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**GENERAL TOKENS OF THE PHENOMENON OF SILENCE
 IN COMMUNICATIVE PROCESS
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A.V. Ayvazyan. General Tokens of the Phenomenon of Silence in Communicative Process. The focus of the present article is the phenomenon of communicative silence. In our research, firstly we have tried to distinguish communicative and non-communicative phenomena of silence. The reason for our study is the existence of non-delimitating approaches in scholarly publications concerning the above mentioned notions. Taking into consideration J. Searle's definition of a minimal communicative unit we have come to a conclusion that an essential feature of the phenomenon of silence is a definite addresser's intention. Secondly, we further developed our approach by applying it within communicative linguistics and singled out some general manifestations of marked and unmarked instances of silence in communicative process.

Key words: addresser, addressee, communication process, communicative intention, marked acts of silence, silence, theory of speech acts.

А.В. Айвазян. Загальні прояви феномену мовчання в комунікативному процесі. У центрі уваги цієї статті – феномен комунікативного мовчання. У нашому дослідженні, по-перше, ми намагалися виділити комунікативні і некомунікативні прояви мовчання. Поштовхом для нашого дослідження відсутність у наукових публікаціях чітко вирізнених підходів щодо згаданих вище понять. Беручи до уваги визначення Дж. Серла стосовно мінімальної одиниці комунікації, ми дійшли висновку, що суттєвою ознакою феномена мовчання є наявність певної інтенції мовця. По-друге, розробляючи наш підхід, ми застосували його до теорії комунікативної лінгвістики і виділили окремі загальні прояви маркованих і немаркованих прикладів мовчання в комунікативному процесі.

Ключові слова: адресант, адресат, комунікативний процес, комунікативний намір, марковані акти мовчання, мовчання, теорія мовленнєвих актів.

А.В. Айвазян. Общие проявления феномена молчания в коммуникативном процессе. В центре внимания настоящей статьи – феномен коммуникативного молчания. В нашем исследовании, во-первых, мы пытались выделить коммуникативные и не коммуникативные проявления молчания. Стимулом для нашего исследования послужило отсутствие в научных публикациях однозначно разграниченных подходов, касающихся упомянутых выше понятий. Принимая во внимание определение Дж. Серлем минимальной единицы коммуникации, мы пришли к выводу, что существенным признаком феномена молчания является наличие определенной интенции адресанта. Во-вторых, разрабатывая наш подход, мы применили его в теории коммуникативной лингвистики и выделили некоторые общие проявления маркированных и немаркированных примеров молчания в коммуникативном процессе.

Ключевые слова: адресант, адресат, коммуникативное намерение, коммуникативный процесс, маркированные акты молчания, молчание, теория речевых актов.

1. Introduction

Due to the pragmatic turn in linguistics [Арутюнова, Падучева 1985: 3–42] the phenomenon of silence has widely been discussed [Ephratt 2008, Jaworski 1993], which in its turn opens up many opportunities for further analysis. In this article we particularly attempt to classify general manifestations of the act of silence in accordance with the roles of addresser and addressee, as well as to single out the marked and unmarked instances of the phenomenon.

While discussing silence as a communicative unit we will follow J. Searle's approach, according to which "the production of the sentence token under certain conditions is the illocutionary act, and the illocutionary act is the minimal unit of linguistic communication" [Searle 1996: 130].

In scholarly publications, "silence" is often seen as absence of speech [see Picard 1952: 21–30]. In this article, however, we are interested in silence as absence of an expected verbal message, or as a certain presentation of speech, through which a message is delivered without being explicitly materialized. Similar issues, such as producing and understanding implicit meanings of texts or utterances, were actually initiated in pragmatics [see Безуглая 2015: 11].

2. On the Definition of Silence

According to our approach, speech and silence are dialectically interwoven. What we mean is not that they naturally just succeed one another in communicative acts, but that sometimes silence frames the speech, or speech, at times, outlines the silence. It is like covering a piece of canvas with paint and leaving some parts of it clean by means of which we want to shape the desired picture. The reason of resorting to such an allegoric illustration in a scholarly text is to show that a necessary condition for observing silence as a communicative element is the presence of its illocutionary force.

