

COMMUNICATIVE CULTURE OF THE LANGUAGE OF THE RELIGIOUS SPHERE IN UKRAINE AND BULGARIA (COMPARATIVE ASPECT)

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Abstract. The language of the religious sphere in Ukraine and Bulgaria has gone through a long path of communicative adaptation, which was influenced by both intralinguistic and extralinguistic factors. In the Ukrainian approach, the confessional style is singled out, while Bulgarian scholars do not introduce it into the stylistic palette. At the same time, with the involvement of Internet technologies in religious communication and the influence of the new information environment in both countries, religious language seems to objectify itself. A comparative analysis of the language of the religious sphere in Ukraine and Bulgaria has made it possible to find out that communicative dynamism is formed by the media religiosity of content consumers and is objectified as a reduction in differences in the language-speech dichotomy, changes in communicative behaviour, the nature of the interpretation of linguistic signs and the choice of forms of reflecting on them. As a result, a language with new identification standards is constructed. The approach used is rooted in the learning objectives of the Bulgarian language course for Ukrainians, where Ukrainian analytics will help students identify commonalities and differences within the Bulgarian framework as they conduct their own research in the field of religious communication. At the same time, the emphasis is placed on the communicative dynamics of the religious sphere specific to different Slavic countries.

Keywords: language of the religious sphere; confessional style; stylistics; Slavic studies; Ukraine; Bulgaria; media religiosity; communicative dynamism

Introduction

The language of the religious sphere in Ukraine and Bulgaria has gone through a long path of communicative adaptation. In the scientific picture of the world of the 21st century, the confessional style of the Ukrainian language is singled out, despite the presence of a number of complex issues of its linguistic argumentation, including the criteria for identifying the characteristics and genre forms of style

development. The logic of such a separation is rooted in the understanding of the confessional style as a form of cultural reflection on the developing world (Derhach & Syzonov, 2014, p. 133). In contrast, Bulgarian scholars do not introduce it into the modern stylistic palette.

At the same time, in both countries, a trend is developing within which the language of the religious sphere seems to objectify itself. With the involvement of Internet technologies and the transfer of many forms of religious interaction to the media, the study of the language of the religious sphere has become the object of interdisciplinary research. Therefore, in the study, we appeal to the theory of synthesis of approaches in the conceptualization of religious language as a subsystem. Its interdisciplinary analysis forms the prospects for the study of religious communication in the 21st century and is important for the dialogue of Slavic cultures, which grew as if from one root, but developed as ethnospecific phenomena.

The aim of the article is to develop a Bulgarian frame in a Slavic context within the framework of a Bulgarian language stylistics course for Ukrainians. At the same time, the emphasis is placed on promising approaches that are also common in other European countries.

Methodology

We used an analytical model that is applied in the representation of all styles of the Ukrainian language in various higher education courses: scope, goals, specificity of language forms with the individualization of typical lexical-semantic groups, substyles, genres. At the same time, we develop an approach (Hrymalovskiy, 2006), which extends to the practices of all religions represented in Ukraine, and we use the concept of **religiolect**, within which pagan, Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Buddhist, etc. styles function. Bulgaria also positions itself at the legal level as a country where interfaith dialogue is supported. Therefore, we consider this approach relevant for comparative research. Socially marked subsystems of the language that serve certain communities within the same religious affiliation are identified as religious **sociolects**.

Taking into account the socio-cultural mental characteristics in Ukraine and Bulgaria and dialogue between religious communities as an official state strategy, we emphasize that the language of the religious sphere in oral and written varieties serves both the activities of numerous institutions and the needs of believers. As for the forms of use, their traditional list (transmission of sacred knowledge, liturgical, ritual practices, etc.) is supplemented by media, advertising, pilgrimage and religious tourism storytelling, religious songs and poetry, animation, filmography, genres of business interaction and many other varieties of oral and written representations. This approach is relevant for the study of religious language in both Ukraine and Bulgaria.

