# Benjamin Lee Whorf Papers 1914-1957



Guide to the Scholarly Resources

Microfilm Edition

by

Peter J. Bartucca, Susan Grigg, John Espy, and Randall Jimerson

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### Note to the Reader

The target at the beginning of Roll 5 mistakenly identifies the material following as being from Series III. Material on frames 1-866 is actually from Series II, WRITINGS ON LINGUISTICS, **Research Notes**. Series III, WRITINGS ON SCIENCE AND RELIGION, begins, instead, at frame 867.

### **Biographical Notes**

Benjamin Lee Whorf (1897-1941) had a brief but important career as a pioneering scholar of the Nahuatl, Maya, and Hopi languages and as a theoretician about the influence of language on thought and perception. Researchers should consult *Language*, *Thought*, *and Reality* for a biographical sketch and bibliography by John B. Carroll,\* but these are some principal events and periods in Whorf's life:

1897	born	in	Winthrop,	Massachusetts

- received a bachelor's degree in chemical engineering from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology
- **1919-41** employed as a fire prevention engineer by the Hartford Fire Insurance Company
- 1920 married Celia Inez Peckham
- [1924-28] studied Hebrew
- 1925 wrote "Why I Have Discarded Evolution"
- 1928 read "Aztec Linguistics" and "An Aztec Account of the Period of the Toltec Decline" at the Twenty-Third International Congress of Americanists

<sup>\*</sup>Benjamin Lee Whorf, Language, Thought and Reality: Selected Writings of Benjamin Lee Whorf, comp. John B. Carroll (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1956).

### **Biographical Notes**

1930	took a field trip to Mexico, supported by the Social Science Research Council
1931	began studies with Edward Sapir at Yale University
1932	began his linguistic analysis of Hopi
1933	published The Phonetic Basis of Certain Characters in Maya Writing
1936	published his first article on Hopi, "The punctual and segmentative aspects of Hopi," in Language
1937-38	was a lecturer in anthropology at Yale
1940-41	published three articles for a nonprofessional audience in <i>Technology Review</i>
1941	died on July 26 after some months' illness

#### Introduction

The Benjamin Lee Whorf Papers consist of five microfilm rolls of correspondence, writings, research material, and biographical matter. They span the entire period of his adult linguistic activity, from about 1923 until his death in 1941, and include posthumous letters and publications as well. The papers are arranged in three series:

- I CORRESPONDENCE
- II WRITINGS ON LINGUISTICS
- III WRITINGS ON SCIENCE AND RELIGION

Series I, CORRESPONDENCE, consists of Benjamin Whorf's correspondence between 1925 and 1941 and letters received by his widow, Celia Peckham Whorf, between 1941 and 1954. The letters written and received by Whorf offer substantive discussions of the full range of his linguistic interests. Among the leading correspondents are Franz Boas, Franz Blom, Clyde Kluckhohn, Alfred Kroeber, J. Alden Mason, Edward Sapir, Herbert Spinden, Alfred M. Tozzer, George L. Trager, and Charles F. Voegelin.

Series II, WRITINGS ON LINGUISTICS, consists of notes, drafts, and printed matter documenting Whorf's linguistic activities from his first explorations in Hebrew around 1924 to the publication of a Spanish edition of Language, Thought, and Reality in 1971. There are three sections: Published Writings, Unpublished Writings, and Research Notes.

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**Published Writings** consists of manuscript and printed versions of slightly less than half of Whorf's publications on language and a small quantity of related notes and research material. The majority of the handwritten drafts and a few of the typewritten drafts differ slightly from the printed text.

Unpublished Writings consists of lectures, research reports, and unpublished essays on particular languages (principally Hebrew, Nahuatl, Maya, and Hopi) and general linguistic questions. Most of the titles in Carroll's bibliography are represented, and there are more than a dozen items that do not appear in his selection.

Research Notes includes material connected with Whorf's linguistic studies. The notes are related to his Mexican research trip in 1930 and to his studies in Hebrew, Maya, Hopi, and several other languages.