Not being able to speak because of great excitement can be just an indicator of a kind of quality, but still may not become a communicative sign if there is no communicative intention: in that case it just shows someone's emotional state (for example: being shocked or amazed at something). The silence, which is not intentional, can be considered interpretative, but hardly communicative. For example, an apple falling from a tree suggests that there is a gravitational force, but the act itself is not communicative. However, even the very falling of an apple may become a communicative act, if the following situation is considered: let's imagine that one of the interlocutors diligently insists that no gravitational force exists in the world, the other, in response, takes an apple off the table and drops it to the floor trying to prove in practice that the person was wrong. In this case, the falling of the apple transforms into a message, and, most importantly, this act is evidently intentional.

It is also important to find out whether silence is a linguistic or non-linguistic unit. Those who favour the linguistic approach may cite the idea of "zero element" (like "zero morpheme"), i.e., as the latter can be accepted as a grammatical unit so can silence claim such status.

In favour of those who consider silence to be a non-linguistic phenomenon may speak the fact that in sign systems operating in real life instances of marked silence can be found. For example, according to road traffic rules in Armenia, some traffic signs, so to speak, lose their validity when an intersection is changed. That is, if the same traffic sign is not installed again after an intersection, that sign is considered to have been repealed [Traffic Rules]. Of course, one can claim that in this case the intersection "works" as a certain sign itself. However, it should be noted that actually the intersection is not a traffic sign, and even if temporarily it may be accepted as such in some situations, it is understood, then, that this feature is attributed to it due to the silence, so the latter can be said, takes the role of predication in the "syntactic" system of traffic.

Accepting the idea that silence can be displayed in the non-linguistic world, too, anyhow, we are going to consider it within the domain of communicative linguistics, though the example above is not in principle contrary to our approach: that is silence should be observed not in opposition to words, rather it should be viewed in opposition to a message, but still not as the absence of the latter, but as *a different way of saying it*.

If that silence is communicative, transmitting information between interlocutors, it is also necessary to determine whether this is the case when one of the communicators, not knowing the answer or the exact answer to the question, at least for a few seconds keeps silent. In such a case, the person, who keeps silent, usually does not have any intention to pass a particular piece of information to anyone. The addressee, by the way, may still interpret that silence. This fact suggests

that a mere appearance of silence in communication is not enough for it to be communicative, as it turned out, even in this case, silence will be interpreted as any other behaviour (e.g. facial nerve spasm), but not as an intentional communicative act.

The communicative character of silence implies that the person who carries out that act has a communicative intention: therefore it is a necessary condition that he or she should realize what they want to say by that act.

The next question we want to ask concerning our definition of silence is the following: if we want to consider silence as a communicative act is it necessary for the communicants to understand an actual representation of silence as a communicative act? Let's have a look at an example: US President Barack Obama avoided the term "genocide" in one of his speeches concerning the mass killings and deportations of Armenians in Ottoman Turkey that many historians and governments of the world recognize as genocide. Instead, the US President used an Armenian phrase "Meds Yeghern" [Obama 2010] which means "appalling massacre". As with the analysis of speech in many cases, we are dealing here with a few layers, too. On the surface layer, of course, people, who are more or less familiar with the problem, may perceive the US President's move as elusive [Danielyan 2016]. Whereas people looking at the matter from a different angle may interpret the President's avoidance in the following way: "That word's usage is not beneficial for the US". So we can conclude from the above mentioned example that silence may be communicative in one layer of communication, and non-communicative in another.

As we have seen, on the surface layer Obama's move is perceived as an evasive behaviour and therefore silence in this case is not considered a communicative act. However, on other levels of analysis, it may be perceived as a clear political message.

Of course, some may disagree by saying that Obama's real message still remains uncertain. That is, what did Obama actually wanted to say by using that phrase? Moreover, some may assume that Obama said what he had wanted to say, and there was no any implicit message in the sentence under discussion.

From the rigorous scientific perspective we probably cannot deny the view above, but it would be illogical to conclude that a politician of this calibre working with his entire team could not have foreseen the possibility of at least several distinct interpretations of the relevant audiences. Therefore, when he refrained from uttering "genocide", he was likely to realize that that act, anyhow, definitely had some communicative feature. Thus, we remain committed to our approach, according to which a necessary condition for an act of silence to be considered a communicative element is that it should be viewed as such by people involved in a communicative process. Of course, the same act can be interpreted in different ways, but human speech is also not free from these kinds of uncertainty.

