

ТЕОРЕТИЧЕСКАЯ, ПРИКЛАДНАЯ И СРАВНИТЕЛЬНО-СОПОСТАВИТЕЛЬНАЯ ЛИНГВИСТИКА /
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CULTURALLY DEPENDENT SEMANTICS OF CURSING IN THE DARGWA AND THE LAK LANGUAGES

Research article

Mishaeva M.V.^{1,*}, Mishaeva L.K.²

¹ORCID : 0000-0001-8681-2592;

¹Dagestan State University, Makhachkala, Russian Federation

²Secondary school №34, Makhachkala, Russian Federation

* Corresponding author (mishmar78[at]mail.ru)

Abstract

The Dargins and the Laks (Laki) are speakers inhabiting central and south parts of Dagestan, North Caucasus. In the North Caucasus, people believe cursing expressions have destructive and powerful significance. Although in the Dargwa and Lak cultures curse words are used to cause fear, to express emotions and negative attitude towards others, cursing practice is not well studied and documented.

The objective of this article is to describe the sociolinguistic meanings and the structural patterns of cursing expressions in the Dargwa and the Lak languages, and then to compare the expressions to uncover if there are universal tendencies in the rules and routines of cursing. The study follows qualitative and comparative research methodologies. The major part of cursing expressions were collected from aged and middle-aged key informants. The findings showed that cursing seems to be realized through much the same means in both cultures. It predominantly refers to bodily functions, supernatural beings and religion.

Keywords: cursing, Dargwa, Lak, linguistic behavior, beliefs.

КУЛЬТУРНО-ОБУСЛОВЛЕННАЯ СЕМАНТИКА РУГАТЕЛЬСТВ В ДАРГИНСКОМ И ЛАКСКОМ ЯЗЫКАХ

Научная статья

Мишаева М.В.^{1,*}, Мишаева Л.К.²

¹ORCID : 0000-0001-8681-2592;

¹Дагестанский государственный университет, Махачкала, Российская Федерация

²Средняя общеобразовательная школа №34, Махачкала, Российская Федерация

* Корреспондирующий автор (mishmar78[at]mail.ru)

Аннотация

Даргинцы и лакцы народности, населяющие центральную и южную части Дагестана, Северный Кавказ. На Северном Кавказе ругательствам приписывают деструктивное значение. В даргинской и лакской культурах ругательства используются для того, чтобы вызвать страх, выразить эмоции и негативное отношение к другим, однако практика ругательств недостаточно изучена и задокументирована.

Цель этой статьи состоит в том, чтобы описать социолингвистические значения и структурные модели ругательных выражений в даргинском и лакском языках, а затем сравнить выражения обоих языков, чтобы выявить, существуют ли универсальные тенденции в правилах употребления ругательств. Исследование следует качественным и сравнительным методам исследования. Основная часть ругательных выражений была собрана у ключевых информантов старшего и среднего возраста. Выводы показали, что проклятия, по-видимому, реализуются с помощью одних и тех же средств в обеих культурах. В основном в проклятиях фигурируют части тела, сверхъестественные существа и религиозные представления.

Ключевые слова: ругательства, даргинский язык, лакский язык, языковое поведение, проклятия.

Introduction

1.1. Background

The Dargins and the Laks (Laki) are ethnic groups living in the Dagestan Republic that occupies large territory of the North Caucasus within the Russian Federation. The population is about 750 000 people (about 550 000 Dargins and 200 000 Laks) and more than a thousand years of Islam culture. The Dargwa language has more than 20 dialects clusters, and there are 10 dialects in Lak. The languages are grouped into Lak-Dargwa subgroup of North Caucasian language family.

This work presents different semantic groups of curse set phrases in the two language cultures, and takes into account some facts causing this special kind of linguistic behavior.

Cursing is an essential element of every language, as a term it refers to emotionally powerful offensive words that are used predominantly to wish harm on a person. Curse words permit speakers to express strong emotions and produce negative impact on their listeners. Due to the strong negative and offensive meanings curse words and curse set phrases are as a rule excluded from language studies, and language theories represent formal and polite languages, 'ideal' ones, without any references to strong human emotions and motivation. In this paper curse words, especially curse set phrases, are regarded as an important and unique part of languages not because they provide information about feelings and emotional state, but because they reflect the national cultures, religious beliefs, standards norms of behavior. Both Dargwa and Lak people believe cursing has magic power to cause harm to a guilty person. They mention natural phenomena and supernatural characters in their speech, as well

as metaphor. As cursing, is mainly an oral practice, not a written speech, we used key informants' discourse for analysis. This article deals with curse set phrases of these languages, not other types of bad language such as vulgarisms and insults.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

The language of cursing in the Dargwa and Lak cultures has not been a subject for a distinct linguistic study; and it is not documented the way cursing language is used; various sociolinguistic and pragmatic meanings, as well as purpose of the emotional speech in communication process are ignored. On the other hand, the dynamic characteristic of the language is clearly seen on a lexical level, and cursing expressions are not an exception. Changes in the social structure, ideology, including politics and religion, process of globalization and other modern trends and sociological factors influence the oral speech culture so that cursing expressions are becoming less forceful for youngsters than they are for elders. That is the reason elderly and middle-aged informants' statements predominate in this study. Thus, the present study is an attempt to document some of the cursing set phrases, and to show their sociolinguistic role in the Dargwa and Lak languages.

