RELIGIOUS DISCOURSE AS A RESEARCH CONSTRUCT

Madina Subkhonova
Teacher of the Bukhara State pedagogical institute

Abstract: This article explores the classification and characteristics of discourse in modern linguistics, focusing on the distinctions between personal and institutional discourse and their respective subcategories. Particular attention is given to thematic and culturally specific discourses, including those rooted in religion. Language and religion are examined as interconnected systems of spiritual culture, with religious discourse analyzed through its various dimensions: doctrinal, cultic, and community-oriented. Strategies and functions of religious discourse, as identified by notable scholars, are discussed, including prayer, confession, affirmation, and ritual. Ultimately, the article underscores the profound influence of religious discourse on cultural, linguistic, and spiritual dimensions of human existence, highlighting its unique characteristics across different religions and its essential role in shaping the linguistic and cultural identity of societies.

Keywords: Religious discourse, institutional communication, language and religion, sacred texts, spiritual culture, doctrinal discourse, cult discourse, community discourse, linguistic worldview, religious symbols.

Introduction: Discourse analysis in linguistics encompasses a wide array of themes and frameworks, reflecting the diversity of human communication and its cultural contexts. A particularly rich area of study is the discourse of linguistic worldviews within specific chronological and cultural frameworks, highlighting how national languages and cultural traditions shape specific forms of discourse. For instance, Germanic languages often serve as a basis for exploring discourses related to war and conflict, while the Russian language is frequently associated with discourses on patience, sacrifice, family, and gender roles. This thematic variety underscores the dynamic nature of discourse, which creates "possible worlds" that can range from a close reflection of reality to significant distortions of it.

In this context, religious discourse emerges as a unique phenomenon, deeply rooted in the philosophical and anthropological insights of W. von Humboldt. His work underpins the interdisciplinary study of language and religion, laying the foundation for the field of theolinguistics. Humboldt's assertion that language originates in the spiritual sphere aligns with the understanding of religion and language as intertwined categories of spiritual culture. Both function as distinct communication systems and are fundamental to shaping human thought and interaction. The deep ontological connection between language and religion manifests in religious discourse, which reflects human existence, cultural values, and societal structures through the lens of linguistic consciousness.

Religious discourse operates within institutional frameworks and develops along three primary directions: doctrinal discourse, cult discourse, and community discourse. It serves as a model of strategic communication, characterized by its duality: the dialogue between religious authorities and adherents, and the monologue of institutions addressing their followers. Moreover, religious discourse plays a pivotal role in shaping the linguistic worldview and cultural identity of societies, influencing various aspects of social, cultural, and individual life.

This article explores the multifaceted nature of religious discourse, examining its strategies,

functions, and cultural significance. It highlights the distinctive features of religious texts, their role in societal memory, and their contribution to the broader linguistic and cultural landscape. By delving into these aspects, the study underscores the profound impact of religious discourse on human communication, cultural identity, and spiritual expression.

Literature review: In modern linguistics, it is generally accepted that discourse is divided into two main types: personal (i.e., personality-oriented) and institutional (i.e., status-oriented), while within the status-oriented discourse, business, expert, special, and professional discourses are distinguished [Chekulai, Prokhorova, 2019, p. 22]. In linguistics, it is also customary to talk about the discourse of linguistic pictures of the world in changing chronological frameworks, and about specific (single) discourses characteristic of national languages. For example, it has been noted that, using the material of Germanic languages, it is not uncommon to study discourses related to war and armed conflict, while discourses related to patience, sacrifice, women, and family are studied using the material of the Russian language [Lutai, Prokhorova, 2018, p. 357]. In discoursology, such thematic discourses as song, news, poetry, media discourse, etc. are also distinguished. Linguists agree that discourse always generates a special world, therefore any discourse is "one of the possible worlds" [Stepanov, 1995, pp. 44–45], or, in the words of R. Jackendoff, a projected world [cit. in Kushneruk, 2013, p. 107]. Such a "possible world" can be close to the real world to varying degrees, and from this point of view, two polar forms with intermediate states between them can develop in discourse - from an adequate reflection of the real world "to complete distortion" [Kubryakova, 2004, p. 529].

