Tongue-Speech and Gibberish: An Exploration and Comparison

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Part 1 - Introduction and Background

The study of tongue-speech within the Christian religion has previously been approached from a variety of perspectives, including both academic studies based in psychology, religion, and linguistics, and examinations by those within the tongue-speaking community who approach the subject from experiential and theological perspectives.* While each of these perspectives offers insight into the phenomenon, they fail to sufficiently account for the make-up and variety of tongue-speech that can occur and instead make what appear to be (in light of this study) oversimplified conclusions.

From a solely linguistic perspective, as will be discussed in depth later, nearly all previous academic researchers, including Samarin (1968, 1972) and Goodman (1972), identify tongue-speech as a phenomenon unlike natural language in that it is repetitive, simple, lacks a recognizable syntax, and usually has no repeatable, direct relationship between sound and meaning. Furthermore, as it does not appear to be synonymous with natural language in these ways, there is a common misconception that tongue-speech must be identical to spontaneous, non-religious gibberish. However, to the best knowledge of the author, no practical study of or comparison to gibberish has yet been made. This lack of evidence to substantiate the conclusion that tongue-speech and gibberish are identical is evidence that further research on the subject is necessary.

This study will attempt to remedy some of these shortcomings of the previous studies through a linguistic approach to tongue-speech within the Christian church through a pilot study designed to compare tongue-speech and gibberish. In order to accomplish this, it will first outline the basic structure of and some of the oft-ignored subtle linguistic variations that can occur within

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tongue-speech in Part 2. With these acknowledged, it will introduce a brief study of the structure of common gibberish in Part 3, and will finally use the conclusions developed in Parts 2 and 3 to compare tongue-speech to voluntary non-religious gibberish in Part 4. In this final comparison, it will ultimately be concluded that although further study appears to be necessary, the previous assumption that tongue-speech and gibberish are structurally identical is probably false.

In the body of this paper, several terms will be used which may be unfamiliar to the reader. The first of these, which has already been used, is natural language; this refers to known human language, such as English or Greek, that is either in use today or is extinct. The second, xenoglossia, is used to describe utterances of tongue-speech that are identical to actual natural languages unknown to the speaker. The third term, glossolalia, refers to all tongue-speech that is not xenoglossic. The final term, gibberish, indicates gibberish that is voluntary, spontaneous, and not of a religious nature. The differences among natural language, xenoglossia, and glossolalia will be further explored and explained in Part 2; the differences between tongue-speech and gibberish will be addressed in Parts 3 and 4. Unless otherwise specified, all utterances of tongue-speech cited in this work were produced by native English speakers.

In addition, it must be acknowledged that the study of tongue-speech involves a number of significant obstacles. First, many tongue-speaking communities are understandably secretive about their tongue-speech; for, except in cases of conversion, their behavior is often ridiculed when observed by outsiders, and they may in some cases fear repercussions within their professional communities if their religious backgrounds become known. In addition, the phenomenon may be disguised if it occurs within a church whose denomination does not officially support tongue-speech. For these reasons, it is difficult to establish connections within the tongue-speaking community and to gather sufficient amounts of new data in the time period allowed for writing a senior thesis. The amount of academic study of this phenomenon to date is also quite small; there are only two books (Goodman 1972 and Samarin 1972) and a small number of journal articles (see Works Cited) devoted to the topic. As a result, this study relies upon existing data that
has been collected by those researchers mentioned in the bibliography in the forms of transcribed speech and song, audio, and video sampling. While many samples were gathered by the same researcher or researchers, all are from different congregations that had no exposure to each other.

It must be understood that a comprehensive understanding of this phenomenon cannot be reached through a purely linguistic study alone. The speech act in a context such as this one, in which it is heavily embedded and related to the strongest of human beliefs and needs, cannot truly be comprehended without a companion study of the culture, psychology, and beliefs that affect it. As Charles Williams (1981, 154) asserts,

"My argument is that to isolate the lexical part will not disclose the meaningfulness of glossolalia as a spiritual exercise. The utterance has its roots in experience and that in turn is not uninfluenced by the conceptual system of the culture in which it occurs. The whole glossolalia event must, therefore be taken into consideration and not simply the verbal form, for there is a mutual inter-relatedness of experience, belief, and utterance."

In other words, the phenomenon cannot be understood unless every aspect of the people, culture, and religion behind it is studied along with the tongue-speech itself. This is clearly out of the realm of a short-term study such as this one. Accordingly, this paper neither claims to make a holistic study of the phenomenon from the perspectives of all of these fields nor attempts to place any kind of judgment upon the faith and religion behind it. This study does, however, acknowledge the significance of these other perspectives, and accordingly will first outline the biblical, historical, and psychological perspectives of it, including where differences among researchers exist, before delving directly into the purely linguistic study of tongue-speech. We shall begin with the biblical background and basis for the phenomenon.

Speaking in tongues is not mentioned in the Old Testament; even in the New Testament, direct references or allusions to the phenomenon are infrequent at best (Sherrill 1964; 116, 163). In fact, the Holy Spirit, though recognized as part of the Holy Trinity for Christianity, is rarely mentioned in the Old Testament. Therefore, the lack of reference to tongue-speech in the Old Testament reflects the theological perception that glossolalia, or xenoglossia, is a "baptism in the
Holy Spirit" through which a speaker is literally filled or possessed by the Spirit; as the Spirit was not frequently mentioned, it follows that it would also not be reported to have prompted much tongue-speech in Old Testament times. (Mills 1985, 8).

The two most famous references to tongue-speech occur in the Book of Acts and 1 Corinthians (the first letter to the Corinthian Church from the apostle Paul). The former, in Acts, refers to the miracle of Pentecost, through which the original disciples of Jesus were able to speak to a crowd of people of many different language backgrounds and be understood. The essential passage is as follows:

"And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability. Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each."

(The New Oxford Annotated Bible, Acts 2:2-6)

It is in reference to this event that the Pentecostal Church derives its name, and it is the most often cited biblical "proof" that tongue-speaking within the Christian Church includes not just glossolalia but xenoglossia as well. This conclusion is taken from the implication that the disciples were speaking in the tongues, or languages, of many nations. However, even this reference to xenoglossia is disputed; scholars and theologians debate whether the event was actually a miracle of speech or of understanding. That is, there is the alternative interpretation of the story that an objective listener of the disciples would have heard them speaking gibberish, but those listeners present also "filled with the Holy Spirit" heard the disciples speaking in their native languages. This argument is still utilized in discussions of tongue-speech today to justify why glossolalia in most cases cannot be understood by the majority and must be interpreted by another member of the congregation who is spontaneously and simultaneously endowed with the "gift of interpretation" by the Holy Spirit. (Hinson et al. 1967; 24)
The second most significant biblical reference occurs in the first letter of the apostle Paul to the church of Corinth, presumably in reference to problems the Corinthian church had been experiencing with glossolalists being disruptive during services (Sherrill 1972, 32). Paul acknowledges the “gift” of tongues as follows,

“To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues...”

(New Oxford Annotated Bible 1 Corinthians 12:7-11)

but he also seems to admonish those especially noisy members of the congregation who speak in tongues excessively and without consideration for the service that must take place:

“If I speak in the tongues of mortals and Angels but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.” (New Oxford Annotated Bible, 1 Corinthians 12:1)

In addition, the Gospel of Mark, in the New Testament, contains the following reference to speaking in tongues in Chapter 16, Verse 17: “And these signs will accompany those who believe: by using my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues...” This passage is often identified as a late addition to the book of Mark by another author, and therefore is not as frequently used to support the faith of the tongue-speakers (Hinson et al. 1967, 21).

Despite these references, documentation of tongue-speech early in the history of the Christian church is rare. Many sources argue that it simply did not occur often during the time period from about 100-1600 AD, or that it was not documented because it was not seen as important (Hinson et al. 1967, 45). In contrast, Kelsey and Sherrill argue separately that tongue-speaking in all probability did exist at that time as well, and that it was as important as it is in the Pentecostal Church today, but records of it were suppressed in order to escape the persecution by
the anti-Christian government. In addition, Reverend Phillip T. Weller asserts that until the seventeenth century, tongue-speech was seen as a sign of diabolical rather than holy possession, and therefore something that was suppressed rather than encouraged. (Kelsey 1964, 46)

Beginning in the mid-seventeenth century, however, references to occurrences of tongue-speech begin to reappear in Church histories and exegetical writings. At first, only a few scattered cases are documented, generally among isolated dissenters who, in response to religious or governmental persecution, were recorded to have spoken either in foreign languages or in perfect French when previously they had been able to speak only a patois. These early cases were generally isolated phenomena that affected only isolated persons or populations. Nearly all of these early references are reported to be xenoglossic. (Kelsey 1964, 53)

The frequency of this documentation increased (or rather, exploded exponentially) with the beginning of the Pentecostal Movement in America in the early nineteen-hundreds. Originally an offshoot of the Methodist Church, Pentecostalism involves intensive study of the Bible with a specific focus on Baptism in the Holy Spirit and the tongue-speech that is a result. The young Pentecostal Church was frequently looked upon with disapproval by other Christian denominations and authorities, but its influence and acceptance among outsiders now appear to be growing. In fact, its beliefs began to spread to other denominations beginning in the nineteen-sixties, and now tongue-speaking can be witnessed at least sporadically in many denominations including Baptist, Methodist, and Assemblies of God (Sherrill 1964, 43-68).

