

# Religion and linguistic culture

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## Abstract

Linguistic culture represents the level of the individual and society, and the richer the individual, the more elevated the society and the individual. There is no linguistic culture *causa sui* anywhere in the world because no one is prepared just because of the language but to convey the ideas and thoughts to others.

The rights are different and deal with different fields of study but, if there is the influence of religion on their expressions, then we will clearly see that in the culture of their language, there is a specific spirit that can be said to be religious.

Religion provides a language that is distinguished by different cosmopolitan traits because it is distinguished by the inspiration it offers to man and society. Such interconnection forms a special culture, which reflects the way we think. Through such specific vocabulary, we can ascertain the level of religious linguistic culture and the religious influence in expressions that are low, middle or high barometers of the individual and society.

So, based on linguistic culture, we understand the level of influence of religion and the way of resonating on various social issues. Such a language confirms the amount of words of a religious language characterization and problem solving, as well as confirms support in religious resonance.

*Keywords:* Society, religion, culture, language, influence.

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## 1. Introduction

Religion, culture and language are an essential element of the human condition. Hundreds of studies have examined how religious beliefs mold an individual's sociology, psychology and linguistics. In particular, research has explored how an individual's religion (religious beliefs, religious denomination, strength of religious devotion, etc.) is linked to their linguistic cultural beliefs and background. While some researchers have asserted that religion is an essential part of an individual's linguistic culture, other researchers have focused more on how religion is a culture in itself. The key difference is how researchers conceptualize and operationalize both of these terms. Moreover, the influence of communication in how individuals and communities understand, conceptualize, and pass on religious and cultural beliefs and practices is integral to understanding exactly what religion and culture are.

It is through exploring the relationships among religion, culture, and communication that we can best understand how they shape the world in which we live and have shaped the communication discipline itself. Furthermore, as we grapple with these relationships and terms, we can look to the future and realize that the study of religion, culture, and communication is vast and open to expansion.

## 2. The Concept of Religion

Religion has been delineated in many and various ways according to a number of scholars. However, it seems that there is no generally accepted definition of religion taken into account the nature of the discipline, diversity of religions, diversity of religious experiences, and diversity of religious origins, among others. Religion like music is a hard concept to define. However, many theologians, philosophers, psychologists, sociologists and scholars in general have defined religion from varying viewpoints and conceptualizations. This implies that religion has been defined in many ways and in a number of cases in line with a particular school of thought or discipline. For instance, scientific approaches to religion have often shifted between delineating religion with reference to its social or psychological functions and its belief contents (see, Berger, 1974). Etymological speaking, religion is derived from the Latin word 'religare' which means "to bind back" or "to rebind". This implies that etymologically speaking religion entails a process of reconnecting by worship a missing or broken intimacy between God and worshippers. Alternative less known and used etymological origin of religion is the Latin word 'relegere' denoting "to re-read" (Steward Harrison Oppong, 2013)

When cultural specifications, such as individualism and collectivism, have been attributed to religion, the proposed definitions and functions of religion overlap with definitions of culture. For example, researchers often combine religious identification (Jewish, Christian, Muslim, etc.) with cultural dimensions (Hofstede, 1991) like individualism/collectivism to understand and compare cultural differences. Such combinations for comparison and analytical purposes demonstrate how religion and religious identification in particular are often relegated to a micro-level variable, when in fact the true relationship between an individual's religion and culture is inseparable. (Stephen M. Croucher, 2017)

The interface between language and religion is so palpable throughout the world that we cannot ignore it. Today's modern world, besides its complexities and due to its diverse and intense relationships among different cultures, countries, and people, do definitely has special relationships of attitudes and religion within and between people of societies. (Ali Rahimi, 2018)

My use of the notion that there is such a thing like a linguistic culture does not rest on the premise that it is deterministic. Whorfian: Language structures determine ways of thinking.

It should be clear by now that the basic tenet of this paper work is that the language policy is ultimately grounded in linguistic culture that is the set of behaviours, assumptions, cultural forms, prejudices, folk belief systems, attitudes, stereotypes, ways of thinking about language and religious-historical circumstances associated with a particular language. (Harold F. Schiffman, 1996)

The study of how language is used, and how members of the culture acquire and display knowledge of usage, has been approached in different ways by philosophers, anthropologists, sociologists of language, social psychologists, and so on. Notwithstanding, these approaches to the cultural context of language all recognize that the formal study of linguistic codes is necessary but not sufficient to our understanding of how people communicate.