Series III, WRITINGS ON SCIENCE AND RELIGION, mainly contains essays on the relationship between science and religion, the nature of the mind and the universe, and the achievements of "primitive" and "advanced" civilizations. There are also published and unpublished writings on fire insurance and notes and writings on botany.

The Benjamin Lee Whorf Papers were given to Yale University Library by Celia Peckham Whorf in 1975 and by John B. Carroll in 1978.

### **Roll Contents**

### Series I: Correspondence, 1926-1954

The arrangement is chronological. An alphabetical index of correspondents in this series and in Series II appears at the end of this guide.

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#### Series II: Writings on Linguistics, 1924-1971

**Published Writings** and **Unpublished Writings** are in chronological order. **Research Notes** is in alphabetical order by language.

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#### **Published Writings**

- 2 3 1 "Toltec History," Twenty-Third International Congress of Americanists, Abstracts of Papers: manuscript 1928

  "Aztec Linguistics," Twenty-Third International Congress of Americanists, Abstracts of Papers: typescript 1928

  2 "An Aztec Account of the Period of the Toltec Decline." Twenty-
  - 2 "An Aztec Account of the Period of the Toltec Decline," Twenty-Third International Congress of Americanists, *Proceedings:* typescript, reprint 1928
  - 3 "The Reign of Huemac," *American Anthropologist:* typescript 1929
  - 4 "A Central Mexican Inscription
    Combining Mexican and Maya Day
    Signs," American Anthropologist:
    manuscript, typescript, reprint
    illustration 1932

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2 3	3	5	"Maya Writing and Its	•	
			Decipherment," Maya Research: manuscript, typescript	1935	

- 6 Appendix to J. Alden Mason, "The Classification of the Sonoran Languages," in Robert H. Lowier, ed., Essays in Anthropology in Honor of Alfred Louis Kroeber: reprint 1936
- 7 Notes on the "Glossary" in Elsie Clews Parsons, *Hopi Journal of Alexander M. Stephens*. Part 2: manuscript 1936
- 8 "The Punctual and Segmentative Aspects of Verbs in Hopi,"

  Language: notes, manuscript, typescript, reprint, mailing list for reprints 1936
- 9 "The Origin of Aztec TL,"

  American Anthropologist: reprint 1937
- 10 "Some Verbal Categories of Hopi,"

  Language: manuscript, typescript,
  reprint 1938
- 11 "Science and Linguistics," 1940, *Technology Review:* reprints 1966

- 2 3 12 "Linguistics as an Exact Science," Technology Review: reprint 1940
  - 13 "Languages and Logic,"

    Technology Review: reprint 1941
  - 14 "The Relation of Habitual Thought and Behavior to Language," in Leslie Spier, ed., *Language*, *Culture*, and *Personality*: reprint 1941
  - 15 "Decipherment of the Linguistic
    Portion of the Maya Hieroglyphs,"
    The Smithsonian Report for 1941:
    abstracts in Spanish and English,
    reprint, program and leaflets from
    the Eighth American Scientific
    Congress 1942
  - 16 "The Hopi Language, Toreva Dialect," in Harry Hoijer, ed., Linguistic Structures of Native America: manuscript, typescript 1946
  - 17 ["On Psychology"], in John B.
    Carroll, ed., Language, Thought
    and Reality: Selected Writings of
    Beniamin Lee Whorf: manuscript 1956

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2	3	18	"A Linguistic Consideration of Thinking in Primitive Communin John B. Carroll, ed., <i>Langua Thought and Reality:</i> notes,	ities,"
			manuscript	1956

- John B. Carroll, ed., Sprache,
   Denken, Wirrlichreit (German translation of Language, Thought and Reality, 1956)
- John B. Carroll, ed., Linguagio,
   Pensiero E Realtà (Italian
   translation of Language, Thought
   and Reality, 1956)
- 4 21 John B. Carroll, ed., Lenguale,
  Pensamiento realidad (Spanish
  translation of Language Thought
  and Reality, 1956) 1971

#### **Unpublished Writings**

- 22 "A New Conception of Semitic Roots": manuscript, typescript [1927?]
- 23 "The Inner Nature of the Hebrew Language": typescript [1928?]
- 24 "A Contribution to the Study of Aztec Language": notes, typescript [1928?]

