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Solyanyk V.I.

G. S. Skovoroda Kharkiv National Pedagogical University

VERBAL SILENCE IN THE PROCESS OF COMMUNICATION

A linguistically significant category of silence, which by now has only been analyzed as an alternative to word, i.e. non-verbally, is considered here as a verbal component of communication. It represents the object of the present investigation.

The cores of linguistic action, in particular its content domain, have already been dealt upon in present day linguistics. Though an apparently marginal area of linguistic action, namely that of silence, which is intended to be surveyed here, has not been studied completely. In the American Heritage Dictionary the phenomenon of silence has the following definition: Silence n. 1. The condition or quality of being or keeping silent. 2. The absence of sound; stillness. 3. A period of time without speech or a noise. 4. Refusal or failure to speak out; secrecy [1:1139].

One can legitimately wonder whether silence is a linguistically significant category. Let us make a comparison. Though for a geologist the complete set of holes in the surface of the Earth does not form a neutral category, it consists of a number of subsets that do. Similarly, though all instances of linguistic silence, taken together, do not constitute a natural linguistic category, it is linguistically significant to get an overview of the complete set because it consists of a number of subsets the “neutral category” status of which would be hard to deny.

Yet an aspect of linguistic silence has been ignored by most theoreticians for a long time. Some of the exceptions are Mihaila's attempt to describe silence in speech-act terms; Basse's anthropological account of motives for silence in speech. The importance of silence is also mentioned by Stross. Silence about something is the implicit topic of Ochs-Kleenan investigation of the way in which the inhabitants of a small Madagascar village deviated the Gricean maxim 'Be informative'. The insights emerging from the contrastive analysis of English and Dutch verbals used to describe linguistic silence were compared with each other by Jef Verschueren. Silence that

occurs in cases of speech communication can be subdivided into communicatively meaningful and non-meaningful.

But in all the cases mentioned above silence is taken as an alternative to word.

The novelty of the present research is the attempt to analyze silence as a verbal, syntactically complex, component of communication.

It's a well-known fact that the process of communication represents reciprocal alternation of verbal and non-verbal acts. Non-verbal components are an integral part of human communication, because the correct interpretation of speech activity with non-verbal components is impossible without taking them into account. They can not only supplement verbal acts, but also fulfill the main function of the communicant's intention realization. Elements that comprise non-verbal components vary. Besides silence as it is, they can be represented with the interlocutor's actions, gestures, facial expressions, laughter, weeping etc. By now silence has been attributed to the group of non-verbal components only. And verballity of silence is under consideration here.

The difference of verbal silence from its non-verbal form is the fact of the speaker not being silent at all: these are the words he pronounces that are 'silent' as far as their meaning concerned!

Just like the non-verbal type of silence the verbal one can be classified into the verbal silence properly and the verbal ellipsis.

The cases of the verbal silence as such can be as follows,

so-called 'small talks': these are idle talks used for the purpose of politeness and communication as it is, e.g. talks about the weather as appreciation of the communicative tradition, for instance,

The car was moving more quickly now, along the old Brampton Road in the direction of Ducane's house in Earls Court, while these gloomy thoughts had been occupying Ducane's mind, she kept holding silence. "The day is really good", I murmured just to say something [3 : 28].

The sentence 'The day is really good' is meaningfully silent in this context; it is the 'small talk', pronounced for the purpose of proper communication.

As soon as we left the doctor's office I rushed home and called Sheila Bond who had two small babies. "Do you still have Brad's playpen? I'll need it." There

was a slight silence. Then she said, "Congratulations". I was too upset to make small talks. "Do you have the pen ?" [3: 198].

In the example illustrated above one deals with the absence of this sort of verbal silence.

b) speech patterns and training sayings, used in speech for the purpose of pronunciation improving; pronouncing them regularly many times one does not pay attention to their first meaning, which gets silent as a result, e.g. to practise sounds [I] and [I:] one can use the following saying ,*'He's on pins and needles, pins're big, needles're as pig's'*, without thinking of its direct context.

c) prayers : pronouncing the words of the same prayer religious people address God and Saints with their own entreaty, thus the direct meaning of the prayer context gets 'silent', for instance,

"Ave Maria, Gracia bene, Benedictum...", she whispered, John's face appearing before her sight again and again [2: 121].

But in the case of addressing God with one's own words, but with the words of prayers, this sort of verbal silence is not represented, for instance,

Conscious thought was overmastered by a deep, elemental, wailing, childish cry, "I want my Mother back, please, God, I want my Mother back!" [2: 171].

So, silence that occurs in cases of speech communication can be estimated as a communicatively meaningful verbal act.

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