

# SILENCE IN THE STRUCTURE OF AGGRESSIVE SPEECH BEHAVIOR (CASE STUDY OF DAY-TO-DAY COMMUNICATION)

Молчание в структуре агрессивного речевого поведения  
(на материале бытового общения)

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## ABSTRACT

Modern linguistics pays more than ever attention to the study of verbal aggression in various types of discourse. Day-to-day discourse is of special interest: on the one hand, communicants disclose their individual features in it; on the other hand, it most fully reflects the cultural and national specificity of communication. Speech aggression in day-to-day communication has a number of differences. So, both verbalized voiced elements and unvoiced ones - zero communication sign 'silence' - serve as a marker of this type of speech behavior. Silence is polyfunctional. This research studies silence as a speech act, as an elementary unit of speech interaction in everyday life. By means of linguistic observation dialogues were recorded where silence was included in the structure of speech behavior of participants. The analysis of functioning of this zero marker made it possible to identify the specifics of verbal aggression in day-to-day communication.

*Keywords:* Day-to-day interaction, verbal behavior, verbal aggression, silence, intentional and non-intentional silence.

## РЕЗЮМЕ

Современная лингвистика все больше внимания уделяет изучению речевой агрессии в различных типах дискурса. Бытовой дискурс представляет особый интерес: с одной стороны, в нем проявляются индивидуальные особенности коммуникантов, с другой – максимально полно отражается культурно-национальная специфика общения. Речевая агрессия в бытовой коммуникации имеет ряд отличий. Так, маркером данного типа речевого поведения являются как вербализованные вокализованные элементы, так и невокализованные – нулевой коммуникативный знак 'молчание'. Молчание полифункционально.

В данном исследовании изучается молчание как речевой поступок, как элементарная единица речевого взаимодействия в бытовой сфере. Методом лингвистического наблюдения были зафиксированы диалоги, где молчание входит в структуру речевого поведения участников. Анализ функционирования данного нулевого маркера позволил обозначить специфику речевой агрессии в бытовом общении.

*Ключевые слова:* бытовое общение, речевое поведение, речевая агрессия, молчание, молчание интенциональное и неинтенциональное.

In the context of communication research the study of speech behavior of communicators is taking on increasing importance. The term ‘verbal behavior’ having appeared in the sphere of interests of sociology, psychology and pragmalinguistics still has no definite interpretation (Skinner 1957; Chomsky 1959; Wolfson 1988; Normand 2001; Leigland 2007).

A number of researchers deny the awareness and purposefulness of speech behavior (Дридзе 1980; Леонтьев 1999, etc.). Meanwhile, R. Jakobson argued that ‘any verbal behavior is goal-directed’ (Jakobson 1960). This approach is also characteristic of modern sociolinguistics where verbal behavior is understood as ‘the process of selecting the optimal variant for constructing a socially correct statement’ (Швейцер 1990: 481). Without denying the activity nature of speech behavior T.G. Vinokur also emphasizes its socio-communicative aspect. She considers speech behavior as a set of speech acts. From an interlingual perspective any speech behavior is determined by the patterns of language use in speech, and from the extra-linguistic perspective – it is determined by socio-psychological conditions for implementation of linguistic activity (Винокур 1993: 12).

In pragmalinguistics verbal behavior is ‘understood as a set of conventional (carried out in accordance with the rules) and nonconventional (carried out at will) speech acts performed by an individual or a group of individuals’ (Клюев 2002: 15). Thus, awareness and purposefulness are considered as key characteristics of speech behavior.

In accordance with this understanding we consider speech behavior as a goal-oriented, motivated, predominantly controlled (through the conscious choice of speech strategies and tactics as well as the selection of speech and linguistic means) process.

Therefore, it is speech behavior that determines the correctness/incorrectness of communicative interaction. Entering into a communicative relationship each of the communicants has his own vision of the communication process and his role in it, has his own value priorities and his own ideas about this or that subject of speech. Choosing the type of speech behavior within a specific dialogic communication the communicant seeks to create his communicative space as a zone of real and potential contacts of each of the communication parties (Воронцова 2009).

