

# From History to Modern Tendencies in the Sphere of Ethnolinguistics and Topical Issues in This Area

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**Abstract.** As a linguistics field, ethnolinguistics is a science with great potential for development and research, in addition to having different names, tasks, goals and many controversial issues. This field of linguistics needs to be sufficiently studied and requires a more thorough investigation. From this point of view, the mentioned topic is crucial for modern linguistics. The object of ethnolinguistic research is language as a carrier of ethnocultural information, the relationship between language and folk mentality, and the role of language in the ethnic picture of the world. This article aims to shed light on the initial perception of the science and modern investigations in this field and draw attention to the topicality of the issue. For this purpose, throughout the research, the scientific literature related to the topic is analysed, and the development trends of Azerbaijani ethnolinguistics and its current state are reviewed and evaluated. The empirical analysis method was used during the research. From a practical point of view, the study can serve as a rich scientific resource for researchers conducting research in ethnolinguistics. As a result, it is noted that in the field of ethnolinguistics, which is developing as a particular field in Azerbaijani linguistics, new studies and research are conducted that resonate with the requirements of the modern stage of science, and they will contribute to world linguistics in this direction in the future.

**Keywords:** Language, ethnolinguistics, people, culture, Azerbaijan linguistics.

## INTRODUCTION

As a linguistic discipline, ethnolinguistics began to develop in the first quarter of the 20th century in the United States under the name "Anthropological Linguistics", the founders of which were the American anthropologist F. Boas and his student E. Sapir. Later, B. Whorf, who is a follower of E. Sapir, in turn, developed this area. Both linguists considered the main task of ethnolinguistics to find differences in the picture of the world between language and culture. According to [32, p. 6], the "picture of the world" is the speaker's perception of the surrounding reality and the complex grammatical, lexical, historical, and cultural relationships that the language imposes on him.

However, the roots of ethnolinguistics trace back to the outstanding linguophilosopher W. von Humboldt, who studied various communities based on the spiritual organisation. He believed

that different languages are different visions, not just a different designation of the same thing. W. von Humboldt connects the vision of the world with the language spoken by the individual. In his opinion, other languages are more than different shells of human consciousness. They are different visions of the world. The scientist compares a foreign language between an object and a person with a language spoken between a person and nature, influencing him from the inside and outside. The researcher presents the nation as a circle of people to which it belongs, and, leaving it, he enters the process of another one [16, p. 37–38].

Undoubtedly, this judgment occurs in a circle of one nation since people in such a society speak the same language, have the same traditions and culture, and perceive another nation as a friend or enemy. However, in the modern world, people usually do not live in isolation, and any society consists of several people speaking different lan-

guages. On the one hand, the language is part of the people where it came from, but on the other hand, there are peoples in history who have adopted the language of another group of people and consider it their own. Thus, not only do people form a language, but language also forms people.

W. Humboldt's followers E. Sapir and B. Whorf put forward a hypothesis about linguistic relativity. According to them, people see the world in their way. Therefore, each nation differently reflects the real world. Language creates a picture of the world with the help of the thinking and worldview of the people [32, p. 245–247]. The role of B. Whorf in modern ethnolinguistics is perceived differently by anthropologists and linguists, not psychologists. Anthropologists and linguists are still interested in scientists' ideas about linguistic relativity and the critical importance of grammatical categories. As the Canadian researcher R. Darnell explains, B. Whorf raised a topical issue but needed an insufficiently complete methodology [8, p. 82–95].

Unlike previous studies, in this article, we plan to consider new development trends in ethnolinguistics and its fundamental issues for modern linguistics to analyse the future development of this area.

## METHODS AND MATERIALS

The study used an empirical method, a method of analysing scientific literature and information, as well as an assessment of various approaches to this topic. The research material is scientific and theoretical literature.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

*Modern Tendencies in the Sphere of Ethnolinguistics.* Ethnolinguistics is a relatively new discipline and is located at the intersection of linguistics and ethnology. The term “ethnolinguistics” is commonly used in Russia, while it is called “Anthropological Linguistics” in foreign linguistics. The second term has a wider use due to the widespread use of the English Language [29, p. 12]. Anthropology includes a wider field of knowledge and studies a person in all areas of his manifestation and development. There are two branches of this field – Physical Anthropology and Cultural Anthropology. Physical Anthropology reveals man as a biological species, studying

his origin, evolution, and racial differences of humanity. In Russian linguistics, this branch is called Anthropology. The subject of Cultural Anthropology is the study of the culture of peoples and societies. In Russian linguistics, this science is called “ethnology”. Initially, this discipline was called “ethnography”, but it had only a descriptive character, studying a particular people's material and spiritual culture. At the same time, ethnology deals with interpreting the data obtained [29, p. 12–13].

To determine what is the object of ethnolinguistics, one should analyse the sciences from which it originated. Undoubtedly, the science of linguistics studies a language. E. Benveniste offers two subjects for the study of linguistics. According to him, linguistics is the science of language and languages. On the one hand, he considers language as the ability to speak, a universal characteristic of a person, as something unchanging. On the other hand, it implies separate languages that are constantly changing and in which this ability is realised [4, p. 21–22].

The main objects of ethnolinguistics are ethnic mentality, ethnic stereotype, ethnic culture, ethnic processes and ethnogenesis. The term “ethnic mentality” refers to the mentality of a nation, which has developed over many years and sometimes centuries, mainly due to culture and lifestyle. An ethnic stereotype is the perception of representatives of a different ethnic community through the prism of their thinking. On the other hand, ethnic culture is a set of cultural values inherent in people. As a result of ethnic processes, the features of an ethnic group can change, which may be accompanied by a change in cultural values, the development of a language, or the loss or change in customs [11, p. 1].

The subject of ethnolinguistic research is language as a carrier of ethnocultural information, the relationship between language and folk mentality, and the role of language in the ethnic picture of the world. For the first time, the concept of a “picture of the world” was touched upon by [14, p. 30]. In this term, the researcher combines the idea of a nation with another nation and a vision of themselves, their actions and their activity in the world [31, p. 18].

According to [9], a researcher is interested in the world and the ethnos that reflect its image while studying the linguistic world. The primary means of depicting an image is based on the result of communication. However, with the ineffective-

ness of cognitive and communicative means, other means of the semiotic system can be involved, such as painting, music, etc.

The modern Canadian scientist M. Danesi indicates that anthropological linguistics aims to study languages by collecting data directly from native speakers. The central idea of this approach, which he called ethnography, or participant observation, is that a linguist can better understand language and its relation to culture by observing language used in its natural social context [7].

*The primary source for ethno-linguistics.* The primary source for ethno-linguistics is etymological and dialect dictionaries, which include hundreds of words and expressions of folk vocabulary, making it possible to study the origin of ethnonyms in detail and penetrate the origins of folk culture. The main advantage of these dictionaries is that they include specific words used in the local environment that is not found in the literary language. Their illustrative material is derived from records of folk speech conversations. It is an invaluable source for analysing modern processes in society, speech situations, and people's attitudes towards their Language, neighbours, their Language, and other peoples. At the same time, literary texts make it possible to outline the image of a native speaker and provide a portrait of him from various strata of society [22, p.10-11].

Ethno-linguistics, existing at the intersection of linguistics and ethnology, has absorbed the data and methods of both sciences. Ethnology, in turn, is a science that studies people and their spiritual and material culture. This science examines the culture of humanity as a whole, describing the standard features inherent in all cultures and a separate nation with the peculiarities of its ethnic culture. However, one should remember the connection of ethno-linguistics with history and geography. As is known, many historical events have left their traces in the language, being the reason for the creation of many ethnonyms. At the same time, the geographical location is also of no minor importance [29, p. 13].

The difficulty of coordinating names lies in the fact that the term "linguistic anthropology", or ethno-linguistics, adopted by us in this scientific work, is associated with a change in the concept of discipline, or rather, the expansion of its focus, methods and theoretical orientation. As A. Duranty notes, from an almost exclusive interest in documenting the grammar of aboriginal

languages in North America and other continents, linguistic anthropology has moved to colloquial speech through social contexts throughout people's lives [10].

There is no doubt the connection between ethno-linguistics and sociolinguistics. The famous modern English scientist P. Trudgill points out two functions of the language: firstly, to establish a social relationship, and secondly, to convey information about the speaker. According to the researcher, if, during a conversation between two Englishmen, one of them comes from Norfolk County, he will speak the same way as people from that region. If the speaker is a middle-class businessman, his speech will correspond to the dialect of people in this profession. The examples establish a connection between Language and society [36, p. 2].

The author [35] characterised the relationship between language and the conceptual picture of the world as colouring the language through the system of its knowledge and their associations with national and cultural colours. However, the author [40] considers the reduction of the picture of the world to the conceptual system of its meaning as a narrowing and suggests that it is impossible to analyse the linguistic "picture of the world" only as part of the conceptual one.

Indeed, the concept of "picture of the world" has a relatively broad meaning, expressing the totality of knowledge, ideas, and opinions of the human community and its representative, based on their worldview, worldview, worldview and worldview. The prevailing ideas in any picture of the world are associated with value ideas against the background of philosophical, religious, scientific, aesthetic and everyday consciousness.

The author [39], the English anthropologist of the 19th century, is considered the father of Cultural Anthropology, who first determined the context of the scientific study of anthropology. The scientist points to the functional basis for the development of society and religion, which he defined as universal. Tylor argued that all clubs went through three main stages of development: from savagery through barbarism to civilisation. The scientist is also the founder of the science of social anthropology, and his scientific work helped build the discipline of anthropology in the nineteenth century. He believed that research in human history and prehistory could be used as a basis for the reform of British society.

Authors [38] believe that in any communication, speakers react to the social characteristics of their interlocutors and, as a result, can correct their linguistic behaviour. In addition to acting in response to the personal identity of interacting and actual use of linguistic features, speakers view their interlocutors as members of social groups. They may respond to perceived linguistic practices associated with those social groups. Socio-indicative meanings tied to linguistic forms are critical to this perceived usage. By examining linguistic variation in multiple-speaker interactions, we can shed light on settlement processes and the social meaning attached to linguistic forms.

The author [37] points out the importance of the semantic meaning of words and disagrees with the opinion of comparative linguists, who often believe that they can leave speech, content and meaning behind, focusing on a supposedly "deeper" level of language, grammatical form and construction. The researcher considers such an attitude as an absurd misunderstanding of the very nature of philology, denoting the love of language, and adds that if we leave meaning behind, then we leave people behind, and language about people is language about us.

*Etymology research in Azerbaijani linguistics.* Some studies related to ethnonyms have been carried out in Azerbaijani onomastics. It should be emphasised that A. Gurbanov is the founder of onomastic in Azerbaijan. Under the term "onomastics", the scientist united all proper names in the language. According to him, onomastics can be used broadly, covering the names of continents, countries and other large territories (macroonomastics) – the onomastics of Europe, the onomastics of America, and also, in the narrow sense, associated with small regions – the onomastics of Sheki. In an even narrower sense, it can be used as the onomastics of a certain author – the onomastics of the works of M. Hussein [30, p. 15–16]. The academician made a historical contribution to the development of Turkic linguistics in Azerbaijan and on a global scale [23, p. 7].

A great contribution to the onomastics of Azerbaijan, namely toponymy, was made by the great scientist G. Meshadiev. The scientist is engaged in studying toponyms of Turkic origin on the territory of Azerbaijan and beyond. The author, using historical and linguistic methods, reveals the

origin of toponyms of Turkic origin in the region of Transcaucasia [25].

Several scientific works on onomastics were written by such prominent scientists as [6, 20, 5] and many other researchers. But ethnonyms in most works are mainly considered in close connection with toponyms or anthroponyms. On the territory of present-day Azerbaijan, there are many ethnonyms derived from ethnotoponyms. They were studied by [19; 18, p. 8–11; 27; 28] and other geographers, historians and linguists. B. Khalilov conducted an etymological analysis of ethnonyms based on the work of M. Kashgari [21]. A. Bakikhanov mentioned the names of Azerbaijani tribes and localities and concluded that if you carefully examine the names of tribes, villages, buildings, ancient borders of the country, you can determine the origin of its population [3, p. 99–108].

Scientist G. Geybullayev, who most carefully studied the ethnogenesis of Azerbaijanis, is the author of books and numerous articles, such as [13, 12]. E. Ahmedova, who studies the Azerbaijani language ethnonyms, published the [2] in 2017, including about 300 ethnonyms with an explanation of their origin. Z. Abbasova, who studied onomastic units in poetry, writes: "Onomastic units used in written literature are more realistic indicators of life. However, in oral and written literature, onomastic units have rich stylistic possibilities" [1, p. 6]. The scientist studied the linguistic features of many onomastic units in the works of E. Efendiev, including ethnonyms.

In general, ethnonymy is less developed in Azerbaijan than anthroponymy or toponymy. A. Mikhailova explores anthroponyms, toponyms and idioms. The author notes that anthroponymy is the primary and most widespread area of onomastics [26, p. 9]. J. Huseynova also notes the importance of anthroponyms and toponyms in studying onomastic units [17, p. 9]. I. Mammadov notes that the ethnographic vocabulary of the Azerbaijani Language consists of everyday vocabulary and words related to finance, moral culture, traditions, folklore, and phraseological units [27, p. 24].

Mamedova K. studied the ethnographic realities of the English Language. The author divides them into denotative and connotative realities and notes that denotative realities reflect a particular people's cultural, historical, and geographical features [24, p. 3]. F. Gurbanova notes the need to study anthroponymy in Azerbaijan [15, p. 3].

A. Abbasova writes: "The relevance of studying Azerbaijani anthroponymic facts in comparison with the material of the English language is undeniable" [1, p. 3]. The spheres of research of Azerbaijani scientists indicated in the scientific work once again confirm that toponyms and anthroponyms are onomastic priority units.

## CONCLUSIONS

Thus, ethnolinguistics as a field of linguistics, in addition to having different names, tasks, goals and many controversial issues, is a science with great potential for development and research. This field of linguistics needs to be sufficiently studied and requires a more thorough investigation.

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