

# Ethnopoetics as the Core of Literary Expression in Educational Contexts

Dildora Farmanova

PhD Student, Bukhara State University

**Corresponding Author:** : Dildora Farmanova, PhD Student, Bukhara State University

Email: [farmanovadildora3@gmail.com](mailto:farmanovadildora3@gmail.com)

## Abstract

**Background:** This article explores the pivotal role of ethnopoetics and ethnoglossaries in literary works, particularly within the educational context. It examines the contributions of prominent scholars who have shaped the concept of ethnopoetics, emphasizing the methodological and pedagogical value of their research. Through analyzing how these elements enrich the literary and cultural understanding of texts, the paper highlights the necessity of incorporating ethnopoetic perspectives in literary education to preserve and transmit cultural heritage effectively.

**Keywords:** Ethnopoetics; Ethnoglossary; Literary education; Oral tradition

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## Introduction

Ethnopoetics refers to the method of transcribing oral poetry and narrative performances using poetic lines, stanzas, and verse to retain their original aesthetic and cultural essence. Unlike standard prose transcriptions, ethnopoetic formatting captures the rhythm, emphasis, and performative nature of oral traditions. As a subfield intersecting ethnology, anthropology, folklore, stylistics, linguistics, literary studies, and translation studies, ethnopoetics enables a more nuanced understanding of oral literature. Scholars such as Jerome Rothenberg, Dennis Tedlock, and Dell Hymes have made substantial contributions to its development.

## Materials and Methods

The foundations of ethnopoetic theory were laid in the 1960s by Jerome Rothenberg, who aimed to preserve the poetic essence of Native American oral traditions. According to Catherine S. Quick, Rothenberg's translations often struggled to fully reflect the power and aesthetic of oral performances in written form, particularly when constrained by Western poetic norms. Rothenberg emphasized that oral traditions should not be subordinate to Western literary standards but appreciated within their own cultural and artistic frameworks. He viewed ethnopoetics as a means of cultural exchange, describing it as "poems that are not only invented by others but can also be practiced." His work highlighted the global richness of oral poetic traditions, encouraging their academic recognition and preservation.

## Results

Further advancements were made by Dell Hymes and Dennis Tedlock in the 1980s. Hymes' "The Nonsense I'd Like to Tell You" (1982) and Tedlock's "The Spoken Word and the Work of Interpretation" (1983)

deepened ethnopoetic analysis and broadened its interdisciplinary appeal. Their later works—*Discovery Center* (Tedlock, 1999) and *Now I Know Too Much* (Hymes, 2003)—reinforced the importance of preserving oral artistic traditions. Hymes focused on revitalizing historical oral narratives, transforming them from static texts into dynamic oral forms. Tedlock, on the other hand, employed a performance-based analysis to highlight the artistry of Native American storytelling.

These scholars played a crucial role in integrating ethnopoetics into linguistic, anthropological, and literary frameworks, establishing it as a legitimate academic discipline.

### **Discussion**

Henri Meschonnic, a French poet and linguist, argued that ethnopoetics is integral to the vitality of hegemonic languages, as it allows ancient texts such as *The Iliad*, *The Odyssey*, and the Hebrew Torah to be appreciated in contemporary contexts. Jerome Rothenberg also stressed that many valuable poetic forms have been overlooked due to their divergence from traditional Western literary norms. He advocated for translations that convey not just literal meaning but the poetic spirit embedded in original languages through ethnopoetic methods.

Catherine Kohler Riessman contributed to the theoretical foundation of ethnopoetic translation by emphasizing the importance of narrative structure and the formal qualities of storytelling. She criticized traditional translation methods for treating language as a vehicle for content rather than a subject of inquiry itself. She also highlighted how Labov's systematic model of narrative analysis did not fully account for prosodic and dialogic features in oral storytelling, limiting its applicability to ethnopoetic studies.

In applied ethnopoetics, Jan Blommaert underscored the role of narrative performance in constructing meaning. According to him, ethnopoetic analysis enables scholars to identify the “voice” of the speaker and analyze how stories are structured around emphasis, dominance, and narrative flow. This approach not only preserves the cultural authenticity of oral narratives but also deepens our understanding of the localized production of meaning in storytelling.

### **Conclusions**

Ethnopoetics plays a critical role in preserving the expressive and cultural richness of oral traditions. As demonstrated by the works of Rothenberg, Hymes, Tedlock, Meschonnic, Riessman, and Blommaert, this field bridges literary analysis with cultural anthropology and linguistics. Its incorporation into literary education allows for a more inclusive, accurate, and immersive study of global literary traditions. Emphasizing performance, form, and context, ethnopoetics offers an essential framework for understanding and teaching literature in both historical and contemporary contexts.

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