

Ethnolinguistics

Conducted by:
Nataliia Hrytsiv
PhD in Translation Studies

LECTURE TOPIC 1

General notions of Ethnolinguistics

1. Contents and tasks of the course Fundamentals of Ethnolinguistics.
2. Subject and object of Ethnolinguistics.
3. Metalanguage for the study of language in its relation to ethnic culture.
4. Founders of Ethnolinguistics as a separate search field.
5. Subject matter of linguistics: a brief overview.
6. Subject area of ethnology: key aspects.

INTRODUCTION

The perception of certain linguistic phenomena is culturally conditioned which means that in different cultures the same ideas may be experienced, perceived, conceptualized and categorized in diverse ways. The study of the different ways the world is perceived and categorized in different cultures is called *Ethnolinguistics* (also *ethnosemantics*, *ethnoscience*, *ethnographic semantics*, and *new ethnography*).

Thus, *Ethnolinguistics* is a field of linguistics which studies the relationship between language and culture, and the way different ethnic groups which studies the relationship between language and culture, and the way different ethnic groups perceive the world. It is the combination between ethnology and linguistics. The former refers to the way of life of an entire community, i.e., all the characteristics which distinguish one community from the other. These characteristics make the cultural aspects of a community or a society.

Ethnolinguistics deals with the human language – especially its vocabulary – as a source of knowledge about humanity and the surrounding (often historically bound). In other words, *Ethnolinguistics* is the study of how language relates to culture and ethnicity. This correlation is of utmost importance when we talk about translation or intercultural, hence, interethnic communication.

In a nutshell, Ethnolinguistics gives answers to:

- Why some people do not differentiate cardinal directions?
- How can time be seen and comprehended vertically and horizontally?
- Why *a frog* is a man in English and how then should one translate *Царівна-жаба*?
- Why a German lady is of neutral gender (das Mädchen)?
- Why English cats have *whiskers* and not moustache, though Ukrainian cats wear *вуса*?
- Why the same rainbow is seen in three to eight colors by different ethnic groups?
- Why does an English bride get 12 roses while Ukrainian gets an odd number?

Because the perception of certain linguistic phenomena is culturally conditioned which means that in different cultures the same ideas may be experienced, perceived, conceptualized and categorized in diverse ways, that is why different ethnic groups express and verbalize the same world reality differently. This is the greatest challenge for translators from one language into other languages.

Ethnolinguistics is a marginal field of linguistics which studies the relationship between language and culture, and the way different ethnic groups perceive the world. It is the combination between ethnology and linguistics.

In other words, Ethnolinguistics *is the study of how language relates to culture and ethnicity.*

To recall:

Linguistics is the comparative study of the function, structure, and history of languages and the communication process in general. Linguistics is also referred to as linguistic anthropology.

To recall:

Ethnic group An **ethnic group**, or an **ethnicity**, is a category of people who identify with each other based on similarities such as common ancestry, language, society, culture or nation. [1][1][2] Ethnicity is usually an inherited status based on the society in which one lives. Membership of an ethnic group tends to be defined by a shared cultural heritage, ancestry, origin myth, history, homeland, language or dialect, symbolic systems such as religion, mythology and ritual, cuisine, dressing style, art, and physical appearance. Ethnic groups, derived from the same historical founder population, often continue to speak related languages and share a similar gene pool. By way of language shift, acculturation, adoption and religious conversion, it is sometimes possible for individuals or groups to leave one ethnic group and become part of another (except for ethnic groups emphasizing homogeneity or racial purity as a key membership criterion). Ethnicity is often used synonymously with ambiguous terms such as nation or people. In English, it can also have the connotation of something exotic (cf. "ethnic restaurant", etc.), generally related to cultures of more recent immigrants, who arrived after the dominant population of an area was established.

Ethnolinguistic group is a group of people with a distinct language and culture that gives them a unique identity.

Two basic concepts needed:
Ethnicity and Language

Definition of Ethnicity

Ethnicity denotes groups, such as Irish, Fijian, or Sioux, etc. that share a common identity-based ancestry, language, or culture. It is often based on religion, beliefs, and customs as well as memories of migration or colonization (*in* Cornell, S., & Hartmann, D. (2007). *Ethnicity and Race: Making Identities in a Changing World*. Thousand Oaks: Pine Forge Press).

Thus, an ethnic group is a social group that shares a common and distinctive culture, religion, and language.

Ethnicity – social identification based on the presumption of shared history and a common cultural inheritance

Synonyms:

- Nationality
- Background
- Identity
- Origin
- Race

Language

Language can mean 'speech', as in the faculty of speech, but it can also mean the act of 'speaking'.

It can refer to the 'discourse' of an individual at a given time or to that individual's 'habitual speech patterns'.

Similarly, it can be applied to the 'discourse' of a group, an institution, a world-conception or even a period in a people's history. We might speak of the 'language of Elizabethan English', for example.