The goals for which language is usually used in religious communication are achieved by forming a religious picture of the world among members of the denomination and developing pragmatic communications. The codes of religious language are established conventionally, they are a tool for forming personal and group identity, transmitting, transmitting and assimilating religious information, integrating or disintegrating the religious community, and regulating relations between members of the community or between communities and denominations (Petrushkevych, 2018, p.184). In Ukraine and Bulgaria, the language of the religious sphere corresponds to this trend and there are no contradictions in the interpretations of the concepts of “religious picture of the world” and “codification” (Kitova, 2017).

Characteristic specificity

Vocabulary correlated with liturgical practice, religious and ritual terminology, isomorphism as a basic principle of information representation, relation to tradition.

Substyles. Usually, limiting ourselves to Christian denominations, we distinguish core substyles: biblical, liturgical, patrological, hagiographic, homiletic; and peripheral substyles: scientific theological, ecclesiolegal, and educational religious ones. In our approach, which is based on the principle of polyreligion, we emphasize the following substyles: sacred textual, liturgical, preaching, educational religious, legal, business, journalistic, media, artistic, marketing and other substyles. Substyles and genre specifics depend on the social functions of religious language, therefore, a corresponding communicative resource is formed with the change of these functions. It can be revived, borrowed, traced, created, reinterpreted, etc.

Genres: Gospel, epistle, apocalypse, parable, psalm, curse, song, hymn, sermon, prayer, advertisement, Quran, Sunnah, hadith, Vedas, mantras, etc.

The comparison method was used to analyse the related and distinctive characteristics of Ukrainian and Bulgarian linguistic support for religious communication, as well as to study the functional activity of religious stylistics.

1. The main stages of the formation of the language of the religious sphere in Ukraine

Slavic ethnic groups have much in common in the formation of writings, because their cultural traditions are rooted in the functionality of the Holy Scripture and its oldest translations into the Old Church Slavonic (Old Bulgarian) language. This language remains prophetic, sacred and cultic in terms of functional assessments. In Ukraine, it represented religious communication from the time of Kievan Rus until the second half of the 19th century to further give way to the folk Ukrainian language. At the beginning of the 20th century there was a full-fledged entry of the religious style of Christian communication into the system of styles of the Ukrainian language.

The churchisation of the Ukrainian language has taken place and the process of final introduction of the Ukrainian language into the liturgical practice of Christian denominations (the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kyiv Patriarchate, the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church, the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church; Protestants (Mova, 2022) and communities of the Roman Catholic Church are gradually joining).

Now Ukraine is asserting itself as a full-fledged subject of Ecumenical Orthodoxy. At the same time, the religious landscape of Ukraine is being formed through interfaith dialogue, which affects the dynamism of the language of the religious sphere. Thus, the majority of pagans use the Ukrainian language (Obyednannya). Ukrainian-language theological sources and prayers were offered to their believers by the Baha'is in Ukraine (Hromada). Mosques in Ukraine use Arabic as the main language of preaching, but the Islamic narrative is developed through numerous vectors of Ukrainian-language educational, media and marketing activity. Synagogues in Ukraine can use not only Hebrew, but also Ukrainian, as a language understandable to the community. The practice of modern Ukrainian-language translation of Jewish prayers (Ukrainier; Bryman 2016), as well as Buddhist prayers (Mediateka), is also popularized by religious media. Thus, in the first quarter of the 21st century the Ukrainian language finally established itself in the religious sphere (Puryaeva, 2001). In the context of changes in the state, a communicative demand arose for a return to the active use of the language of religious records, etiquette, religious science and art, and the service sphere (educational, pedagogical, medical, tourist, market spheres, etc.). New genre forms have come into general use.

