
Theolinguistics as a science of language and religion

Turaxonova Badia Omonillayevna

bturahonova@gmail.com

Uzbekistan state world languages university

Annotation

This article explores theolinguistics, an interdisciplinary field dedicated to understanding the intricate relationship between language and religion. It asserts that religion profoundly shapes linguistic expression and cognition, influencing even everyday language beyond explicit religious texts. Terms like "redemption" or "grace" demonstrate this "linguistic seepage", subtly influencing worldviews. Theolinguistics employs methods from cognitive linguistics, corpus linguistics, and historical semantics to analyze how religious consciousness is embedded in language. The article traces the field's formalization, highlighting its introduction by Jean-Pierre van Noppen in 1981 and popularization by D. Crystal and A. Wagner. It underscores the field's unique position in combining linguistic analysis with theological insights, offering a holistic perspective on how the sacred is woven into the fabric of human communication and thought, as exemplified by research from Uzbek linguists like M. R. Galiyeva. The article also reflects on the implications of theolinguistics for intercultural communication, language pedagogy, and translation studies, especially in multilingual societies where religious discourse intersects with everyday speech.

Keywords

Humanity special position, religion as the main value, discipline

Теолингвистика как наука о языке и религии

Турахонова Бадия Омониллаевна

bturahonova@gmail.com

Узбекский государственный университет
мировых языков

Аннотация

В этой статье описываются основополагающие предположения и дисциплинарный охват теолингвистики, новой междисциплинарной области, посвященной изучению сложных отношений между языком и религией. Он утверждает, что религия глубоко формирует языковое выражение и познание, влияя даже на повседневную речь за пределами явных религиозных текстов. Такие термины, как "искупление" или "благодать", демонстрируют это "языковое проникновение", тонко влияющее на мировоззрение. Теолингвистика использует методы когнитивной лингвистики, корпусной лингвистики и исторической семантики для анализа того, как религиозное сознание встраивается в язык. В статье прослеживается становление области, подчеркивается ее введение Жан-Пьером ван Ноппеном в 1981 году и популяризация Д. Кристалом и А. Вагнером. Она подчеркивает уникальность области в сочетании лингвистического анализа с теологическими прозрениями, предлагая целостную перспективу того, как сакральное вплетено в ткань человеческого общения и мысли, как это показано в исследованиях узбекских лингвистов, таких как М.Р. Галиева. Кроме того, в статье рассматривается влияние теолингвистики на межкультурную коммуникацию, преподавание

языков и переводоведение, особенно в многоязычных обществах, где религиозная лексика переплетается с повседневной речью.

Ключевые слова

Особое положение человечества, религия как главная ценность, дисциплина

Teolingvistika til va din ilmi sifatida**Turaxonova Badia Omonillayevna**bturahonova@gmail.com

O'zbekiston davlat jahon tillari universiteti

Annotatsiya

Bu maqola teolingvistikaga, ya'ni til va din o'rtasidagi murakkab bog'liqlikni o'rganadigan fanlararo sohaga bag'ishlangan. Unda din shunchaki madaniy hodisa emas, balki til ifodasi va bilishni chuqur shakllantiruvchi asosiy kuch ekanligi ta'kidlanadi, hatto kundalik tilda aniq diniy matnlardan tashqarida ham o'z ta'sirini ko'rsatadi. "Najot" yoki "inoyat" kabi atamalar bu "lingvistik sizib chiqish"ni namoyish etib, dunyoqarashga nozik ta'sir ko'rsatadi.

Teolingvistika diniy ong tilga qanday singib ketganini tahlil qilish uchun kognitiv lingvistika, korpus lingvistikasi va tarixiy semantika usullaridan foydalanadi. Maqolada sohaning shakllanishi, uning Jan-Pyer van Noppen tomonidan 1981 yilda joriy etilishi hamda D. Kristall va A. Vagner tomonidan ommalashtirilishi ko'rsatilgan. U ushbu sohaning lingvistik tahlilni ilohiyot tushunchalari bilan birlashtirishdagi noyob o'rnini ta'kidlaydi, bu esa, M. R. Galiyevaning tadqiqotlari misolida ko'rsatilganidek, muqaddaslikning insoniy muloqot va tafakkur matosiga qanday singib ketganligi haqida yaxlit tushuncha beradi. Shuningdek, maqolada teolingvistikaning madaniyatlararo muloqot, til o'qitish va tarjima sohalariga ta'siri, ayniqsa ko'p tilli jamiyatlarda diniy nutqning kundalik til bilan kesishgan joylari haqida fikr yuritiladi.

