Psycholinguistic paradigm of biblical damnation in ancient Georgian Historical Documents

Paradigma psicolinguístico da condenação bíblica em documentos históricos georgianos antigos

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Abstract: Any language as a psycholinguistic entity does not only accumulates in itself the emotional layers but also explores the relevant verbal ways for expressing these emotions. A speech act or a written form is a visible product of this emerging process. Therefore, language is generated as a concurrent processes result. Linguistics increases the psychology extent, describing language phenomenon facts occurring either in oral or written forms. Any of the national languages material has an inherent value reflecting its systematic organization, its expression extent, psychologically stable or paradigmatic patterns, or is subject to common psychological changes occurring in a group of a particular language native speakers. Both oral and written damnation forms should be considered as one of such oldest psycholinguistic proto-paradigms. Special focus will be given to the verbal model of Biblical (particularly, the Old Testament) curse formulae, attested in old Georgian historical documents (IX-XII cc.). Damnation as a psycho-verbal model is supposed to be originating from the mankind earliest existence period, when a human being gained a solid word power understanding, matching it against physical abilities to a certain extent. Damnation as a verbal material has been manifested in written monuments also and its psycho-emotional rationale intended, first and foremost, to instill fear (specifically, fear of God), and to have God-fearing readers. Damnation problem in the literature recent findings are both Biblical and Georgian historical materials (records), revealing the so-called damnation texts particularly meticulous choice: it is a fact that it intends to cause anxiety in readers.

Keywords: Damnation texts; Georgian historical documents; Old Testament; psychoverbal model; fear; anxiety.

Resumo: Qualquer língua como entidade psicolinguística não apenas acumula em si as camadas emocionais, mas também explora as formas verbais relevantes para expressar essas emoções. Um ato de fala ou uma forma escrita é um produto visível desse processo emergente. Portanto, a linguagem é gerada como resultado de processos concorrentes. A linguística aumenta a extensão da psicologia, descrevendo fatos de fenômenos linguísticos que ocorrem tanto na forma oral quanto na escrita. Qualquer material das línguas nacionais tem um valor inerente que reflete sua organização sistemática, sua extensão de expressão, padrões psicologicamente estáveis ou paradigmáticos, ou está sujeito a mudanças psicológicas comuns que ocorrem em um grupo de falantes nativos de uma determinada língua. Ambas as formas de condenação oral e escrita devem ser consideradas como um dos mais antigos proto-paradigmas psicolinguísticos. Especial enfoque será dado ao modelo verbal das fórmulas de maldição bíblicas (particularmente, o Antigo Testamento), atestadas em antigos documentos históricos georgianos (IX-XII cc.). A condenação como um modelo psico-verbal deve ser originária do período mais antigo da existência da humanidade, quando um ser humano ganhou uma compreensão sólida do poder da palavra, comparando-a com as habilidades físicas até certo ponto. A condenação como material verbal também se manifestou em monumentos escritos e seu raciocínio psicoemocional pretendia, antes de tudo, incutir medo (especificamente, temor de Deus) e ter leitores tementes a Deus. Problemas da condenação na literatura recentemente encontrados são materiais históricos (registros) bíblicos e georgianos, revelando os chamados textos de condenação particularmente meticulosos de escolha: é fato que pretendem causar ansiedade nos leitores.

Palavras-chave: Textos de condenação; documentos históricos georgianos; Antigo Testamento; modelo psicoverbal; medo; ansiedade.

Introduction

Any language as a psycholinguistic entity does not only accumulates in itself the emotional states but also explores the relevant verbal ways for expressing these emotions. We believe that from this perspective, any of the national language material has an inherent value that reflects its systematic organization, its expression extent, psychologically stable or paradigmatic patterns, or is subject to common psychological changes emerging from a particular language native speaker.

From our point of view, we consider both oral and written damnation forms as one of such damnation oldest psycholinguistic proto-paradigms. In this presentation, special focus will be given to the Biblical (particularly, the Old Testament) verbal model curse *formulae*, attested in old Georgian historical documents (IX-XII c.c.).

Damnation as a psycho-verbal model is supposed to be originating from the mankind existence earliest period, when a human being had an in-depth-understanding of the word matching power it against physical abilities to a certain extent. Damnation as a verbal material has been manifested in written monuments as well and its psycho-emotional rationale intended, first, and foremost, to instill fear, (specifically, fear of God) to have God-fearing readers.