2. Religious style in the stylistic palette of the modern Ukrainian language

For the first time, the confessional style (with variant names) was added to the main styles of the Ukrainian language in 2003 (Babych, 2003, p. 14; Matsko, 2003; Yushchuk, 2003). It concerned only the Christian context. In the classification of styles, it was defined as book-colloquial, having 5 substyles: a) canonical literature; b) liturgics; c) sermon; d) prayer; e) catechism (Babych, 2003, p. 11). In addition, the sphere of functioning, purpose and main features were briefly analysed with a call for scientific research. Style-forming characteristics: marked vocabulary, or “stylistems” (Matsko, 2003, pp. 288 – 289): Jesus, Christmas, Easter, fasting, saint, church, icon, etc.; “microstylistems of the word-formation level”: false prophet [лжепророк], most bright [пресвітлий], equally glorified [рівнослаvimий], the Theotokos [Богоматір], wonder-worker [чудотворець], etc.; peculiarities of the orthographic use of certain norms in the reproduction of vocabulary and phraseology. It was concluded that this style of the modern Ukrainian literary language “preserves the main features of the classical sacred language: solemnity, canonicity of word forms and constructions, constancy of genres (Bible, Gospel, divine service, prayer,

sermon, psalm)” (Matsko, 2003, p. 291), “reveals the meaning of the main religious symbols” (Matsko, 2003, pp. 314 – 317).

During the years of independence, religious vocabulary was not only revived for internal needs in individual denominations, but was also more actively used in secular contexts. Preserving the archaic-sublime presentation of information, symbolizing events and relaying in time and space the Christian assessment of key concepts, religious stylistics “is updated through the use of socio-political vocabulary relevant to the general public, which expands its semantics, adding sacred meaning to the realities in the new conditions of text creation” (Kots, 2023, p. 98) of the modern world order.

3. The infrastructure of the language of the religious sphere

In the scientific approach, the core group has traditionally been Christian theological terminology. Thus, for oral communication, these are words meaning:

- 1) core concepts (God, Jesus, Holy Spirit, Virgin Mary, angel);
- 2) the temple and its arrangement (holy of holies, discos, church gates);
- 3) parishes as a religious unit with a certain circle of people practicing the cult (pastor, priest, parishioners);
- 4) religious holidays (Christmas, Transfiguration, St Peter and Paul’s Day);
- 5) religious sacred rites (receiving communion, baptism);
- 6) Christian dogma (confirmation, confession);
- 7) divine services (liturgy, service) (Yaremchuk, 2011, p. 119).

In turn, O. Myronchuk distinguished the following substyles in accordance with the communicative realities of the written needs of the religious sphere: 1) Holy Scripture, or Biblical; 2) liturgical; 3) patrological, or patristic; 4) hagiographic; 5) preaching, or oratory; 6) scientific-theological; 7) ecclesiolegal; 8) journalistic; 9) clerical; 10) catechetical, or educational religious; 11) pilgrimage; 12) polemical; 13) artistic religious; 14) epistolary; 15) extrachurch, or interreligious; 16) oral-conversational (Myronchuk, 2010, pp. 115 – 117).

Instead, S. Yaremchuk developed an approach (Yaremchuk, 2011, p. 118 – 119). It is open to being supplemented with new material:

- 1) religions, religious practices and cults (paganism, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Catholicism, Protestantism, Judaism, Pastafarianism, Scientology, Baha’ism, etc.);
- 2) religious and ideological categories and concepts (nirvana, immortality, resurrection);
- 3) immaterial entities (God, Satan, spirit);
- 4) proper names that are important in religious history, names of gods, religious figures, adherents, preachers, etc. (Zarathustra, Jesus Christ, Yahweh, Buddha, Mohammed, Bethlehem, Mecca);
- 5) sacred books and their parts (Quran, Sunnah, Bible, Torah, Rigveda);

- 6) special states and processes of practice (communion, prayer, blessing, imposing anathema, Sacrament of Marriage, Shahada, Salah, Hajj);
- 7) status by attribute (sinner, penitent, possessed, saved, deceased);
- 8) supernatural phenomena for religious worship (resurrection, stigmata, prophecy);
- 9) varieties of personal holiness (blessed, venerable, saint, equal to the apostles, tzaddik);
- 10) rites, religious services (funeral, consecration, baptism, circumcision);
- 11) names of persons providing religious services (mullah, metropolitan, rabbi);
- 12) religious holidays and periods (Ramadan, Eid al-Adha, Vesak, Feast of Booths, Rosh Hashanah, Hanukkah, Pesach, Shabbat, Easter, Lent);
- 13) religious buildings, structures, as well as their parts (chapel, mosque, cell, choirs, kivot);
- 14) objects, tools, symbols of religious practice (samsara, crucifix, myrrh, holy banner).