1.3. Objective

The aim of this article is to investigate the different types of cursing in the two native languages of Dagestan and discuss whether the similarities might be universal for this special type of linguistic expressions. We attempt to describe the peculiarities of the expressions in these languages, as well as to find out the way cursing reflects the people believes and fears. This can be interesting if compared with European languages, which speakers have different traditions, thus there can be some similarities despite diverse cultures.

The study presents the attempt to document some of the cursing vocabulary in the two languages and to describe their semantic features.

Research methods and principles

2.1. Methodology

The study follows a practical research methodology. Informants were asked to reproduce some cursing expressions, their responses were audio and video recorded, typed as text and then transliterated into English. The examples were systematized into four groups due to their semantics and component structure.

2.2. Definitions and state of the art

Curse words are an essential part of communication process and contain emotional information. Montagu [7] proposed that all modern languages have developed from primitive linguistic utterances that were comparable with swearing. Knowledge of cursing formulas, semantics of their components as well as historical and cultural background helps to predict the conditions under which a speaker in the culture is likely to use this or that curse set phrase. A curse set phrase is a formula used to wish harm to somebody or to invoke a supernatural power for harm to come to a specific person or a group.

Jay [3] noticed that words for cursing get their power through religious or social demarcation. Cursing implies danger for the speaker and has the function of transferring attention from the speaker to the target of the curse.

According to Wyss [12, P. 17], cursing is a magical or a prophetic speech act that is the negative counterpart to a blessing.

There is so far little literature on cursing in Dagestan languages, in particular in Dargwa and Lak, but we came across works of Radjabova [10] and Alieva [1]. A comparison between Dargwa and Lak cursing may thus give other perspectives on stating universal character of cursing. The examples taken from the two languages can give the interested researchers a good incentive to replicate the research in their own languages and to compare the results with the suggested findings of the study.

Main results

3.1. Why do we curse?

Cursing can be understood as a form of aggression and can be examined from very different perspectives. This research focuses on native beliefs and cultural background of cursing episodes and provides the sociolinguistics perspective. There can be several causes for cursing, moral reasoning and coping skills depend on speaker's emotional state, psychological development and social context. Curse phrases examples of the two languages are analyzed and incorporated into four groups.

3.2. Curse set phrases that include somatonyms

Across the world, the most commonly used taboo categories for swearing involve bodily functions, body parts, sex, and religion [9], [11]. Native speakers of Dargwa and Lak tend to use names of the parts of human body within their cursing formulas: 'hand/hands' Dargwa: *някъ/ някъби*, Lak: *ка/кару*; 'mouth' Dargwa: *мух1ли*, Lak: *къац1*; 'tongue' Dargwa: *лезми*, Lak: *маз*; 'eyes' - Dargwa: *х1улби*, Lak: *яру*; 'head' Dargwa: *бек1* Lak: *барх1*; 'heart' Dargwa: *урк1и*, Lak: *къюнк1*; 'back' Dargwa: *къакъ*; 'legs' Dargwa: *къяшми*, Lak: *ччанну*; 'belly/stomach' Dargwa: *кани*, Lak: *лякъа*.

The examples below show cursing expressions used in Dargwa to wish horrible thing happened to the cursed:

- (1) *Бек1 бячаб!* 'Your head to be crashed';
 - (2) *Дарг х1урасаб сунела!* 'Your guts (insides) to be come out';
 - (3) *Сунна урк1и берц1аб!* 'May his heart be fried';
 - (4) *Къакъла лига бяч* 'Let your backbone be broken'.
- Desiring terrifying thing happen to the evil doer in Lak:
- (5) *Вил бак1 гъагъибуй!* 'Your head to be crashed';
 - (6) *Вил няракъатта пнив шибуи!* 'Your skull with brain to be exploded';
 - (7) *Му ттимлик1рал бярчу вих багъи вил* 'Your spine to fall down';
 - (8) *Бюрх1ал авлия!* 'Fool science birth'.

These cursing expressions are metaphoric wishes of death. Phrases (9), (10) in Dargwa and (11) and (12) in Lak may be interrupted as wanting the target person to die or to live very poor, because the majority of the population are rural farmers and to lose the limbs is equal to get disability to regain their livelihood.

Dargwa:

(9) Някъби деръаб х1ела 'Let your arms dry off';

(10) Къяшми дуръ! 'Let your legs dry off';

Lak:

(11) Вил кару къкъвибуѳ! 'Let your arms dry off';

(12) Учанну къкъвибуѳ! 'Let your legs dry off'.