- 2 4 25 "Investigations in Aztec Linguistics and Toltec History. Part II. The Phenomenon of Oligosynthesis in Nahuatl or Aztec," Twenty-Third International Congress of Americanists: manuscript, typescript 1928
  - 26 "Notes on the Oligosynthetic
    Comparison of Nahuatl and Piman,
    with Special Reference to Tepecano":
    notes, typescript 1928
    - "Appendix to Notes on the Oligosynthetic Comparison of Nahuatl and Piman (Tepecano)": notes, typescript 1928
  - 27 "Plan of Project," submitted to the Social Science Research Council: manuscript, typescript 1928
  - 28 "Translations from the Annals of Quauhtitlan": typescript [1928?]
  - 29 "Translation of Aztec MS, Gates Coll. # 758A/l": research material, notes, manuscript, typescript 1929

    See also: Series I, Franz Blom,

    1928 Nov 14-1929 Dec 12 and
    Alfred M. Tozzer, 1929 May 7, 13

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2	4	30	"Conclusion of Report on Research Project," Social Science Research Council: manuscript, typescript	1930
		31	"Stem Series in Maya and Certain Maya Hieroglyphs," Linguistic Society of America: notes, manuscript, typescript, illustrations	
		32	"Notes on Two Recent Findings from Central Mexico": manuscrip typescript	ot, 1930
		33	"Pitch Tone and the Saltillo in Modern and Ancient Nahuatl": manuscript	1930
		34	"The Problem of American History before Columbus," Connecticut Historical Society: notes, manuscript	1931
		35	"The Structure of the Athabascan Languages": typescript	n 1932
		36	"Characteristics of the Uto- Aztecan Stock": notes, typescript	1932
		37	"The Uto-Aztecan Stock": notes	[1932?]
			"First Report on Hopi": manuscritypescript	pt, 1933

2	4	38	"Recent Determinations of Phone Characters in Maya Writing," Linguistic Society of America: manuscript, typescript	etic
	5	39	"Hopi Verb Classes": manuscript	1934
		40	"The Phonology of Hopi": manuscript	[1934?]
			"Hopi Phonemes": typescript, mimeograph	[1934?]
3		41	"Hopi Text": manuscript	[1934- 1935?]
		42	"Educational Project: Study of Learning-Inhibitions and Their Prevention and Treatment": typescript	1935
		43	"First Steps in the Decipherment of Maya Writing": manuscript	[1935?]
		44	"Outline of Hopi Morphology": typescript	[1935?]
		45	"The Hopi Language": manuscript	[1935?]
		46	"The Hopi Language": typescript	[1935?]

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3	5	47	"A Comparative Decipherment of Forty-one Ancient Maya Written Words," American Anthropological Association: manuscript, typescript 1	.936
		48	"Notes for the Chemistry of Language and Thought," Hartford Technical Club: notes	1936
		49	"Azteco-Tanoan": notes	1936
		50	"Macro-Penutian": notes	1936
		51	Response to circular letter on the status of American linguistics: typescript, mimeograph	1937
		52	"Classification of the Languages of North America North of Mexico": typescript	1937, 1939
		53	"Report on Linguistics Research in the Department of Anthropolo of Yale University for the term September 1937 to June 1938," with G. L. Trager: manuscript, typescript	gy 1938
		54	"The Reading of Maya Glyph C of the Supplementary Series and other Glyphs": notes, manuscrip typescript	

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3	5	55	"Phonemes of the Toreva Diale of Hopi": manuscript	ct 1939
		56	"Some Experiments with Langua Wethersfield Rotary Club:	
			manuscript	1939
		57	"Descrifsmento de la Parte Linguistica de los Jeroglificos Mayas," Eighth American	1040
			Scientific Congress: mimeograph	1940
		58	"Maya Vocabulary from Motul Dictionary": manuscript	1940
		59	"Analysis and Translation of a Short Maya Text in Hieroglyphs Linguistic Society of America:	, ,, ,
			abstract	1940
			"The Parts of Speech in Hopi": notes, manuscript	1940
		60	"Notes on Linguistics: Rough Outline of Historical Development of Linguistic Theory": notes	it 1941
		61	"Ancient America and the Evolution of the Coming Race": manuscript	n d