This approach is promising and allows developing the vocabulary of both oral and written spheres of religious communication. In particular, in accordance with the realities of the development of religious marketing in Ukraine, a lexical-semantic group relevant for the development of religious tourism can be added to this list, namely - the original onomasticon of sacred locations (St. Sophia Cathedral [Софійський собор]; Church of the Tithes [Десятинна церква]; Vydubychi Monastery [Видубицький монастир]; Holy Protection Holosiiivskyi Desert [Свято-Покровська Голосіївська пустинь]; Brodsky Choral Synagogue [Хоральна синагога Бродського]; Grave of Tzadik Nachman of Bratslav [могила цадика Нахмана з Брацлава] etc.).

The classification can also be developed within the framework of the official-business substyle as a communicative resource to designate: institutional subjects of activity (church authority, Synod, Inter-Council Presence's Commission, diocese, synodal institution, deanery, monastery, religious educational institution, brotherhood, sisterhood, parish, mission; Ukrainian Association of Buddhists of the Karma Kagyu Linage of the Diamond Way; Gomde Ukraine Retreat Centre; Ukrainian Buddhist Centre of the Drikung Kagyu Lineage of Tibetan Buddhism, etc.); religious clericalisms: impose church punishments, exclude from the episcopate, exclude from the clergy; ties of subordination in relations between...; guarantee of religious freedom; act of proclamation...; list of canonical violations; in case of repentance of the party on which ... is imposed, etc.; feminines to designate women who perform religious service or have a special religious status: female Orthodox theologian [православна богословиня], female liturgist [літургістка], nun, sister, deaconess, presvytera [матінка], female Protestant [протестантка], female Islamite [ісламістка], Muslimah, female Baptist [бабтистка], female Mujahideen [маджахедка], bhikshuni, etc.

At the same time, we consider the optimal approach for studying the language of the religious sphere to be one in which styles are distinguished according to religious doctrines: pagan, Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Buddhist, etc. (Hrymalovskyi, 2006). The core of such styles will be formed by religious terminology.

4. Business etiquette in religious communication

The interaction of religious institutions with state bodies and the need for internal order contributed to the establishment of specific features of business etiquette in religious communication. In particular, etiquette addresses and phrases of Christians returned to modern etiquette manuals.

At the same time, in Ukrainian society, a need was formed to develop this cluster with etiquette of other confessions, for example, Jewish greetings and responses to them: “Shalom aleichem” (“Peace be upon you”) – “Shalom uvrchah” (“Peace and blessing”) or Muslim “As-salamu alaykum” (“Peace be upon you”) – “Wa-alaykum assalam” (“And peace be upon you too”) or Buddhist “Namaste” (“I bow to you”), etc.

The Covid pandemic and the need for remote interaction have contributed to the development of polite religious communication, primarily epistolary communication. Religious media responded on this social request with a series of informational materials: “Communication” (Spilkuvannya; Lytvyn, 2017).

The traditions of the Ukrainian-language embodiment of ADDRESSEE regarding religious statuses have been developed. The culture of etiquette addresses to representatives of Christian churches has emerged as an extensive system of names with a marker of sacralization. Religious honorifics are a form of politeness that conveys respect by adding a position, rank, or title when addressing a person or in a story about this person, embodying a modus of a special social status. Thus, when addressing the Patriarch, the expression **Your Holiness [Ваша Святосте!]** is used. Such a phrase is also required when addressing the Pope of Rome, since he is the Patriarch of the Western Church. He is also addressed as **Your Eminence [Ваше Високопреосвященство!]**

The identification etiquette function is also embodied by gradational adjectives, for example, “Reverend Father!” [«Всечесний отче!»] or “The Most Reverend Father!” [«Всечесніший отче!»], which are used in relation to ordinary priests. And the forms **Eminent [Преосвященний]** (positive degree of comparison) or **Most Eminent [Преосвященніший]** (comparative degree of comparison in Ukrainian) are often addressed to the metropolitan. When addressing a bishop, “**Archbishop**” [„Владико“] is added to these words: **Eminent/Most Eminent Archbishop [Преосвященний/Преосвященніший Владико!]**. When addressing a hierarch, the adjective **God-loving [Боголюбивий]** is also often used.