Many previous researchers including, but not limited to, Lapsley and Simpson (1965), Hinson, Oates, and Stagg (1967), Goodman (1972), and McDonnell (1976) have attempted to explain tongue-speech within the Pentecostal Church through psychological study. The psychological analysis of speaking in tongues falls into two categories: that which assesses the state of mind of the speaker at the time of the utterance, and that which studies the predisposition (or lack thereof) of a person or group of people to speaking in tongues. There are conflicting views among researchers in both of these two areas of inquiry; again, no single conclusion or set
of conclusions has been made that satisfies all researchers and is consistent with all data.

Typically, psychologists belong to one of two schools of thought regarding the psychology involved for individual instances of tongue-speech. The first of these factions asserts that in order for glossolalia to occur, the speaker must first be in a trance or dissociative state; that is, the speaking is directly caused by the altered state of consciousness. Felicitas Goodman (1972) describes this as a state of "hyperarousal" and likens it to a trance with stages like those of sleep (introductory, deep, and waking) in which the speaker still maintains some access to reality. Other researchers describe the possibility of a state of dissociation in the following ways:

"...[Speaking in tongues involves a] form of dissociation within the personality, in which a set of voluntary muscles respond to control centers other than those associated with consciousness." (Lapsley and Simpson, 1965, as cited by McDonnell, 1976, 81)

"[Dissociation is] a mental mechanism whereby a split-off part of the personality temporarily possesses the entire field of consciousness but in such a way that it does not imply the presence of hysteria." (McDonnell, 1976, 81)

The essence of the dissociation hypothesis is, therefore, that muscles and responses that are normally voluntary are placed under the jurisdiction of an extraordinary form of consciousness.

The second school of thought contrasts with this perception but does not disagree with it in its entirety, asserting that states of dissociation can be but are not always present, and therefore cannot be seen as the single cause of tongue-speech. William Samarin (1972), for example, argues that although he has observed glossolalists in a state of dissociation, the glossolalic utterance is independent of this state. As evidence, he cites the observation that the phonetic properties of the utterances for a given person or group of people were the same regardless of whether or not the speaker(s) was/were in the trance-like state. In addition, Samarin observes that the dissociative state seems to be even less essential to the utterance when the glossolalist is more experienced and "fluent." Among others, James Jaquith supports this hypothesis by citing the fact that speakers
appear to have control over the beginning and termination of their utterances as proof (McDonnell 1976, 82).

Although all of these assertions can be criticized or attacked as a result of their lack of clarity in the definition of what constitutes a trance or dissociative state, personal observation leads me to believe that the second of the two is a more accurate representation of the reality. This is evident in the video *Holy Ghost People*; in the course of one video-recorded service, we see examples of tongue-speech both concurrent with and independent of a state of dissociation. In one case, a woman is so overcome by her altered state of consciousness while speaking in tongues that she reels and repeatedly bumps into and falls on top of other people seemingly without control or awareness. At the same time, some fellow parishioners can speak in tongues with no apparent state of altered consciousness at all; without missing a beat, a single utterance can flow easily back and forth between English and tongue-speech. The premise that dissociation is not necessary for tongue-speech also appears to fit into the assumption that tongue-speech could be structurally identical to common voluntary, non-religious gibberish.

While this study is primarily focussed upon the linguistic utterance and not so much the conditions that produce it, the possibility that dissociative states may contribute to the utterances raises pertinent questions for future studies. For example, is it possible a dissociative state may allow a speaker access to subconscious “phonemic memory” that contributes to the phonological and phonetic foundations of the utterance? Could this then be remembered in a fully conscious state (as in the cases of non-dissociative utterances), or not? Are there any structural differences between that which is spoken in a dissociative state versus that which is uttered in full consciousness? Does this affect what is “true” versus “false” glossolalia? All of these questions may help us down the path to understanding what exactly constitutes the linguistic structure of a glossolalic utterance.

The psychological assessment of tongue-speech regarding the study of socioeconomic trends and predisposition to tongue-speech contributing to the utterance is also pertinent to this
study. Again, there is a significant dichotomy between two schools of thought concerning predisposition to tongue-speech. The first, espoused by Lapsley and Simpson (1965) and Lawless (1988), asserts that groups lower on the socioeconomic hierarchy are predisposed to tongue-speech; that is, their relative poverty prompts them to seek more radical answers to their problems. In addition, such groups are likely to be more conservative and follow a more strict and literal interpretation of the Bible as a result. These three researchers almost exclusively studied tongue-speech within small, rural, impoverished communities, and so their data understandably mirrors their hypotheses. However, Sherrill, who has an inside perspective, and Samarin, who has done more extensive studies, both cite the participation of doctors, economists, scientists, and so on, which they have witnessed first-hand, as proof that the hypothesis of Lapsley, Simpson, and Lawless cannot be wholly true even though it may account for a large portion of the tongue-speaking population. As a result, we cannot consider linguistic tendencies of tongue-speech to be resulting from natural language patterns related to socioeconomic class.

With these theological, historical, and psychological backgrounds in mind, we are now ready to begin the specifically linguistic analysis of tongue-speech and its comparison to spontaneous, voluntary, non-religious gibberish.
Part 2 - The Linguistic Structure and Subdivisions of Tongue-Speech

Now that the background of tongue-speech has been briefly outlined, I shall begin the linguistic study of tongue-speech by examining a sample of glossolalia that is illustrative of many of the general conclusions researchers have made about tongue-speech thus far and then offer a survey of some of the common variances from this stereotype according to the different intents for utterance. In the subsequent section of this study, Part 3, I will offer a similar study of gibberish; both Parts 2 and 3 will be incorporated into Part 4, which will contrast the two as entire phenomena to determine if they are in fact nearly synonymous and will summarize those conclusions found in the contrast.

The first example to be considered is taken from Samarin (1971, 104-5) and was originally gathered by Walter A. Wolfram (1966) in an unpublished Masters of Arts thesis at the Hartford Seminary in Connecticut. It is shown in its original transcription by Samarin with phrase and “word” boundaries as originally transcribed by him, an International Phonetic Alphabet (hereafter IPA) transcription, and as it is broken down into its basic phonetic components. The context of the utterance was not given by Samarin, but it exemplifies the structural generalizations commonly made about tongue-speech almost perfectly.

(1) yamana kita siyanasi
    yamana kita siyanasi
    anakiyana tiyasanaya anakiyatana, siyanayasi.
    asakina, anakisa, asakiyana tiyanayasi
    yamana kita, siyanayasi.
(Samarin 104-5)

IPA: jomano kito sijonosi
    jomono kila, sijonosi.
    onakijano tijosonajo onekijatona sijanajasi
    osakino, anakisa, osakiyana tiyanayasi
    jomana kita, sijonajasi.
There are a number of characteristics present in this sample that illustrate the general linguistic stereotype of tongue-speech. First, it is obvious that the number of phonemes that comprise the utterance is quite small; there are only two vowel sounds and six consonants for a total of only eight sound segments in the entire utterance. Typically, the occurrence of a small phonemic inventory such as this one is cited by skeptical researchers as proof that tongue-speech is of a substandard form in comparison to natural languages. However, the vowels that are present in this utterance in fact do meet the principle of sufficient perceptual separation, which, as summarized by Ladefoged (1975, 268) requires that sounds of a language be as distinct as possible.
to aid the listener in his or her discernment of them. If a language were to have only two vowels then they should be as far apart as possible, which is the case in this first example. In contrast, the choice of consonants that make up the phonemic inventory seem to favor ease of utterance for the speaker rather than the ease of perception for the listener; although the inventory is small, all phonemes fall into one of three clusters (bilabial, alveolar, and palatal/velar) with regard to their place of articulation, and none fall into the areas in between these specific regions. While the phonemes that do occur are all part of the speaker’s natural language (English), not all English sounds are represented. Most significantly, there is a lack of long vowels, diphthongs, liquids, sibilants, glottal stops, the more complex affricate consonants $\theta f$ and $\theta s$, and the velar nasal $\theta$.

There is, however, a full range of nasality, voice, and stricture.

Also according to this list of stereotypical traits, there is significant repetition of syllables, breath groups $^1$, and entire phrases, perhaps as a result of the small inventory of phonemes. On the most basic level, the syllable ja is used fifteen times in thirteen different contexts, and the syllable group ana is used fifteen times in thirteen different contexts, where a context is its breath group. On the level of breath group, there is no perfect repetition, but there are very close similarities between asakina and anakisa, in which only the n and s switch places. Finally, the entire phrase jamana kita sijanasi is also repeated once, and jamana kita is repeated a second time without sijanasi in the final line of the utterance.

