Brooklyn College – City University of New York
Department of Anthropology

LINGUISTIC ANTHROPOLOGY AND LANGUAGE IDEOLOGIES

Prof. Joseph A. Torres-González
ANTH 1100 – Culture & Society
March 8th, 2022

DISCUSSION AGENDA

- Linguistic Anthropology (Rosa & Urciuoli)
  - Raciolinguistics
  - Language ideologies
  - Mock Spanish
  - Inverted Spanglish

- Semiotics of Exclusion (Urciuoli)
  - Social signs
  - Language and power
  - How language is racialized
  - Linguistic "acts of identity"
  - Code-switching
  - Indexicality (Silverstein, 1977)
  - Boundaries
  - Inner/Outer Sphere
  - "Acting American"
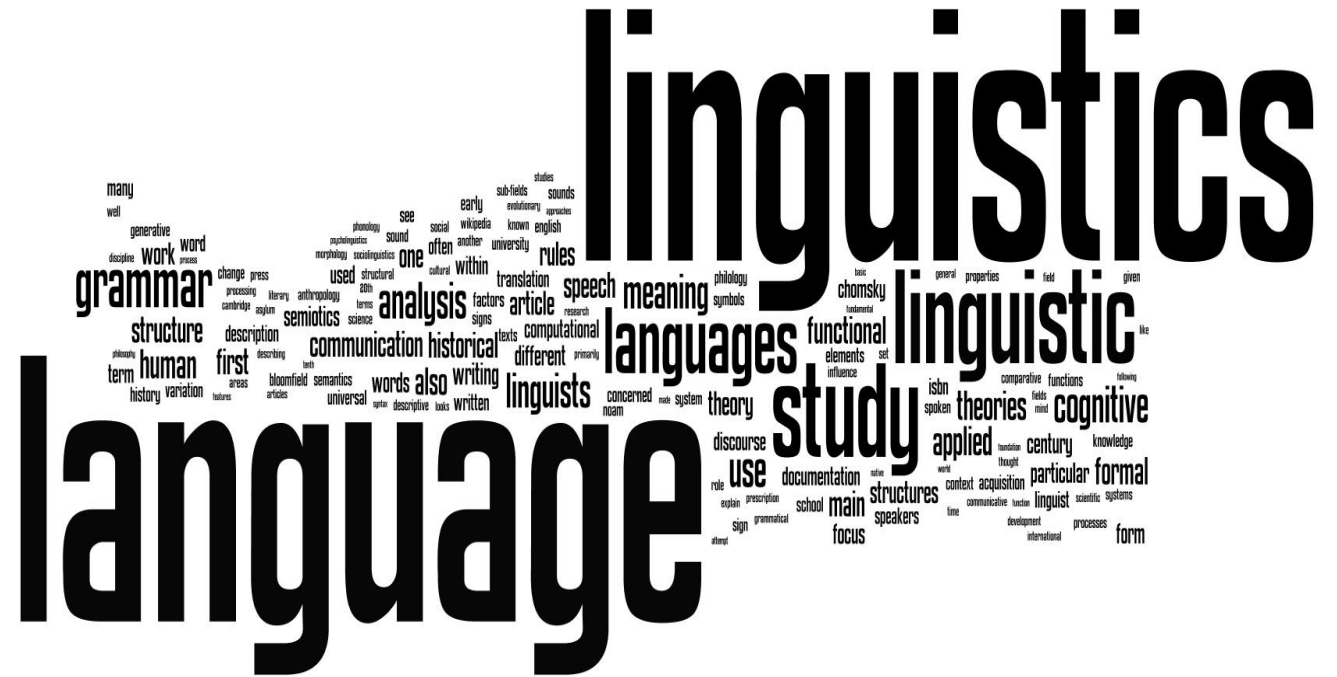
READING ASSIGNMENTS

- Light, Linda. 2020. "Language" in *Perspectives: An Open Invitation to Cultural Anthropology*. Ed. Nina Brown, Laura Tubelle de González, and Thomas McIlwraith. Pp. 70-95. (Open Educational Resource)

- Rosa, Jonathan. 2016. "Chapter 3- From Mock Spanish to Inverted English: Language Ideologies and the Racialization of Mexican and Puerto Rican Youth in the United States" in Samy Alim, H., John H. Rickford and Arnetha F. Ball (eds.) *Raciolinguistics: How Language Shapes Our Ideas about Race*. Pp. 65-80.

