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THE POWER OF WORDS - UNVEILING THE DEPTHS OF VERBAL VIOLENCE

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ABSTRACT

This research explores the nuanced realm of verbal violence, investigating its manifestations, consequences, and broader societal impact. Inspired by Albanian proverbs like "Words kill more than bullets" and "The tongue has no bones but can break them," the study employs a multidimensional approach, integrating linguistic, sociological, and psychological perspectives. Analyzing various cultural definitions, the research unveils the complex nature of verbal violence, extending beyond simple exchanges to acts that seek to control, coerce, and inflict emotional pain. Emphasizing the urgent need for awareness, understanding, and mitigation in today's communication-centric world, the study navigates linguistic landscapes, revealing nuances reflective of the universal struggle to communicate without causing harm. Drawing on works by different authors, the research highlights verbal violence's multifaceted nature, encompassing acts of force, contempt, and challenges to honesty. The paper concludes by underlining the hidden, yet potent wounds caused by verbal violence, advocating for collective efforts to foster communication promoting understanding, empathy, and positive change.

Keywords: Verbal violence, cultural perspectives, societal impact.

INTRODUCTION

In a world where the gravity of physical violence is widely acknowledged, there exists a parallel realm of harm that often eludes our attention: verbal violence. The wounds inflicted by words, whether delivered as cutting insults, biting mockery, or offensive contempt, can sometimes penetrate deeper than the blows of physical aggression. This article embarks on a journey to unravel the intricate layers of verbal violence, exploring its manifestations, consequences, and the enduring scars it leaves on individuals and society.

Drawing wisdom from Albanian proverbs such as "Words kill more than bullets" and "the tongue has no bones but can break them," we begin to grasp the profound impact of language on human sensitivity. Verbal violence is far from a one-dimensional concept; it is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon, demanding examination from linguistic, sociological, and psychological perspectives.

In our exploration, we explore the varied definitions and interpretations of verbal violence across different cultures and languages. As we traverse linguistic landscapes, we encounter nuances that reveal the universal human struggle to communicate without causing harm. Verbal violence, we learn, transcends mere exchanges of words; it seeks to control, coerce, and inflict emotional pain, often leaving lasting scars.

This article aims to shine a light on the hidden injuries inflicted by words, examining their capacity to erode honesty, respect, and personal dignity. As we navigate through the intricacies of verbal violence, we will underscore its profound implications and emphasize the urgent need for awareness, understanding, and mitigation in a world where communication has never been more omnipresent.

Exercising violence against others does not only mean using physical violence. We often feel worse when someone says a harsh and insulting word to us than when we receive a slap, a tug on the ear, etc. “Words kill more than bullets”, “The tongue has no bones but can break them” or even “the word kills” say the Albanian proverbs and indicate the level of human sensitivity which tolerates neither violence nor corporal punishment, nor verbal punishment. Both cause pain, especially when they are public, in the presence of others.

THE COMPLEXITY OF VERBAL VIOLENCE

Verbal violence, as a complex concept, is analyzed and treated from several points of view. It has been treated from a linguistic point of view, from a sociological point of view,

from a psychological point of view. Insult, insult, offense, mockery, contempt, humiliation are all forms of verbal violence.

This complexity of verbal violence is considered by Galatanu et al. (2012) who talk about the fact that it is due to the realities that it evokes, that it provokes.

In the literature, we find many definitions of violence or verbal abuse as linguistic concepts. Our intention is to analyze all the meanings of verbal violence, analyzed by different authors and researchers, in order to later use them when analyzing the selected journalistic corpus, as we mentioned in the methodology section of this research.

In the Albanian online language dictionary Fjalori shkenca (n.d.) there are three definitions that are given on the word violence as such.