When choosing the type of speech behavior the addresser (the speaker) targets one of these three goal sets:

- 1) to transform the communicative space of the addressee in accordance with his own worldview, beliefs, valuations, etc.;
- 2) to explicate his own views and valuations without seeking to significantly change the views and valuations of the addressee;
- 3) to create a common but brand new communicative space for both the addressee and himself.

In accordance with the above-mentioned paradigms the main types of speech behavior are designated as *aggression, tolerance and politeness* (Воронцова 2012).

Aggression as a type of speech behavior is most commonly the subject of sociopsychological studies (Bandura 1983; Baron 1994; Beatty 1997; Buss 1961; Infante 1995, 1996). Meanwhile, the study of verbal aggression from the perspective of pragmalinguistics, in our opinion, is an important factor in optimizing speech communication.

From the point of view of the communicative-discursive approach speech aggression is a destructive speech behavior whose parameters are determined by the conditions and conventions of a particular discourse. Regardless of the communication type the addresser's attitude to communicative domination underlies aggressive communication. This type of speech behavior is characterized by a double intention: 1) an expression of a negative attitude towards someone (conditionally it can be designated as an affective vector of verbal aggression); 2) an attitude towards a subject-object nature of communication with an addressee (a pragmatic vector).

At the level of direct speech interaction speech aggression manifests itself in the desire to seize the communicative initiative and to appropriate a priority 'right for speech'. Thus, the addressee becomes an object of speech aggression. The addresser with help of various semantic and structurally-semantic methods intrudes into the addressee's speech space; in other words, he seeks to impose his own scenario of communication not taking into account the interlocutor's interests (Воронцова 2006). This is a goal-directed motivated speech behavior where the speaker controls the choice of speech strategies and tactics, as well as the selection of speech and language means. However, not so much individual linguistic and speech units (negative emotionally loaded vocabulary, rude colloquialisms, slang words, etc.), but the purpose and specifics of their use become relevant.

The manifestation of speech aggression in day-to-day communication is interesting as, on the one hand, this kind of communication is characterized by spontaneity, unpreparedness, and it expresses individual qualities of each member of this or that linguistic culture, on the other hand, day-to-day communication is culture-specific. Unlike social communication regulated by various institutional conventions with a predominantly supracultural character, day-to-day communication most fully reflects a nation's specific communicative behavior.

By means of linguistic observation dialogues were recorded indicative of aggressive speech behavior of the communication participant/-s that established a role of silence in this interaction structure<sup>1</sup>.

The dialogues' analysis considered the following indicators to be relevant:

- characteristics of the communication participants: sex, age, communicative role in terms of a service delivery/consumption (a seller – a buyer, a buyer - a buyer, a

1. The observation has been carried out at socially significant sites of the city of Izhevsk (banks, railway stations, public transport, post offices, hospitals, shops, etc.) for 1 year. The object of observation is day-to-day (outside the family) sphere of communication. The participants are residents of Izhevsk.

- seller – a seller, an employee - a visitor, a visitor – a visitor, an employee - an employee);
- characteristics of the subject of aggression: sex, age, possession of power (force), degree of social protection, communicative role in terms of a service delivery/consumption (a seller – a buyer, a buyer - a buyer, a seller – a seller, an employee - a visitor, a visitor – a visitor, an employee - an employee);
- characteristics of the object of aggression: sex, age, possession of power (force), degree of social protection, communicative role in terms of a service delivery/consumption (a seller – a buyer, a buyer - a buyer, a seller – a seller, an employee - a visitor, a visitor – a visitor, an employee - an employee);
- an attempt to involve third parties, speech methods;
- verbal methods of aggression, markers of aggression;
- ways to avoid aggression.

The dialogues' analysis identified that aggressive speech behavior is quite frequent (62.7%). The subject of aggression can be described as: an elderly woman (58%), a civil officer (23%), a woman with a child (9%), a man in a state of alcoholic intoxication (2%), sellers of small shops (2%), others (6%). The object of aggression is most often presented by: men can be younger people (32%), younger people can visit public institutions (47%), men (11%), others (10%).