Kalit so'zlar

Insoniyatning alohida pozitsiyasi, din asosiy qadriyat, intizom, teolingvistika, tafakkur

Furthermore, a critical analytical task within theolinguistics involves discerning how religious consciousness is encoded and activated within the seemingly neutral fabric of everyday language. Beyond explicit liturgical texts or theological treatises, religious conceptualizations often permeate lexical items, idiomatic expressions, and metaphorical frameworks that are widely used in secular discourse. Terms such as "redemption," "grace," or "prophecy," while rooted in specific religious traditions, frequently manifest in broader

cultural narratives and individual psychologies, subtly influencing worldview and value systems. Analyzing this linguistic seepage requires a sophisticated methodological toolkit, drawing upon cognitive linguistics to uncover conceptual metaphors, corpus linguistics to map patterns of usage, and historical semantics to trace the etymological and semantic shifts of religiously charged terms. This analytical lens allows theolinguistics to illuminate not just the overtly religious dimensions of language, but also the pervasive,

often tacit, ways in which the sacred continues to shape the very architecture of our shared linguistic world picture.

Theolinguistics aspects at how we use language in spiritual settings, how our deepest convictions show up in our words, and why humans, with our unique ability to articulate thoughts and feelings, hold a special place in the universe. We'll touch on how this field came to be, what it focuses on, and the clever ways it brings together linguistics and theology to help us understand the sacred threads woven into our everyday conversations.

Traditionally, the problem of "language and religion" is considered in philosophy, theology (theology), religious studies, linguistics (linguoculturology, ethno linguistics, anthropo linguistics) and other sciences. The term "theolinguistics" was first used by Jean-Pierre van Noppen. In 1981, a collective monograph was published under his editorship (Noppen 1981).

Theolinguistics is a science that attempts to describe how the human word can be used in relation to God, as well as how language functions in religious situations, in situations that do not meet the rigid standards of direct one-way communication, and which, on the other hand, despite this, coincide with the logic of its description in such well-known forms as a metaphor or a speech act (Noppen 1995: 693; cit. according to: Gadomsky 2008b: 6).

Thanks to D. Christel's Cambridge Language Encyclopedia, the term "theolinguistics" gained particular popularity (Crystal 1993). Soon A. Wagner used it, speaking in 1999 with a report Theolinguistics?

- Theolinguistics! (Theolinguistik? – Theolinguistik!) at the annual 32nd Linguistic Colloquium held in Kassel. He compared this term with the terms "sociolinguistics" and "neurolinguistics" already established in linguistics and defined the subject and tasks of theolinguistics (Wagner 1999). In 2008, the 1st volume of the Theolinguistik series was published in Germany. To date, 5 of them have already been published and an international

working group on theolinguistics has been formed.

The subject of the study of theolinguistics is the study of various aspects of the interaction of religion and language, the analysis of how language functions in religious situations, on the one hand, and how various manifestations of religion are reflected in language, on the other hand. The object of study of theolinguistics can be "religious language"; stages of development of linguistics, the history of linguistics, due to confessional reasons; theories of the origin of language (and above all the theory of the divine essence of the origin of language) and other issues – in a word, all the phenomena associated with God, which were fixed and reflected in the language.

Moreover, this integrity between religion and culture makes a common link in the history of humankind. As distinctive feature of any religion may be seen in belief (faith) in the supernatural and perfect one, that is mostly qualified as God. Along with the culture in the core of religion as the main value is seen a man. This privilege is explained by the unique spiritual nature of human being, which is mainly formed by the usage of the language. This reason from point of view of religion gave humanity special position above the other creatures that exist in the universe, as it is with the help of the language, there exist, function and reproduce certain spiritual beliefs that contain sacred meaning.