Use of physical force, physical or psychological restraints, harsh methods and methods to force someone to do something beyond their will, to subdue and repress someone, in order to limit someone's actions 'A; to force or press someone by force. Revolutionary (counter-revolutionary) violence. Police violence. Violence against the person. Act of violence. Violent method. By violence. Uses (contradicts) violence. Takes (wins) by violence.

A great shame, humiliation or shame towards someone, a serious violation of someone's honor with works or words; a heavy insult to someone. I rape someone, I dishonor or humiliate them; rape or humiliate someone.

Speak something bad. Do good, find bad.

If the first definition in the Albanian language dictionary refers to violence exerted by physical force, the second and third definitions are dedicated to violence exerted by speech and the effects it can cause. This violence is experienced as shame or severe humiliation, which we inflict on someone by using inappropriate or thoughtless words.

It is interesting to note that apart from the definition given in the dictionary of the Albanian language, there are other details on violence and the adjective ‘verbal’. This is the case of the Dictionary of the Albanian Language which contains approximately 41,000 words that are not found in the Dictionary of the Albanian Language, with etymological elaborations (Elezi, 2007). The word violence is here identified with shame and represents something evil. The first meaning of the adjective “verbal” in the Le Grand Robert dictionary of the French language (2nd edition, 2001) is linked to threat (written or verbal threat). In the third sense of the adjective, we notice its relationship or linguistic marriage with the noun violence, which brings us to the syntagm *verbal violence*.

In the dictionaries of the Albanian language, Fjalori shkenca (n.d.) and Fjalorthi (n.d.) forms of verbal violence, such as insult and offense are considered synonymous: *to offend is to insult another person with words or particular behavior, with which he is violates dignity, honor, etc*. Offense is a form of expression of the individual's aggressiveness towards another. There is no insult more serious than an offense.

As for mockery, it is defined as a group of "words or gestures made to ridicule someone; mocking or contemptuous attitude towards someone or something. Both expressions/words and insults and mockery fall into the realm of words that violate human dignity.

Whatever the nature of verbal, interpersonal, family or even institutional violence, its main goal is to hurt someone. This feeling can then lead to misunderstandings or tensions, which can also lead to physical violence. In order to prevent conflicts, which verbal violence preceded and fueled, it has today become an important concern for researchers, who are trying to unravel it.

This is confirmed by Olga Galatanu et al. (2012) who say that "violence remains a central concern of all forms that human society, that all social practices have known and know".

Among the most dedicated connoisseurs and researchers of verbal violence, Olga Galatanu and her colleagues have conducted numerous linguistic research, with the aim of illuminating the horizons of knowledge of this linguistic and social concept. In one of these studies, they study threatening and reassuring acts. According to Galatanu et al. (2012) and research done on threatening and reassuring acts, verbal violence covers speech acts that:

Aim to exert force to coerce someone/a social group (submit them, make them act in a certain way) and provoke a feeling of "discomfort": threaten, order, prohibit, and even authorize, accuse;

- *Express contempt, hatred, indifference (in certain situations of expression of affects or social crisis), which cause people to "lose their public face" and cause "discomfort": insulting, insulting, cursing, blaming, to accuse;*
- *Call into question the honesty, sincerity, relevance, good faith, common sense… of the other: criticize, interrupt […], invalidate, contradict […] or the hierarchy which authorizes the order does not exist.*

In speech acts which aim to exert force to coerce someone, there is a threat, which in the Grand Robert of the French language (2001), is defined as "a manifestation by which one shows someone one's anger, one's resentment, with the intention of making him fear the evil

that is being prepared for him." The main idea of using threat and making a person act according to the speaker's will, in order to achieve the objective determined by the latter.

On the other hand, in the acts of speech which experience contempt, hatred, indifference, which cause one to lose one's public face and cause discomfort, include insults and insults, but also other frequently used words. violent such as cursing, blaming or accusing. Of this group of speech acts, insults and insults are those that have been studied by many authors, due to the fact that on the one hand they are treated as very similar, while on the other hand they are different from each other. others. There are many cases where the insult aims to hurt the victim, touching them where they are most sensitive in an emotional sense, while the violation of their integrity is greater.

