silence

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Abstract:

Περίληψη

Η λέξη «σιωπή» χρησιμοποιείται σε πολλαπλά πεδία και με διαφορετικούς τρόπους. Ωστόσο, είναι μία ιδιαίτερη έννοια εξαιτίας του εννοιολογικού της ορίου, του περιεχομένου της και της σημασίας της. Η ίδια λέξη μπορεί να σημαίνει μία διαφορετική κατάσταση, όπως: συναίνεση, επιβεβαίωση, συμβιβασμός, φόβος, αποδοχή, υποταγή, κ.ά.

Λόγω της περιπλοκότητας της έννοιας, η «σιωπή» θα συζητηθεί από μια σημασιολογική-πραγματολογική άποψη, με κριτήριο την ανθρώπινη συμπεριφορά. Μερικές από τις ερμηνείες της σιωπής θα διευκρινιστούν παρακάτω:

- η λέξη «σιωπή» είναι ένα ουσιαστικό, αλλά και μια έντονη συμπεριφορά που παρατηρείται μεταξύ των ατόμων στην καθημερινή ζωή
- ii. η λέξη «σιωπή» σπάνια προφέρεται σε ευθεία ομιλία από έναν από τους συνομιλητές, αλλά χρησιμοποιείται συχνά σε μια αναφερόμενη ομιλία

Για παράδειγμα, στον ευθύ λόγο: Α: Που πας; Β: (σιωπή)

Α: Σε ρώτησα πού πας. Θα μου απαντήσεις? *Σε έμμεσο λόγο:*

Ο Α ρώτησε τον Β πού πήγαινε αλλά δεν του απάντησε.

- Η σιωπή ως κατάσταση ή κατάσταση περιλαμβάνει τα συναισθήματα και τις στάσεις των ατόμων, όπως ο φόβος και η συναίνεση.

The word **silence** is used in multiple fields and in different ways. However, it is a special concept because of its **conceptual burden**, its **context** and its **meaning**. The **same word** can denote a different situation, such as: **consent**, **confirmation**, **compromise**, **fear**, **acceptance**, **submission**.

Because of how complicated concept is, silence will be discussed from a semantic-pragmatic view, with considerations to human behavior. Some of its interpretations will be clarified below:

- the word ‘silence’ is a **noun** but also a strong **behavior** that is seen among individuals in everyday life
- the word silence is rarely uttered in direct speech by one of the interlocutors, but it's often used in a reported speech. *For example, in direct speech:* A: Where are you going? *A: I asked you where are you going. Will you answer me? In indirect speech:* A asked B where he was going but he didn’t answer to her.
- silence as a state or condition includes individuals’ emotions and attitudes, such as fear and consentment.

Etymology:

silence (noun) - from Latin ‘silentium’ = being silent; present participle of ‘silere’ = be quiet or still [www.etymonline.com] It could also mean:

- muteness, state of being silent
- absence of sound
- being silent (English Dictionary, 2002).

Problematization:



https://twitter.com/silence_guelph

As it already has been mentioned, **silence** is a concept with **multiple dimensions** and **meanings.** For this reason, there is often a confusion of the term or its **interpretation**, depending on the whole context and the given situation. Silence is often translated as consent and acceptance (*The Yale Law Journal*, 1920, pp. 441-444), as it is considered that if **something is not explicitly stated**, it can be **misinterpreted**, while it can be considered **unreliable** or **invalid**.

In the light of the **concept of Otherness**, silence is seen as a sign of **condescension** and an **attempt** for **acceptance** and **integration**, where in order to be accepted, **one must not speak** and **not react**. So, silence is the mean to **achieve assimilation** and **integration,** showing who has the right to have a voice and who hasn't. For example, a person who is different from the majority (e.g., comes from another country), tends to be silent so as to go unnoticed and not provoke the reaction of many, in order to fit in and integrate (Rasool & Makuve, 2022).

Communication strategies:

In the field of **Criminology**, silence is related to the **non-reporting of crimes** to the official prosecuting authorities and to the subsequent cover up of the phenomenon, without always examining the **direct relationship** between **silence**, **fear and trauma** (Farsedakis, 2005, pp. 153-154).



https://www.lifo.gr/now/greece/o-16hronos-gkrafitas-tis-athinas-zografizei-gia-tin-endooikogeneiaki-bia

Victims are **scared** and **traumatized** and they don't want to talk about their victimization in order to protect themselves, physically and emotionally. In this condition, 'silence' is the word that is used to interpret an **individual's behaviour** when they have been questioned/interrogated and do not provide a reply as a result of their emotions such as fear.

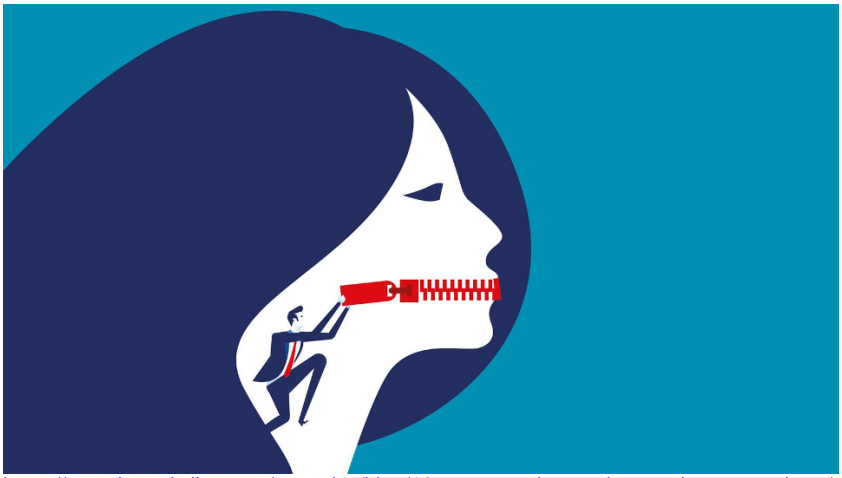
This form of silence affects not only the individual, but society as a whole – on one hand, the society will never know the real crime rate and won't be able to protect itself and, on the other hand, the state won't be able to design an effective anti-crime policy to protect society as a whole.