Therefore, we selected the so-called damnation texts, poured into the readers (listeners) minds with expressive force. The fear emotion, referred to as a "lower" emotion (Rubinshtein, 2002 [1946], 459) in psychology, is dominant in the damnation texts, however, it is a fact that it intends to cause anxiety in readers. A fear feeling seems to be basic, while the anxiety emotion brought about by fear is superimposed.

We believe that taken together they serve as a basis for damnation *formulae* occuring in the Georgian historical documents and providing textual materials that should have stemmed from the Old Testament texts. The Biblical phrase "thou art cursed" (Dochanashvili, Genesis, 1981, Ch. 3) is the crucial verbal formula which, though slightly modified, is still manifested in the Georgian historical documents due to the same psychological motive: instilling the fear

emotion ("Let Father, Son and Holy Spirit condemn him" [IX c.]; or "let his sleep and wakefulness be cursed" [IX c.]).

A fear feeling seems to be basic, while the anxiety emotion brought about by fear is superimposed. We believe that taken together, fear and anxiety serve as a basis for damnation *formulae* occuring in the Georgian historical documents and providing textual materials that should have stemmed from the Old Testament texts.

1. Theorical framework

It should be briefly noted how an emotion is defined by psychology. Dimitry Uznadze, the Theory of Set founder, specifically discusses the emotions classes and, following W. Stern's theory (Stern, 1935, Ch. 4), holds that "the life of a human being unfolds in the present, however, it incorporates both the past and the future" (Uznadze, 2006, 135). The feelings surrounding the future imply anticipation, fear and hope, among others, while at the same time, fear occurs among unpleasant emotions. Even though emotions as life psychological facts have been under uninterrupted investigation so far, "we lack satisfactory qualification of emotions today", states D. Uznadze (2006, 136). Nevertheless, scholars collectively agree that fear is a basic human emotion (Goryanina, 2002, 416) that warns of threat and depends on multiple internal as well as external factors.

Fear emerges due to several reasons, for instance, loneliness or inability to self-evaluate. However, from our point of view, the fear emotion in verbal curse *formulae* draws upon self-preservation, one of the major instincts that causes acute stress, forcing a human being to flee away from an expected threat to protect oneself from anticipated adversity. In such a case, the curse is a signaling text, being perceived on an individual level. The once perceived disastrous event contributes to imagining another one, leading to the association as a psychological phenomenon.

2. Methodological framework

To clarify the expression specificities of the verbal models for curse *formulae* as early as in the Old Testament texts, we need to identify several major grounds for the language communicative activity, such as: a) a cursing person, i.e., the subject who initiates cursing; b) an object of cursing, and c) a fear-embodying verbal form, or a text, whose form specificity should be determined through a descriptive method. Furthermore, the first two communicative components themselves are interactive, while the intermediary link represents the text, which draws upon a fact association perceived by a speaker or a listener. The linguistic choice is governed by the three components, the distributive material of which has a somewhat paradigmatic nature.

Figure 1. Three communicative components of language activity.

Source: author

A directly proportional interrelationship occurs between the aforementioned three communicative components. Among them, both the curse Subject and Object are conscious, intellectual beings, while the intermediary link is represented by the verbal material communicated by the Curse Subject to the Curse Object, who has cognitive powers. Such texts, normally, incorporate social and cultural aspects and they activate memory, certainly implying the social group for which the curse text is intended (for instance, for sinners or an individual that commits a particular crime). Further it indicates the cultural development level of the particular language native speaker group, and the cultural values that govern their life social mode.

While discussing the culture general meaning, S. Freud claims that

> "life in our universe serves some higher purpose which is, indeed, hard to discern, however, it inevitably implies striving towards human perfection. Spirituality in a human being – the spirit should probably be

the object of improvement and refinement" […] "kindness will ultimately be duly rewarded, and evil will be punished" (Freud, 2014, 21).

Thus, this cultural values area (with a religious standard at its core) is somehow universal: both the semantic model and the curse psychological structure should be understood as a universal entity, thoroughly examined below.

3. Results and discussion

Let us examine several curse texts from the Bible, namely, from the book of Genesis (Dochanashvili, 1981):

Text I (God's curse upon the serpent):

> And the LORD God said unto the serpent: Because thou <u>hast done</u> this, thou **art cursed** above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life. And I will <u>put enmity</u> between thee and the woman (Dochanashvili, 1981, Genesis, 3, 14-15) (author's bold)..

Text II (God's curse upon the woman [Eve]): "Unto the woman he said, I will greatly <u>multiply</u> thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt <u>bringforth</u> children; and thy desire <u>shall b</u>e to thy husband, and he <u>shall rule</u> over thee." (Dochanashvili, 1981, Genesis, 3, 16).