The key goal of the addresser is to create a communicative imbalance aimed to obtain a priority right for speech (communicative preferences) or to ensure himself psychological or physical comfort at the expense of the addressee (extra-communicative preferences).

Let us mark here that in day-to-day communication speech aggression is most often manifested in a *verbalized form* and implemented through verbalized tactics.

(1) A dialogue in the supermarket 'Vkusny Dom' [delicious house], the checkout lane. *Participants*: customers standing in a three-man line. A middle-aged woman standing the first in the line has put a basket of groceries on the belt (A). An elderly woman (B). A middle-aged man (C). A check-out clerk laying out the products from the basket of the first woman (D) is evaluating and putting the products into the plastic bag.

(B): *Ох, расставила тут корзину свою / поставить некуда / сил нет уже держать //*

(A): [...]

(B): *Молчит / как будто не слышит //*

(A): [...]

(B): *Нет, вы посмотрите на нее / никакого уважения! //*

(A): [...]

(B): *Могла бы сама продукты свои в пакет складывать / ведь видит, люди ждут // Барыня! // Вот мы раньше [...] // Да я на заводе столько лет! // И детей сама //* (to the check-out clerk) *Что за порядки тут у вас? //*

(D): [...] (proceeds putting products in the bag)

(B): (turning to the man) *Безобразие! //*

(C): [...]

(A): (pays, picks up the bag and leaves)

(D): (politely, indifferently) *Здравствуйте! // Пакет брать будете? //*

The 'age factor' turns out to be a sufficiently relevant one when choosing strategies of aggressive speech behavior:

(2) (At the shop) Mum – to her crying child: *Не ори уже! // Надоел! //*

(3) (In the bus) A teacher – to a pupil: *Ты – идиот? //*

(4) (In the library, during a tour for schoolchildren): *Петросян! // Рот закрыл! //*

(5) (In the trolley-bus) An elderly woman to a teenager with a rucksack: *Весь проход закрыл! // Рюкзак-то снимать надо! // Молодежь! // Вообще о людях не думает! //*

Behavior of the subject of aggression is characterized by violation of communication conventionality, by an unordered choice of linguistic means (colloquial, rude colloquial, abusive vocabulary), by use of evaluative vocabulary, direct means of influence such as imperatives (*не ори, не ной, иди нормально, замолчи*), verbs in the Past tense and the infinitive in the role of imperatives (*рот закрыл, замолчал уже, быстро пошел; встать, тут не стоять*), verbs in the Present tense, more often negative ones in the 3<sup>rd</sup> person (*не думает*), in the Past tense (*расселся тут, расставила* (about bags)), as well as comparative constructions (*С Сашкой никаких проблем не было, а этот; Другая бы давно прощения попросила*), rhetorical questions (*И что здесь смешного?*). Personal pronouns play a special role foregrounding this or that emotion of the addresser, more often a threat through reaching out to authority:

(6) *Ты со МНОИ́ таким тоном разговариваешь? //*

The marker of aggressive communication is also an appeal to a person by gender: *мужчина, женщина, девушка*. In modern Russian speech etiquette the culture of appealing to a person is at the stage of formation. The function of appeal is often performed by constructions that were initially intended to draw the interlocutor's attention to the speaker (*Извините, ...; Прошу прощения, ...*), greeting words (*Здравствуйте!, Добрый день!*). An appeal to a person by gender enhances the influence of the subject of aggression, especially when it is used together with other means, for example, with an interrogative constriction:

(7) (In the out-patient department) An office-cleaner - to a patient: *Женщина! // Женщина! // Не слышите, что ли? // Я Вам говорю! // Не видите, чисто! / Куда без бахил? //*

(8) (In the tram) A check-taker - to a man looking out the window: *Мужчина! // Вам-Вам! // Платить будем? //*

In the example (8) the functioning of the verb in the 1<sup>st</sup> person of the plural form emphasizes the hierarchy of communication and the objectivity of the addressee. This form, the use of which is more appropriate for the people in power, indicates the dependence of the addressee on the addresser (for example: an investigator - to a prisoner: *Ну что, говорить будем?*; a traffic police officer – to a driver: *Нарушаем?*; a doctor - to a patient: *На что жалуетесь?*).

