



---

## CONCEPTUAL CONTENT OF SILENCE IN THE HERITAGE OF THINKERS AND PROVERBS

Sobirova Feruza Asqarali qizi

1st Year Doctoral Student at Fergana State University

---

### Abstract

The article examines the socio-linguistic and communicative aspects of silence. Based on proverbs, literary sources, and thinkers' views, its multiple meanings are revealed. Silence is interpreted as a nonverbal unit of communication with cultural and spiritual significance.

**Keywords:** Silence, communication, nonverbal unit, proverbs, intercultural communication

### Introduction

Silence has long been considered one of the most enigmatic yet essential aspects of human communication. Although traditionally defined as the absence of speech, silence is not merely muteness; it is a meaningful communicative act capable of expressing emotions, attitudes, and relational stances. It functions both as a linguistic gap and as a nonverbal signifier that conveys information often more powerfully than words themselves. Scholars and writers from antiquity to the present—from Seneca and Tolstoy to modern linguists—have emphasized that silence reveals truths inaccessible to overt speech. Within contemporary linguistics, silence is recognized as an integral phenomenon that shapes pragmatic interaction, reflects cultural values, and indexes psychological states.

### Literature Review

The phenomenon of silence has been studied across multiple disciplines. Potebnya (1892) argued that “the true life of a word lies in context,” extending this principle to silence as well, claiming its meaning emerges only within interactional settings. Hall (1976) highlighted silence as a communicative device that may carry meanings more potent than speech. Seneca and Tolstoy likewise



---

underscored its ethical and existential weight, noting that to understand silence is to grasp the essence of human wisdom.

Cross-cultural research confirms the universality yet variability of silence. In Uzbek communicative tradition, the proverb “Sukut – a’lomati rizo” (“Silence is a sign of consent”) parallels the Russian saying “Молчание – знак согласия” and the German expression “Keine Antwort ist auch eine Antwort.” This demonstrates that silence transcends languages while simultaneously reflecting culturally specific nuances. In literary discourse, silence often becomes a metaphorical resource. For example, Abdulla Oripov’s poetry transforms silence into a symbolic marker of mourning, betrayal, and existential pain, situating it within the broader cultural imagination.

Modern scholarship further explores silence in pragmatics, sociolinguistics, and psycholinguistics. In pragmatics, it is analyzed as a turn-taking device and a strategy of politeness; in intercultural communication, as a cultural marker of worldviews; in psycholinguistics, as a reflection of emotional states; and in discourse analysis, as an implicit index of power, agreement, or resistance.

### **Methods and Methodology**

This study adopts an interdisciplinary qualitative approach to analyze silence as a communicative phenomenon. The methodology integrates:

1. Pragmatic Analysis – examining how silence functions as a speech act substitute, either as agreement, disagreement, avoidance, or politeness strategy.
2. Sociolinguistic and Intercultural Frameworks – exploring cross-cultural proverbs and idioms (Uzbek, Russian, German) that embed shared interpretations of silence.
3. Discourse Analysis – analyzing silence within literary texts (e.g., Abdulla Oripov’s poetry) to identify metaphorical and symbolic uses.
4. Comparative-Historical Method – tracing philosophical reflections on silence across cultural traditions (e.g., Seneca, Sa’di, Tolstoy, Montaigne).
5. Psycholinguistic Observation – interpreting silence as an index of psychological states such as grief, fear, humility, or inner protest.

Data were drawn from proverbial expressions, literary texts, and documented reflections of thinkers and philosophers. The integration of these methods ensures



---

a multi-layered analysis that highlights silence's polyfunctionality and its role in constructing meaning.

### **The Main Part**

Silence is the state of human muteness, yet even through this muteness meaning and emotions can be expressed. Thus, silence is not merely the absence of speech, but rather an integral part of communication and a nonverbal means of expression. Numerous scholars have reflected on the phenomenon of silence. For instance, A.A. Potebnya observed that "the true life of a word lies in context, and the true meaning of silence also unfolds within the communicative process." Similarly, E.T. Hall argued that "silence at times conveys meanings stronger than words." Seneca maintained that "he who does not know silence cannot speak well," while L. Tolstoy emphasized its existential value, remarking that "the essential point is to know when and how to remain silent."