Text III (God's curse upon the man [Adam]): "And unto Adam he said, … **cursed** is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou <u>eat</u> of it all the days of thy life"; […] "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou <u>eat</u> bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." (Dochanashvili, 1981, Genesis, 3, 17-19) (author's bold).

Text IV (God's curse upon Cain): "And now **art thou cursed** from the earth, which hath <u>opened</u> her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand; When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth <u>yield</u> unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond <u>shalt thou be</u> in the earth." (Dochanashvili, 1981, Genesis, 4, 11-12) (author's bold).

The above-cited verbal samples clearly demonstrate that the lexical level of the curse *formulae* is governed by the phrase *"**thou art cursed**"*. The latter is inserted in the text beginning and it is, therefore, naturally prepositive, being the most principal segment, which impacts both the idea further development and the text grammatical structure.

As for the grammatical features, intense language-specific positions are attested in terms of both morphology and syntax. The verbal forms in which God curses are striking in terms of morphology, for example, წყეულ იყავნ, literally translated as 'They are cursed'; the Biblical phrase "or thou shalt bring forth", პმჳნე, literally translated as 'h/she'; the Biblical phrase "he shall rule", გეუფლებოდეს შენ, literally translated as 'to possess you' or "shalt thou eat" (სჭამდე), literally translated as "it shall [not] yield"; არა literally translated as "No" ; მესძინოს literally translated as "to acquire" and so on.

Given the fact that the verbal content of subjunctive forms, due to their nature, imply assuming or presupposing a particular action, in Old Georgian language they also had a function to express the action supposed to be conducted in the future (they still maintain such a morphological function even in modern Georgian). It should also be mentioned that a curse has two different purposes: a) on the one hand, it declares a verdict or judgment for already committed sins and b) on the other hand, it hiders the expected offence (or sin) that could possibly be committed only in the future. Therefore, the future tense contents in the curse texts merge with contents and subjunctive mood grammatical forms.

> As for syntactic modeling, it is standard to a certain extent. Namely, we suggest that the written curse texts follow structural possibilities of a particular literary language, employing merging syntactic means, as well as subordination and coordination. These texts significantly differ from simple sentence *formulae*, which are typical to colloquial speech frequently occuring in spoken Georgian, for example, "To hell with you!", "Damn you!" and so on.

The literary language old age and its linguistic experience reasonably impact the ideas or sentences complexity and structure. If we take into account Chomsky's fundamental scholarly position, holding that every syntactic structure is based on the inherent language nature, it becomes clear that the linguistic manifestation of any idea is supported by such a universal fundament. Defining linguistics task Chomsky (1957, 85) claims:

> So far we have considered the linguist's task to be that of producing a device of some sort (called a grammar) for generating all and only the sentences of a language" […] therefore, "it leads us naturally to establish phrase structure and transformational structure as distinct levels of representation for grammatical sentences (Chomsky 1957, 85).

It should be emphasized the distinction Chomsky does between competence and performance:

> Linguistic theory is concerned primarily with and ideal speaker-listener, in a completely homegeneous speech-community, who knows its language perfectly and is unaffected by such grammatically irrelevant conditions as memory limitations, distractions, shifts of attention and interest, and errors (random or characteristic) in applying his knowledge of the language in actual performance (Chomsky, 1965, 3).

Consequently, a Biblical curse, showing stylistic ancient literary characteristics, may cause less or major degrees of acceptability among its readers.

Robert J. Sternberg (2009, 361), who is the author of *Cognitive Psychology,* diverging with Chomsky, states that language is the use of an organized means of combining words in order to communicate with those around us. It also makes it possible to think about things and processes we currently cannot see, hear, feel, touch, or smell, although language being manifested through sensory organs participation, the basis that generates the ideas system, which we otherwise identify as a language.

Despite the fact that syntactic structures and vocabulary differ across languages, a language still remains the way of communication conducted through the transmission of signaling means. In curse texts, the verbal forms of imperative and subjunctive mood certainly remain as signaling grammatical means, while the future tense takes a dominant position in terms of the category of tense in the subjunctive.

We will specifically concentrate on the importance of the imperative mood, which is determined by its own nature in the curse texts. Namely, the cursing entity (in our case, the God) with His powers largely exceeds the (physical, moral) abilities of the Curse Objects. Therefore, the cursing entity is sublime (being the "higher power"), looking down upon an inferior object. Such a semantic imperativism is manifested by means of the imperative mood.