An appeal to a person for some other attributes is also frequent. It is aimed at belittling the importance of the interlocutor and causing a feeling of inferiority to him.

(9) (In the hospital, at the registration office) A medical officer - to a patient: *Больной! // Сюда не входите! // Ждите у стойки //*

The functioning of the generalized nomination as an appeal to a person should be pointed out: *молодежь, женщины, больные, люди*.

(10) (In the tram) An elderly woman - to teenagers: *Ну что, молодежь, уступите место? //*

(11) (In the hospital) A medical officer - to a patient: *Женщины! //* Тут не стоять! // Ходить мешаете! //

In addition to the "age factor" that influences the choice of the addresser in favor of strategies of aggressive speech behavior, the "gender factor" also becomes relevant by enabling the weaker sex (a woman) to direct her aggression to the stronger sex (a man).

(12) (In the transport) *Мужчина! // Помогите! // Не видите / что ли / женщина коляску не может поднять //* (appealing to a neighbor) *Мужики пошли! //*

Silence is one of the markers that characterize aggressive speech behavior in day-to-day communication.

However, silence as a speech act in the structure of a communicative act can perform various functions: to mark consent or indecision, to demonstrate politeness or unwillingness to speak with a representative of a lower status group, etc. (Jensen 1976).

But silence as a non-verbalized communicative sign most often fulfills the role of an utterance-reaction (response silence) in the structure of an aggressive communicative act. If silence demonstrates 'a refusal to make another statement, i.e. zero deed' (Демьянков 1989: 43), then such a purposed communicative discrepancy can be considered as a manifestation of a communicative initiative (Tannen 1990; Jaworski 1993). This speech behavior 'simulates a strong interlocutor' (Почепцов 2001: 158) and attributes a higher status to him (imaginary or real). Silence can be a sign of a refusal of an uncomfortable topic, an unacceptable style of communication, etc. (Макаров 2003: 218)

The subject of aggression implements various tactics of aggressive behavior by means of silence, such as:

— disregard

(13) A dialogue in the street, in the courtyard of the house. *Participants*: mother (A), a child of 9 (B); Mother without a word is pulling her son home holding him by the hand.

(B) *Мам / ну давай я немного погуляю //*

(A) [...]

(B) *Мам / ну все же гуляют. А ты / как всегда [...] //*

(A) [...]

(B) *Я немного [...] // Мам! //*

(A) (pulling his hand) *Домой / я сказала! // Опять нить начал! // Вот придем домой! //*

— demonstration of offense

(14) A dialogue at the public transport stop. *Participants*: a young couple - a man (A), a woman (B).

(A) *В магазин зайдём? //*

(B) [...]

(A) *Вроде дома хлеб закончился //*

(B) [...]

(A) *Лен / ну хватит уже! // Сколько можно? //*

(B) [...]

(A) *Б...б! // [...]*

— deprivation of the right for speech

(15) A dialogue in the street. *Participants*: an elderly woman with a grandson (A), an elderly woman (B), a boy of 7 (C). The women are talking excitedly with each other.

(C) *Баб / ну пойдём уже! //*

(A) *Подожди / сейчас // (proceeds talking)*

(C) *Я есть хочу! // Баб! //*

(A) *Не перебивай старших / Сейчас! //* (continues the discussion)

(C) (After a few minutes) *Баб! //*

(A) [...] (silence is accompanied by a severe condemning look).

(C) [...]

Silence as a response speech act is often accompanied by paralinguistic means of communication: a gesture, a look, pursed lips, a disapproving shake of the head, etc. These language codes and the location of the addressee within the communicative situation make it possible to interpret silence without fail.