So silence is linked to the erroneous image of crime because **of the fear of victims** reporting crime and action. Especially in cases of **domestic violence** and **sexual crimes**, victims remain silent not by choice, but due to the existence of **socio-cultural factors**, as well as by fear and by the fact that often authorities do not believe or protect them. The result: **crimes remain silent too.**

In addition to it, **silence** is quite often identified with **acceptance** and **submission.** In many cases, **minority groups may not reac**t to the **hostile behaviors** and **attitudes** they face (usually associated with racism and discriminatory attitudes as a whole) in order not to provoke or being targeted (Bernburg, 2009, pp. 187-207). At the core of this logic lies the individual's desire to integrate into the social environment, not to be marginalized and to be accepted.

All the above mentioned cases show that **silence is a site** where **power relationships manifest - or hide**. The socially, economically or politically **strong** is the one who **expresses** and **imposes his/her voice**, while the socially, economically or politically weak is called to be silent and **accept the word** of those who have the power in order to avoid negative consequences. In this case, **silence translates as submission** and retreat and is directly related to the feeling of fear. (Chanez, 2005, pp. 11-14).

Another context in which **silence manifest unequal power relations** is the working environment. People do not express their disagreement about it or about their working conditions because they are afraid of being fired. Thus, they accept their condition, thus giving the impression that they agree with it.



https://www.integrityline.com/expertise/blog/10-reasons-why-employees-do-not-speak-up/

Subversion:

Silence has often been the **object of inspiration** and **creation** in the context of the **arts**. **Songs**, **poems**, **paintings**, **entire art exhibitions** have based their creation and are inspired by silence. By transforming **silence into a work of art**, the creators have attempted to express their concern about this condition in order to call on individuals to break it.

In the following poem, the **Greek poet** Nikiforos Vrettakos talks about the **power of silence** and sustains that the possibility of **its dissolution** would mean a **huge change** with disturbing consequences.

It seems that silence has enormous energy in repression that, if released, overturns all the facts.

ΧΟΡΙΚΟ (1961) **–** ΝΙΚΗΦΟΡΟΣ ΒΡΕΤΤΑΚΟΣ (Original text in Greek)
Υπάρχουνε λύπες που κανείς δεν τις ξέρει.
Υπάρχουνε βάθη που δεν τ' ανιχνεύει ο ήλιος.
Όρη σιωπής περιβάλλουν τα χείλη.
Και σιωπούν όλοι οι μάρτυρες. Τα μάτια δε λένε.
Δεν υπάρχουνε σκάλες τόσο μεγάλες να κατέβει κανείς ως εκεί που ταράζεται του ανθρώπου ο πυρήνας.
Αν μιλούσε η σιωπή, αν φυσούσε, αν ξέσπαγε – θα ξερίζωναν όλα τα δέντρα του κόσμου.

CHORIKO (1961) **–** NIKIFOROS VRETTAKOS (Translation into English)
There are regrets that no one knows.
There are depths that the sun cannot detect.
Mountains of silence surround the lips.
And all the witnesses are silent. The eyes do not speak.
There are no stairs so great to descend to where the core of man is shaken.
If silence would speak, if it would blow, if it would burst forth - it would uproot all the trees of the world.

This is an **abstract** from Aziz **Nesin's** poem "**Be Silent**"

AZIZ NESIN – BE SILENT (2017)

.....This way you will be consistent with my plans

With my dreams

I retain my tongue amidst tears and cries

Because I fear that there will come a moment

Where I won't be able to take it anymore

I will burst out

I won't be afraid

I will hope

And every minute

I will fill my throat

With one syllable

One whisper

One stutter

One howl

Which will tell me:

SPEAK!



Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yNFPBOf3CAU

In the case of the poem "Be Silent" by the **Turkish writer Aziz Nesin**, it seems that the person is nurtured in silence, so that s/he does not react, s/he will learn to accept and won't stand out.

However, reading the poem to the end, the tension peaks reaching redemption: the destruction of silence and **liberation through expression** and **speech** becomes a **source**, an inner need of the individual. **Speak!**

Last but not least, the phrase '**break the silence**' is very often used. This phrase and the words that make it up are not accidental. In this expression, the use of the verb 'to break' defines **silence** as a **solid physical barrier** that **is being constructed** and that **needs to be broken** in order to **vindicate the right** to make **one's voice heard**.

Discussion:

From the the above discussion, it is understood that '**silence**' is a quite **multi-polar** and **multi-dimensional concept** and questions constantly arise around its **meanings**.

- How is silence defined?
- Is it a choice, a need or a compulsion?
- How can a person express her/himself when s/he is silent?
- Are you silent? When, in which occasions, are you silent?
- Why are you silent?
- What you think, when you hear the phrase 'break the silence'?

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