

# **CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY**

## **Linguistic Support for Intercultural Communications Year 3, Term 5**

Translation and Intercultural  
Communication Department,  
*Nelly N. Ovchinnikova*

# **THEME 1**

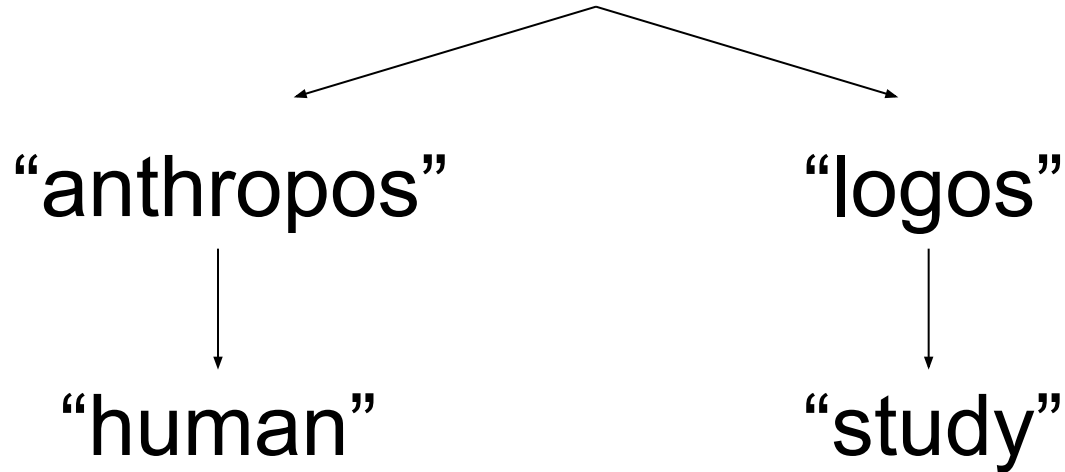
## **Cultural Anthropology as a Science**



# 1. Anthropology as a science



# Anthropology



- literally meaning


*“the study of humans”*





Other disciplines also study humans,  
their being and condition:

- Biology
- Psychology
- Sociology
- Economics
- Political science
- Philosophy
- History...

What distinguishes anthropology?

- 
- *Anthropology is the broadest in scope.*
  - **Anthropology** – the study of people, their origins, development, and contemporary variations, wherever and whenever they have been found on the face of the earth.
  - ***Concern of anthropology:***
    - all humans, both past and present;
    - humans' behavior patterns;
    - humans' thought systems;
    - humans' material possessions.

- 
- **The task of anthropology** is an understanding of the biological and cultural origins and evolutionary development of the human species, *i.e.* to explain and describe, in the broadest sense, what it means to be “*human*”.
  - **The subject matter of anthropology:**
    - 1) fossilized skeletal remains of early humans, artifacts, other material remains from archaeological sites;
    - 2) all the contemporary and historical cultures of the world.

- 
- Anthropology developed a diverse field of study and spans the gap between:
    - 1) the humanities
    - 2) the social sciences
    - 3) the natural sciences.
  
  - Anthropology is divided into **4 subfields**:
    - 1) physical anthropology (biological),
    - 2) archaeological anthropology (archaeology),
    - 3) linguistic anthropology (anthropological linguistics),
    - 4) cultural anthropology.



# ■ Branches of anthropology:

- **physical anthropology** studies humans as biological organisms: their emergence, evolution, and variation in time and space;
- **archaeological anthropology** attempts to reconstruct the cultures of the past (historic and prehistoric) through material remains;
- **linguistic anthropology** focuses on the study of language in historical, structural, and social contexts;
- **cultural anthropology** examines similarities and differences among contemporary cultures of the world.

# Branches of anthropology:

## Physical Anthropology

Paleoanthropology

Primatology

Human variation

Forensic anthropology

Applied physical anthropology

## Archaeology

Historical archaeology

Prehistoric archaeology

Contract archaeology

Applied archaeology

Cultural resource management

## Anthropological Linguistics

Historical linguistics

Descriptive linguistics

Ethnolinguistics

Sociolinguistics

Applied linguistics

## Cultural Anthropology

Economic anthropology

Psychological anthropology

Educational anthropology

Medical anthropology

Urban anthropology

Political anthropology

Applied anthropology





**Thus,**

- anthropology uses ***holistic approach*** to the study of humans as it:

- 1) involves both biological and sociocultural aspects of humanity;
- 2) has the deepest possible time frame;
- 3) studies all varieties of people;
- 4) studies all aspects of human experience.

## 2. Cultural anthropology as a branch of anthropology

### Cultural anthropology

```
graph TD; CA[Cultural anthropology] --> S[the study of specific contemporary cultures]; CA --> G[the study of more general underlying patterns of human cultures derived through cultural comparison]; S --> E[ethnography]; G --> Eth[ethnology]; E --- E_desc["(descriptive, specific)"]; Eth --- Eth_desc["(comparative, cross-cultural)"];
```

the study of specific contemporary cultures

***ethnography***

(descriptive, specific)

the study of more general underlying patterns of human cultures derived through cultural comparison

***ethnology***

(comparative, cross-cultural)



- ***The purpose of ethnography*** – to describe specific cultures in as much detail as possible.