One more relevant question to be asked is the following: is it possible to rely solely on an analysis of the act relating to each separate case, without taking into consideration the interlocutors of the actual communication, as well as social, cultural, political and other circumstances? At first glance, such an analysis may sound impossible, but we will try to find an example of this kind. Let's consider two interlocutors' remarks.

A: How are you doing?

B: Not so good. Well, if you were able to help with money...

A: Am I a wallet for you?

B: ... [silence].

Even in this short dialogue we can see two instances of silence:

I) B's incomplete sentence: perhaps its missing part is not uttered because it is too evident.

II) B's last absolute silence.

Thus, as we consider the illocutionary act as the minimal communicative unit, then we can say that in the above mentioned example each of the interlocutors actually exchanged one implicit illocutionary act.

As we have seen, it is possible to find an example in which an expression of an act of silence can be analyzed without resorting to factual background information, including the information directly connected with the participants involved in the conversation. But the same result cannot be expected by replacing the word “genocide” by another phrase, because the intention of the substitution will remain vague. In other words, the implicit illocutionary act will not be understood. Moreover, if those historic and current geopolitical events, which are usually observed in the background of Obama’s speech, are ignored, it will not be possible to know what term is expected from the US president. Therefore, the act of silence will be observed in a broader context, because the communicative nature of it is the focus of this article. Therefore in some cases it is required to take into account a number of non-linguistic factors directly linked with the communicative act.

3. Components of a Communicative Act

To reach this goal it is necessary to specify the basic components of a communicative act. They are briefly presented below, according to the study presented in the book edited by Professor V.A. Vasilik [Василик 2006: 139–150].

1. The source of the message / information (that is to say, the addresser) can be individuals, groups of individuals, institutions (state institutions, political parties, etc.). It is necessary to distinguish between the source or the addresser of the message and its mere transmitter: for example a TV station, which was paid by a political party to show its campaign, in this case, takes the role of a mere transmitter of the information.

2. Other important features of a communicative process are coding and decoding of information/message, which are conducted by addresser and addressee respectively. For successful implementation of both of these processes it is necessary to ensure that the used symbols and signs are understandable to both sides. The decoding of the message by a recipient can reveal serious problems. For instance, the sender may not be able to code the message in such a way that the receiver is able to decode the exact message of the sender, that is, the former will not understand the latter’s intention. This may be due to various factors and circumstances, but the important thing is that during a manipulative message the recipient may decode the information in such a way that the implicit intention of the addresser is revealed. However, it cannot be claimed in this case that the communication has failed. More accurate would be to say that due to the decoding abilities of the recipient the sender failed to manipulate the addressee.

3. Another important component is the information/message, which is, as a rule, either a sentence, or a text. In non-verbal communication images, physical objects, etc. can operate as a message. According to the same source, they can be understood as a means of communication, as coding methods of communication/speech, including words, sound signals, gestures, etc. [see Василик 2006: 145].

4. Another important component of a communicative process is, so called, the “pipe” through which the sender’s message moves to the recipient. “Pipes” can be natural (like human senses) and artificial (like a telephone line, a radio band, etc.).

5. Next component is the addressee: it can either be an individual or a group of people, that is, an audience. The recipient decodes the received information, and his or her ability to do that directly influences on the effectiveness of communication. Specialists in communication theory study the degree of impacts on the recipient’s prejudices, habits, stereotypes and other similar features. The degree of these impacts determines effectiveness of the communication process. As a result of the influence the addressee’s beliefs and/or behaviour may remain, in general, unchanged, but they also can be partly or completely changed. Such effects are greater on those who are less aware of the respective field. Therefore, especially in mass communication, by controlling the flow of information manipulators are able to configure the consciousness of audiences in a way the formers want.

6. An important component of effective communication is also considered feedback, which is usually the most visible during direct interpersonal communication. Meanwhile, during political elections, when a politician urges his or her audience to vote for them on television, no immediate feedback is seen. However, later, possibly even months later, it becomes clear how effective the communication was.