THE DESTRUCTIVE POWER OF WORDS

In his book Marseille la Violent, speaking of the "symbolic" wounds and verbal violence exercised in Marseille society in the middle of the 19th century, Regnard-Drouot (2009) says that "the wounds they inflict seem unbearable". Furthermore, she continues by emphasizing that "the insult aims to affect the victim where the damage to his reputation will be greatest". Reputation or personal pride is often the target of verbal violence, while interlocutors try to escape it by using different discursive strategies.

An anonymous quote says that "the insult is often the final argument of someone who can no longer find anything to say", while Rosier (2012) emphasizes by saying that the insults are best used by people who have a rich linguistics vocabulary and knowledge: "to insult well is to demonstrate linguistic, rhetorical and pragmatic knowledge".

These individuals manage to dominate the interaction and disqualify the opponent and allow themselves to be placed in higher positions during the interaction and as Kerbrat-Orecchioni (2012) says, "the insulter is in a high position" because he presents himself as being legitimate to disqualify his interlocutor. In these situations, we are dealing with unequal positions of the individuals who participate in the interaction, or as Vincent et al. (2012) point out, an "unequal relationship between individuals, a phenomenon that they consider as a breach of contract social according to which every individual, every group, has the right to full respect for its integrity. For them, the expression of disagreement is fundamental in any democratic society. This is why we must take into account the fact that the expression of divergent opinions does not enter the realm of violence when the expression of opposing positions is curbed.

Imposition also brings control of the situation or exchanges, while with this the interlocutor sees himself denied and not worthy of discussion. Vincent and Barbeau (2012) consider that when we have succeeded in imposing control of the management of exchanges, we confine the other to silence and this constitutes a denial of his role as an egalitarian interlocutor.

Other authors see interaction as the arena of exchanges or *battle of words* between interlocutors who, when they need to defend themselves against verbal attacks, counter-react. Found in a situation like this, where potentially violent statements range from simple expression of opinion to extreme forms of attack that Windisch (1987) calls *verbal knockout*, very often, the interlocutors respond in the same way and with the same destructive force.

Windisch also speaks of this battle of words, as a place of manifestation of verbal violence between the interlocutors, who, "mistreated, displaced, accused of holding a speech and of occupying a place or a position which are not theirs, will be seen forced to react, to speak again and very probably vehemently too. *The process is underway […]. To hurt and have the last word*, these are some of the objectives of the battle of words.

Honesty represents a set of traits or properties of an individual. These properties come from certain principles, which are valued by society and appear in the behavior and actions of the individual. The Chinese philosopher Confucius differentiated between three levels of honesty:

- *The more superficial level (the Li), which foresees the actions that a person undertakes with the aim of satisfying their own desires, both in the short term and in the long term, from the moment they demonstrate sincerity.*
- *The deeper level is Yi, where the acting person does not wish to achieve his own interest, preferring instead to obey the moral principle of justice, while basing himself on reciprocity.*
- *The deepest level of honesty is Ren, which requires a certain understanding of oneself beforehand in order to better understand others. This level implies that an individual must treat everyone lower on the social ladder the same way he would like those higher up to treat him.*

Acts of speech which call into question the honesty, sincerity, relevance, good faith, common sense of the other, then criticize, interrupt, invalidate or contradict are very often experienced as an insult or a very serious insult. by the participants in the interaction, because they are directly linked to their personal and professional integrity. Regnard-Rouot(2009)

evokes the experience of this form of verbal violence by practitioners of different professions, while emphasizing that it is experienced as an insult or an insult: "calling into question the honest exercise of a profession is […] experienced as a particularly offensive insult."