It is critical to distinguish between *intentional silence*, which is a conscious choice of a communicant, and *non-intentional forced silence* of an addressee caused by an addresser's aggressive behavior.

Forced silence is the result of achieving the communicative goal by the subject of aggression. This goal determines the choice of strategies aimed particularly at depriving the addressee of the right to speak (*Чего ты там еще говоришь?; Чего-чего? Что ты сказал?; Рот закрой!; С тобой никто не разговаривает; Заткнись!, etc.*); at eliminating the addressee out of the communication process (*Вас, мужчина, не спрашивают!; Тебя забыли спросить!; А с тобой вообще никто не разговаривает!; Я не с тобой разговариваю!, etc.*). In most cases silence is a forced response to aggression verbalized through direct means of influence: imperatives, interrogative sentences enhancing the effect by the repeated use of a question word, and narrative sentences-constatives. A silence-response can also be a consequence of silence as a zero marker of aggression (see the Dialogues 1, 15).

Forced silence is characterized by the fact that the addresser starting his own communicative scenario deprives his interlocutor of the right to choose communicative actions according to his own strategies. Thus, the addressee acts in favor of the aggressor. The addressee's communicative behavior is a result of the goal achieved by the addresser: he becomes silent, does not interfere, gives place to the interlocutor, leaves his turn, does not bother, etc. In case the addresser achieves the targeted by means of aggressive silence, the addressee's responsive communicative behavior manifests this zero marker:



<i>Zero Aggression Marker</i>	<i>Zero Marker Verbalization</i>	<i>Zero Marker Manifestation</i>
An addresser's silence	1) <i>I won't talk to you as you are guilty.</i> 2) <i>I'm ignoring your request to stay for a walk.</i> 3) <i>You must keep quiet and do not interfere with a response.</i> 4) <i>Stop arguing with me. You cannot argue with me.</i>	an addressee's feeling of guilt subjection, an addressee goes home having bent his head subjection, an addressee keeps silent subjection, an addressee stops standing his ground

The compulsory nature of defensive silence emphasizes non-verbal means of communication: an addressee can get embarrassed, blush, get red spots; he may get tears in his eyes, his hands may start trembling; an addressee can start fussing about and the like. This silence is accompanied by a hyper-negative emotional background: insult, despair, frustration (please see the dialogues). Together with the loss of control over his speech behavior an addressee often loses control over his non-verbal actions:

(16) A dialogue in the public transport. *Participants*: a woman (A) is sitting, a woman (B) is holding on the handrail near a seated passenger, there are heavy bags in her hands. There are a lot of people in the salon. The woman with the bags is being constantly pushed onto the seated woman.

(A) *Осторожно! // Вы уже вообще свои сумки на меня положили! //*

(B) [...] (She is trying to keep the bags away)

(A) *Женщина! // Вы мне все ноги обступали! // Осторожно! //*

(B) [...] (She starts blushing, getting embarrassed and looking around to find an empty seat).

The bus stops dead. The woman under the pressure of a crowd almost falls down on the sitting passenger.

(A) [...] (The woman is frowning, she demonstratively moves away, shakes off her coat, prims up her lips).

(B) [...] (She's getting even more embarrassed, fussily shifts the bags from one hand to the other, maximally moves away from the seated passenger, her hands are trembling, she's looking around in bewilderment).

Let us mark that silence as a conscious choice of the response line of the addresser, so called *intentional silence*, is of special interest. Moreover, the choice is made under influence of different motives.

(17) A dialogue in the public transport. *Participants*: a check-taker (A), an elderly woman (B) is entering the transport, looking around for an empty seat; a young man is sitting and listening to music on headphones (C).

(A) *Молодежь / место уступите! //*

(C) [...] (does not respond, does not hear)

(A) (He's touching him by a shoulder) *Уши-то заткнут вечно! // Место уступим? //*

(C) (He takes off the headphones, listens, looks at the check taker) [...] (again puts on his headphones, listens to music, and keeps sitting in his place)

(B) (He turns to the check taker) *Ничего! // Я скоро выхожу! //*



The communicant C ignores aggression of the Communicant A (he responds on her aggression with aggressive silence). In this case aggression serves to avoid the interlocutor's aggression.

