

The History of Domestication of Speech

Dr. Kazım Tolga Gürel

Series in Communication



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Writing is talking about history and the future.

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Abstract

Like all human actions, speaking is one of the most interesting human qualities that have evolved throughout history. Speaking, a concept related to biology, anthropology, sociology, psychology, and politics is also one of the central topics of communication and cultural studies. This study analyses such a profound topic from various perspectives, including its historical evolution and current status. The study's central thesis is that speech has become sterilized with the new sociocultural environment and has lost its revolutionary qualities by becoming compatible with new powers. To strengthen this thesis, the text on the domestication of speech, which many thinkers support, has been created by drawing on history, philosophy, and multidisciplinary sciences on an intense and complex subject.

The question of why the oppression and censorship of speech throughout history has diminished today is answered by linking it to the fact that it has been domesticated and has lost its former power by integrating with the practices of power. The human being is a being who keeps silent as he speaks and postpones one side of the sentence. If it were not for the side that he has postponed and excluded both for himself and his social relations, perhaps order could not be established. Since language and speech, reproduced in conjunction with the practices of power, have lost their revolutionary elements and the ears that would hear speech have been domesticated, a deep scholastic silence continues amidst all this word inflation. Speech has evolved into a counter-revolutionary structure, it has become entirely domesticated, and for this reason, this epoch is characterized by the lowest censorship practices in history. In capital-centered countries, censorship rates have decreased day by day. This is why civilization has reached a structure in which philosophy and analysis have died, and words have lost their meaning and power. Since the structure resembles extensive censorship, visible censorship is no longer needed.

For the last century, speech has been transformed into a commercial product beyond being banned. Power no longer forbids speech; on the contrary, it reproduces it as much as possible and turns it into a commodity. Thanks to communication technologies and big cities, people are no longer silenced, and their silencing slows down the speed of the new cycles of the economy. In such an environment, neither opposing views nor partiality is possible. What appears to be diversity and flavor is essentially very uniform and only a commodity for sale. In this age, speech is domesticated and therefore not censored; on the contrary, silence is forbidden, and silence is madness.

Preface

I have lived in poor neighborhoods in many cities in Turkey. To live in the slums of a third-world country is to live in an abundance of discourse. In places where social rules are looser, far from aristocratic structures, what could be more abundant than the discourse produced by speech? People take refuge in a speech in poverty. Their poverty, impossibilities, problems, and troubles are reflected in speech. The lawlessness of underdevelopment, a chaotic life, and the need to hold on to tradition and each other; in the living spaces of capitalism that produce uncertainty and insecurity, speech becomes an area of comfort and assurance.

I usually sleep with my window open in all seasons, and all the sounds from the street reach inside. Suppose you live with masses of people constantly exploited by the state and kept ignorant by the oligarchy, which comprises all kinds of bureaucrats, soldiers, and bourgeois. In that case, something starts to catch your attention. Especially since the 2000s, when this oligarchy has been accompanied by a twisted peasant revolution and has turned into a one-person regime, that thing that catches your attention becomes much more apparent. People feel the need to talk all the time; this is true for all social classes, but it is as if I have the advantage of experiencing this and witnessing more discourse where I live. Talking is a point of refuge for those far from life's comforts.

I made some bold predictions when I started working on this book in 2013, like thinking that I would finish the book within a year. As I became acquainted with the act of speaking, I realized how profound an activity is and that it is an activity that is influenced by multi-disciplinary knowledge. No matter what I did, something would always need to be added to this work. Speaking was an infinite universe. It was a subject that touched many fields, from linguistics to anthropology, political philosophy to sociology.

Moreover, suppose you live in an anti-democratic state closely related to censorship. In that case, the consciousness of the subjects that make up society is also restricted, and the subject is not independent of politics. It was entirely political. Since it was an endless topic to talk about, I had to stop the book at some point and collect my ideas. Collecting such a broad topic was difficult, and perhaps some points had to remain scattered.

My encounter with an advertisement by a GSM company happened while reading Jorge Louis Borges' *Historia Universal de la Infamia*, in which he mentions that enslaved people were forbidden to talk in the fields. In the advertisement of the GSM company, it was amusingly suggested that the masses speak all the time.

Talking was encouraged and glorified, and the slogan “talk, talk, talk!” was emphasized in the ad. However, Borges’ book mentions that enslaved people in the southern states of the United States were punished if they spoke. There were regions and social spaces in history where speech was banned. The process of promoting speech is a historical project.

Why was speech freed by the apparatus of power? Why was it even glorified beyond being freed? Had this speech ceased to be a danger for power? Was it domesticated? Despite being banned in many periods of history and trying to be controlled by pressures imposed primarily on the oppressed class, why is this act subject to inflation strategy today? Why was speech, whose resistive qualities and potential for producing resistance had been recognized in the past, now finding more support at every point? Apart from the commercialization of speech, what factors were involved in this? All these questions form the basic skeleton of this study.