Hierarchs, mainly in the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, are addressed as **Your Eminence! [Ваша Еміненціє!]** (perfection) or **Your Excellency! [Ваша**

Ексцеленціє! (supremacy, superiority). When addressing a cardinal, **Your Eminence!** [**Ваша Еміненціє!**] or **Your Holiness** [**Ваша Превелебносте!**] are used. With the development of the business activity of churches and theological science and its regulation in the educational space, the address **Father** [**Отче!**] is used in the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church. If the priest has an academic degree or title, then “Father Doctor” [«Отче докторе»], “Father Licentiate” [«Отче ліценціате»], “Father Dean” [«Отче декане»], “Father Master” [«Отче магістре»] etc. are used. Priests who have a doctorate degree and seminary rectors are addressed as “Most Holy Father!” [«Всесвітліший отче!»].

At the same time, in the midst of spelling innovations, a lexical-semantic group is also developing to designate women who participate in religious communication: female Christian [християнка], female Protestant [протестантка], Muslimah, female Buddhist [буддистка], female Orthodox theologian [православна богословиня], nun, female liturgist [літургістка], laywoman, female chaplain [капеланка], deaconess, etc. The etiquette also extends to feminine addresses: to nuns – “Venerable sister” «Преподобна сестро», to abbesses – “Venerable mother” «Преподобна мати», to priests’ wives – “Mrs. benefactress” [«Пані добродійко»] or “Mrs. presvytera” [«Пані їмосте»] (from “her grace” – «їмость»), [«панімачко»] etc.

Specific features include forms of address with a special word order (position, locational adjective, name): Metropolitan of Nizhyn and Pryluky Kliment [Митрополиту Ніжинському і Прилуцькому Клименту], Archbishop of Bilohorod Sylvester [Архієпископу Білогородському Сильвестру], etc.

But each religious tradition has its own peculiarities in the culture of communication. For example, in Islam, there is a rule that the beginning of any matter must be associated with the name of Allah. Muslim theophoric formulas are used to embody a message, confirmation, agreement, denial, praise, approval, reproach, greeting, farewell, request, wish, promise, etc. This set of intentions determines the importance of knowing the appropriate formulas for a large number of communicative situations both in live and remote communication.

When writing a business letter of request, the address includes only the position. The vocabulary is marked by a heightened level of respect and appreciation, as evidenced by the frequently used adjectives “highest, unrivalled, best, colossal”, etc., speakers avoid direct answers, various deadlines are made dependent on the will of the prophet, etc. Different stylistics are used for interpersonal and status communication. Thus, it is not recommended to use verbs in the imperative mood in the official business style to express a request, since this form is considered impolite. To soften the statement, special modal verbs of polite expression of will are used, the so-called verbs of hope and supplication. But there are differences in communicative culture in different Islamic countries. (Martyniak, 2008; Etiquette). The sphere of official business communication with representatives of foreign

cultures stimulates evolutionary processes and becomes a breeding ground for the emergence of new language clichés, the adaptation of borrowings, and, in general, linguistic interference.

5. The language of religious media in Ukraine

The language of the religious sphere in the media and social networks has many specific characteristics, which are shaped by the technological capabilities of the channels of information dissemination. In addition, the features are reinforced by the functions that religious communication embodies in the era of military crisis, when political communications hold an information monopoly on the factors of meaning-making, and the value of human life is lost in geopolitical strategies.