(18) A dialogue in the store. *Participants*: a man pushing a heavily loaded cart (A), a woman with a child walking alongside (B).

(B) *Мужчина! // Вы что, не видите, куда едете? // Осторожно! // Ребенок! //*

(A) [...] (He's smiling guiltily, quietly takes a little to the side, carefully passes by).

Intentional response silence stipulates allocation of different types of aggressive interaction:

- Type 1  
aggression - aggression (dialogue 17)
- Type 2  
aggression - politeness (dialogue 18)
- type 3  
aggression - tolerance (dialogue 1)

Out of 270 recorded dialogues, type 1 "aggression - aggression" (2.6%) is the least characteristic of day-to-day communication (communication outside the family); type 3 "aggression - tolerance" (74%) and type 2 "aggression - politeness" (23.4%) are the most frequent.

Forced response silence in the structure of aggressive speech behavior does not form an interaction as it is not an addressee's own communication strategy aimed at achieving a goal. The addressee acts in accordance with the addresser's plan.

Thus, as a result of observation and analysis it was found that:

1. In the structure of a communicative act aggressive statements can act both as replicas-actions and as replicas-reactions.
2. One of the leading verbalized tactics is emphasizing age inequality. This tactics can be implemented both implicitly and explicitly. In this case an addresser can use such techniques as comparison (*вот мы раньше*), an appeal to experience (*да я на заводе столько лет, я на стройке больше 40 лет отпахал*), to own merits in the past (*Я между прочим ветеран; Мне сам директор завода орден вручал*). This tactics is often accompanied either by a tactics of depersonalizing of an addressee which is presented through either a generalized appeal or an indirect appeal in the third person (on deixis), or a tactics of "deleting" an addressee from the communicative interaction (*Ишь-ты / молодая еще мнение иметь / я в твои годы глаза боялась поднять*). Implicit tactics are most often aimed at stimulating the feeling of guilt in an addressee (*сил уже нет держать*). The tactics of appealing to third parties can also be used in aggressive speech behavior to increase the number of participants in the conflict.
3. Language markers for implementation of aggressive tactics are most often the use of negative evaluative vocabulary (*барыня, безобразие, обнаглели, возмутительно, etc.*) and rhetorical questions and exclamations (*Что за порядки тут у вас?*), etc.

4. Speech aggression can also be implemented with help of a zero marker - silence. Silence of the subject of aggression is intentional. It is a deliberate choice of an addresser in order to realize his communicative goal. The aggressor most often implements tactics of ignoring, demonstrating resentment and denial of the right to speech. Aggressive silence is accompanied by certain paralinguistic means: gestures, glances, pursed lips, disapproving shake of the head, etc.
5. Aggressive speech behavior is more characteristic of weak, socially unprotected communicants: elderly women, clerks, representatives of non-prestigious professions. Speech aggression is mostly directed from an older person to a younger one, from a woman to a man.-
6. Silence is also a forced response to aggression when an addressee corrects his speech behavior in favor of the addresser. Response silence can be intentional as a deliberate choice of avoiding aggressive behavior. It can be included into the structure of various types of aggressive interaction: aggression - aggression, aggression - politeness, aggression - tolerance. The most frequent type is "aggression - tolerance" (74%).
7. Silence as a response to aggression may not be an addressee's own communicative strategy. It means that silence in this case may not fulfill the addressee's communicative goal. This type of silence is designated as non-intentional and forced; it has a protective function. The nature of such silence is emphasized by special non-verbal means and hyper-negative emotional background. An addressee may lose control not only over his speech actions, but over his non-verbal actions as well (fuss, tears, hands trembling, etc.).
8. Both intentional and non-intentional silence in the structure of aggressive day-to-day communication is presented as the most frequent tactic response to aggression (97%) aimed at avoiding the unwanted communication.

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