4. General Tokens of the Act of Silence by Addresser and Addressee

Now let's try to single out the main tokens of the act of silence, according to the participants of communication. First of all, we will consider the phenomenon under discussion in relationship with the sender. It should be mentioned that the addresser can both keep silent as well as he or she can silence (make someone keep silent) the other participant or participants of the communication process. Moreover, they can do it, by using verbal (reproach, command, etc.), as well as non-verbal means, including psychological and physical violence. The latter has been thoroughly discussed in a separate article by us [Ayvazyan 2014: 21–29].

When keeping silence the addresser may pronounce no word, be silent specifically about something by talking about other things, as well as to develop his or her speech in such a way that the interlocutors may understand something which is not explicitly expressed in the speech. After general outlining the main cases of displays of the phenomenon of silence let's speak in details on the points listed.

The addresser may silence the recipient by intimidating. He can make it physically (e.g., beating) and verbally (e.g., threatening). The addresser can also silence the interlocutor by the force of law. For example, the speaker of the National Assembly of Armenia, according to some fixed regulations, is able to “deprive him/her of the right to speak over the microphone during one sitting” [The law of...]. The government could restrict media reports, for the sake of “prevention of the threat to the constitutional order and protection of people's rights and legitimate interests” [The Constitution of...]. Finally, the addresser may simply eliminate the addressee by killing, imprisoning or mutilating so that the person loses the ability to communicate.

We must admit, however, that such cases can deal with communication theory mainly indirectly, because in fact we deal with examples of blocking a communicative process in different ways. In our opinion, within the above mentioned theory more interesting are the addresser's acts of keeping silence, which can be classified as follows:

1. The addresser does not fulfill communication expectations: by this formulation we avoid saying that he does not speak or communicate, because in some cases it is possible that he continues to speak or communicate, but not with those who expect his speech or not about the expected subject. It may happen in the following way:

- a. Physically not taking part in the communication process.
- b. Explicitly refusing to communicate.
- c. Talking without conveying the expected message or information.

In this regard it is possible to single out some particular cases:

- While communicating, the speaker explicitly refuses to pass the anticipated message/information to the audience.

- Avoiding conveying the expected information, providing other information, instead.

2. The addresser says something, hinting at another thing. In this case the addresser develops his or her speech in such a way that the recipient understands the message without being explicitly given. To reach the communicative goal the addresser may use various means, including all the relevant features of argumentation, particularly implicatures [Brutyan 2002: 12–23].

3. The message is transferred through non-linguistic and suprasegmental means. In relation to these, two situations should be viewed:

3.1. First, the message can be transmitted without the addresser's awareness. For example, an unconsciously expressed facial expression may reveal the speaker's negative attitude towards the

topic of the speech. Although these phenomena are widely discussed in professional literature, in the present work we will not speak on them in detail, because, as we said, we are interested in communication, mainly as a volitional act.

3.2. Secondly, the addresser deliberately resorts to non-linguistic and/or suprasegmental means for delivering the message to the addressee. As we do not oppose silence to the voice, but to the message, so we are especially interested in cases where the person transmits the message to the addressee through the above mentioned means as a hint. Otherwise, if a non-linguistic or suprasegmental means contains an explicit message, it is beyond our focus of study. Such is the case, for example, with a traffic sign, which is actually quite clear to drivers and/or pedestrians. These signs and their regulatory provisions simply serve as a communication language of some sort. Similarly, another, perhaps more striking example is the sign language used by speech impaired people, which we again do not view as an example of an act of silence, because in this case opposition is not against the content, but simply against a natural language.

4. Explicitly keeping silence as a conventional cultural act. For example, observing a moment of silence to mourn for the victims is a certain socio-cultural sign, which is usually perceived by the public. Of course, at first glance, it seems to contradict our approach, that is to view silence in contrast with message, however, if we compare it with the above cases, we can see that in this case, in contrast with speech, silence is chosen as a more effective means of transmitting a message in a particular situation. While in the above examples (traffic signs, sign language) natural language speech transmission is virtually impossible. (Of course, it's impossible not in the sense that the message expressed by them is not possible to transmit through a natural language, but in this situation the message sender is not faced with a choice, that is, to use natural language or another sign system.) So we can conclude that within the context of our discussion we can come across non-manipulative instances of some usage of silence. Incidentally, such socio-cultural practices of conventional silence might cast doubt on the principle that "a typical feature of silence is in the absence of locutionary act" [Меликян 2000], as in this case, silence as a locutionary act is almost equal to itself, that is to "I'm silent", which, in turn, operates as an illocutionary act which can mean, for example: "I honour the memory of the victims". Of course, we understand that the term "locutionary" originally was used by J. Austin to describe the act of speaking itself [Austin 1962: 94], but if we try to slightly expand its field of meaning within the context of the theory of communication, we can say that the locutionary act refers to any explicit means of transmitting of a message, including silence, because it is difficult to express the proposition "I'm silent" more felicitously than just being silent.