Furthermore, moving beyond existing knowledge of the interrelationships between religion and culture (Heath, 1983; Sarroub, 2002), this study indicates that language plays a significant role in the religious identity development of youths who come from multicultural, multifait, and multilingual homes. Thus, this study calls for greater attention to the role of language in conceptual and empirical research about the processes involved in youths' religious identity development. Literacy scholarship pertaining to youths who claim a single faith has been illuminating the complex literacy capacities that youths develop through religious life and suggesting how literacy

teachers can connect those strengths to building academic, civic, and social literacy (Eakle, 2007; Eakle, J. A. (2007). Literacy spaces of a Christian faith-based school. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 42, 472–510.; Skerrett 2014, 2016). Youths who transact with multiple faiths and languages in developing religious identities seem uniquely positioned to build even more robust literacy competencies that can be leveraged for more powerful learning in literacy classrooms. This phenomenon presents a well warranted agenda for future literacy research. (Allison Skerrett, 2017).

### 3. Religious language

Meanings and uses of religious language in a narrow sense, ‘religious language’ can be referred to as a language that is “consistently used with religion” or within a religious domain of language use (cf. Samarin 1987: 85).<sup>3</sup> In this sense, ‘religious language’ is a sort of language “especially reserved for religious activities and used for very little else, except perhaps as school subjects or literary and scholarly languages” (Fasold 1987: 77-78). But even then, religious language is mainly meant to allow the learner, the writer or the scholar to participate in religious custom (cf. Baker 2000: 178-179 on religion and language learning). An example of the study of ‘religious language’ in a narrow sense is David Crystal’s analysis of liturgical language from a sociolinguistic perspective (cf. Crystal 1990). Other examples can be found in Samarin (1976)

Apart from focusing on the (sociolinguistic) traits of ‘religious language’ in contexts of religious practice, one could, however, also widen the scope somewhat and investigate how ‘religious language’ is used outside of the religious discourse community and filters through colloquial, political and other types of speech in which it is used to support nonreligious causes. In connection with this, Paul Chilton, co-editor with Ruth Wodak of the *Journal of Language and Politics*, devotes a section of part III of his book on *Analysing*.

A similar ‘definition’ of ‘religious language’ can be found in Swann et al. (2004: 262-263). ‘Religion’ itself is not defined by Swann et al. (2004). Also Samarin (1987) refrains from a definition and so does Fishman (2006: 14) who writes that he is “not prepared to define “religion” per se, accepting that the behaviours, beliefs and values that are deigned to be religious are more diverse than any of us are currently aware of”.

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*SOCIOLINGUISTICA* 25/2011 Political Discourse (2004) to the role of religion. Chilton indicates that the dimensions of the analysis of religious discourse could, for example, include the political exploitation of religious language and the nature of religious meaning expressed linguistically (Jeroen Darquennes, 2004).

Words are, however, a way for the worldly to connect with the divine through prayer and worship. For many, developing a greater understanding of a religion extends not only to studying the theological and philosophical points but to learning another language. We spoke to three people who study Arabic, Hebrew and classical Tibetan about the role languages play in their relationship with religion.

The language, she claims, is intimately involved in an understanding of the religion, with word stems allowing a whole philosophy to be found in a single term. Take the word *bar mitzvah*, for example. The word literally means “son of the commandment” and is used to refer to a Jewish boy’s coming of age ceremony. However, the stem “*mitzvah*” on its own has deeper layers of meaning, referring to the 613 commandments given in the Torah at biblical Mount Sinai and the seven rabbinic commandments instituted later. It is also used to refer to a good deed.

Nitza Spiro, director of the Spiro Ark School, says she has seen a large increase in the number of people wishing to learn both biblical and Modern Hebrew. Spiro argues that language is central to Jewish identity and its resilience. “Books meant our spirit, our hope, our outlook on life, our morality, our ability to argue about issues which are higher than the daily mundane things,” says Spiro. “Without it [Hebrew] you don’t have the tools to understand what it is to be a Jew.”

Just as Hebrew has helped preserve Jewish religion and culture for generations, the Islamic intellectual, legal and social heritage has been transmitted for centuries in Arabic. All Muslims are not only required to recite daily prayers in Arabic, but they must have a minimum amount of the Qur’an memorised for the purposes of prayer and worship.

London-based Imam, Shafiur Rahman, believes learning the language would help prevent any dangerous misinterpretations of the holy book. While there are parts of the Qur’an which are open to interpretation, Arabic scholars have developed sciences around grammar, syntax, and rhetoric which ensure followers don’t extrapolate meanings from the book which weren’t intended. The word “jihad”, for example, is often translated as “holy war” but actually means “struggling” or “surviving” (Matthew Jenkin, 2014)

Second, language and religion are basic sources and forms of social, cultural, and political identification. They are ways of identifying oneself and others, construing sameness and difference, and naming fundamental social groups. Language and religion are again both analogous to ethnicity and nationalism in this respect and pervasively intertwined with them. Language, religion, or both are generally understood as central to or even constitutive of most ethnic and national identifications, and they frequently serve as the key diacritical markers, emblems, or symbols of such identifications.

The reasons for this are found in the most elementary differences between language and religion. Language is a medium of communication; it is not a structure of authority, and it has no intrinsic normative content. Defenders of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis – the idea that language constitutes thought, culture, and world views – would argue with this characterization. But strong versions of Whorfianism have long been discredited, so this would be an argument only at the margins. Whatever normative content languages might carry is relatively thin.<sup>16</sup> But religion (and especially public religion) often involves an authoritative, binding, and comprehensive set of norms. (Patricia Jeronimo, 2013)

The Union’s motto is precisely “United in diversity”, which suggests a difficult balance between integration and autonomy, but which is nevertheless presented with confidence in the official European discourse as both a source of originality and a key to the Union’s success. Instead of aiming to be a single culture, EU’s Europe presents itself as a mosaic of different cultures – as a “culture of cultures” –, combined to form a whole which is greater than the sum of its parts. That is why the EU considers itself to be particularly suited to build bridges between different cultures and why it is committed to foster intercultural dialogue, inside and across borders. A commitment which is confirmed, e.g., by the involvement of the European Community in the negotiations of the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, adopted in 2005, and by the European Parliament and Council’s decision to celebrate 2008 as the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue (EC Treaty, 2005).

Considering that tolerance for cultural, ethnic, and religious and linguistic diversities, as well as dialogue among and within civilizations, is essential for peace, understanding and friendship among individuals and people of different cultures and nations of the world, while manifestations of cultural prejudice, intolerance and xenophobia towards different cultures and religions generate

hatred and violence among peoples and nations throughout the world. UN General Assembly, 2005)

### 3. Linguistic tolerance

One of the dimensions of the multicultural society is the development of the *linguistic tolerance*. The Language teaching policy of the European Council is based on the concept of the individual multilingualism. This concept should be separated from the concept of the multilingualism of the geographic regions (society). *The individual multilingualism* means the totality of languages that can be used by a person. The totality of languages includes the native or the first language of a child and all the other languages mastered by that person. In *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (2001), the multilingualism is defined as an ability to use languages for the purpose of communication as well as participate in the inter-cultural interaction, where a person, as a social actor, possesses skills of communication in several languages and the experience of several cultures. It is not the superposition or juxtaposition of different competencies, but rather a complex competence that can be used by a person. Therefore, multilingualism means the whole linguistic repertoire of a person including his/her native or first tongue. (Virginia, 2005)

To sum up, the religion appears to be essential for the retention and transmission of the community language when it is in constant contact with the majority language. The religion has a great impact on intergenerational transmission of community languages. (Mustefa Abdelhadi, 2017)

Cultural determinism is the term for the notion that different cultures cause or determine certain behaviors in their members, and that these cultural rules bind or constrain people, allowing them no alternative but to act in certain way.

### 4. Conclusion

Language is a mean of expressing feelings, thoughts, but also religious expressions, and if this tool is harsh and biting, a rough culture and linguistic rust can be formed. Religion has its own terminology and influences the formation of positive linguistic culture if it is used positively to bring people and nations around the world closer. There is no bad linguistic culture but there is misinterpretation of religion, which can be used to do bad and to create hatred of great size with fatal consequences.

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