- Urciouli, Bonnie. 1996. "Introduction: The Semiotics of Exclusion", in *Exposing Prejudice: Puerto Rican Experiences of Language, Race, and Class*. Waveland Press: Long Grove. Pp. 1-14.

GUIDE QUESTIONS

1- Define language and linguistic relativity (Light, 2020)

2- What is "Mock Spanish" and "Inverted Spanglish"? Provide an example of each (Rosa, 2016)

3- How does Urciouli (1996) describe "language prejudice"?

ANTHROPOLOGY AS A FOUR-FIELD DISCIPLINE

Social/Cultural Anthropology
Biological (Physical Anthropology)
Archaeology
Linguistic Anthropology

LINGUISTIC ANTHROPOLOGY

- **Linguistic Anthropology** – the study of language and how it shapes and influences social life.
  - Initially as a discipline that was created to study "endangered languages"

- How language shapes communication

- Social and group membership (identities)

- Large-scale culture and ideology

- Social spaces

- **Raciolinguistics -** reveals the central role that language plays in shaping our ideas about race and vice versa. (Samy Alim, Rickford, and Ball, 2016)

- **Language ideologies -** "sets of beliefs about language articulated by users as a rationalization or justification of perceived language structure and use". (Silverstein, 1979)

LINGUISTIC ANTHROPOLOGY

- **Language ideologies**- Used as strategies of maintaining social power and domination.
- **Mock Spanish –** "a set of discursive practices involving the incorporation of 'Spanish-language materials into English in order to create a jocular or pejorative 'key" (Rosa, 68: 2016), citing Jane Hill (1998, 682) "Production of Whiteness"
  - Provide an example of Mock Spanish

- **Spanglish –** deemed as a "unifying force" among Latinas/os; *hybrid language*.
  - Provide an example of Spanglish

- **Inverted Spanglish –** when US Latino/as use these languages practices to meet the demand that they speak Spanish in English without being heard to posses an accent. Signals intimate familiarity with both English and Spanish.
  - Provide an example of Inverted Spanglish

- How does Jonathan Rosa use Ethnography? Why do they use Inverted Spanglish? Why is Mock Spanish a practice associated with social power? Where are the boundaries?

SEMIOTICS OF EXCLUSION

- **Semiotics**- study of signs and interpretative systems; how humans are semioticized. (Urciuoli, 1996: 14; 2)
  - "How people talk about language, race, and class must be interpreted in terms of their social location" (2)

- **Prejudice**- "expressed as a social sign, that is, meaningful behaviors and actions that take place in ordinary social interaction. Social signs include but go well beyond language" (Urciuoli, 1996: 1)

- **Language and power –** linguistic and social conditions in which they live.

- **How is language racialized?**

- "Here, the starting points are race and class: how are people racialized, how are race and class conflated, how do race and ethnicity become contrasting discourses, how are language perceptions constructed and mapped onto race/ethnicity and class?" (3)

SEMIOTICS OF EXCLUSION

- What are the conditions that have brought bi-lingual and multilingual situations in post-colonial industrial-capitalist societies?
  - Hint: migration, historical conditions (P. 4-5)

- **Code-switching**- Who, where, with whom, and when is it done?

- **Indexicality**- "Indexes are signs that indicate connection, co-existence, or causality. Indexes are words, sounds, or grammatical elements that carry information about the speaker's identity or location. Interpreting indexes depends on the interpreter's perspective" (7)
  - Who is marked and who is unmarked?
  - What is an example of an index?

- **Linguistic boundaries-** "Spanish is treated as a thing which does not belong in the workplace; a "Spanish" or "Puerto Rican" accent becomes a thing that threatens to take over and destroy one's control and security (8)

SEMIOTICS OF EXCLUSION

- **Inner/Outer Sphere**
  - **Inner Sphere** – familiar relations
  - **Outer Sphere-** interactions out of the familiar circle, with people who are not part of the same class/racial dynamic.

- Can this theoretical approach still apply to language use within people of different class/race/ethnicity in the United States, particularly among US Latino/as?

- What other examples can you think of this dynamic? How is language use negotiated?

Torres-González, J.A.

One Day at a Time (Netflix Sitcom) Season 2, Episode 1

- Mock Spanish
- Language Ideologies
- Language/Race

Image obtained via Wikipedia
https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/9/9a/OneDayAtATime.png