Everything relating to criticism made against a person whose aim is to blacken their image, their appearance and everything that has to do with what they present, Al Odhayani et al (2013) consider verbal violence as *an act of bullying that aims to emotionally attack a person by criticizing their appearance, personality, or what they associate with*.

Vincent et al (2008) deal with the issue of denigrating the individual, but for them, this involves the use of pejorative forms and accentuated metaphors which further reinforce each form of quality used. They speak of another aspect of verbal violence which is that of the denigration of the person which is done in particular by means of insulting forms, strong images (metaphorical or metonymic and often hyperbolic), assertions without nuance and false propositions, insinuations and innuendoes, as well as all the processes which serve to give depth to the propositions: repetition, reformulation, accumulation of details, resumption, etc.

If in the case of physical attacks and violence, the wounds are visible, in the case of verbal attacks and violence, the pain is hidden, but sometimes it is more powerful than the physical pain. A popular Albanian proverb says that *words cut wood and stone*. If words have this destructive power, we can understand their effect and the emotional pain they can cause.

Although it is very difficult to implement, verbal violence must be addressed and reduced as much as possible, in order to prevent the negative effects, it has on the people who are victims of it. Forms of its presentation such as threats, slander, insults, insults, outrages or others, all of which induce negative feelings, provoke a counter-reaction from the party who is the target of such verbal attacks. They become even more serious in cases where they are expressed in public, because in this case, it is the public who witnesses the denigration, the humiliation of the personality of the individual or the given social group.

CASE STUDY

THE PRESPA AGREEMENT – THE GEOGRAPHY OF RENAMING

The case study refers to the change of the name of the state and the Prespa Agreement, while it is more precisely related to the verbal violence used in the journalistic articles in the daily Nova Makedonija. It analyzes daily newspaper articles published in Nova Makedonija in the period June 19-July 19, 2018, while their total number reaches 76.

North Macedonia changed several names until it managed to get the name it has today. The agreement with Greece, as an agreement mediated by the international factor, provoked numerous reactions in the political spectrum, particularly Macedonian. These reactions of men and political parties, as well as civil society organizations, occupied a large space in the written and electronic press, both in Macedonian and in Albanian.

President Gjorge Ivanov reportedly rejects signing the deal, calling it catastrophic. On the other hand, the newly elected president of VMRO-DPMNE, Hristijan Mickovski, would invite citizens to demonstrate against the state name change. After a while, Mickovski would change his mind, making softer statements on the name issue, for which he would be accused by opposition media. Thus, in an analysis published on the 360° portal, he declares he would leave the return of the old name of the State to *another generation*, while even its initial position would be called into question. This is completely opposite to what he declared previously, stating that under no circumstances would he agree to add the adjective north to the name of the country.

The range and variety of offensive remarks in the articles analyzed in the daily press, or more precisely in the newspaper Nova Makedonija, range from simple accusations addressed to participants in the negotiation process, including international mediators or facilitators, to more serious insults like traitor, liar, and even sold out. The debate will be very hot, where on one side there will be experts, intellectuals and pundits, who, in search of truth and solid arguments, will consider the agreement suspicious and controversial, while on the other side, supporters of the agreement will be concentrated, and will use controversy, with the aim of defeating opponents of the agreement.

This is underlined in a large part of the statements and analyzes of Macedonian commentators and experts, expressed in the newspaper Nova Makedonija. Finally, this is a process of renaming and *the renamings seek to act on the meaning of what is designated by the impact on the meaning, we act on the way of conceiving the identity often relating to manipulation is the instrument of symbolic violence*. It is the fear of this renaming of the country which provokes concrete responses, presented both as polemic, but also as controversy. Finally, the force of a speech act resides in the position or status of the speaking subject, whereas in the present case, the speaking subjects are in diametrically opposed positions, where the balance of power between the political body and the citizen body (columnists and experts are citizens in this case) has *reciprocal and non-symmetrical influence.*

After analyzing the content of the speech acts used in the newspaper Nova Makedonija, we managed to identify four different categories of violent verbal expressions, including:

Columnists, intellectuals and experts who oppose the Prespa agreement itself, calling it harmful, occupying, undermining the country's interests, dismantling the Macedonian identity. This type of discourse is supported and used mainly by Macedonian commentators and experts, who are even more virulent when it comes to naming names.