Introduction

Certain areas of the social sciences are doomed to remain at the level of speculation, which is the intuitive power of the social sciences. Intuition has long been excluded from the social sciences because of the harsh rule of positivism. The positivist understanding of science almost broke this intuitive power of the social sciences last century. They imposed on us that speculations are not “facts.” But it is impossible to remove intuition from science. Speculation, however, sheds light on reality in a way that still needs to be understood. This intuition brings the social sciences closer to art and gives them creative and philosophical power. If intuitive cognition were to disappear, science, especially social science, would lose much strength, which is why speculation, contrary to what many scientists think, gives social sciences power. Precisely because of these statements, this study will not exclude speculation and does not claim to be “scientific.” It aims to reveal a specific process of a phenomenon based on scientific data.

The primary condition for the uprisings of the oppressed to succeed is for people to communicate freely. This is the first condition of being human. But as Rousseau said early on, “Men are born free”. But he is everywhere in chains (Rousseau, 2019).

For a long time, when the government’s control over people was inadequate, free speech was forbidden in many places. In modern times, however, thanks to a wide range of discourses and practices, from manipulating these reactions to anesthetizing responses and even marketing reactions, reactions are absorbed, produced when necessary, and sold without needing external authority.

Communication has always been challenging for oppressed classes in history. As urban life has developed and the population of the masses has increased, the power of this action has become more evident. As Jean Baudrillard states (1994), the rulers, who saw early on that the masses were not neutral and could take action, realized the power of people in this regard. Byzantine Emperor Justinianos’ banning of gladiatorial and chariot races, which disrupted the discharge mechanisms of society, and riots such as the massive Nika uprising in Constantinople in 532, gave the ruling classes this realization over time (Taddei, 2017). The ruling class’s experiences led to increased speech restrictions and censorship of all forms of communication. At that time, the primary condition for the rulers to maintain their sovereignty was to reinforce the static structural elements that could protect the existing structure. For this, they had to tame the “speech” circulating in society.

The word is the way of being of a certain age. It is a reflection of form and a force that directly affects form. The word is not just a simple representation. It is a reality related to change at various levels. Each historical period collects language according to its characteristics and produces it by flexing it according to the formation models of its era. At the same time, speech directly affects every historical process. The speech that circulates in society cannot be considered independent of the individuals and their minds, the general structure of language, and, therefore, the entire material culture that constitutes society's culture. Ultimately, it is tremendously affected by the form of the means of production and the speed of commodity circulation. The word is not independent of the superstructure. The concept transforms more slowly than many others, such as religion, gender, etc. It requires a much longer time for its transformation, and language is transformed due to material practices.

The domestication of the word spread in society means the domestication of the minds of individuals. Therefore, domestication is the only way for governance to maintain its legitimacy. Governance is always capable of dominating discourse. A power that cannot dominate discourse cannot maintain this dominance. When its power starts to break or rupture over discourse, it cracks at every point. Structure, its tools, and governance's first target is existence. Discourse is the fabric of being.

Discourse becomes the fabric of being through the channels of "micro-power." Emotions are integrated into power at the stages of socialization, and no subject can escape it. Countless foci of conflict, points of instability, acts positioned with the criterion of success, beliefs and desires that ground singularities and the internalization of what is constantly acquired through imitation transform the individual into a field of micro-power, and discourse is produced in a way that is built from top to bottom with these networks. Like micro-physical particles, it reflects the power relations scattered in consciousness and the subconscious in the context of a system. It reflects incompletely but ensures performativity and moves the structure in motion. Communication and discourse become the complex voice of the will to power of existence.

So what is discourse? What distinguishes a speech from a sentence? When does a sentence become a discourse, and what turns it into a discourse? How do consumer society and the rapid cycle of commodities affect speech?

Discourse is the recreation of reality through symbols. Discourse is articulating a grammatically structured sentence influenced by human experience and the text. Speech is the production of discourse, not just the production of sentences. Of course, a sentence is a discourse, but not every discourse is a sentence. Through speech, the reality is recreated. By producing discourse, the speaker recreates the event and the experience of the event, which is why saying, "In the beginning was speech," is proof of God. Discourse

is not just an event; it is a creation and recreation. A *sentence* is a grammatical string that changes from language to language. It is a tool and soulless. For a sentence to become a discourse, it needs a soul. That soul is the human being with all its historical experience. While communicating, he also visualizes the meaning of every message he tries to convey to the other party in his mind and constructs himself as he speaks. Thus, communicating also means communicating with oneself.

The transformation of language into discourse requires the use of the subject in society. Language existed before the subject and will exist after the subject. Discourse disappears unless it is recorded. It exists within a context or narrative. Language, which is static and fixed, contrasts with discourse, which is dynamic and transforming. Its mobility results from variability and readings in the receiver, the transmitter, and the context.

Discourse can never be neutral; it can never be independent of time and space. Nor can speech be independent of the community; therefore, discourse is never personal. A sentence becomes a discourse from the moment it is read. The Oedipus complex, dazed and ruthlessly repressed by consumer society and the rapid cycle of commodities, generates speech on an enormous scale today.