As part of this repetition, the “typical” characteristics of alliteration and rhyme are also present. As an example of the former, there is the repetition of the vowel a initial in a breath group in the line asakina, anakisa, asakiyana tijanajasi; the latter surfaces in the relationship between the endings of the third and fourth lines (sijanajasi and tijanajasi). While these characteristics are also

$^1$ The term “breath group” will be used in this investigation to describe what we would refer to in natural language as a “word” as researchers and speakers alike often admit difficulty establishing the location of word-like boundaries when transcribing tongue-speech. Breath group boundaries in samples of tongue-speech are as determined by the original researcher(s), who identified them according to the spacing of pauses in the original speech.
used to designate tongue-speech as atypical, it should be noted that the occurrence of such characteristics in natural languages, especially within religious or poetic contexts, is not uncommon. For example, “Praise God; praise God...,” or “seven spirits of God and the seven stars” in Revelations 3:1 are natural language examples of repetition and alliteration in religious speech.

The syllable structure within this utterance is also representative of the stereotypical glossolalic utterance: it always follows a pattern of CV (consonant-vowel) no matter what its context within a breath group may be. Never does a syllable in this utterance contain a coda, diphthong, or vowel without an onset. Again, although the simplicity of this pattern is used to point out the supposedly undeniably simplicity and predictability of tongue-speech, it does also occur in some natural languages, such as Japanese, and, what is more, it is not even a pattern strictly adhered to in many examples of tongue-speech, as will be shown in the data to come.

In addition, the length of breath groups and the utterance as a whole is fairly typical for studies of tongue speech. Breath groups contain from three to six syllables of the same length, and the entire utterance is only five lines long.

Finally, and perhaps most significantly, the utterance lacks a direct relationship between sound and meaning. Specific sounds are not interpreted as always meaning the same thing; in fact, there is no interpretation given for the utterance at all. (Although this is not the case for all utterances of tongue-speech, all examples cited in this paper are given without interpretation, even if one exists, as the sources from which they were gathered do not include interpretations.) While many researchers, including Samarin (1968, 1972) and Goodman (1972), see this as proof that tongue-speech is not valid communication, speakers often see it as proof that tongue-speech is actually a speech act superior to natural language because it can be used to express feelings or desires abstractly. As Sherrill asserts, it allows speakers to “pray even when with our own minds we have no idea what to ask for in a given situation. (Sherrill 1964, 91)” In light of the fact that, for speakers, tongue-speech functions not strictly as communication between human beings but
also as private communication between human beings and God, interpretation for the benefit of other people is technically unnecessary in some cases.

In order to truly investigate the make-up of the religious utterance in tongue-speech, however, this generalization or stereotype is not enough. It is evident that tongue-speech does in fact vary from this pattern in a number of ways. These differences, subtle though they may be, must be acknowledged so that a thorough comparison to voluntary gibberish can be fully explored in the next section. This will be made possible by classifying tongue-speech according to its function within the religious context and exploring the differences in its form that can result.

The entire phenomenon of tongue-speech in the Christian Church can be broken down into subgroups according to its purpose; it is utilized to fulfill a variety of communicative and non-communicative functions that will be discussed here briefly. Sherrill (1964) divides these purposes into four major groups, the first of which is an assurance that the speaker has been baptized in the Holy Spirit. Usually an utterance produced to fulfill this goal (most often the “first words” of a speaker in tongues) is significant simply because of its existence, not because of its content. It occurs most often in the context of a church service or revival, but Samarín (1972, 63) does note that in some cases speakers will have their “first words” consciously (but not voluntarily) present in their minds for weeks before actually being driven to speak them. Such utterances are rarely interpreted as a “message,” with few exceptions as noted in the data. As a result it is clearly intended as a sign and is not an evolved linguistic form. The importance of the utterance lies in the fact that it “proves” that the speaker has been filled with the Holy Spirit rather than providing any special message between God and man. This is frequently the most important aspect of tongue-speech for the beginning speaker, when actual fluency or quality of the utterance matters little and often consists of only the most simple sounds. However, all tongue-speech can in some way fall into this category, from the most basic utterances to xenoglossia.

The second primary category of motivation or environment for an utterance in tongue-speech is worship, in which tongue-speech is utilized either by an individual or by a group through
song or speech, and the intent is to express one’s individual or group worship to God. Whether pursued individually or as a group, it is almost always done in the context of a religious church service or revival. In contrast to the first motivation explained, in this usage of tongue-speech the content of the utterance does matter; the intent is communication, but the communication travels only one way, from human being to God, and therefore also requires no interpretation. In fact, this type of tongue-speech is never interpreted and is not xenoglossic because it is strictly intended to serve as communication from human being to God and not vice versa. That is, although the speaker offering the prayer can understand the general sense of his/her prayer, s/he does not know the exact meaning of what s/he is saying, as is the case with natural language prayer or interpreted tongue-speech. Tongue-speech in this context is still seen as a “tool” given by the Holy Spirit; believers see it as a way to help them express their worshipfulness and obedience to God in a format that is, in its ease, spontaneity, and “vocabulary,” superior to natural language. (Sherrill, 88)

The third primary motivation for tongue-speech is prayer. As with worship, tongue-speech in the instance of prayer is used to help achieve communion between human being and God rather than serve as a vehicle for a message from God to a person or persons. Once again, as it is a message that travels strictly from human to God, it is not given interpretation or expressed xenoglossicly or pseudoxenoglossicly as a result. In this case, however, the utterance in tongues is usually offered individually, either alone or in the presence of others. It is considered to be important because it allows the speaker to express to God that which s/he might not be able to express in his/her natural language. That is, if the speaker is unsure of how to express what s/he needs or wants in his/her natural language or is altogether unsure of what to ask for, tongue-speech can serve as a substitute for the insufficient natural language. (Sherrill 1964, 91) As an example, Sherrill (93) tells the story of how a pastor once prayed in tongues for a severely injured child, unsure of whether to pray that she survive her accident (and potentially remain severely brain-damaged) or simply die. As a result of his confusion, he prayed in tongues, which he trusted
would express for him the correct prayer to offer.

The final category for tongue-speech according to intent is preaching, or providing a message from God to human beings. This is the context in which interpretation is important; it also is the context in which “outsiders” are most often converted. Pseudoxenoglossia or supposed xenoglossia are valuable in this context because they can often prompt conversion. As the purpose in this case is for sending a message to a certain person or persons, it is always done individually in the context of a church service or revival. The utterance in this case serves a dual purpose: it both signifies that the Holy Spirit is present and wishes to give a message, and it provides the specific message or communication itself. (Sherrill 1964, 94)

It is important to note that none of these contexts or motivations is considered to be more or less valuable within the speakers’ faith than any of the other contexts. Outside researchers tend to concentrate on occurrences of xenoglossia or pseudoxenoglossia because they are the most exotic. However, to the believers each function of tongue-speech is equally valuable, although admittedly in different ways. (Sherrill, Ch. 8)

If tongue-speech does in fact follow some of the patterns in form of natural language, we would expect that it might be codified according to purpose just as natural language is. In natural language (as it was defined in the introduction) there are different kinds of language patterns for different circumstances, and there may also be subtle corresponding differences in tongue-speech. If it is indeed similar to natural language linguistically, its linguistic form should reflect differences in its function. In a service in natural language, we would expect to see broad, though perhaps subtle, structural differences among speech acts utilized for prayer, worship, preaching, and the acknowledgment of the receiving of gifts (such as the Spirit Baptism or Benediction.) As an example, we expect prayer may be likely to include repetition, average sentence length, be broken down into recognizable phrases; worship to be in some way poetic, preaching to be longer and have a significant message between humans, acknowledgment of reception of gifts to be more brief, and so on. (This is merely an example and in no way attempts to describe or make a
conclusion about all possible linguistic patterns or variances within a church service of any denomination.) If tongue-speech is used in similar ways, one would expect that it too might contain such a pattern of codification that may or may not be similar to the pattern given for natural language.

In order to examine whether this is the case and create a thorough basis for later comparison to common gibberish, we shall make a more in-depth study of specific examples of tongue-speech for each of the functions outlined above and compare them both to each other and to corresponding examples in natural language, beginning with the use of tongue-speech as indication of baptism in the Holy Spirit.

While this subgroup does not contain utterances that are as potentially linguistically meaningful as the other categories, they do serve a simple communicative purpose similar to that of an ejaculation in natural language: they call attention to something but do not express a complex idea or message. A first utterance or ejaculation in tongue-speech generally serves not to deliver a message from or to God but merely to draw attention to the event (the “filling with the Holy Spirit”) taking place.

The following data are examples of ejaculations or first utterances in tongue speech. They are shown as they were transcribed by Samarin (1972), transcribed into the International Phonetic Alphabet, and broken down into their phonemes. Although the utterances are from separate individuals on different occasions, their phonetic inventory will be displayed collectively.