Secondly come the supporters of the agreement, few of whom are cited in the articles analyzed in Nova Makedonija. We are talking here about international representatives, but also about certain individuals who present themselves in the role of rulers and whose aim is to convince the population through populist discourse that with the signing of the Prespa agreement, the dark past and the economic and political crisis will be overcome while after the name change, Macedonia will move towards Euro-Atlantic integration, ensuring a bright future for all its citizens.

The last in this categorization are the journalists themselves, who, instead of reducing the number of messages that can aggravate the situation, play the role of triggers and matches, influencing the escalation of the situation at the moment when protests against the state's name change are taking place.

Accusations against government officials and international organizations supporting the process and the current government itself continue with direct insults such as:

> "*The UN, USA, EU and NATO, with their mouths full, glorify our fools, they celebrate the Macedonian capitulation, and this should serve as proof that their terror against us begins here*."

Furthermore, the author of this article uses capital letters to say that it is an *occupation, high treason, terror against those who do not agree with this psychopathic crime* which does not exist with the end goal of leading to the liquidation of Macedonia and the Macedonians.

The confrontation position-opposition arguments in the sense of convincing the population, creating a positive climate and having an affirmative attitude towards the Prespa agreement, trying to influence, persuade, with reasoning fallacious or the sending of poisoned arrows as Charaudeau (2010) says, towards those who think differently, is not indirect, but very direct.

As we were able to see, the case study addresses the use of offensive language in Nova Makedonija, ranging from accusations to serious insults like "traitor" and "liar." It categorizes violent verbal expressions, including those opposing the agreement, supporters of the agreement, and the role of journalists in escalating tensions. In summary, this case study gave

a detailed examination of the linguistic aspects of the Prespa Agreement discourse, shedding light on the complexities and tensions within the society during this period.

CONCLUSION

In our exploration of the intricate landscape of verbal violence, we've peeled back layers of understanding to reveal a stark truth: the harm inflicted by words can often run deeper and linger longer than physical acts of aggression. Albanian proverbs like "Words kill more than bullets" and "The tongue has no bones but can break them" underscore the immense power of language to wound the human spirit. Verbal violence, whether it takes the form of insults, offenses, mockery, contempt, or humiliation, leaves scars that may be invisible but are profoundly felt.

Our journey has encompassed linguistic, sociological, and psychological perspectives, highlighting the multifaceted nature of verbal violence. It is a complex interplay of language and emotion, one that can have devastating consequences on both individuals and communities.

By delving into various definitions and cultural interpretations, we have come to understand that verbal violence extends beyond mere words. It seeks to dominate, control, and harm, often eroding the foundations of trust and respect in human interaction. The pain it inflicts may be psychological, but it is no less real or enduring than physical wounds.

This article has demonstrated that verbal violence is not a trivial matter; it poses a genuine threat and can escalate to physical violence. In today's interconnected world, addressing verbal violence is not just a matter of choice but a societal imperative. Researchers and advocates must remain vigilant in their efforts to comprehend, prevent, and mitigate the destructive impact of verbal violence.

While physical violence often leaves visible scars, verbal violence leaves emotional and psychological ones that can endure a lifetime. Through this exploration, we aspire to shed light on the profound harm that words can cause. Let us all be mindful of our language, choosing words that foster understanding and empathy rather than employing them as weapons of harm. Our collective goal should be to cultivate a society where words serve as instruments of connection, healing, and positive change. In doing so, we can collectively address and reduce the negative effects of verbal violence, working toward a world where dignity and respect are the cornerstones of our interactions.

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