Although during the war, religious problems in Ukraine became more acute and are in a state of unresolved conflict, which contains not only a religious component, but also a significant political and legal one (Kolodnyi, 2024, pp. 7 – 24), it was during this period that the level of people’s appeal to religion with the participation of the media increased. In particular, according to N. Kostruba, media religiosity is considered a personal resource that helps overcome stressful and crisis situations. It was found that: 1) the meaning-making factor helps to reassess experience and find new meaning in experienced events; 2) subjective well-being determines a positive attitude towards life and self-confidence; 3) media-religious individuals find a community that supports them in difficult times – social support (Prorok, 2025, p. 135). “Religious coping is one of the most common forms of coping in times of crisis, regardless of religious or cultural affiliation” (Peres, 2007, pp. 343 – 350). Therapeutic functions are embodied primarily by core religious concepts, through the prism of which dramatic reality is interpreted. “Salvation” is a fundamental value-meaning construct of Christianity (Prothero, 2022).

The dynamics of the language of the religious sphere during the war are caused primarily by extralingual factors. In particular, with the beginning of the war, all denominations in Ukraine were faced with the need to determine the nature of the events and provide their communities with recommendations on how to counter aggression. With the beginning of the war, the media field constantly represented concepts that are components of both the national strategic religious narrative and the enemy narrative in appeals to the religious picture of the world and its core concepts: “Christian patriotism”, “Christian warrior”, “pastoral ministry”, “active charity”, “pacifism”, “war”, “genocide” – “sect”, “satanisation”, “shaitanisation”, “holy war for the liberation of Holy Rus”, “jihad”, etc. (Kulahina-Stadnichenko & Nedavnya, 2024). The positions of denominations developed in the demonstration of new models of communicative behaviour.

In particular, the sermons of Epiphanius (The Orthodox Church of Ukraine) present socio-political vocabulary (war, Russian world [руський мiр], genocide, etc. (Kots, 2023, pp. 96 – 106) and sanctify the defenders. The Catholic approach

states that patriotism “is one of the manifestations of the main commandment – to love your neighbour as yourself... Therefore, the roots of earthly patriotism are in heaven. Giving us the Fatherland as a gift, the Lord calls us to responsibility for it...” (Svyatoslav). Patriotism is clearly exalted as a virtue that must be present in true Christians, and the defence of the Fatherland is a sacred duty for all Ukrainians, in one way or another available to them, starting with the way when weapons are in their hands (Kulahina-Stadnichenko & Nedavnya 2024, p. 49).

In official documents of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (UGCC), the relevant definitions have semantically evolved from “armed conflict”, “attack”, “war in Eastern Ukraine”, etc. “to a full-scale war, war crimes of Russia, and even to the statement of the genocidal characteristics of the actions of the Russian Federation, developing from somewhat cautious and moderate “peacebuilding” rhetoric to uncompromising definitions of Russia’s military atrocities and the just nature of the defensive war that it has become for Ukraine” (Kulahina-Stadnichenko & Nedavnya 2024, p. 48).

Reframing also took place in the media activity of Protestant communities, where prayers for peace were replaced with prayers “for Ukrainian soldiers-defenders”, “for the Armed Forces of Ukraine”, along with patronage of projects in support of the defenders. In the conditions of the Russian-Ukrainian war, pacifism becomes an unacceptable ideology for Ukrainian Protestants (Kulahina-Stadnichenko & Nedavnya 2024, p. 55)

With the involvement of new information technologies, the hierarchical structure of religious communication, both vertical and horizontal, both interpersonal and interinstitutional, has undergone a reformatting of the peripheral zone, which is filled with analytics, journalism, popular science articles, fiction, news information about resonant events, interviews with religious influencers, comments by ministers on topical issues, blogs, advertising representations, spiritual and cognitive, youth and children’s social projects, musical programmes, documentary projects, network services, virtual churches, web cemeteries, musical content for services, theological chats, ecumenical debates, meditation sessions, online contacts, sermons by e-mail, 24-hour training by missionaries from around the world, culinary or medical pages, etc. As a result, the style of religious texts is changing. In particular, the problem of the influence of linguistic means on the formation of religious consciousness and the religious picture of the world is emphasized. At the same time, external factors of preserving stylistic specificity, which are “church censorship; special confessional editing; special rules that regulate the circulation of confessional texts in society (indexes of banned books, prohibition of reading certain religious books before a certain age)” (Petrushkevych, 2018, p. 205), gender marking of religious texts or their age-related pragmatics, genre diversity, foreign-language translation versions of the text (Ukrainian/Polish, Ukrainian/Arabic, etc.), the culture of font stylization, etc. lose their monopoly influence, although religious dogmas still play the role of

