

## Speech is Silver but Silence is Gold (Once Again to the Issue of What Russian Silence Means)

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**Abstract:** The study raises the issue about the place of silence in the conceptual sphere of Russians. Russian silence is considered in the context of ethnic speech prohibitions representing an un verbalized variety of communication standards. Such prohibitions without an alternative in the form of statements, corresponding to the rate of an ethnic communication norm are implemented in the form of communicative and meaningful silence. The study presented the methodology of ethnic speech prohibition identification. As the analysis showed, the revealing of ethnic speech prohibitions allows the corrective statements signaling on the violation of this communication standard. The structure of such correctional statements includes lexical and idiomatic components with the prohibition semantics. At that the accounting of these historical-etymological research, the facts of Russian people spiritual and material culture makes it possible to conclude that the considered means do not allow any other interpretation. In addition, the used research approach to the study of ethnic speech prohibitions supports the idea that such prohibitions are associated with the magic of a word and, therefore, to some extent influence the perception of the world and communicative behavior of an ethnic group.

**Key words:** Silence, ethnic speech prohibitions, communicative behavior, specialized language tools, lexical units, paremiological units

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### INTRODUCTION

It is known that the communication activity is based on an universal (but not ethnic, geographical, political, etc.) foundation which in its essence is a set of universal principles of co-existent public existence of men. Meanwhile, the researchers noted that “a man needs a reliable system of orientation which would give him an opportunity to get lost in the wilds of social life, identifying himself with some recognized standards and personalized patterns” (Gilazetdinova *et al.*, 2014). That is why an individual, on the one hand, is absorbed by the cultural determinants, norms, signs of culture, on the other, he is their carrier. In its turn, a man leaning on the chosen (consciously or not) cultural tradition, performs the search for the reason of his being, his own roots, perceiving himself as a link in the transmission of tradition. At the same time, culture understood as a system of consciousness associated with a particular ethnic value system, allows you to reconstruct ethnic consciousness, recorded in the semantics of language units (Gilazetdinova *et al.*, 2014).

The idea that “a language (as well as the picture of the world and the world images reflected in it) is the part of the people’s culture speaking it” is stated by other scientists. Defining the image of homo sapiens in Russian

language picture of the world, Nikitina (2011) says: “language as the result of a long historical development develops some cultural codes (key words that became commonly used, frequent, stable expressions-idioms, proverbs), allowing a certain language speaker to cognize the reality in a certain way. In this sense, the language affects the the world vision, the picture of the world and the images of the world in people’s minds”. Thus, interpreting the images of a number of well-known Russian proverbs, correlating their conceptual content with the mythopoetic model of the world, Bochina and Adamka (2015) notice: one form of fixation perceived in the socialization process of attitudes (customs, norms, traditions, social experience, collective representation about the world, the foundations of common sense, stereotypes) is presented by paremiological units. They have emotional valuation content and make an impact “not only on logic but on the feelings of a man who joins the collective knowledge through a precedent text”.

This study discusses Russian silence in the context of ethnic speech prohibitions which being a type of prohibition communicative rules are non-verbal components of verbal communication. It should be noted that the review of the literature showed that the issue of communication prohibitions is one of the most difficult, undeveloped and theoretically controversial

issues of modern linguistics. Meanwhile “it seems possible to consider ethnic speech prohibitions as the system of communication rules” because “they reflect the characteristics of Russian people nonverbal communicative behavior and their compliance is also important in everyday life than the observance of the norms and rules of verbal communication” (Sadykova, 2014).

The principal difference between communication prohibitions from other varieties of communication rules is that they are realized in the form of communicative and meaningful silence, i.e., they have no verbal alternative in the form of verbal statements corresponding to communication standard of an ethnic group. At the same time, the communicative nature of such prohibitions may be disclosed, the system of rules may be described by subjecting the corrective statements to the analysis that in terms of content are the corrective speeches of an interlocutor in case of speech prohibition rules (superior-subordinate: Don't you dare! Do not dare perjure yourself! (Kovsky, 1979)). Thus, such statements and adjustments became a semantic meta-language of an implicit system description concerning ethnic speech prohibitions.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The object of investigation is presented by corrective statements with the semantics of prohibition on speech production, including in its composition such components as to jinx, to spit, to knock on wood and a number of others, the proverbs and sayings like “a plague on you for saying such things”, speak not of the Devil. Such means serve as an argument justifying a communicative adjustment by the reference to the effects, real or imaginary ones and the violations of ethnic speech prohibitions. The linguistic communicative analysis of these components became the basis of linguistic construction system concerning ethnic and speech prohibitions for us specific to the Russian linguistic culture.

The selection of factual material is all over the body of dramatic works of the second half of the XXth century. Let's note that the studied voice phenomenon (ethnic speech prohibitions) are not referred to the frequency ones, so the volume of the analyzed literature is much broader than the scope of sources.

The research methods were determined by the specificity of an observed speech phenomenon: the method of metafield analysis was used as the primary

method of search and material collection. In order to analyze an actual material, the descriptive method and component analysis were used. The method of theoretical extrapolation was widely used.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

So ethnic speech prohibitions present an un verbalized variety of a communication standard (Sadykova, 2005). They may be subjected to proper linguistic analysis because they are represented on the level of actual speech acts as the corrective statements that contribute to the socialization of a dialogic interaction between communicants.

Note that corrective statements may contain a variety of language tools which perform the function of indication by one of the interlocutors on the presence of ethnic speech violation from another interlocutor. In the framework of this study, we shall consider the corrective language tools which include certain lexical and paremiological units and which do not allow usually a different interpretation, except for the indication of ethnic speech prohibition violation. These language tools are referred by us to the corrective statements of a clichéd subtype. In Russian-language materials the corrective statements with the meaning of ethnic speech prohibition violation signal by the use of clichéd magic formulas include:

- The corrective statements with the components to jinx, to spit, to knock on wood, etc.
- The corrective statements “a plague on you for saying such things”, speak not of the devil

In the studied Russian-language materials a significant number of cases is presented by genre-themed ethnic speech prohibitions for a prediction or an assumption of certain events in a person's life, so they became an object of the performed analysis. This type of prohibitions is divided into three types in its turn. These types differ in their degree of social rigidity:

- Ethnic speech prohibitions on the prediction or the assumption of death or serious illness
- Ethnic speech prohibitions on the prediction or the assumption of any significant adverse events in a person's life
- Ethnic speech prohibitions on the prediction or the assumption of any significant positive developments in a man's life

One may assume that ethnic speech prohibitions on the prediction or the assumption of certain (both positive and negative) events in a person's life are a kind of a communicative universal phenomenon. These prohibitions are associated not with a collective origin in every man but with his personal and individual origin. The analysis of prohibitions shows that they reflect a man's fear who feel himself as a separate individual in respect of the world, in front of his unpredictable attacks before the mystery of destiny. Tsivyan (1994) indicates that in the model of the world, verbally expressed in Russian texts and not only in folklore ones, not only the fact of the fate immutability is reflected but also the prohibition of arguing with destiny. The expression "there is no escape from a fate" is a response to an attempt to "escape the fate". Obviously, the fact that ethnic speech prohibitions for the prediction or the assumption of death or severe diseases in the Russian linguistic culture are the most stringent within the genre and theme restrictions may be explained by this. So, in this sense, in our opinion, it is interesting to see a response to a woman's replica, who expressed doubts as to their bus station, littered with an avalanche of snow came down from the mountain, that it will be able to dig out: Sizova. They try in vain yes, we were warned about a mousetrap. We will be caught. Raisa (in a fit of anger): "a plague on you for saying such things" (Kuznetsov, 1977).

The "coverage zone" of this prohibition includes any nomination included in the lexical and phraseological field "death". And it should be noted, even when the thing is not about a real prediction but about jokes which anyway, use the lexemes with the specified semantics. So, in our opinion, the response of a son's reaction to his mother's replica is quite legitimate for the Russian-language communication who, being ill, can not lie in a bed by virtue of his restless nature. Burov: "It is better at home than at a hospital, isn't it? grandmother: "It would be even worse at a cemetery!" Burov: "A plague on you for saying such things" (Braginsky and Ryazanov, 1993).

Let's note that Russians perceive this violation as a prohibition, even an indirect prediction of death, particularly in the case when the speaker does not have this intention. And the reaction of the soldier to the nurse utterance may be considered quite a natural one about the shard that she took from his wounds and threw away. Zhenya: "that's okay. You will have a lot of such medallions". Victor: Spit now! (spits being frightened). Zhenya: What did I say? Victor. I said it! You can jinx! (Crim, 1985).

Besides, the violation of ethnic speech prohibitions concerning the prognosis of death is often adjusted by

using such lexeme as to be a gloomy Gus. Dal (1992) describes such superstitions and omens of Russian people related with the mythological association with the lexeme to be a gloomy Gus: Crows and ravens sitting screaming in front of the house, especially in the morning, is for the worse; When a raven croaks it means that somebody will die soon, etc. We can see that this lexeme reflects the traditional view of what is considered taboo in the representation of Russian people. Thus, the semantics of the prohibition contained in a replica reaction of a boatswain, who is close to a commander dying of wounds, to a doctor's predictive utterance. Boatswain: And here is the doctor! (Very sharp, clearly). Do not bother me! You said that he will die. So, there is no reason to be a gloomy Gus! (Barinov and Tsunami, 1971).

By the way, ethnic speech prohibitions on the prediction or the assumption of any adverse events in a person's life within a Russian linguistic culture are less rigid but, nevertheless, they are also subject to the communicative correction. Trofim: "Sit down, you fool! (He walks around the room). Sit down, I tell you! Let's think". Ilya: "I'll stand while it is possible still. And, we will be put into prison, probably, together, Dad. On one bench, if necessary". Trofim. "Ugh! A plague on you for saying such things! (Lukovsky, 1960). In this example, we see the father's reaction on the son's utterance, the assumption that they will probably have to go to jail together for their frauds.

The synonym for such corrective statements as "A plague on you for saying such things" is the expression "speak not of the Devil" (What would it better if we opened and found the coach and his gang? Speak not of the devil (Limonova, 1991)).

As we noted, such a mistrust entered in our everyday life for a long time, takes its origin from superstitions which reflect the belief in the sacramental power of a word. In this sense, the idiom, the saying "a plague on you for saying such things" deserves its special attention. Thus, according to the etymological data, the idiom is a universal speech formula which was intended to deprive speech of those who had the ability of the evil eye or slander as "slander could (for superstitious notions) invite a disaster, deprive property, cause death or an incurable disease" (Mokienko, 1999). These slanders and evil eye were perceived not only literally but were also directly identified with an appropriate action. "Over time, the original meaning of "concealment formulas" changed and turned into the prohibition of saying the things that should not be said, send something bad under a threat" (Mokienko, 1999). Artist: "and you also beware, you are not immune". Trainer: "a plague on you for saying such things!" (Zlotnikov, 1991).

And a very effective and quite “modern” way to get rid instantly from something unclean was a guarding spit, the most natural target of which was the left side (as was “unclean”, sinful, i.e., “wrong” and unjust in every sense) (Mokienko, 1999): Burkov: “and what do you have here? Is Lyoshka not in charge yet?” Varvara: “Spit!” (Levin, 1984).

The base of a cliched statement and a corrective expression became the expression “knock on wood” (joc. omen: it is necessary to knock on something wooden, so as not to jinx) (Ozhegov and Shvedova, 1996): Oborimov: “Um, CEO ?!” Ventsova: “Congratulations, Vyacheslav Hrinanovich!” Oborimov: “Early, early (spits over his left shoulder)”. Ventsova: Yes, Yes, Yes! Knock on wood (Knocks on the table with Oborimov) (Salynsky, 1988).

In his turn, ethnic speech prohibitions on the prediction or the assumption of positive developments in a man's life within Russian-speaking linguistic culture are not among the hard ones but, nevertheless, it is usually adjusted by communicative environment. An example of the things that were said is the husband's response to a wives' utterance-assumption about the upcoming wedding of their daughter. Konovalov: “Let us celebrate the wedding, huh?” Nastasya: “Let's knock on wood” (Uspensky, 1964).

**Summary:** Our research approach to the study of speech prohibitions using specialized the analysis of special language means that perform a corrective function, convinces us that ethnic speech prohibitions is not only a social phenomenon but also a mental one. The prohibition on speech production in certain communicative situations is caused not only by social factors. It can be argued that the belief in the magical power of a word is still deeply and firmly rooted in the man's subconsciousness today.

## CONCLUSION

Thus, it can be argued that the silence, considered as the part of this work in the context of ethnic speechprohibitions, occupies a special place in Russian conceptual sphere. It is communicatively significant and represents a variety of communication standards.

The corrective statements with the semantics of the prohibition on speech production evidence the violation of communication standards through specialized linguistic means (lexical and paremiological units) that do not allow a different interpretation, except for the indication of an ethnic speech prohibition violation.

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