

Silence and its Communicative Function: Various Views

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Abstract:

This article discusses verbal and non-verbal tools used in communication in Uzbek culture, particularly the phenomenon of silence. It highlights the increasing attention given to linguistic phenomena related to speech processes in recent years. The article provides information on various types of silence and their communicative functions in dialogic speech, the meanings conveyed during communication, and the representation of silence in literary texts.

Keywords: verbal and non-verbal, communication, communicative act, silence, interaction, functions of silence

Introduction:

Silence, as a communicative element, has become a subject of increased study by modern linguists in recent years. Silence is one of the most important and multifaceted phenomena in linguistics, with different interpretations across various languages and cultures. It is often understood as a pause or break in speech, but it also has social, psychological, and cultural dimensions. The paper analyzes the various meanings of silence and its communicative functions. Even though speech may pause, individuals continue to think, maintaining inner verbalization processes. Thus, silence is a communicative process that can be triggered by various psychological and social factors. Silence has different meanings in many languages, such as Russian, English, and German. For example, in Russian, the word "molchaniya" can refer to both a pause in speech and the act of remaining silent or withholding an opinion. In English, "silence" can signify not just silence itself but also quietness or the withholding of critical comments. In German, silence ("Schweigen") can refer not only to refraining from speaking but also to a person's choice not to react or show themselves in a particular situation.

The multiplicity of meanings of silence across languages illustrates its complexity and multi-faceted nature. Understanding this phenomenon requires considering its social, cultural, and linguistic context. Each meaning of silence depends on the language and culture in which it occurs, and this is what creates new approaches in studying its communicative functions.

In conclusion, silence should not only be viewed as a pause in speech but as a concept that also has social and cultural dimensions. The diversity of meanings associated with silence increases its importance in linguistics and aids in understanding how it functions in different cultures and languages.

Method:

Silence is a multi-functional and polysemous tool. It can convey various meanings through both verbal and non-verbal codes. The communicative function of silence has been well-known throughout human communication history, as relationships have shaped its use. "Dialogue is a conversation between two people, and it is important to note that this speech process also involves listening. That is, the information from the speaker is received and interpreted by the listener through silence, and vice versa" [6, p. 26]. Hence, communication involves both speaking and listening (silence). Listening, or being in silence, is also an integral part of the communicative act, in which the addressee receives the transmitted information, reflects on it, and responds. This is how a dialogue is formed, and communication occurs. "Indeed, listening requires patience, tolerance, and a certain level of understanding and insight" [7, p. 96].

Through years of human communication, silence has come to represent specific meanings in speech acts, and its result as a communicative signifier conveys meaning. Phrases like "silence signifies consent," "Speech is silver, silence is golden," "Better not speak than to speak and suffer consequences," and "Speech is silver, silence is golden" demonstrate that silence functions as a communicative tool conveying certain meanings. From a functional perspective, silence, as a communicative sign, is a linguistic tool used in communication and is analyzed as an object in linguistics. "Understanding the communicative function of silence is important not only theoretically but also practically for anyone engaging in communication" [5, p. 70].

Silence can carry specific meanings, words, or concepts, but it does not convey meaning outside of a communicative act. Regardless of the different tasks or meanings associated with silence in communication, the meaning being expressed is determined in the process of speech.

Conclusion:

Russian linguist S.V. Melikyan, S.V. Krestinskiy, and English linguist J.V. Yensen, along with Thomas Bruno, provide detailed insights into the communicative functions of silence. S.V. Krestinskiy identifies 18 types of silence [3], J.V. Yensen, in his article "Communicative Functions of Silence" [1, p. 251], identifies 5 types, while Thomas Bruno mentions 3, and S.V. Melikyan refers to 6 types of silence [4, p. 150].

S.V. Krestinskiy defines the functions of silence as: affective, strategic, rhetorical, social status, role definition, social role, and ritual functions. "The act of silence is a communicative unit, and it must fulfill the corresponding communicative function," he states. S.V. Krestinskiy lists the following 18 types of silence:

1. Communication function
2. Discount function
3. Expressive function
4. Information function

5. Evaluation function
6. Regulative function
7. Cognitive function
8. Doubt function
9. Background function
10. Affective function
11. Strategic function
12. Rhetorical function
13. Syntactic function
14. Social position function
15. Definition function
16. Social role function
17. Ritual function
18. "In addition to the listed functions, silence also has an ethno-social-cultural function, which becomes evident only when related to a specific ethnic community's cultural, religious, or ethnic traditions" [3, p. 37].

Thomas Bruno identifies three functions of silence:

1. Psychological function
2. Interactive function
3. Socio-cultural function. Bruno bases his classification on the global origin and use of silence, viewing the psychological aspect, ethnocultural traditions, and the communicative practices of specific professions as primary factors in its application.

S.V. Melikyan provides six functions of silence:

1. Meditative function
2. Rhetorical function
3. Completion function
4. Expectation function
5. Result function
6. Attractive function [4, p. 152].

Discussion:

The method of identifying the functions of silence and differentiating between them reveals the complexity of communication. One of the challenges is the lack of clarity about silence as a speech act, as it often involves both pauses and other forms of communication that are not easily categorized. Furthermore, defining silence's function is complicated due to its various types and the challenges in distinguishing between them.

As emphasized in the article, silence has multiple functions, and each of these must be analyzed to understand how they are used in communication. For example, S.V. Krestinskiy divides silence into 18 types and shows how they can be applied in communicative processes. He differentiates between

affective, strategic, rhetorical, and other functions. However, classifying them clearly and universally across languages and cultures is difficult.

The differences in the types and functions of silence, and how each performs distinct communicative tasks, may vary based on the cultural context. For example, in Russian, English, and German, silence can represent different meanings and tasks, which creates challenges in studying how it is interpreted in different cultures.

Moreover, the social and cultural aspects of silence are also crucial. Silence is used, for instance, to maintain social norms, establish roles, or observe rituals. At the same time, it plays a significant role in fulfilling psychological and interactive functions.

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