Relationship of religion and language can be traced back to the whole history of linguistic investigations starting from Grammar of Panini, Arabic linguistics, ParRoyal grammar, emergence of classic and Semitic philology, exegetic and hermeneutics, lexicography and translation theory and others. In this regard, we can claim that traditionally, the problem of "language and religion" is considered in philosophy, theology (theology), religious studies, linguistics (linguoculturology, ethno linguistics, anthropo linguistics) and other sciences. Due to the importance and popularity of the religion and religious issues, as an

object of the study in many disciplines as mentioned above, a new direction named Theolinguistics emerged in the field of linguistic sciences in 1981.

Generally, Theolinguistics is determined as one of the linguistic directions in the framework of the established anthropocentric paradigm. This term was introduced by the Belgian linguist Jean-Pierre van Noppen, who focused his attention on the study of the relationship between language and religious thought and practice. In his preface of collection of papers named, "Theolinguistics" van Noppen (1981) introduces Theolinguistics as "The pluridisciplinary field of investigation offered by the linguistic articulation of religious belief and thought – a notion condensed, in a Western perspective, in the neologism *Theolinguistics* – raises a number of issues that are, at least, far from being exhausted. The new term covers an area of interest with a history as old and respectable as Man's attempt to voice, with the means of conception and expression at his disposal, his understanding of the divine but it is meant to refer more specifically to the interest in language whose origins can be traced back to the turn of the century, and which was to result in the church-wide debate over religious language – a debate which gained momentum on the eve of the 'Death of God' movement and which, unabated by more recent trends on the theological scene, claimed for years a priority in theological thought." (Noppen, 1999; p 428) Another significant contribution in the emergence and popularity of the term "Theolinguistics" is an introduction of it by D. Crystal in Cambridge linguistic Dictionary in 1993 and A. Wagner's report at the annual 32nd Linguistic Colloquium, held in Kassel where he used this term.

Over the past three decades, in different countries of the world (Netherlands, Germany, Great Britain, Poland, Serbia, Ukraine, Belarus, Russia, Slovakia, Belgium, etc.), scientists have actively studied various aspects of the language of the religious sphere. Language and religion as an object of research has entered

the circle of interests of linguists in the post-Soviet space relatively recently in connection with well-known events in the late twentieth century. Several directions got their development, and many synonymous epithets appeared that nominate the object under study: religious-preaching, church-religious, church-preaching, churchbiblical, liturgical, liturgical, sacred, etc. And although, according to many researchers, the term religious language is the most neutral, it did not acquire an unambiguous attitude to itself, which led to the use of the terms "religious discourse" (Karasik, Slyshkin), "Religious style" (Mistrik, Itskovich), "religious preaching style" (Golberg, Gosteeva), "religious communication" (Rozanova). As an example of the works done in Theolinguistics by Uzbek linguists can be regarded M.R. Galiyeva's research where she claims, that investigations focused on the linguistic study of reflection mythological-religious factors should be conducted in line with an independent interdisciplinary linguistic discipline – theolinguistics, which received various terminological notions. Within number of these notions, the term "theolinguistics" is most appropriate because of terminological appropriacy of discipline nomination, that reflects the interaction of theology and linguistic and clearly represent the direction of linguistic research; the universal nature of the term, because there is definitely no specific religious or denominational affiliation (i.e. Orthodox linguistics, Orthodox Christian cooling system); lack of stylistic and generic limitations of the term (i.e. religiousstyle preaching, religious language, liturgical language, religious style, biblical style). From the position of M.R. Galieva direction Theolinguistics is designed to study the reflection of mythological and religious consciousness in the linguisti world picture on the basis of achievements and methods of both traditional (comparative linguistics, lexicology, stylistics, grammar, etc.) and new interdisciplinary linguistic disciplines (cognitive linguistics, linguaculturology,