(2) kada nagoma (Samarin 1972, 58)
(3) kum, te, lalasa (Samarin 1972, 63)
(4) ab, ab, abba, abba (Samarin 1972, 74)

IPA: (2) kada nogouma
(3) kum, te, lalasa
(4) ab, ab, abba, abba.

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Where symbols appear in pairs, the one to the right represents a voiced consonant.

**VOWELS**

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Where symbols appear in pairs, the rightmost represents a rounded vowel. (Ladefoged, inside cover)

*These vowels occur only in diphthongs.

The first of these utterances is the only one of the group in which any kind of interpretation is given. It is the "first words" of a glossolalist who asked "an African" if he knew the words, to which the reply was given that they were reminiscent of the word for "evil spirit" or "devil" in "another African language somewhat familiar to him (Samarin 1972, 58)." The second is the first words of a Church of God minister; it is an example of a case in which the "words" surfaced and were present in the mind of the speaker before he was actually driven to speak them. The final example is from a speaker to whom tongue-speech did not initially come easily (Samarin 1972,
Although these samples clearly vary in their phonemic inventory and level of simplicity or complexity, they do share several notable commonalities. First, they all are brief or abrupt; there is no documented evidence of a speaker whose first utterance, or any utterance whose purpose is simply to convey the “Baptism in the Spirit,” is lengthy. Secondly, perhaps as a result of their brevity, they all contain a very small range of sounds and seem to favor discrete places of articulation in the bilabial, alveolar, and velar regions for consonants and the far front and back of the mouth for vowels. Thirdly, all are repetitious; they employ the same syllable nucleus, entire syllables, and even entire breath groups (for (2), (3), and (4), respectively). Finally, all exhibit a simple syllable structure; never do they vary from a basic consonant-vowel (CV) structure. For these reasons, first utterances seem most similar to the typical example of tongue-speech addressed earlier.

These examples are clearly phonetically simple and convey only the most basic communication. If we do compare them to the similar code in natural language, however, we can see that the natural language follows similar patterns in form. As an example, “Hey!” is structurally and semantically simple. Its IPA transcription, \textit{het}, supports the notion that such an utterance will not be complex; although it does contain a diphthong, it consists of a small total number of sounds in a simple pattern such as CV. In fact, it must be in order to serve its purpose of drawing attention in an efficient manner. In addition, its meaning is most elementary, and may even be served equally well by a grunt or yelp. For this reason, we will not dwell upon this example at greater length.

The second primary function of tongue-speech, that of worship, also has corollaries in natural language. Specifically, it occurs in natural language in the same way that it does in tongue-speech: as part of a greater religious context, through song and spoken word. Two examples of this category of utterance in tongue-speech are given below. The first is a traditional Shaker song used in worship service; it is shown with original transcription by Samarín (1972, 180), an IPA
transcription, and a charted survey of its phonemic inventory, where \( sh \) and \( ch \) are taken to be \( f \) and \( \phi \), respectively. The second, from recordings of Malcolm Calley (1965) of West Indian sects in England and is also given in original transcription, IPA transcription, and phonemic charts. It is uncertain whether or not the speaker of (6) is a native speaker of English; so some unique characteristics of (6) compared to the rest of the data may result from the influences of a different first language. Primary stress patterns for both are as indicated.

(5) kán ta va sta ká la ká ra pá sta ka ka ká la ká sta má na ka shta ká ko la ká shta ma vi kó ne fá cha má le ta kó ná fa che má le ta ko lá ka lá ko chan te la fó na ste ma chi

IPA: 'kon to va sta 'ka lo 'ka la 'pa sta ka ka 'ka la 'ka sta 'ma na ka 'sta 'ka 'ko lu la 'ka 'sta ma vi kou nei fa 'fa ma lei ta kou na 'fa 'jeit ma lei ta kou 'la ka 'la kou 'fjan lei la 'fou na ste ma 'gi.'

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Where symbols appear in pairs, the one to the right represents a voiced consonant.
VOWELS

Front       Central       Back
Close       i            e*           o*
Close-mid   e*           o*           o*
Open-mid
Open        o

Where symbols appear in pairs, the rightmost represents a rounded vowel. (*Ladefoged)

(6) He shall be my amajuka (omədʒuka)
He shall be my atandoboin (ətəndouboi)n
He shall be my adala shilama pando baka shaibahikasai (ədələ shila mə pando baka šai bahikasai)
He shall be my adai (ədai)
He shall be my a hekobai (ə heko̱bai)
He shall be my blandahopenadalabai (blandəhoʊpenədaləbai)
He shall be my dahoken salabai (dahouken salabai)
He shall be my dasarabai (dəsərəbəi)
He shall be my dahokentai hokentai (dahoukenətai houkenətai)
He shall be my dahokal (dahoukal)
He shall be my hokensala lipos salam (houkenəsəla lipos)
He shall be my umbabadala shilama. (umbəbadəla shila mə)
(Calley 1965, 78, 163)

Where symbols appear in pairs, the one to the right represents a voiced consonant.
Similar to the example of stereotypical tongue-speech and first utterances, (5) is fairly brief and its syllables rarely include a coda, but (6) is longer and does contain syllables with codas, most of which are nasals. Repetition is also still present; for example, the syllable ka in (5) is used eleven times, and the syllable hoo in (6) is used six times. Rhyme is clearly used as well; however, this is not surprising considering that the same genre in natural language often employs poetic speech, including rhyme. In addition, it is similar to the “typical” in the facts that all sounds used are part of the English phonemic inventory and that the utterance contains varying levels of stricture, nasality, and voice.

(5) and (6) do, however, differ significantly from (1) (the example of typical tongue-speech) in their phonemic inventories and in the onsets of their syllables. These utterances are of approximately the same duration as or slightly longer than the first example, “typical” tongue-speech (and longer than “first utterances”), but they contain significantly more phonemes that are not grouped quite as strictly in regards to their place of articulation. While the first example contained only eight different sounds, (5) contains eighteen that fill in places of articulation the first example ignored, and (6) contains twenty-one different sounds.

Additionally, the syllable structure (for both utterances) is more variable. The syllable template is no longer strictly CV. Instead, it is sometimes C₁VC₂, where C₂ is usually a nasal, or,
in one case, VC (\textit{um} in the final line of (6)). The onset of the syllables in these examples also
tends to allow more complexity than (1), combining consonantal sounds (\textit{ft}, \textit{sf}, and \textit{tfn} in (5), and
\textit{bl} and \textit{c} in (6)) rather than using only single consonantal sounds. There are also more complex
vowel sounds present; while the typical does not allow for diphthongs, (5) and (6) allow them with
frequency. Finally, breath groups in (5) may seem simplistic but cannot actually be ascertained
correctly as the phrasing of song often alters normal word duration and apparent breath group
boundaries.

The third motivation for tongue speech is, as mentioned above, to provide a prayer from
human being to God. This too exhibits some similarities to the same speech act in natural
language; it is longer than the previous two kinds of ejaculations and appears to be broken down
into repetitive phrasing. The following two examples are taken from Samarin (1972). The first is
given only in its IPA transcription and phonemic breakdown, and the second is again given with its
original transcription by Samarin, its IPA transcription, and its phonemic breakdown.

(7) a. \textit{ku'pöi ñan'drei fili'et sund'rukum ñan'drei 'lasa 'houja k'aki.}
    b. \textit{fou'go fëtirelousou kumou ñan'drei palasou ñan'trei kmoujentri.}
    c. \textit{ñou'gandri kago 'soumbou 'houjentri lapatsoumbou ka'sandrala 'sou.}
    d. \textit{'ñila sain'drzantakamala sind'ri pata'tou santra'ku ñan'drei.}
    e. \textit{'kila sou ñanduramandrafulu sou jantrei l'metaka.}
    f. \textit{mou'zandrou fotsisiteta sum pruturut fusiisirururdiri kam'palaka fula'sou.}
    g. \textit{ke'gandri tara'soumbou ka'sandrei.}
    h. \textit{ñili sin'dri tarotu santra'kadi sin 'deripti 'pili san'tro.}
    i. \textit{'ñeisantrou filei san'trei 'kajantroupousantra metiri kilisu.}
    j. \textit{ñili sin'dri 'kajentrou mou'sentre peles'andou.}
    k. \textit{sin'dri katorri pilisi sin'dri 'kišan drupu lašunt.}
    l. \textit{kan'botjantreitilaisin 'žindra 'mu.}
    m. \textit{ñalasun 'drufanta 'koli 'sintrotial 'sumpake.}
    n. \textit{ñila sou'goan 'drjuma tari'pili 'sindri 'ki.}
    o. \textit{ñu'zantri pilisi ñandru'mandaro fili'sin'tru.}
    p. \textit{so'gandere 'ktiia sintru palat'soumbou ka'sjantrei.}
    q. \textit{si'gandreipi tarra santræ'kou.}
    r. \textit{keta'santri valasoumba 'kora.}
    s. \textit{ve'izindrei 'ñila san'dru ñan'tramana trufuku 'jantri pi'ki.}
    t. \textit{sa'gandar 'kajentere pe'iri.}
    u. \textit{'meisantrou set'gandri 'kila santra pata'so.}
    v. \textit{se'gandrei 'muli sintre, tepe'pili sin'dri biteri 'patara pou'kou.}
    w. \textit{kajentrei pilisi gam'boi jom'boi kam'boi ñan'dri pe'lasanutru 'kunja pa'kel.}
### Consonants

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Where symbols appear in pairs, the one to the right represents a voiced consonant.

### Vowels

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Where symbols appear in pairs, the rightmost represents a rounded vowel. (Ladefoged, inside cover)

* These vowels occur only in diphthongs.
(8) a) sharisi tivatashataw vvarisitivirisi.
    b) varasata varashita wati savarashataporat sitiverisi.
    c) varasatalavari shita situvarayati tuvalisitalishi.
    d) warisi takalasha talisi tawaray tatavatasay shatavarisiti.
    e) watasiyata sata vilishitavarawa risa tisatatavarashi
    f) warasatatavasi talashi tavywi satalavatasi
    g) sari shitawatasi titovawari tatwarasaysi.
    h) witaarbihina tawanayhinta watasiy shatativishenti.
    i) vvaritahita moritatavatashi tatavatasayshetavwa.
    j) tatashatatati sati satavori tatavatahay sata.
(Samarin 1972, 253)

IPA:

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Where symbols appear in pairs, the one to the right represents a voiced consonant.
The first is a full prayer by a Pentecostal pastor spoken in isolation, the second is a completed prayer given in a small neo-Pentecostal prayer session (Samarin, 253). As in the previous two instances, there are some similarities to the typical tongue-speech, but the similarities are fewer and less frequent. Most significantly, repetition still occurs. In (8) the repetition of syllables is similar to that of the previous examples. In (7), however, the repetition tends to occur in a different way; instead of frequently repeating syllables, it instead reuses a breath group template, */f V n d/l r V*, in which V can be a variety of vowels (Samarin 1972, 80).

The majority of syllables for both (7) and (8) have a CV pattern, but exceptions are far more frequent. A nasal coda is present at least twice per line of (7); the same pattern occurs several times in the final lines of (8). Additionally, (7) even includes some syllables with non-nasal codas such as *bifnantar* (in (z)) and *sagandreiimat* (in (aa)). The onset of the syllables also tends to be more complex, often combining consonantal sounds (such as *vw* in (8)) or using sounds that are not usually word-initial in English (such as *z* in (7y)). Both passages also contain phonemes or combinations of sounds foreign to English, such as the trill *r* in (7) and the *vw* combination in (8). Finally, the length of these two utterances is significantly longer than that of the average utterance in tongues, and they are divided into sentence-like phrases as one might expect in a prayer in natural language.
The final context for tongue-speech is preaching, and it is significant in the fact that it is used to specifically send an interpreted message. While the data for tongue-speech used in preaching does still follow a few of the traits of the original typical tongue speech, it is the most different of all the examples outlined thus far. It continues to follow a primarily CV syllable structure, and repetition of similar syllables occurs occasionally (see data (9)), but rhyme, alliteration, and restriction to English phonemes no longer are present as they were in (1). Our primary example of tongue-speech for preaching, with original transcription, IPA transcription, and phonetic charts is as follows:

(9) Travioxóta xiá exitamakapasán denisisiantiáda. Animóta ianemóte exitakantraviande. Livísta lavasiándo nemóta meporpampitándara sotinisisian tiáda kepaltala patrabas tinisisiantiádadevioxóta. (Samarin 1972, 80)

IPA: traviou’xouta xi’d eixitamakapa’son demisisi антида. ani’mou ta iane’mou te! eixitakan’trou eixitakantraviandet. li’vista lavasi’andou nel’mou ta mepourpampir’andara soontinisisian ti’o da kepaltala patrabas tinisisianti’adadeviou’xouta.

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Where symbols appear in pairs, the one to the right is a voiced consonant.
VOWELS

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<td>Open-mid</td>
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Where symbols appear in pairs, the rightmost represents a rounded vowel. (Ladefoged, inside cover.)

*These vowels occur only in diphthongs.

Data (9) is a fine example of pseudoxenoglossia, which has been documented many times by researchers. This phenomenon describes the occasion in which a speaker believes that s/he is speaking a foreign natural language, and may in fact be interpreted/translated by an observer as if s/he were. However, s/he is not actually speaking the language in a way that anyone fluent in the language would recognize, and s/he would be unable to produce any lengthy meaningful utterance in the natural language.

In this case, the speaker asserts that he is speaking in a “Spanish” tongue, but he is not actually speaking Spanish. The example does, however, illustrate a common trait of pseudoxenoglossia: despite the fact that an actual natural language is not being spoken, the sounds utilized in the utterance are not entirely comprised of sounds from the native language of the speaker. In addition, the phonemic inventory of pseudoxenoglossia almost always varies from that of a speaker’s primary tongue-speech, which usually is more strictly reflective of the phonemes of his/her native language regardless of what that native language may be (Goodman, 1972). In fact, a pseudoxenoglossic utterance may in some cases reflect the phonemes of the natural language the speaker or observer/identifier believes the speaker to be speaking. In this example, sounds used in Spanish, such as r and , are present, but the sounds are not combined in such a way as to produce meaningful communication in Spanish. The use of these sounds in conjunction with a stress pattern that is often similar to that of Spanish (falling second-to-last) as well as the appearance of
Co and Cas (where C is any plosive) do indeed endow the utterance with a sound similar to Spanish. These superficial similarities are likely the cause for the misidentification.

The following example is another instance of pseudoxenoglossia:

(10) Poro vando ro, le kabanzo,  
   Dandole se la fa mase,  
   Ye Carra, mucho mando,  
   Pepe la, kume rando,  
   Go lavando, selaga ya,  
   Te dala Puka, se raseka sone,  
   Me aka rando mandoro. . . .  
   (Samarin 1972, 116)

The transcription of this example is an approximation, as diacritics were provided by the speaker and an original audio tape was not available to Samarin. In this case, the speaker did not assert or acknowledge that his speech had some superficial similarities to Spanish. There are, however, similarities of a different kind than those observable in (9). In this case, although there is no borrowing of Spanish phonemes by a native English speaker, there are breath groups that are phonetically almost identical or completely identical to actual Spanish words. Specifically, mucho is translatable as "much", dandole as "giving to him/her," lavando means "washing," le and me as "to him" and "to me," respectively, and so on. Again this does not classify as genuine xenoglossia because the utterance as a whole offers no meaningful discourse in a natural language.

The most common explanation for this is that the speaker is able to access a subconscious memory of the sounds of the natural language s/he claims to be speaking. S/he may have been exposed to the language without his/her knowledge, even in an incident so simple as passing a speaker of the language on the street, and may have stored sounds or entire words of the language in their memory without awareness of it. Then when s/he begins to speak in tongues, these
sounds are retrieved, either involuntarily, or with a subconscious drive to produce "foreign" sounds. (Samarin 1968, 54).

Regardless of the fact that it does not flawlessly reproduce the actual structure and sound of a natural language, the pseudoxenoglossic utterance frequently serves a similar, if not exactly identical, function as a speech act within the religious context as a genuine xenoglossic speech would. That is, it serves to communicate with a particular person or group of people (often with the goal of conversion) that would not otherwise hear it, rather than serve as a means for private prayer or general group worship, and often inspires conversion (Samarin 1972, 112). From a practical perspective, a pseudoxenoglossic utterance often produces the same result that a xenoglossic speech might. That is, if a non-believer mis-identifies a pseudoxenoglossic speech as a natural language and is converted as a result, the goal of a xenoglossic speech act has been achieved.

Xenoglossia, if it does in fact exist, would also fall under the category of tongue-speech whose intent is preaching. As with pseudoxenoglossia, the function of xenoglossia as it is reported to have occurred always involves the intent of a public or private message to a select person or persons rather than prayer or worship between God and man. In fact, the story of the founding of the Pentecostal church involves another especially famous incident in which a Jewish man who walked into the original Pentecostal church in Los Angeles and was spontaneously spoken to in Hebrew by a church member with no previous exposure to the language (Sherrill 1964, 43).

Although frequently categorized or misunderstood as being under the label of "glossolalia," xenoglossia is a markedly different and unique phenomenon. Unlike glossolalia, xenoglossia is defined as the speaking of an actual natural human language, either current or extinct, rather than the speaking of a language of the Spirit, which may or may not be similar to natural language in a variety of ways. It is the variation of tongue-speech most often recognized as a speech pattern in its own right, rather than as an occurrence that can be grouped together with many similar (or not so similar) speech patterns, as is the case with glossolalia. One of the reasons for this may be its role
in the beginning of the tongue-speaking phenomenon within the Christian church. As mentioned earlier, the most common interpretation of the story of Pentecost is that Jesus' disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to preach in actual human languages foreign to them that were spoken by the other people present. (Hinson et al. 1967, 24)

Xenoglossia is the tongue-speaking phenomenon least documented and most questioned by scholars and academics. For this reason, there are no samples of it here, but it will be discussed briefly nonetheless. Because there are few scientific explanations of xenoglossia at this time, it is not seen as a believable phenomenon by most outsiders to the practice. There are, however, many reports of occurrences of xenoglossia; the problem lies in the fact that very few have ever been documented or studied by linguists or other academics. One of these is documented by Kelsey (1964), who, although not a tongue-speaker himself, was acquainted with someone who had her tongue-speech identified by a seminary professor well-versed in Hebrew. The essential passage describing the event is as follows:

"When she had finished, he informed her that he was a Hebrew scholar and that she had given a reasonably good talk in Hebrew, of which she had no knowledge." (Kelsey 1964, 163)

This event was apparently not witnessed by anyone else who was able to verify the speech. The second, and only other record of any significance known to the author is a report of an investigation done by Ian Stevenson in a non-religious setting. Stevenson reports about an incident at which he was personally present; in this case, a middle-aged Philadelphian woman began to communicate in Swedish despite having had no previous exposure to it or any other Scandinavian languages. The Swedish was identified and verified by several witnesses who either spoke or taught Swedish. While the incident was not religious in nature, the woman was under hypnosis and her "communications were deemed to come from a character named Jensen Jacoby." Although these two occurrences are the best documented cases of possible xenoglossy known to
exist, even Stevenson deems them questionable. (Williams 1981, 188)

So much disbelief on the part of researchers as to the existence of the phenomenon is a result not only of the lack of a "logical" explanation for it but also because researchers often question the ability of witnesses to make correct identifications. In some cases, as in (10), a speaker might utter a few actual words in a foreign tongue, interspersed with glosstolalic discourse. As discussed earlier, this does not technically fall into the category of xenoglossia as it is not meaningful speech in the foreign tongue nor is it pure speech of the language. However, the foreign language may be mis-identiied by someone who recognizes the general "sound" of the utterance as similar to the sound or a few phrases of a certain foreign language and subsequently identifies it as the actual language. (Samarin 1972; 80, 109-115)

Within the category of xenoglossia there appear to be two major distinctions, which Ian Stevenson (1974) identifies as recitative xenoglossia and responsive xenoglossia. Recitative xenoglossia, the more common (or more aptly, less uncommon) of the two, involves the "subconscious remembering of words and phrases of a foreign language." That is, while the speaker has no conscious knowledge of the language, either fluent or superficial, he or she does have certain words or phrases of the language stored in his or her subconscious memory (Williams 1981, 187). As an example of this, Williams cites Stevenson's encounter with a woman who spoke Latin, Greek, and Hebrew during a delirium without prior knowledge or conscious memory of the languages. It was later realized that the phrases she uttered were from the favorite books of her foster father, who had read them aloud when she was a young child. It should be noted that in such cases the speaker has no ability to actually converse in the language or engage in meaningful discourse beyond the words or phrases that they are able to regurgitate with precision (Williams, 186).

In contrast, responsive xenoglossia is that of the type assumed to be described in the Book of Acts, in which the speaker is able to converse and provide lengthy, meaningful statements in the foreign language, rather than simply provide arbitrary chunks of it that have no significant
meaning. Again, this is the kind of tongue-speaking that is often reported by churches or individuals but is infrequently verified by outsiders. As it is more incredible, it is both one of the most sought-after and rarely witnessed forms of tongue-speech; in fact, as mentioned earlier, only a few cases verified by academics are known to the author. For speakers, it is the best proof to outsiders that their “gift” could only come from supernatural powers; in addition, it can be used to send specific messages to speakers of certain languages alone, who would not “hear” (i.e. be converted by the message) if it were in any less miraculous form. If it truly exists or is perceived to exist, it is a powerful tool for conversion as a result. (Williams 1981, 187-189)

For scientists, xenoglossia is the most baffling possibility of all tongue-speech; all explanations of it are suppositions at best. Linguists and psychologists either dismiss it as impossible or try to explain it in a number of ways that are not satisfactory given the current limits of our understanding of the human brain. According to Samarin (1968), one of these possible explanations is cryptomnesia, a more thorough subconscious storing and remembering of foreign languages, similar to but more extensive than the hidden memory found in cases of recitative xenoglossia or pseudoxenoglossia including foreign phonemes or speech patterns. This seems to be the most favored explanation as it can be most easily reconciled to current understanding of the brain. Another unlikely potential explanation is that some sort of hereditary recall or collective memory exists within the genetic make-up of a human being that allows him or her to “remember” under certain circumstances languages to which they have absolutely no exposure. That is, speakers can remember languages of their ancestors or are endowed with a knowledge of a basic common denominator of all human language that under certain circumstances they are able to access and build into a language other than their own (Williams 1981, 187). This possibility is unlikely as it assumes that human beings are predisposed to acquire particular natural languages rather than just language in general. Finally, other less likely explanations include sleep learning and telepathic communication. (Samarin 1968, 53)

The enigma of xenoglossia presents the greatest problem in the understanding of tongue-
speech as a whole, especially concerning the lack of resolution among and within the fields of religion, psychology, and linguistics. While few cases have ever been verified by academics with credentials in the field (as mentioned earlier), thousands of reports of the phenomenon exist. While accidental false reporting may account for some of the discrepancy, it cannot be assumed that this explains all. Because there are currently no good scientific explanations for the phenomenon, many academics do not acknowledge it is as a real possibility. As the scope of the religious phenomenon has in no way been exhaustively observed by researchers, it is the opinion of the author that no final judgment can be made until extensive further study is done.

It is incorrect to assume that the occurrence of xenoglossia is the most important of all tongue-speech and that questions as to its existence cast doubt upon the validity of the phenomenon as a whole. From the perspective of speakers, xenoglossia, while special, is significant in its usage in certain situations not because it is the most important form of tongue-speech. It simply serves a different purpose and is not seen as better or more holy because it is more difficult to explain scientifically. Tongue-speech not associated with natural language is commonly viewed as being equally important, though for different purposes. (Sherrill 1964, Ch.1)

In summary, it has been shown in Part 2 that tongue-speech has the following significant characteristics:

- Tongue-speech is variable and cannot be adequately described through the typical example (1). Instead, utterances can vary in phonemic inventory, syllable structure, and length, among other characteristics, according to their function or motivation.
- The length of an utterance can vary from a single word to several minutes of speech.
- The predicted syllable structure of CV (where C is commonly a plosive) is standard but not strictly adhered to; when it is broken, it is most often through the addition of a nasal coda or complex onset.
- The phonemic inventory of an utterance can vary in size and can include phonemes (most often the trill r or fricative x - see pseudoxenoglossic data (9) and (10)) that
are nonexistent or rare in English. Longer utterances in tongue-speech are more likely to contain sounds that are more difficult for the speaker to make, including sounds foreign to or rare in the speaker's native language as well as combinations of consonants without intermediary vowels.

- Consonants and vowels almost always occur with the same degree of frequency (i.e. about fifty-percent of sounds are consonants and about fifty percent are vowels).
- Tongue-speech is often repetitive either through syllable repetition, as in (5), or template repetition as in (7).
- Rhyme and alliteration do appear to be common to all samples, in varying degrees.
- There is no direct, repeatable correspondence between sound and meaning in tongue-speech as is the case with natural language.

With these variable and common characteristics established, we are now one step closer to the ability to make a truly thorough comparison to voluntary, spontaneous, non-religious gibberish. The following section, Part 3, will lay further groundwork for this comparison in Part 4 by outlining a concise and preliminary study of gibberish similar to the analysis of tongue-speech just completed.
Now that a complete examination of tongue-speech has been made, we are one step closer to making a thorough comparison between it, in all of its variations, and spontaneous, voluntary, non-religious gibberish. First, however, gibberish must be examined on its own. If the assertion that tongue-speech and gibberish are linguistically identical is true, then we would expect to see patterns in gibberish that are similar to those that have been defined for tongue-speech. That is, gibberish should also vary in similar ways according to the context in which it is used. Its phonemic inventory should vary but contain mostly English phonemes with some exceptions in "exotic" gibberish. In addition, it should adhere to a CV syllable template except in longer utterances and have a nasal coda, if one exists, as is the case with tongue-speech. Finally, if gibberish is truly similar to tongue-speech, the length of a gibberish utterance should vary according to context and intent from a few words to utterances that are several minutes long. As will be shown in the data to come, this does not appear to be true.

The samples of spontaneous, non-religious gibberish that will be used for this comparison were obtained in a variety of environments designed to create circumstances through which the gibberish produced would be most likely to mirror the kinds of tongue-speech outlined in Part 2, if the assumption that gibberish and tongue-speech are interchangeable is accurate. Twelve subjects were used; all are undergraduates from varying religious and socioeconomic backgrounds. Their gibberish was sampled in two ways. First, about half of the twelve were recorded individually; their speech in this case was based on seven different instructions that prompted them to speak with motivations or circumstances similar to those of the various kinds of tongue-speech in Part 2. These circumstances included examples of their “first words,” utterances that were as long as possible, utterances similar to a natural language, utterances that were meant to be “exotic” or “foreign,” utterances meant to convey an important meaning, and utterances meant to command the attention of a listener, in both spoken voice and song. In addition, group and repeat recordings were later obtained in a less controlled manner (without additional prompts or instructions) with all
twelve subjects; this was done in order to determine whether or not an individual’s gibberish was affected by other gibberish s/he heard as well as the length of their exposure to (or practice with) gibberish speech. None of the content of the utterances in any of the settings was premeditated in order to mirror the spontaneous quality of tongue-speech.

The results of the sampling and the ensuing comparison to tongue-speech can be explained both as a whole and according to the classifications given in Part 2. In this part of the paper, I shall outline only the structure of gibberish and comparisons to tongue-speech according to classifications similar to those of Part 2; categorical comparisons between tongue-speech and gibberish will be included as part of the summary and conclusions of Part 4. I shall begin by describing the comparison of first utterances, as they are indicative of the general characteristics of gibberish and the resulting similarities and dissimilarities between gibberish and tongue-speech regardless of genre. Examples that are typical of the gibberish first utterances gathered for this study are as follows, given individually in their IPA transcription and collectively in their phonemic inventories:

(11) ge:bu: bidap
(12) jme/mufulufu
(13) tju: joupm we:
(14) g!a

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Where symbols appear in pairs, the one to the right represents a voiced consonant.
While this collection of first utterances contains one more sample than the first utterances in tongue-speech that were examined ((2), (3), and (4)), this selection is clearly phonetically different from the data given for first words in tongue-speech. (11), (12), (13), and (14) are generally longer and comprised of more syllables than (2), (3), and (4). In addition, their phonetic make-up, though varied, is larger and far more diverse than that of the corresponding tongue-speech, especially concerning vowel sounds. The gibberish first utterances include ten different consonantal sounds and nine different vowel sounds (compared to eight and four, respectively, in gibberish first utterances) and additionally contain phonemes rare to tongue-speech (such as ɡ and θ) and phonemes not present in the phonemic inventory of the native language of the speakers. In tongue-speech, there are no examples in which a speaker’s first words include phonemes not in their first language; in contrast, (14) contains ɬ, a postalveolar click, which is not a part of the speaker’s natural language. Additionally, in samples not transcribed here, lateral alveolar clicks and bilabial and uvular trills are also present.

The syllable structure of these utterances is also dissimilar to that of (2), (3), and (4). While the syllables of (2), (3), and (4) are strictly CV, every single first utterance of gibberish breaks this tendency at least once; there are complex onsets (such as ſme in (12)), diphthongs (ou in (13)), and non-nasal codas present in the syllables of these examples.

It does appear that some characteristics of tongue-speech may in this case be included in
gibberish. Specifically, (12) includes repetition in both the form of alliteration of onset within
syllables and the form of rhyme; it should be noted that these are not, however, characteristic of the
gibberish first utterances as a whole.

The similarities and dissimilarities observable in the comparison of first utterances of
tongue-speech and gibberish illustrate the general pattern of contrast that occurs throughout most of
our samples, regardless of functional differences. In fact, while we saw that speech patterns in
tongue-speech can vary subtly according to the motivation for utterance, the speech patterns in
gibberish appear to remain largely the same regardless of the function the speech act may fill. The
gibberish samples obtained for lengthy speech and speech with a message, for example, use the
same kinds of phonemes, syllable patterns, and breath groups as were present in the first
utterances, including those not transcribed above. As an example of the typical behavior, (15) is
the longest utterance of the speaker of (14).

(15) higgə blupləp
  səf ləf ləf
  uggə dəbə də jəp
  ḳəgtə s'fрогətŋ
  dəŋ wiŋ gəŋ da'
  if uf əuf fədəup
  uə qətə qəf uəhə
  ingədə'riŋəwud bələmədə ogtə liə?
  i vədələ u vədəp

As expected, this utterance repeats standards set by the speaker in his first utterances,
including (14). Syllable structure is similar; that is, it varies greatly and is not restricted to CV or
CV(nasal). In addition, sounds that were used in the first utterances are repeated in the longer
utterance rather than discarded in favor of more complex or advanced sounds; in fact, two of the
speaker's first words (q'tə and wɨip) are replicated in this utterance. Again, alliteration (line 3) and
rhyme (lines 2 and 5), are present even though general repetition of syllables and breath groups

2 s' is used to denote a rhotacized s, as in the vowels of American English herd.
does not appear to occur.

It is obvious that compared to (11), (12), (13), and (14), the phonemic inventory has expanded, as would be expected for a longer utterance. However, unlike tongue-speech, in which the growth in phonemic inventory from first utterances to longer speeches involved the addition of more complex sounds that are more difficult for the speaker to make, in this case the additions do not seem to grow in complexity. Rather, the shortest (and arguably simplest) gibberish utterances contain complex sounds to begin with (as shown in (11), (12), (13), and (14)); as utterances increase in length other complex sounds are added, but they are not necessarily any more difficult for the speaker to produce than the sounds used previously in the first utterances. They are merely longer, larger versions of the first utterances.

Additionally, although this utterance is the longest the speaker could provide even when allowed several weeks for practice or evolution, it is not significantly longer than the first utterances, unlike the marked contrast between first- and long- utterances in tongue-speech. This is a pattern which applies to all data gathered for gibberish; while first utterances were limited to three or four words, the longest utterance any one speaker could provide without considerable pause was twenty-two seconds. In fact, the average maximum length of speech for all speakers was only twenty seconds, even when they were prompted to speak as long as possible or to speak about something. In contrast, as noted in Part 2, the longest utterances of tongue-speech tend to occur in prayer and can be up to several minutes long.

There are two exceptions to the observation that all gibberish tends to be remarkably similar to other kinds of gibberish, differing primarily in length only. The first of these is speech that is more “exotic,” what we would predict to be comparable to pseudoxenoglossia or xenoglossia, and the second is song. Two typical samples of exotic gibberish are transcribed below.

(16) ahom: oii:mu: aoloxawuuwa,
ajmei:kal: bobaduksnei:jia:
In exotic gibberish, the overall sound of an utterance is different from that of the pattern defined by the first utterances, but the phonemic inventory still remains almost entirely the same as that which was established in the speaker’s first utterances or lengthy speech. Instead, difference, or exoticism, is established by cadence and pitch/intonation, and vowels (and, in some cases, approximants) are used with greater frequency, for a greater duration, or for a greater percentage of the total duration of the utterance than in the other gibberish speech acts. “Exotic” speech is, as a result, the example which best illustrates the overall tendency of gibberish speech to use vowels (and approximants) with far greater frequency than those consonantal sounds that require greater stricture. As an example, one breath group of (16) can be transcribed as *aha: a: o: i: mu: aolao:awaumaua*, where the vowels are long and distinct from each other, rather than being phonetically realized as diphthongs. This is a marked contrast with tongue-speech, in which stops, trills and fricatives comprise the majority of consonantal sounds and generally appear in an equal percentage of an utterance as vowels.

The second exception to the general pattern that all gibberish speech mirrors the behavior of the first utterances is in song. Song is an exception in the fact that it is the single kind of gibberish that is notably similar to its counterpart in tongue-speech as well as to tongue-speech as a whole. Two examples of gibberish song are as follows:

(18) *ni niu ja ko ko
isi gi gu do
so do do do do*

(19) *ha mi ha ha jau ji vi
ka mi sa va ru ki ki
gi ni ko ra ka ku sa fi
mausami, mausamou,
chikaka, kakasakou....

41
In these examples, it can be seen that in this case the syllables of gibberish do frequently follow more closely to a CV pattern, and are often preceded by plosives rather than approximants; the sample is very similar to (5) above. This similarity reflects what appears to be a strong influence of melody on an utterance; because the goal of the singer is to create a sonorous base for melody, s/he does not close his/her syllables off with a coda and allows one syllable per tone given. In addition, the universal tongue-speech characteristics of repetition through rhyme and alliteration comprise a larger portion of (19), in which lines one through three rhyme perfectly with each other, and lines four and five create a new repetition.

Beyond these two categorical exceptions, a comparison of the samples of different kinds of gibberish to each other reinforces the notion that the syllable structure, length of phrase or utterance, amount of rhyme and alliteration, phrasing, and level of complexity of the phonemes used in gibberish does not change according to context. Specifically, although the overall phonemic inventory and syllable pattern of gibberish does not appear to be codified, it is significantly larger or more diverse than that of any of our samples of tongue-speech.

Finally, the study of the variations of gibberish reinforces the notion that gibberish often does not obey the principle of sufficient perceptual separation. Instead, sounds that are chronological often occur near each other in the mouth. For example, one breath group given in a gibberish sampling consists solely of open and open-mid back vowels (aːɔːoːoː); this is representative of the tendency as a whole.

Despite these similarities among individual’s gibberish, each had a distinctive style and vocabulary. This is a pattern not often seen in tongue-speech, perhaps because tongue-speech most often occurs within and at the prompting of a community, which may serve to standardize the utterances toward a common pattern and/or vocabulary. To begin to assess the degree to which such a collective setting might also affect gibberish, samples were also taken in a group setting. The group samples included both experienced (i.e. previously recorded) gibberish-speakers and new gibberish-speakers; the goals of speech included both communication and lack thereof, at the
speakers’ discretion, but all were spontaneous. Once again, the results showed that while
gibberish and tongue-speech may have some superficial similarities, there are also significant
differences beyond the surface level.

Initially, those speakers new to gibberish conformed the patterns and sounds of their
utterances to one another without consciously planning to do so; they would often mirror the
sounds of the utterance(s) most recently heard. For example, a speaker who had just heard an
utterance in which certain vowels or consonants were prominent would also use the same sounds
with frequency in addition to approximating the intonational pattern of the utterance of the previous
speaker. In contrast, experienced speakers retained their own “style” and vocabulary as mentioned
above. After a short period of time, however, the beginning speakers also began to establish their
own styles and lexicons and no longer resembled each other so closely.

Despite the level of experience attained by the speaker of gibberish in the group setting,
regardless of whether his/her speech was in the stage of conformity, the utterances produced
continued to adhere to those patterns of gibberish established in the isolated individual utterances.
Repetition of sound and/or breath group was frequent; however, although utterances remained
brief, syllable structure was potentially complex and variable throughout (as in the individual
examples), and the phonemic inventory for the utterances was not entirely founded in English,
even in the utterances of the beginning conformist speakers. Overall, it appeared that there are no
great marked changes between gibberish in an isolated individual and gibberish in a group setting;
that is, the presence of other speakers does not seem to affect gibberish as much as it might affect
tongue-speech, but prolonged exposure (rather than just a few meetings, as in this pilot study) to
gibberish in a group setting would be necessary to substantiate this conclusion.

In summary, the salient categorical characteristics of spontaneous, non-religious gibberish
recorded and analyzed as part of this study that must be considered in the comparison to tongue-
speech are as follows:
• Gibberish does not vary greatly according to its intent or motivation. When it does vary, the variance is reflected in pitch, cadence, and intonation rather than in phonemic inventory.

• The length of an utterance in gibberish tends to be short. Even when prompted to produce the longest utterance possible, no speaker was able to speak for longer than twenty seconds, approximately, even if s/he had previous practice speaking in gibberish.

• Syllable structure within an utterance in gibberish is greatly variable. Syllables can be comprised of a nucleus (V) only as well as a pattern in which they contain an onset, coda, or both; onsets and codas can vary from simple plosives to complex strings of consonants.

• Gibberish often contains phonemes that are not present in the first language of the speaker. When such foreign phonemes occur, they are as likely to be present in the first words of a speaker as in his later, more “advanced,” or lengthy utterances.

• Consonantal sounds in gibberish speech are as likely to be approximants or fricatives as they are to be plosives.

• Vowel sounds are common. In gibberish, entire phrases may be made up of vowels only.

• Gibberish does not strictly adhere to the principle of maximum perceptual separation. Instead, sounds that occur close together in an utterance often occur in neighboring places of articulation.

• Repetition is present in gibberish speech. Speakers will often re-use words or syllables within words.

• Rhyme of syllables and breath groups as well as alliteration of breath group initial sounds can and do occur in gibberish, most often in song.

• There is no direct correspondence between morpheme and meaning in gibberish. In fact, some gibberish has no meaning at all.

With these essential characteristics of gibberish in mind, the complete comparison in form between gibberish and tongue-speech (as defined in Part 2) can now be pursued based upon the characteristics of both as entire phenomena.
Part 4 - The Summary and Conclusion

If tongue-speech and gibberish are in fact identical in their linguistic structure, the characteristics of gibberish as outlined at the end of Part 3 should also serve to describe tongue-speech. However, very few of them actually apply to tongue-speech as it was defined in Part 2 of this study. In fact, of the ten characteristics of gibberish outlined at the end of Part 3, only the final three also describe tongue-speech with some accuracy, and the previous seven describe characteristics which are not found in tongue-speech at all. In addition, had the comparison been made only based upon the “typical” tongue-speech (1), the dissimilarities between the two kinds of speech would be even more conspicuous.

Of all of these differences noted, several are most significant to the argument that tongue-speech and gibberish are not identical, taking into consideration all of the observed subcategories of both. The first of these significant differences is syllable structure. Syllables in tongue-speech tend to occur most often in a CV pattern, occasionally in a C1VC2 pattern (where C2 is a nasal stop), and rarely in a C1VC2 pattern where C2 is not a nasal stop, depending on the function of a particular utterance. However, syllables in gibberish appear to vary indiscriminately between V, CV, C1VC2, and VC templates, with complex onsets and non-nasal codas being perfectly acceptable.

Secondly, there are significant differences between the variation of length of utterances within gibberish and within tongue-speech. As shown in Part 2, the length of utterances in tongue-speech can vary from a few words, as in (2), (3), and (4), to minutes long, as exemplified in (7), depending upon context and motivation for the utterances. In contrast, the length of the gibberish utterances appears to be limited to several words, as in (11), (12), (13), and (14), to approximately twenty seconds long, as demonstrated by (15). Despite contextual differences or varying motivations for the utterances, their lengths did not vary greatly.

Thirdly, the phonemic inventory and the range thereof of tongue-speech is different from
that of gibberish. As shown in Part 2, the phonemes used in an utterance in tongue-speech (concerning ease of utterance) ranges from simple (4) to more complex (vw in (8)) and from a basic use of sounds only present in the speaker’s first language (7) to the inclusion of foreign phonemes in pseudoxenoglossic speech (9). In contrast, as shown in the entirety of Part 3, gibberish speech includes a wider range of phonemes that were both simple and complex, from English and other languages, where the more complex or foreign phonemes were as likely to be found in first utterances as in more practiced speech.

Finally, spontaneous, non-religious gibberish appears to remain far more phonetically consistent than tongue-speech despite differences in utterance motivation. As explained in Part 2 and the preceding paragraphs, tongue-speech varies subtly in length, syllable structure, and size and quality of phonemic inventory depending on motivation for utterance. In contrast, as shown in Part 3, gibberish does not appear to undergo such significant variations in any of these three categories even when it has the same varying contexts or motivations as those observed in tongue-speech. Instead, it remains more consistent regardless of differing motivations for speech.

Based on these observations drawn from the understanding of the varieties of tongue-speech established in Part 2, the understanding of the varieties (or lack thereof) of gibberish established in Part 3, and the contrast existent between the two as established earlier in Part 4, I must conclude that the assumption that tongue-speech is identical to spontaneous, non-religious gibberish is false.

Overall it appears that gibberish is more diverse and complex than tongue-speech, which is opposite to the result we would expect if it is understood that the two are linguistically different, given that tongue-speakers generally have more practice with their speech than the volunteers used to collect voluntary gibberish for this study. That is, because tongue-speakers speak in tongues more frequently than gibberish speakers speak in gibberish, tongue-speech has greater opportunity to be diverse, but this is not the case. The one exception to this is length of utterance, in which tongue-speech does appear to be more complex than gibberish. Tongue-speech can last for many
minutes; this potential sign of “fluency” seems to more accurately reflect tongue-speakers’
continual use of their speech.

There is a possibility that the relative diversity of the gibberish sampled for this study
compared to tongue-speech is a result of the fact that the gibberish-speakers were not influenced by
hearing gibberish spoken to them regularly within a community (such as a congregation). Tongue-
speech may be less diverse because tongue-speakers are (perhaps subconsciously) driven to
conform their tongue-speech to that which they hear around them. However, the samples of
tongue-speech used in Part 2 were elicited from a wide range of congregations and speakers that
were not exposed to each other; yet their tongue-speech is more similar to each other than are the
varying samples of gibberish. (There is no theological explanation for this that is known to the
author.)

It is also possible that gibberish, when used repeatedly and with frequency as is the case
with most speakers of tongue-speech, may replicate the discussed patterns of tongue-speech more
closely. Further study that incorporates a greater sampling of both speakers of gibberish and
tongue-speech, including those with interpretation provided, must be done in order to assess
whether or not gibberish may have an evolutionary pattern similar to that of tongue-speech, and
whether prolonged exposure to other speakers’ gibberish significantly affects the quality of the
individual’s utterance. Were I to begin this study again, I would attempt to accumulate more data,
both through existing sources and first hand, in order to make this possible.

Regardless of the outcome of such future studies, it is clear that the linguistic composition
of tongue-speech has by no means been adequately explained or defined thus far. The mere
existence of such contrastive evidence in gibberish as presented in this pilot study validates the
assertion that tongue-speech cannot wholly be described as comparable to gibberish. If this is
indeed the case, it means that we still have failed to adequately account for the linguistic origin and
composition of the utterance in tongue-speech; it can be explained neither as identical to natural
language nor as identical to gibberish.
Works Cited