5. Silence as a performative act is similar to the above-mentioned opinion, but in this case, the addresser does not keep silence to "say" something, but does it, because first of all he wants to say that he refuses to talk, that is in this case silence realizes both locutionary and illocutionary acts. Again, drawing parallels with J. Austin's definition, according to which, "issuing of the utterance is the performing of an action" [Austin 1962: 6], we would like to single out such examples of silence in cases of which the act is identical to its content, to the message it carries. Such examples can be sewing their own mouths as a sign of protest [Khachatryan 2014].

Now let's talk about, so to say, the other pole of communication – the addressee:

1. Cases when the recipient listens silently. These are the situations in which recipients, following the relevant socio-cultural norm, just silently listen to the interlocutor/addresser. Of course, these acts can be interpreted as following of the conventional norms of communication. However, it is possible to interpret almost anything around us in the world. Hence, we are not going to consider such examples as marked elements of communication.

2. The recipient does not respond to the question or a remark. Naturally, in this situation, some may argue that the addressee transforms into the addresser. But the problem is just that: the recipient does not fulfil the expected role changing and in certain circumstances this behaviour in terms of communication may be highly marked and in different contexts may actualize different meanings.

3. The recipient refuses to respond to the addresser's words/comments. This is a volitional act, as the recipient explicitly says or implies with gestures (such as shaking his or her head), that he or she is not going to respond to the comments/questions. This also can be attributed to performative silence. In these cases, too, the addressee refuses to transfer into the addresser. Such an explicit move would automatically convert his status, even though for a short time. That is, in principle, only the addresser can explicitly refuse to communicate. But we included this point in the classification of the displays of the recipient's silence, because the conversion is of short-term, carries simply transit nature. The recipient becomes an addresser for a moment only to say that he or she will remain in the addressee's role or refuses to communicate. The latter can be done through gestures, for example, the addressee may demonstratively close his or her ears.

4. Not participating in the act of communication. This can be displayed in two ways.

a. As a non-volitional act accounted for various reasons. For example, in case of failure of telephone connection the addresser may still go on speaking for a while without realizing that he or she was not being listened to. In terms of communicativeness, naturally, this act of silence is non-marked.

b. The recipient simply does not appear in the communication situation or demonstratively leave the respective place. For example, numerous cases can be observed on TV, when one of the parties, who is dissatisfied with someone's behaviour, speech or with something else, leaves the studio. Naturally, we do not discuss the cases when one of the parties leaves the studio because of a reason which has no relation to the discussion: for example, sudden health deterioration.

Note that the addressee can silence the addresser as well. This implies a more active participation by him or her, in which case, the recipient may be perceived as an addresser. However, it is possible to single out cases when the addresser's and the addressee's roles have been distributed in accordance with the format of the event, and therefore the addressee's act of silencing the addresser does not change his or her status. For example, the audience applause or stamp their feet as a sign of protest trying to silence the speaker.

5. Conclusion

We've tried to single out general manifestations of acts of silence by the addresser and the addressee in a communication process. The phenomenon has been viewed as absence of an expected verbal message. It has been found out that even in an act of communication some instances of silence may be non-marked. Thus, we have differentiated communicative acts of silence from non-communicative ones, as well as instances of keeping silence from those of silencing others. We have noticed that in general the act of silence can be carried out only by the addresser, except in some cases when, for example, the roles of the addresser and the addressee are distributed by the format of the event.

The approach I offered above opens up perspectives of being used as a kind of tool of analysis of tactics of maneuver and manipulation in political discourse. Further investigation is needed to explore the role of silence in international negotiations. Such a study may also examine the influence of communicative acts of silence through the globalization of massmedia.

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