Today, silence is studied in linguistics from multiple perspectives. In pragmatics and sociolinguistics, it is regarded as a nonverbal means of meaning-making; in intercultural communication, it functions as a cultural marker reflecting the worldview of different peoples; in psycholinguistics, it is interpreted as a factor revealing an individual's psychological state; and in discourse analysis, it is treated as a unit that conveys implicit meanings and relational attitudes. Therefore, in contemporary linguistics, silence is not perceived as mere muteness, but as a significant phenomenon that actively participates in the process of meaning construction.

In the monograph "The Socio-Linguistic Features of Uzbek Communicative Behavior", an entire chapter is devoted to the communicative meanings expressed through silence<sup>1</sup>. It states: "Our observations indicate that in many nations silence conveys communicative meanings that are strikingly similar. For instance, the Uzbek saying 'Sukut – a'lomati rizo' ('Silence is a sign of consent') corresponds exactly to the Russian expression 'Молчание – знак согласия' ('Silence is a sign of agreement'). Similarly, the German phrase 'Keine Antwort ist auch eine

---

<sup>1</sup> Mo'minov S.M. O'zbek mulokot hulkining ijtimoiy-lisoniy xususiyatlari: – Farg'ona, 2021. –B.61.



*Modern American Journal of Linguistics,  
Education, and Pedagogy*

ISSN (E): 3067-7874

Volume 01, Issue 06, September, 2025

Website: usajournals.org

*This work is Licensed under CC BY 4.0 a Creative Commons Attribution  
4.0 International License.*

Antwort' ('No answer is also an answer') parallels the Uzbek proverb 'Ahmoqqa javob – sukut' ('Silence is the answer to a fool'). However, just as 'the true life of a word lies in context' (A.A. Potebnya), the genuine communicative meaning of silence also becomes clear only within the process of the communicative act." In Abdulla Oripov's poem beginning with "Oilada tug'ilsa go'dak..." ("When a child is born in a family..."), the lines "Azalilar ko'rsa yomon tush mozor uzra sukut etarlar..." ("When the ancients dreamed a bad dream, they would remain silent over the grave...") symbolically reveal the human condition in the face of loss. When a person loses a loved one, they put on mourning attire and become an azador (mourner). The ancients, when troubled by a bad dream, would often visit the graves of their kin and, though burning within, keep silent as an act of remembrance. But what if friendship dies? Where should it be buried? Where is its grave? Indeed, the accidental encounter of estranged friends is likened to the mournful experience of one who dreams a bad dream at the site of a grave. The "mourning friend," estranged from friendship, finds no place to voice his "bad dream."

Thus, Oripov transforms the imagery of mourners who "open grief for the dead and dye their clothes in mourning" and who "remain silent over the grave" into a metaphor for the inner cry, the remorse, and the tragic silence directed toward a "faithless friend." In this way, silence becomes a metaphorical transference of the deepest and most tangled psychological states of the human soul—where grief, betrayal, and speechless sorrow converge.

Do'stlar, ayting, do'stlik so'nganda

Qanday yig'lab, qanday kiyarlar?

Azalilar ko'rsa yomon tush

Mozor uzra sukut etarlar.

Tirik turib, qayta kelsang duch,

Unda oxir, qayga ketarlar...

The proverb "Silence kills" usually signifies a situation in which a person awaits a word, news, or message from someone, but the speaker's silence exerts a profoundly negative effect on the listener—sometimes to the extent of causing spiritual "death." Conversely, silence can also mean "speaking without words," "uttering without speech," the cry of the heart, or a wise response to a fool. At



*Modern American Journal of Linguistics,  
Education, and Pedagogy*

ISSN (E): 3067-7874

Volume 01, Issue 06, September, 2025

Website: usajournals.org

*This work is Licensed under CC BY 4.0 a Creative Commons Attribution  
4.0 International License.*

times, however, it may naturally serve as a marker of ignorance. Thus, the analysis of the informational value of silence in verbal communication demonstrates its polyfunctional nature: it may serve as a means of sparing another's feelings; as a tool of humiliation or disregard; as a manifestation of hidden anger, surprise, or disapproval; as a sign of spiritual maturity; or as an indication of fear and helplessness. Consequently, silence can be regarded as a nonverbal communicative unit that belongs to the category of linguo-spiritual phenomena, functioning as an integral part of interpersonal discourse.

As is well known, silence and the phenomena associated with it have long attracted the attention of thinkers throughout history. As evidence of this, we may cite several reflections on silence expressed by some of the world's great sages.