To recall:

Ethnography

1. The branch of anthropology that deals with the description of specific human cultures, using methods such as close observation and interviews.
2. A text produced using such methods.
3. Anthropological research in which one learns about the culture of another society through fieldwork and first hand observation in that society.
4. Ethnography is also the term used to refer to books or monographs describing what was learned about the culture of a society.

- **Ethnolinguistics** is a field of linguistics which studies the relationship between language and culture, and the way different ethnic groups perceive the world. It is the combination between ethnology and linguistics.

- Ethnolinguistics: that part of anthropological linguistics concerned with the study of the interrelation between a language and the cultural behavior of those who speak it.(Britannica)
- In different societies, and different communities, people speak differently" (Wierzbicka, 2003)

Ethnolinguists studies the way perception and conceptualization influences language, and shows how this is linked to different cultures and societies.

- An example is the way spatial orientation is expressed in various cultures. In many societies, words for the cardinal directions east and west are derived from terms for sunrise/sunset. The nomenclature for cardinal directions of Inuit speakers of Greenland, however, is such as the river system and one's position on the coast.
- Similarly, the Yurok lack the idea of cardinal directions, they get oriented as based on their principal geographical feature –the Klamath River.

The **Yurok**, whose name means "downriver people" in the neighboring Karuk language (also called *yuh'ára*, or *yurúkvaarar* in Karuk), are Native Americans in Karuk), are Native Americans who live in northwestern California in Karuk), are Native Americans who live in northwestern California near the Klamath River in Karuk), are Native Americans who live in northwestern California near the Klamath River and Pacific coast.

- The **Inuit** (pronounced /ˈɪnu.ɪt/ (pronounced /ˈɪnu.ɪt/ or /ˈɪnju.ɪt/ (pronounced /ˈɪnu.ɪt/ or /ˈɪnju.ɪt/; Inuktitut (pronounced /ˈɪnu.ɪt/ or /ˈɪnju.ɪt/; Inuktitut, "the people") are a group of culturally similar indigenous peoples (pronounced /ˈɪnu.ɪt/ or /ˈɪnju.ɪt/; Inuktitut, "the people") are a group of culturally similar indigenous peoples inhabiting the Arctic (pronounced /ˈɪnu.ɪt/ or /ˈɪnju.ɪt/; Inuktitut, "the people") are a group of culturally similar indigenous peoples inhabiting the Arctic regions of Greenland (pronounced /ˈɪnu.ɪt/ or /ˈɪnju.ɪt/; Inuktitut, "the people") are a group of

- **Cultural mindset** (acc.to J. Underhill)

Term used in this work to designate that relatively rigid and fixed way of seeing the world which frames our perception and conception of politics, society, history, behaviour, the individual's place in the world and the organising conceptual frameworks of social relations. When groups and generations who speak the same language fail to understand each other, it is because their cultural mindsets have grown into very different expressions of the world, though those differing expressions are derived from the same world perceiving and world-conceiving which organizes the language shared by all groups within their linguistic community.

- **Linguistic worldview conception** (acc.to J. Underhill)

An adaptation of Humboldt's concept of Weltansicht within the context of the Polish Ethnolinguistics School of Lublin and its exchange with Czech scholars (see Vaňková 2001) and their concept of 'world picture' (obraz světa). Jerzy Bartmiński (2009: 213) gives the following definition: 'The linguistic worldview conception is semantic, anthropological and cultural in nature. It is based on the assumption that language codes a certain socially established knowledge of the world and that this knowledge can be reconstructed and verbalized as a set of judgements about people, objects and events. The knowledge results from the subjective perception and conceptualization of reality by the human mind; it is anthropocentric and relativized to languages and cultures.'

- **Personal world** (acc.to J. Underhill)

Term used in this work to designate the mode of perception and conception of the world which is specific to each individual. This 'personal world' constitutes the individual's own version of the 'cultural mindset' he or she adheres to both consciously and unconsciously. This world constitutes a stance, and as such it may change over time: nevertheless, the personal world remains coherent and is to a large extent a permanent aspect of the life and personality of the individual. Though malleable, it cannot be abandoned or supplanted. In contrast to this, a person's 'perspective' changes with circumstances and as he or she interacts with others. Our views and our ideas may change, but our way of seeing the world and our way of conceiving it belongs to a deeper level of feeling and consciousness.

- **World-conceiving**

Term used in this work to designate one aspect of Humboldt's concept of *Weltansicht*, namely the changing and developing manner in which we draw that world into the realm of thought to form concepts and frameworks to represent things and our experience of the world.

- **World-perceiving**

Term used in this work to denote one aspect of Humboldt's concept of *Weltansicht*, namely the changing and developing perception we have of the world.

(The example with *ghost*)

Must know!	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The term Ethnolinguistics was introduced by Bronislaw Malinowski 2. Key idea:
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ethnolinguistics is a marginal field of <u>linguistics</u> which studies the relationship between language and culture, and the way different <u>ethnic groups</u> perceive the world. It is the combination between <u>ethnology</u> and linguistics. 2. In other words, Ethnolinguistics is the study of how language relates to culture and ethnicity.

Thank you for attention!