the main producer of meanings and images, as in previous evolutionary stages. Under these conditions, stylistics, which traditionally reflected the nature of the relationship with the core of discourse, is blurred, losing its identification function, because the analysis of language units is inferior to the analysis of interactions. The formation of a new model of “media religious language” is indicated, in particular, by Polish (Bajerowa & Puzynina, 2000; Wojtak, 2010; Gazdecka, 2014; Makuchowska, 2017; Kindziuk, 2020 etc.) and Serbian (Končarević, 2011) researchers. This concerns informational syncretism, eclecticism of sign systems, high saturation with methods of emotional influence, etc.

Bulgarian approach to learning the language of religion

The majority of Bulgarian citizens are Orthodox Christians. According to the 2001 census, this is 82.6% of the country’s population, 12.2% of citizens profess Islam, 43.8 thousand are Catholics, 42.3 thousand are Protestants and 4% of the population are believers of other religions (Wikipedia). The communicative sphere of the use of religious language is shaped by historical processes and is fed by the modern needs of Bulgarians.

The historical cultural unity of the Church Slavonic language space serves as a kind of reference point in the position of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church regarding modern processes (Dimitrov, 2023). It is recognized that the liturgical language was influenced by other sacred languages (Greek, Latin, Old High German, etc.). At the same time, the language used for communication with believers, teaching, and other forms of knowledge transfer was and continues to be influenced by national languages. This is an international experience that also defines the Bulgarian sphere of religious communication: “In the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, divine services continue to be held mainly in Church Slavonic, although the books used by the clergy were translated into modern Bulgarian decades ago. ... There is no ban on the use of colloquial speech, on the contrary.” (Dimitrov, 2023) The BOC rejects attempts to mythologize the language of the church, does not turn it “into a sacred cow”, instead calls for focusing on its essential characteristics: “it is simply frivolous, at the very least irresponsible, to define a living language with a thousand-year written tradition as unsuitable for church use. The burden of ennobling our modern language and elevating it to the truths of Revelation falls on us” (Dimitrov, 2023).

Regarding the use of the modern Bulgarian language for liturgical needs, there is a consensus between the church and society: “Unintelligible services do not teach or encourage the believer to life, but on the contrary, burden and mechanize them, that is make them “stand” the service and leave; Praying to God in a language that we understand is the dream of all believers.” (Trifonova, 2022); “The freedom of every people to serve in their native language is part of this freedom to which we are called” (Georgieva, 2021).

A scientific approach to the characteristics of the language of the religious sphere was developed by M. Kitova. She admits: “now there are many liturgical languages, which undoubtedly have both common and specific features and therefore should be studied separately” (Kitova, 2017). She also emphasizes that there is a difference between the cult language and the language of the dissemination of teachings, or media language: “The language of religion has two aspects: 1) the language of spiritual practices and 2) the language of view. The language of spiritual practices often contains linguistic formulas that may be incomprehensible even to practitioners, since they come from the source language of religion (if it is not their native language). The language of view represents concepts and explains them.” Defining the purpose of the functioning of religious language as the formation and consolidation of a religious picture of the world, M. Kitova pays attention to its structure with the core of GOD, in comparison with the scientific one.

Codification is analysed with an emphasis on conventionality: “At the micro level, analysis involves establishing the “correctness” of individual texts (the linguistic fabric – the arrangement of words and expressions that make up the corresponding text – is checked); at the macro level, normalization involves choosing the “correct” list (composition) of texts, that is, works that are perceived as canonical” (Kitova, 2017).

