

**UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI**  
**INSTITUTE OF ANTHROPOLOGY, GENDER AND AFRICAN STUDIES**  
**ACADEMIC YEAR: 2014/2015**  
**SEMESTER: SECOND**  
**DEGREE: BACHELOR OF ARTS IN ANTHROPOLOGY**  
**COURSE: NAF 106: LINGUISTIC ANTHROPOLOGY**

LECTURER: D.OMIA

Office Hours: by appointment

EMAIL: dalmas.ochieng@gmail.com; ochiengomia@uonbi.ac.ke

**Overview:** This course is an introduction to linguistic anthropology, which investigates the relationship between language and culture. The course asks how language is shaped by social and cultural processes, how people use language in their daily lives, and the interaction between language and identity. We will initially work to explore the building blocks of human language, in order to better understand its role in social context. A major goal of this course is for students to work to examine their own linguistic beliefs and attitudes, and to appreciate linguistic and cultural diversity. This course will make extensive use of media resources, natural language examples, and recent scholarship in linguistic anthropology.

**Course contents**

**1. Introduction**

- The scope and goals of linguistics, anthropology, & linguistic anthropology;
- Cultural relativity and ethnocentrism;
- The principle of linguistic relativity: the ‘Sapir-Whorf hypothesis’.

**2. Linguistic Relativity: The politics of language**

- Cross-cultural color terminologies—relativity & universals;
- The value of languages and the threat of language death;
- Bourdieu’s concepts of *habitus*, *symbolic power*, *symbolic violence*.

**3. Language Ideologies, Nation and identities**

- Language ideology & the social constructedness of language
- Categories of language and nation: the world map today and how it got that way
- Imagined communities & print capitalism; the myth/ideology of standard language
- Nationalism, multilingualism, and diglossia (Bakhtin’s concept of heteroglossia)
- Transformations in language status and identity: the case of post-genocide Rwanda

**4. Speech acts & Pragmatics: Doing things with language**

- Pragmatics, speech act theory: how to do things with words;
- Hymes’ SPEAKING model for analysis of interactions
- Conversation as action: cooperation & competition
- Meaning more than what we say & reading between the lines: Grice’s maxims and implicature
- The non-universality of Grice’s maxims: directness & indirectness in Malagasy
- The meanings of silence across cultures
- Discourse analysis and agency in language

**5. Human language in evolutionary perspective: the language “instinct”**

- Design features of language
- Evolution of language and evidence for biological, innate basis for language
- Human vs. animal communication
- Language and the brain, the impact of brain disorders on language
- Child language acquisition: critical period hypothesis
- Pidgins & creoles
- Nature vs. nurture/social interaction vs. genetic determinism

## 6. Language ideology & non-standards

- Social change in Rwanda: structural and ideological factors shaping language value;
- Language mixing vs. purism;
- Language politics in popular culture;
- Education, media, movies: instituting inequality, exploiting & propagating stereotypes
- Ethnicity, class and language

## 7. Globalization: Media, technology, and language politics

- Colonialism, post-colonialism, globalization
- Power through language and technology
- Constructing belief through language
- Conformity to global styles or alternatives & resistance: hip hop worldwide)
- Global Protestant evangelism: preservation of linguistic diversity vs. disruption of traditional cultures & communities for the benefit of global capitalism
- Making a difference: living with a critical awareness of language

## Term paper: Due on the 29th Day of October, 2015

**Option A:** Hymes' "ethnography of SPEAKING" remains a significant construct in everyday conversation and speech making. Expound (30 marks).

**Option B:** A definition of language is always, implicitly or explicitly, a definition of human beings in the world. Elaborate (30 marks).

## Bibliography

Bauman R, Sherzer J 1974 Explorations in the Ethnography of Speaking. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK.

Berlin B, Kay P 1969 Basic Color Terms: Their Universality and Evolution. University of California Press, Berkeley, CA.

Duranti, A. 2001b. Linguistic Anthropology: A Reader: Oxford: Blackwell.

Duranti A 1997 Linguistic Anthropology. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK.

Duranti A, Goodwin C (eds.) 1992 Rethinking Context: Language as an Interactive Phenomenon. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK.

Foley W A 1997. Anthropological Linguistics: An Introduction. Blackwell, Malden, MA.

Goodwin C 1994. Professional vision. American Anthropologist 96: 606–33.

Goodwin M H 1990. He-Said-She-Said: Talk as Social Organization among Black Children. Indiana University Press, Bloomington.

Hall, Kira and Bucholtz, Mary, Eds. 1995. Gender Articulated: Language and the Socially Constructed Self. New York: Routledge.

IN Gumperz J J 1982. Discourse Strategies. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK