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General reports on glossolalia from a scientific perspective.

Encyclopaedia Britannica states in an article:

“from Greek glossa, “tongue,” and lalia, “talking”), utterances approximating words and speech, usually produced during states of intense religious excitement. The vocal organs of the speaker are affected, the tongue moves without the conscious control of the speaker, and unintelligible speech pours forth. According to religious interpretations of the phenomenon, the speaker is considered to be possessed by a supernatural spirit, is in conversation with divine beings, or is the channel of a divine proclamation.” (*Encyclopædia Britannica Online* (2009) - *Gift of tongues*)

In a related article *Encyclopaedia Britannica* states of Pentecostalism:

“charismatic religious movement that gave rise to a number of Protestant churches in the United States in the 20th century and that is unique in its belief that all Christians should seek a postconversion religious experience called baptism with the Holy Spirit. Recalling the Holy Spirit’s descent upon the first Christians in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, or Shabuoth (Acts of the Apostles 2–4), this experience appears to have been common in the Christian movement during its first generations.

Baptism with the Holy Spirit is also believed to be accompanied by a sign, the gift of tongues. This “speaking in tongues” occurs as glossalalia (speech in an unknown language) or xenoglossy (speech in a language known to others but not the speaker).” (*Encyclopædia Britannica Online* (2009) *Pentecostalism*)

Brian Grady and Kate Miriam Loewenthal in a 1997 study state:

“Glossolalia, speaking in tongues, is a religiously endorsed activity in Pentecostal and charismatic Christian groups. Speaking in tongues is seen as a gift of the Spirit (Meadow & Kahoe, 1984).

Speech is rhythmic, usually contains few or no recognisable words or semantic content, apart from biblical words and phrases. Its phonemic properties have been said to resemble those of the language(s) of the speaker. Glossolalia may occur in non-Christian religions (May, 1956).

Might glossolalia be psychopathological? The early twentieth century

literature on glossolalia carried the implication that it was a form of mass hysteria or psychosis. This view was successfully challenged by Boisen (1939), Alland (1962) and others. Modern consensus appears to be that glossolalia is a legitimate and legitimated religious activity, possibly adaptive, and not psychopathological (Meadow & Kahoe, 1984; Littlewood & Lipsedge, 1989; Loewenthal, 1995a)." (Grady, Brian and Loewenthal, Kate Miriam, *Features associated with speaking in tongues (Glossolalia)*, British Journal of Medical Psychology (1977), 70, 185 – 191)

The conclusion of a study of 991 male Evangelical clergy summarises its own findings and four other studies:

"What is clear, however, from all five studies is that there is no evidence to support the hypothesised link between glossolalia and neuroticism and, indeed, some evidence to suggest that glossolalia is in fact associated with greater psychological stability." (Leslie J. Francis and Mandy Robbins, *Personality and Glossolalia: A Study Among Male Evangelical Clergy*, Pastoral Psychology, Vol 51, No. 5, May 2003)

An article in *Jet* reports on research into glossolalia by the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine:

"In a recent study conducted by researchers from the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine, Associate Professor Dr. Andrew Newberg, M.D, reported, "Our finding of decreased activity in the frontal lobes during the practice of speaking in tongues is fascinating because these subjects truly believe that the spirit of God is moving through them and controlling them to speak.

"Our brain imaging research shows us that these subjects are not in control of the usual language centers...which is consistent with their description of a lack of intentional control while speaking in tongues."

The study can be found in the November issue of the journal *Psychiatry Research: Neuroimaging*." (Jet (27 November 2006) *Research Finds Brain Affected When 'Speaking In Tongues'*)

An article on *Meta Religion.com* states:

"The highly respected 1972 study of John P. Kildahl (The Psychology of Speaking in Tongues) concludes that "from a linguistic point of view, religiously inspired glossolalic utterances have the same general characteristics as those that are not religiously inspired." In fact, glossolalia is a "human phenomenon, not limited to Christianity nor even to religious behavior." (Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements by Spittler, P. 340)." (Meta Religion (undated) *Glossolalia in Contemporary Linguistic Study*)

This article also states:

"In a massive study of glossolalia from a linguistic perspective by Professor William J. Samarin of the University of Toronto's Department of Linguistics published after more than a decade of careful research, he rejected the view that glossolalia is xenoglossia, i.e. some foreign language that could be understood by another person who knew that language. Samarin concluded that glossolalia is a "pseudo-language." He defined glossolalia as "unintelligible babbling speech that exhibits superficial phonological similarity to language, without having consistent syntagmatic structure and that is not systematically derived from or related to known language." (William J. Samarin, "Variation and Variables in Religious Glossolalia," *Language in Society*, ed. Dell Haymes, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972 pgs. 121-130)

Felicitas D. Goodman, a psychological anthropologist and linguist, engaged in a study of various English - Spanish - and Mayan-speaking Pentecostal communities in the United States and Mexico. She compared tape recordings of non-Christian rituals from Africa, Borneo, Indonesia and Japan as well. She published her results in 1972 in an extensive monograph (*Speaking in Tongues: A Cross-Cultural Study in Glossolalia* by Felicitas D. Goodman, University of Chicago Press, 1972).

Goodman concludes that "when all features of glossolalia were taken into consideration--that is, the segmental structure (such as sounds, syllables, phrases) and its suprasegmental elements (namely, rhythm, accent, and especially overall intonation)-- she concluded that there is no distinction in glossolalia between Christians and the followers of non-Christian (pagan) religions . The "association between trance and glossolalia is now accepted by many researchers as a correct assumption," writes Goodman in the prestigious *Encyclopedia of Religion* (1987).

Goodman also concludes that glossolalia "is, actually, a learned behavior, learned either unwarily or, sometimes consciously." Others have previously pointed out that direct instruction is given on how to "speak in tongues," ie. how to engage in glossolalia." (Ibid)

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Sources consulted

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