The study of the language of religious communication took place in various ways: analysis of the folklore heritage, where the paremic fund with the lexeme God, which is core to religious discourse, is widely represented, but the devil is also mentioned (e.g. If God helps, everything will be fine. If God goes your way (and he will). Surrender to God, do not play with the devil (Slaveikov 1889, p. 48), authentic religious texts, chronicles and translations of the Bible that have survived since the Middle Ages; they are available in archeographic collections and scientific publications, such as the Institute of the Bulgarian Language of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences and university libraries. At the present stage, scientific clarification of definitions of the religious sphere and the distinction of linguistic objects of research and range of tasks are underway. It is clear that lexemes representing the main lexical-semantic groups of the sphere were studied from various aspects, both in the collected texts and in the explanatory articles. They are similar to those presented above in the Ukrainian language.

Researchers recognize that the phenomenon of religious media is new for the Bulgarian information space. Its isolation as an object of scientific research occurred rather by analogy with foreign interdisciplinary studies (Kirilov, 2019; Mihailova, 2025; Nushev, 2020; Iliev, 2022 etc.) and began with a lexicographical study of the terms: religion, new religious movements, sect, religious information, religious worldview, online religion and religion online, etc; the nature of the relationship with legal categories – religion, religious community, religious institution – was studied in order to get rid of “intellectual colonialism” (Kirilov, 2019, p. 232). The specifics

of the work of popular information representation platforms in terms of media literacy were also analysed, in particular Bulgarian-language religious websites in a wide range of profiles (institutional websites, private websites, temple and monastery websites, blogs, vlogs, video sites, thematic portals, forums, web libraries, educational websites, religious media sites on online radio and online television). As it turned out, Muslims, Jehovah's Witnesses, Buddhists, occultists, etc. are also the subjects of information, in addition to the Bulgarian Orthodox Church and other Christian churches. At the same time, the Christian segment is approx. 50%. The analysis of the religious segment made it possible to find out that the Internet, as a media channel, is the most convenient for meeting the information needs of very different subjects of religious activity. Due to multimedia, hypertextuality and interactivity, the Internet is used to broadcast religious meanings and information, as well as for missionary communication and internal interaction. Despite the general similarity to secular media, communicative characteristics of the religious sphere have been identified (transparent or implicit orientation to theological specificity, different calendars, who consecrated the website, etc.). The question of the language of religious communication has not yet been singled out as a separate option. At the same time, the position of the Orthodox Church in relation to the "new normativity" regulated by the media format is quite critical: "...there is no specific language of the Church. Common language and style are used, which is destructive, unacceptable, humiliating" (Quoted by Kirilov, 2019, p. 237). The need to involve church-trained personnel in this work, rather than using specialists from the secular segment, is emphasized. Genre analysis revealed an eclecticism of secular and religious forms (sermon, fairy tale, hagiography, testimony, etc.). Religious journalism in the media is represented primarily by theological analytics, sermons, artistic and instructive texts. Among the modern factors of change in the religious sphere, the potential of new media is mentioned, thanks to which everyone has the opportunity to listen, watch or virtually be present at a sermon or communicate directly with a priest, download a multimedia version of the Bible or the Quran to their phone (Kirilov, 2019). An analysis of media strategies and a study of the audience of users of religious media content by conducting sociological surveys have been initiated (Iliev, 2022).

Conclusions

A comparative analysis of the language of the religious sphere in Ukraine and Bulgaria has made it possible to find out that, despite the differences at the level of intralingual and extralingual factors of influence, communicative dynamism is formed by the specifics of the special state of consciousness of the audience of content consumers at the present stage. This specificity is objectified as a reduction in differences in the dichotomy of language – speech, changes in communicative behaviour, the nature of the interpretation of linguistic signs and the choice of forms of reflecting on them. In religious interaction, the language of reality is constructed

with new identification standards, which, in turn, are constantly updated. The market of information services with the participation of the media forces different denominations to compete, audience loyalty is achieved thanks to new formats of religious and media intentions. At the same time, in Internet communication, various types of cognitive activity (thinking, speaking, listening, writing, reading, text creation, and text perception) interact diffusely, and numerous forms of “retelling” and “rewriting” are systematically produced as new or hybrid genre forms, while the religious and ritual terminological series embodies a relationship with the sacred textual tradition.

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