Discourse produces the subject, and the issue creates the structure. Thanks to the individuals it transforms, the sovereigns and those they keep under sovereignty become subjects in the formation and reproduction of the design with themselves and all their activities. Issues are now ready to be sovereign and to be dominated. The structure will, of course, be changed by human beings when material practices change. However, due to the dialectics of social change, while one group will continue to strive to preserve this structure, another group will want to change it, and it is precisely at this point that Karl Marx explained the social role of the working class. However, the power of the media, the network of brain seduction mentioned by Armand Mattelart, has broken the revolutionary power of the subjects. In the first-world countries mentioned by Herbert Marcuse, the increase in the conditions for the working class to get a share of surplus value has locked them in a prison of a comfortable life. Delusions of gains through political developments, such as social democracy, constitutional rights, etc., have changed the forms of exploitation. The new working conditions brought about by the post Fordist mode of production have eroded this revolutionary side of the working class. The factors that constituted this erosion and revolutionary rupture were reflected in every aspect of communication, and the "word" became domesticated and apolitical, just like the working class. The fact that the personal is political has been subsumed under the painful cries of freedom of individualism. The object of desire that is constantly pursued and the passions that can never be satisfied have led people to envy and emulate each other.

The expanding middle class is encouraged to aspire to the lifestyle of the bourgeoisie, even though they own little property. Hegemony is built on this encouragement. The cheapening of prices through imitation products comes to the rescue of the middle class. Thanks to imitation products, they are included in a similar form to the quality of life of the bourgeoisie. With these lifestyles, many people consume the symbols of the bourgeoisie's culture. This broad middle class, fed on imitations of the material cultural life of the bourgeoisie and the leftovers of the bourgeois lifestyle, makes the rulers' ideology a general atmosphere: social media applications and mass media present slices of their lives. The middle class constantly follows the bourgeoisie and its narratives. The narrative is fiction. However, it dramatically influences both reality and discourse. The middle class, whose discourses are shaped by the narratives of the bourgeois lifestyle, is emasculated in its ability to resist the system. Their dreams, hopes, and even dreams are controlled, the natural causes of the problems of their lives are covered up, and their class position is blurred.

So, how do the masses emulate and imitate the ruling classes' speech patterns, lifestyles, and attitudes? What is the relationship at the core of the flow of messages from the powerful to the powerless, from those who own property to the dispossessed, and from those with status to ordinary people? How does discourse become mass through imitation? To answer these questions, we need to consider Gilles Deleuze's (2023, p. 43) perspective on imitation. Singular blocks of meaning take shape in each subject, and imitation enables the flow. However, this flow is not a flow between equals. Imitation is also subject to a relation of force. According to Deleuze, imitation is an essential element that enables power flow. Power, which is a strategy, operates within relationalities. Power relations are carried within these relationalities. As micro-physics constitutes macro-physics, relationalities also constitute structures.

The subordination of uniqueness to the relationship of power provides a flow due to the relationship of power with lifestyle and money as a matter of the politics of desire. The way of life of the ruling classes is a sign of power for the deprived and subalterns, and they become objects of desire to reach them. Since money and reputation are among the most remarkable objects of desire, they produce imitation. The discourses of money and reputation owners are emulated, internalized, and imitated. Thus, the lifestyles of the ruling classes come to dominate society over time. Antonio Gramsci saw this in the first half of the twentieth century and identified the spread of petty-bourgeois culture.

The spread of petty-bourgeois culture to the broader society is a factor in the decline of the power of resistance to the spoken word. Henceforth, while the apparatuses of power constantly reproduce the word, they also transform individuals into agents for each other through mechanisms that are internalized in the individual. The situation of subjects being "carriers of modes

of production,” as seen in Poulantzas’ ideas (1975), applies here. Like subjects’ agency, their discourse is also the result of social causes. Society becomes a collection of subjects who consume domesticated speeches and whose actions often do not match these speeches. Common discourses such as patriotism and nationalism are not enough to unite the subjects diversified by the capitalist way of life. These subjects, who produce discourse rather than labor, cannot satisfy their need for meaning and produce speech rather than production to contribute to life; they seem to want to fill their emptiness with speech.

Word, and therefore speech, contains static and revolutionary elements because it reflects the established reality of society. Material life consists of the dialectical struggle between these two elements. Just as static and kinetic energy can transform into each other, they embody each other as opposites. The fundamental element of communicative action, which constitutes transformation and revolution, must be transformed into a static form, made part of the capitalist market, and positioned as the background force of consumption. Since speech reflects the established reality in the minds, it reproduces this reality ideologically. Through speech, the ideology that dominates society seeps into concrete and abstract concepts. It marginalizes ideas that can constitute constitutive actions and transform the world at the stage of their formation. These revolutionary elements must be included in the glittering world of market products. The glittering world of commodities is also reflected in discourse, sealing the ears against the reality of exploitation. Transitioning from an authoritarian state to a controlling state and then to a new decentralized power that produces discourse is, in fact, the domestication of speech. They are the barriers to establishing a communication structure in which speech can generate revolutionary ideas; thanks to these barriers, life is organized through the reality of exploitation.

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