"The philosophical and anthropological program" of V. fon Humboldt became the basis for interdisciplinary research by linguists and religious scholars, linguists and theologians abroad and in modern Russian science within the framework of the new direction of theolinguistics [Sazonova, 2021, p. 7]. This program is based on the idea that the origins of language are in the spiritual sphere: language arises with the advent of man immediately "as an integral and complex system embedded in man" [Susov, 1999]. Language and religion are categories of spiritual culture. Language and religion are two different "communication systems", two different ways of communication [Mechkovskaya, 1998, p. 23]. Religion, like any aspect of human existence, is inevitably connected with language at a deep ontological level. Of course, in addition to words expressing a particular meaning, there are structures that have "redundancy" [Ricoeur], i.e. religious symbols, the essence of which remains unspoken, transmitted non-verbally, and their role in religion is also great, nevertheless, in general, human existence, including that connected with the religious world, is reflected precisely through the prism of language, through linguistic consciousness and discourse [Vladimirova, 2009, p. 278]. The most general definition of religious discourse is a set of speech acts that accompany the "process of interaction of communicants in the religious sphere" [Anikushina, 2010, p. 8]. From the point of view of the institutional position of any religion, religious discourse develops in general in three main directions: doctrinal discourse, cult discourse and the discourse of the religious community (including all social institutions). A.V. Olyanich calls religious discourse a model of "strategic communication" [Olyanich, 2007, pp. 244-251]. The researcher believes that religious discourse is characterized by duality: on the one hand, it is built in the dialogue of the authorities with the people, on the other hand, in the monologue of the authorities directed to the people.

Discussion: Religious discourse reflects the mentality of the people, conditioned by the influence of a particular religion, as well as the religious culture of this people and the religious culture of its individual representatives. Religious discourse in the narrow sense of the word, according to T.A. Van Dijk, is a sacred text, i.e. a text that carries the sacred-cultural meanings of a particular religion. A sacred text in a living religion each time becomes a text pronounced actually, i.e. a discourse, since it is reproduced in repeating sacred rites and rituals and sets the main directions in the doctrinal discourse.

V.I. Karasik identifies strategies of prayer, confession, appeal, affirmation (i.e. affirmation of faith), explanation (in relation to doctrine) and rite (ritual) in religious discourse [Karasik, 1999,

pp. 13-14]. E.V. Bobyreva notes discursive functions in religious discourse that are present in any discourse, but are distinguished by their religious specificity: representative, communicative, appellative (i.e. being a means of calling for certain actions), expressive, phatic (i.e. establishing contact) and informative, as well as institutional functions that regulate the existence of a religious community, relations within it, as well as "the internal worldview of a member of society" [Bobyreva, 2007, p. 3]. The perception of the word in religious discourse is akin to the aesthetic perception of speech: in religious feeling, as in aesthetic feeling, ideas "organically grow together with the text, ritual, image, rhythm, sound that express them" [Klyuchevsky, 1988, p. 271]. A feature of religious texts is their formal-semantic organization, structure and skill, and the frequent use of cliches: such texts exist in the memory of society as stable signs with given functions and a certain composition and are "reproduced as ready-made verbal works" [Mechkovskaya, 1998, p. 23]. Linguists recognize the important role of religious discourse in the formation of the linguistic picture of the world of any people: a significant part of the life of society is the "area of religion" [Mechkovskaya, 1998, p. 22], the impact of which on other aspects of the life of this society is very deep, organic and multifaceted; religion has a huge impact on the content of culture and the mentality of the people. Religious communication occurs in extraordinary situations, is characterized by tension and drama, since its addressee is a higher power. Due to the fact that the understanding of a higher power in religions is different, this circumstance is fundamental for understanding religious discourse, which in all religions, with general external analogies, differs at the verbal, conceptual level. In each religion, religious discourse is carried out in a certain sign system, expressed in terms familiar to this religion.

Conclusion: Religious discourse stands as a profound and complex phenomenon that intertwines language, culture, and spirituality, shaping human perception and societal structures. Rooted in the philosophical insights of thinkers like V. fon Humboldt, religious discourse highlights the intrinsic connection between language and the spiritual realm, presenting a unique form of communication that transcends the purely linguistic to embody cultural, symbolic, and ritualistic dimensions. Its dual nature, oscillating between institutional communication and individual spiritual expression, underscores its multifaceted role in religious communities.

This discourse not only reflects the cultural and historical identity of societies but also actively contributes to the construction of their linguistic worldviews. Through its institutional functions and symbolic representations, religious discourse influences societal values, cultural practices, and individual worldviews. The features of religious texts, including their formal structure, reliance on cliches, and role as repositories of cultural memory, further demonstrate their enduring significance in shaping collective and individual consciousness.

In conclusion, religious discourse transcends the boundaries of language and religion, serving as a critical framework for understanding the interplay between communication, culture, and spirituality. Its study not only enhances our comprehension of linguistic and cultural phenomena but also deepens our appreciation of the spiritual and symbolic dimensions of human existence.

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