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3	5	62	"Experiment in Linguistic Abstraction and/or Assimilation": typescript	n.d.
		63	"First Sketches for Language, Thought and Reality": notes	n.d.
		64	"Glyph Groups Regarded as Proving Phoneticism in the Maya Script": typescript	a n.d.
		65	Unidentified transcriptions (relat to the Gates manuscript?): manuscript	ed n.d.
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		67	Notes on Gaelic and Polish	1927- 1930, n.c
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		76	Notes on binary groups in Hebrew	[1927?]
		77	Notes and charts relating to Hebrew and Semitic roots	1925, 1927, [1924- 1928?-

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		83	1935-1938	
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		87	Notebook on Hopi including botanical notes	1938- 1939
		88	Notebook on Hopi and miscellan- eous lectures and writings	1939- 1940, n.d.
5		89	Notes on contracted plurals and Hopi relational stems	n.d.
		90	Notebook on Kiowa and Hopi	1933- 1934
	8	91	Notes on Maya hieroglyphics	1929- 1934, n.d.
		92	Notes on Maya, Cholti, Quiche and Tsotsil	1929- 1936, n.d.

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5	8	93	Notes on Maya-Quiche	1931- 1932, n.d.
		94	Maya hieroglyphics: photograph photostats, transcriptions	n, n.d.
		95	Notes made prior to Mexican research trip	1930
		96	Notes made prior to Mexican research trip	1930
		97	Notebook on Mexican research trip	1930
		98	Notes on Menomini	1940
		99	Spanish-Mexican vocabulary list	n.d.
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		100	Notes on various languages and their relationships	1927, 1931, 1934, n.d.
		101	Notebook on linguistics	1935- 1940

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5 8 102 Notes on linguistics and linguistic 1 theories	1938 n.d.
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- 103 Notes showing how "Tenting
  Tonight on the Old Camp-ground"
  would be rendered by non-native
  speakers of English
  n.d.
- 9 104 Notecards for Hopi dictionary n.d.
- 10 105 Language notecards n.d.
- 11 106 Bibliographic notecards n.d. [Boxes 12 and 13, Writings by Others, are not included in the microfilm.]

### Series III: Writings on Science and Religion, 1925-1941, 1955

There is no overall organization except that writings on fire insurance are at the end of the series.

5	14 1 "Why I Have Discarded Evoluti typescript, correspondence		on": 1925	
		2	["Concerning Science and Religion"]: manuscript	[1925?]
		3	"Library books read beginning Jan. 1925": list	1925- 1928

5	14	4	Drawings related to philosophic and scientific writings	2 1934, 1936, n.d.
		5	"Part I: The Flux-Outlet Theory" Part II: The Expansion Theory manuscript	," ": n.d.
		6	"In Defense of Puritanism": manuscript, typescript	n.d.
		7	"Largest-Stemmed Plants": manuscript	n.d.
			"Pines": manuscript	n.d.
			Untitled manuscript notes on Mexican trees and shrubs	1936 Dec 19
		8	"Light-Velocity and Expansion" manuscript	n.d.
		9	"On Being": transcript	n.d.
			"Universal Trinity in Unity": outline	n.d.
			"A Fragment from the Song of Creation": typescript (translation?)	n.d.

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5	14	9	Letter in response to a critic of Darwinian theory: manuscript	n.d.
			Letter to an English writer comparing civilizations: manuscript	n.d.
			Essay on consciousness and perception: manuscript	n.d.
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		10	"Unanswered Questions from Ancient Times": typescript	n.d.
		11	["A Trip to Southern Florida"]: manuscript	n.d.
			Notebook on botany	n.d.
			Writings about fire insurance	
		12	"Blazing Icicles": reprints, correspondence	1941- 1955
		13	"The Flying Kettle": manuscript	n.d.
		14	"A Suggested Classification of Insurance": mimeograph	n.d.
		15	Other manuscripts, typescripts	

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