**Yet,**

- Description of a total culture is usually beyond the scope of a single ethnographer.

- There's a strong trend toward specialization within cultural anthropology, i.e. the study of particular aspects (areas) of culture (*see slide 10*).

- *Other specialties include:*

- *agricultural anthropology*
- *legal anthropology*
- *military anthropology*
- *ecological anthropology*
- *nutritional anthropology*
- *anthropology of work...*

- 
- ***The purpose of ethnology*** – to understand:
    - what all cultures of the world have in common, what ‘rules’ govern human behavior;
    - why people differ in terms of ways of life, ideas, and behavior patterns.
  - **The main aim of cultural anthropology** – to explain **WHY** people in different parts of the world behave and think the way they do.

# Guiding principles in cultural anthropology

■ Cultural anthropology distinguishes itself from other disciplines in the humanities and social sciences by several ***principles***:

- 1) holism;
- 2) reducing ethnocentrism;
- 3) cultural relativism.

# Holism


- Holistic approach to the study of human groups is general to anthropology.
- Cultural anthropology is holistic by covering as many aspects and topics of a culture as possible in the total cultural context viewed together, e.g.:
  - family structure, marital regulations, child-rearing practices, house construction, means of livelihood, beliefs, language, space usage, art...



# Reducing ethnocentrism



This Mursi woman from Ethiopia, with her colorful lip and earlobe plates, illustrates the principle that cultural ideas of beauty can affect our bodies.

- 
- Everyone is ethnocentric to some degree being brought up in a single culture.
  - Ethnocentrism is inevitable, unconscious, and difficult to control.
  - Becoming aware of one's own ethnocentrism helps to set aside one's own value judgments and learn how other cultures operate.

- *The main rule of cultural anthropology:*

**“There are no better cultures,  
or worse cultures,  
there are different cultures.”**



# Cultural relativism

- ... is the notion and methodological perspective according to which any part of a culture (an idea, a thing, a behavior pattern) must be viewed in its proper cultural context rather than from the viewpoint of the observer's culture.
- ... helps to identify the inherent logic behind certain ideas and customs, not judging by standards of one's own culture


### 3. Methods in cultural anthropology

- Cultural anthropology employs a system of specific research strategies and methods.

- The most distinguishing feature of ethnographic research is *fieldwork*.

- **Fieldwork** – an experiential research strategy in doing which cultural anthropologists collect their primary data by living in the cultures and with the people they study.


- It has become necessary for the discipline since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.



■ Initially, cultural anthropologists concentrated their fieldwork on ‘exotic’, non-Euro-American societies, i.e. ***small-scale societies***.

■ Today, cultural anthropologists also conduct fieldwork in various parts of, modern, ‘developed’, Euro-American societies, i.e. ***large-scale societies***:

- urban ethnic neighbourhoods,
- administrative bureaucracies,
- hospitals, schools, prisons,
- industrial plants,
- among prostitutes, alcoholics, the homeless...

- 
- Doing fieldwork cultural anthropologists describe the life ways found among the peoples of the world.
  - They ask themselves numerous What? How? Why? questions and try to answer them by:
    - asking the people they study, investigating their environments and material possessions,
    - spending long periods of time observing their everyday behaviors, activities, and interactions in their natural settings,
    - taking part in their everyday life.

# Data-gathering techniques

■ Methodological mainstays of fieldwork are:

- participant-observation,
- interviewing.

■ Other data-gathering techniques used at various stages of fieldwork include:

- census taking,
- ethnographic mapping,
- document analysis,
- collecting genealogies (genealogizing),
- photography,
- life stories.

# Participant-observation

- ... is a fieldwork method in which the researcher becomes involved in the culture under analysis while making systematic observations of what is going on.
- ... involves sharing activities, attending ceremonies, eating together, etc.
- Participant-observation allows the fieldworker to establish rapport in a new community, learn to act the way accepted in the culture, gain a better understanding of the people.



# Interviewing

- ... is a fieldwork method used for obtaining information from the local people.

- ***Types of ethnographic information:***

- 1) *attitudinal data* – information on what people think and feel about things, ideas, events;
- 2) *behavioural data* – information on what people do, and why.

- Depending on the level of control kept by the interviewer there are **2 types of ethnographic interviews:**

<b>Structured</b>	<b>Unstructured</b>
maximum of control	minimum of control
all informants	key informants
specific topic	general topic
short-answer questions	open-ended questions
the same set of questions in the same sequence under the same conditions	at the interviewee's own pace and order
used late in the fieldwork	used early in the fieldwork
to produce statistical data	to get initial understanding

# Other data-gathering techniques

**census taking** The collection of demographic data about the culture being studied.

**document analysis** Examination of data such as personal diaries, newspapers, colonial records, and so on.

**ethnographic mapping** A data-gathering tool that locates where the people being studied live, where they keep their livestock, where public buildings are located, and so on, in order to determine how that culture interacts with its environment.

**genealogical method** A technique of collecting data in which the anthropologist writes down all the kin of an informant.

**photography** The use of a camera or video camera to document the ecology, material culture, and even social interactions of people during ethnographic fieldwork.