In addition, the cursing entity employs the curse text in order to attack the communicator entity and attempts to trigger the fear emotion in order to ensure the self-defense, or the society defense. G. Kiknadze (1953, 44) claims that "the main purpose of the curse is to hinder the negative action as well as impact on the part of the object" and, indeed, by emphasizing the moral criteria and instilling the fear emotion, the cursing entity belittles and suppresses the object. Multiplicity of imperative forms in curse texts is a given, in terms of grammar. The logical sequence of these forms is displayed within the syntactic structure (for instance, in Text **III,** წყეულ იყავნ, literally translated as 'They are cursed'; "shalt thou eat" (სჭამდე), literally translated as "it shall [not] yield"; "shalt thou return"; მიიქცე literally translated as "behave".

It should hereby be noted that there is an important semantic difference between the Curse Subject and the Curse Object. If the Curse Subject is a particular entity (in this case, God), the Curse Object is generalized in terms of content, denoting an uncertain, unspecified person, the possible "sinner", the "guilty one".

We must also consider that a curse is a cognitive-linguistic phenomenon developing in parallel with a blessing. The availability of antonyms and binarity is presumably typical to an earlier language phase, leading to proto-languages: The opposition pair blessing / cursing possibly illustrates proto-concepts, originated in the era when a human being contraposed pleasant and unpleasant emotions thought.

4. Conclusions

The lexical and grammatical analysis of curse texts from the Old Testament allows us identifying several main linguistic features. We notice that typologically there is a similar situation in old Georgian historical documents, the absolute majority ending with the written curse text. For protection purposes, grant deeds would incorporate the curse as an essential attribute.

Being mainly Clergymen, the Curse Subjects specified the curse texts in the name of God. Such is the case in both Deeds, that is, "The Deed Concerning the Cave of the Family of Pavneli" (second half of the 9th century) and "The Deed by *Catholicos* Melkisedek" [1031-1033]. The latter is the Commemoration text of Mtskheta Church, specifying the offerings and donations to the Church. Below are the excerpts from above-mentioned texts:

Text I (signed by the *Catholicos*):

> […] and whoever of whatever origin alters" [literally: will alter] [it], "let he become estranged from the Christian faith; and **cursed be with divine wrath** by the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, **cursed be** his sleep as well his conscious state, his grave and remembrance… let he and his ancestry, kindred and memory of him be bound with inseparable shackles of Satan ["The Deed Concerning the Cave of the Family of Pavneli"] (Enukidze et al.1984, 19). (author's bold)

Text II (approval):

> Whoever modifies/forges (literally: will modify/will forge) [… it] **is cursed** by the Almighty God, by the grace of the Holy Mother of God, and by the grace of the holy catholic church, Holy Apostles and all Saints; his very essence **is cursed** in this world as well as in the next world whoever commits a breach ["The Deed by *Catholicos* Melkisedek"] (Records 1984: 29) (author's bold).

Other deeds that were executed in the same period reflect the same situation (for instance, "The Deed by Bagrat IV of Georgia to Opiza and Midznadzori Fathers" [1054/1072], or "The Deed by

Bagrat IV of Georgia to the Shio-Mgvime Lavra" [1057/1058]).

The quoted samples demonstrate that almost everything remains intact in terms of linguistic-communicative standard, including the "cursed is", lexical segment, and both future tense and subjunctive mood still prevail: "will alter" შეუცვალოს literaly translated as "change"; "will modify"/ "will forge" აქციოს literaly translated as " to turn" and so on). It is apparent that the curse *formulae* attested in the Old Georgian texts assume the form of divine damnation, all Curse Subjects act in the name of God attempting to intimidate Curse Objects verbally. The Recipient (the communicator Object) is given the psycho-linguistic signal through the text and a core function is performed by the lexical level in the curse. Due to expressive impact, the curse reading contributes to increased anxiety in readers. Contrary to Chomsky (1957, 94) who affirms that "There is, however, little evidence that "intuition about meaning" is at all useful in the actual investigation of linguistic form", I believe that intuition about meaning of the curse provides for both semantic and structural transformation.

The materials that serve the same functions are distributed in different linguistic variations; however, their vector as well as the psychological significance remains unaltered. The Curse Subject directs the verbal form towards the Object and resorts to the intimidation as a main psycho-semantic tool.

Thus, curses and the written forms of their expression are intended to have psychological impact on a human being (Object), further altering the brain connections in substantial ways. This leads to a psychological response in an individual in the form of anxiety in order to prompt expected threat or distress (in this study, the divine wrath), forcing the individual (the communicator Object) to exert self-control over his own actions through the increased emotion of fear in order to avoid a potential threat which is the so called "harsh divine judgment".

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