pragmalinguistics, etc.) (Galiyeva, 2018). Her study of language material from the standpoint of theolinguistics shows that multi-level units in the system of any language represent religiously marked units. In her work, she investigated the verbalization of the religious world picture at the level of lexical, phraseological and parameological units and text. The subject of research of Theolinguistics is the study of various aspects of the interaction of religion and language, and analysis of how language functions in religious situations, and how various manifestations of religion are reflected in language. The objects of study of Theolinguistics are: a "religious language"; religious discourse, religious lexics, semantic and stylistic aspects of religious discourse, theory of the origin of the language, description of the language of religious communication, genology of religious texts, theology of theolinguistics, language of homilies and sermons, translation of religious texts, prayers, religious vocabulary and lexicography, religious style texts, religion in the media, language of religious songs and other questions – in a word, all the phenomena associated with God, which are fixed and reflected in the language.

Theolinguistics, in comparison with other synthetic branches of linguistics (sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, linguoculturography, etc.), based on one field of knowledge – science, combines ideas from disciplines belonging to different fields of knowledge. That is, linguistic representations from the sphere of science are combined with theological representations from the sphere of theology (religion). The analysis of the language, performed on the material of a religious text and provided with theological commentary, is recognized as theolinguistics. Recently, there are several approaches in linguistics to study the problems of the interrelation of religion and language. The most developed is functional-stylistic approach to the study of religious language. Many scientists underline the significance of

highlighting of religious style as special functional style in the system of functional styles (Krisin, 1992; Mistrik, 1992; Proxvatilova, 2006; Wojtak, 1992; Umarkhodjaev, 2011 etc.). Therefore, we conclude that, in fact, Theolinguistics studies include those in which linguistic units and language levels, genres, styles considered from the perspective of religious consciousness and the religious linguistic picture of the world.

Theolinguistics uses the achievements of a number of adjacent linguistic disciplines characterized by interdisciplinary approach to the study of linguistic phenomena such as sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, communicative linguistics and, cognitive linguistics and others combining them with sub branches as general, private, synchronic and diachronic theolinguistics.

M. Galiyeva argues that theolinguistics is specifically designed to investigate the manifestation of mythological and religious consciousness within the linguistic world picture. This is achieved by leveraging the theoretical advancements and methodologies of both traditional linguistic disciplines (e.g., comparative linguistics, lexicology, stylistics, grammar) and modern interdisciplinary fields (e.g., cognitive linguistics, linguaculturology, pragmalinguistics). Research in this vein demonstrates that multi-level linguistic units frequently bear "religiously marked" significance, examining their verbalization across lexical, phraseological, paremiological, and textual strata.

Theolinguistics' strength lies in its inherently interdisciplinary methodology, which transcends the conventional boundaries between scientific linguistics and theological inquiry. By integrating insights from traditional linguistic branches such as lexicology, stylistics, and grammar with modern approaches like cognitive linguistics, sociolinguistics, and pragmatics, it offers a multi-faceted analytical framework. This allows for a deeper understanding of phenomena ranging from the functional styles of religious communication to

the cognitive underpinnings of religious metaphors and the historical evolution of sacred terminology.

The emergence and consolidation of theolinguistics as a distinct academic discipline mark a significant advancement in scholarly attempts to rigorously analyze the intricate relationship between language and religion. As we have seen, this interdisciplinary field is built upon the fundamental premise that religion is not merely a cultural overlay but a formative force that has profoundly shaped human cognition and linguistic expression from antiquity. The unique human capacity for articulate language, viewed through a theolinguistic lens, elevates humanity to a distinctive position, enabling the verbalization, transmission, and perpetuation of sacred beliefs.

In conclusion, theolinguistics offers a critical and comprehensive framework for appreciating how language functions as both a mirror and a medium for religious belief. It affirms that the sacred is not merely an abstract concept but is dynamically embodied and transmitted through linguistic forms. As the field continues to mature and expand its methodological frontiers, it promises to yield increasingly profound insights into the symbiotic relationship between language, culture, and the enduring human quest to articulate the divine. The ongoing dialogue between linguistics and theology within this discipline is vital for a holistic understanding of human communication in its deepest and most meaningful dimensions.

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