"The only way to be a good interlocutor is to know how to listen."  
(K. Morley)

"Many people can speak well, but few know how to listen, for listening requires the use of intellect." (R. Tagore)

"If you do not know how to speak, learn how to listen."  
(Pomponius)

"Before a person utters a single word,  
Let him conceal his skill from everyone." (Sa'di Shirazi)

"The one who cannot remain silent until it is time to speak or act is not a true human being." (T. Carlyle)

"He who does not know how to keep silence cannot speak properly either."  
(Seneca)

"Not speaking does not only mean saying much, but also accomplishing much."  
(E. Kapiiev)

"At times, silence is more meaningful than any words."  
(Montesquieu)

"Silence is the best response to any disagreement arising from rudeness, impoliteness, or envy." (I. Zimmermann)

"There is no more humiliating reply than hateful silence."  
(M. Montaigne)

"People learn how to speak. Yet the essential point is to know when and how to remain silent." (L. Tolstoy)



*Modern American Journal of Linguistics,  
Education, and Pedagogy*

ISSN (E): 3067-7874

Volume 01, Issue 06, September, 2025

Website: usajournals.org

*This work is Licensed under CC BY 4.0 a Creative Commons Attribution  
4.0 International License.*

---

“Silence is not always proof of wisdom, yet it certainly demonstrates that one is not a fool.” (J. Addison)

“In many real-life situations, the utterances produced by an individual through linguistic means may not convey significant meaning, whereas the interlocutor’s silence can, in fact, communicate multiple layers of meaning.”

### **Conclusion**

Silence is not a passive absence of language but an active and multifaceted communicative resource. It operates at the intersection of pragmatics, culture, and psychology, expressing meanings that words often fail to capture. In Uzbek communicative behavior, silence resonates with universal patterns observed in Russian, German, and other traditions, yet retains its unique cultural inflections. Literary discourse, particularly in Oripov’s poetry, demonstrates that silence can symbolize grief, betrayal, or existential reflection, functioning as a metaphor for the ineffable dimensions of human experience.

Thus, silence should be regarded as a linguo-cultural phenomenon that transcends disciplinary boundaries. Its study illuminates both universal communicative strategies and culturally specific expressions of meaning. In contemporary linguistics, silence is therefore recognized not as muteness but as an indispensable element of interaction—one that continues to challenge, enrich, and expand our understanding of human communication.

### **References:**

1. Alisher Navoiy. Mahbub ul-qulub. – Toshkent: G‘afur G‘ulom nashriyoti, 1991.
2. Bahouddin Naqshband. Maqolat. – Toshkent: Fan, 2005.
3. Buxoriy. Sahihul Buxoriy – Hadis to‘plami.
4. Hall, E.T. The Silent Language. – New York: Anchor Books, 1973.
5. Hofstede, G. Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind. – McGraw-Hill, 2010.
6. Imom G‘azzoliy. Ihyo ulumuddin. – Qom: Dar ul-fikr, 2010.



***Modern American Journal of Linguistics,  
Education, and Pedagogy***

**ISSN (E):** 3067-7874

Volume 01, Issue 06, September, 2025

**Website:** usajournals.org

***This work is Licensed under CC BY 4.0 a Creative Commons Attribution  
4.0 International License.***

7. Muminov Sidikjon Mirsobirovich, Sobirova Feruza Asqarali qizi. Sharq va G'arb madaniyatida sukut: madaniyatlararo farqlar // Qo'qon davlat pedagogika instituti ilmiy xabarlari. – 2025. – №6 (A seriya). – B. 1373–1376.
8. Nisbett, R.E. The Geography of Thought: How Asians and Westerners Think Differently... and Why. – New York: Free Press, 2003.
9. Qur'oni Karim. Tarjimasi va tafsiri. – Toshkent: Hilol Nashr, 2018.
10. Sobirova, F.A. Sukut ifodalaydigan ma'no: til va kommunikatsiyaning noverbal aspekti // European Science International Conference. – B. 383–386.
11. Sobirova, F.A. Sukut va sukunatning farqi: tilshunoslik nuqtai nazaridan // Qo'qon davlat pedagogika instituti ilmiy xabarlari. – 2025. – №4.
12. Ting-Toomey, S. Communicating Across Cultures. – New York: The Guilford Press, 1999.