Gender is learned, collaborative, action, asymmetric
- Language is a powerful tool that construct and maintains gender features and actions

Gender theories

- The biological theory: gender is defined in terms of biological sex.
 - The theory assumes that men outsize and overpower women (Bergvall, 1999; Tannen, 1993) and that gender polarities exist in language use.
 - The biological theory also assumes that gender roles are static and contextually independent.
- The social constructionist theory (Leaper & Smith, 2004) defines gender in light of social contexts in which interactions occur.
 - It assumes that gender roles are fluid and contextually situated (Leaper & Smith, 2004), that gendered identities are voluntary, and that males and females choose their gendered identities (Leaper & Smith, 2004).
 - In terms of language use, the social constructionist theory assumes that males and females are not confined to one particular language style, but exchange styles based on the social context of their interactions (Coates & Johnson, 2001; Leaper & Smith, 2004).



Male talk vs. Talk

- Male speech is characterized as opposition / competition oriented or adversarial.
 - Males use language primarily to assert their position of dominance, attract and maintain an audience, and to assert themselves when other speakers have the floor.
- In contrast, female speech is characterized as collaboration oriented or affiliative.
 - They use language more cooperatively than males, respond to and elaborate on what others have said, make more supportive comments, ask more questions, and work to keep conversations going.
 - They use language to create and maintain relationships of closeness and equality, to criticize others in acceptable ways, and to accurately interpret other female's speech (Sheldon, 1990).

Who's speaking here?

- “I am frightened to death”!
- mauve, lavender aquamarine, azure and magenta
- adorable, charming, lovely, fantastic, heavenly
- awfully, pretty, terribly, vastly, quite
- Dear me! Do you always get up so late? It's one o'clock!
- Shit! The train is late again!

Register

- A register is a linguistic repertoire that is associated, culture internally, with particular social practices and with persons who engage in such practices.
- The use of a register conveys to a member of the culture that some typifiable social practice is linked indexically to the current occasion of language use, as part of its context. (Asif Agha 2000:210)
- Registers and recognizable instances of social practice
- distinctive registers are associated with social practices of every kind – such as law, medicine, prayer, science, magic, etc.
- registers rely on the metalinguistic ability of native speakers to discriminate between linguistic forms, to make evaluative judgments about variant forms.

Language and Performance

- 'Performance' means something like a particular practice of some held knowledge or belief
- In linguistics distinction between 'performance' and competence, in anthropology 'performance' means special events like rituals
- Three main ways linguistic anthropology understand performance:
 - communicative competence (Dell Hymes 1972)
 - performatives (doing by saying: I pronounce you husband and wife...) and
 - verbal art: stylization of language, acts of speech on display, oratory, storytelling, theater...
- Performance for sociality, esthetics, strategy...

Language and thought

- Franz Boas, Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis, Harry Hoijer, Lera Boroditsky...
- Linguistic Determinism
- Linguistic Relativity (Eskimos and snow; Akan and yam...)
- “We see and hear and otherwise experience largely as we do largely because the language habits of our community predispose us to certain choices of interpretation” Sapir 1949 [1929]:128)



1

taha

2

ua

3

tolu

4

fa

5

nima

6

ono

7

fitu

8

valu

9

hiva

10

hongofulu

11

tahataha

12

tahaua

13

tahatolu

14

tahafa

15

tahanima

16

tahaono

17

tahafitu

18

tahavalu

19

tahahiva

20

uanoa

Language and power

- Hegemony
- Governmentality
 - Official language
 - Standard variety vs. others, minority varieties
- Naming, forms of address and power (vous/tu; ma petite/mon bois, le vieux/lo vié, le babatchai...)



Methods in Linguistic Anthropology

Ethnography

- **Ethnography** A detailed description of a particular culture primarily based on fieldwork.
 - **Fieldwork:** on-location research.
 - **participant observation** In ethnography, the technique of learning a people's culture through social participation and personal observation within the community being studied, as well as interviews and discussion with individual members of the group over an extended period of time.



Ethnology

- The study and analysis of different cultures from a comparative or historical point of view, utilizing ethnographic accounts and developing anthropological theories that help explain why certain important differences or similarities occur among groups.

Discourse Analysis and Transcription

- Linguistic anthropology record instances of discourse, and
- transcribe those instances

Goodwin,
1980

example 3

- ((Said from a distance.))
- (1) Sha: Your **mother** wants you!
- (2) Flo: Okay.
(4.0)
- (3) Sha: °You better- Go "I didn't do it" Pam.
- (4) Ria: **WE AIN'T SAY THAT PA:M.**
- (5) Flo: You said that//I said-
- (6) Pam: °Where. Where.
- (7) Ria: [°Sh' said-
- (8) Pam: [(°Lemme see.)
- (9) Ria: Um-
- (10) Flo: They//say y'all say I wrote **everything** o//ver there. I ain't//wrote everythi:ng.
- (11) Ria: **They** say- (0.2) Y'**all** said that she (0.2) Wrote that um, They wrote//that bi:g
- (12) Ter: You//said-
- (13) Flo: Only thing//is the car.
- (14) Ter: **Pam** tol://me-
- (15) Pam: **UHUH. = THAT WAS VINCENT SAID.**
- (16) Ter: But y//ou told **me** that
- (17) Flo: I know it was Vincent cuz Vincent was the one that wrote that//on that **car**.
- (18) Sha: ((Falsetto)) **Uhuh.** = We started to tear that- ·h uh that out. We tol- we said that we- **all** said- ·h I said//all-
- (19) Ria: ((Falsetto)) **I** said, "Who wrote it on the car." Sharon say "Either Vincent, (0.2) or, **Vincent** or um-//**Florence**.



Practice

- How different do men and women speak? How? What are the indexicals? (see Deborah Tannen *You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation*. 1990)
 - Choose specific language practices and unveil cultural facts linked to those practices (any language will do)
 - In your mother tongue, give a few examples showing ideas about specific forms of language or speech.
 - Give ideas that the following forms index:
 - Babatchai (Ivorian French)
 - Igwe (Igbo)
 - Ma petite (Ivorian French)
-