The most common cursing expressions of Dargwa include somatonyms 'mouth' *мух1ли*, and 'tongue' *лезми*. This fact elucidates the role of speech organs in human life: they are used for vital functions – eating and communication. Speakers use these words in cursing metaphorically, for example:

(13) Лезмилизи милкъи бик! 'Your tongue be infested by a worm';

(14) Мух1ли мулкѳа берг! 'Your mouth be eaten by a worm'.

Such a curse means 'die,' 'die in whole, not in part - for example just a mouth and lie in a grave where worms will eat a person's mouth'. The curse with similar meaning in Lak:

(15) Му къац1либун шатта багѳи вил 'Your mouth be infested by worms';

(16) Му маз шатрал буки вил 'Your tongue be eaten by worms'.

Some other strong wishes for a wrongdoer's speech organs to be damaged in Dargwa:

(17) Мух1ли беръ! 'Let your mouth wither and fall';

(18) Лезми беръ! 'Let your tongue dry off';

(19) Мух1ли берд! 'Let your mouth tear up';

(20) Лезми чеббик! 'Let your tongue tear off'.

Alike cursing in Lak:

(21) Вил му маз бякъвибуѳ! 'Your tongue to be frozen dead'.

The curser in (22) is wishing the cursed to die and then a piece of cotton to be put into his/her mouth:

(22) Вил зумув (къац1ливу) памма бишибуѳ 'Let a clod of cotton be put into your mouth'.

A non-religious curse is often aimed cause disfunction of body parts as in Dargwa (22) *Х1улби дац1* 'May your eyes go dry',

however, for some cursing historical events may be a background. There were some episodes in Dagestan history when conquerors took out eyes of native folks resisting to capture:

(23) *Х1улби дурадикаб сунела!* 'May your eyes roll out' (Dargwa);

(24) *Яру цяв экви лагибуѳ!* 'Let your eyes roll down on the ground' (Lak).

Somatonyms are anthropomorphic metaphors used for metonymic reference to label a certain person mainly a relative (Lak: *яру* 'eyes' denote children/ offspring) or actions, activities, processes (Lak: *лякъа* 'stomach/belly' ability to give birth, to have a baby):

(25) *Ми яру леци вил* 'May your eyes (*яру* 'eyes' – children) go out';

(26) *Вил ляква къакъвибуѳ!* 'May your womb go dried (you would not be able to have a baby).

Allegoric wish for the cursed to die is in Lak:

(27) *Къюк1 чарин дукибуѳ!* 'Let your heat turn into a stone (I wish you were dead)', as that is wanting for the essential part of living organism to have nonliving characteristics.

3.3. Cursing wrongdoer's relatives

While act of cursing an evil doer may be subject to die or to be killed by different means:

Dargwa:

(28) *Алахб!* 'May him peg out';

(29) *Берц1* 'May him get fried';

(30) *Кавшаб!* 'May him be killed' / (31) *Кави* 'May him be killed';

(32) *Беръаб!* 'May him be rotten' / (33) *Беръ!* 'May him be rotten'.

Lak:

(34) *Ивк1у!* 'Drop dead';

(35) *Учучу!* 'Go burnt';

(36) *Аью!* 'Rot!/Sod off'

Cursing somebody's relatives can mention one of addressee's relative, but predominantly the cursing formulas are used to affect the whole extended family (*tukhum*), all relatives of the addressee, even already died to the moment.

Dargwa:

(37) *Сунела неш каруш!* 'May his mother be murdered';

(38) *Дудеш кави* 'May his father be killed';

(39) *Сунела бег1ти алх!* 'May his parents die';

(40) *Сунела вег1ебш!* 'May our host get lost';

(41) *Верх1ли авцили кавхаб сунела урши!* 'May his son be carried by seven men';

(42) *Жинс къябберд!* 'May all your generations be over'.

Lak:

(43) *Вил баба дирч1ибуй!* 'May your mother die';

(44) *Зуйн ц1у дагѳибухѳул* 'May fire burn out all your family';

(45) *Зул тѳухум бух лагибухѳул* 'May all your family stop to exist';

(46) *Зуйн паранна дагѳибухѳул* 'May the thunder bolt kill your *tukhum!* / May your family be hit and killed by lightning'.

The people believe that a curse may bring harm to individuals or a group. They usually refrain from doing any evil and being cursed for that as fear evil happen to themselves, their relatives or their seven lines descendants. They doubtless believe in power of cursing words and do their best to avoid evil eyed people.

3.4. Curse phrase with mythological component

The cursing formula can call for evil creatures to cause harm. In Dargwa and Lak they often use Jinn or Shaitan – euphemized forms of Satan /Devil.

Dargwa:

(47) *X1y шайт1унта арух* ‘May the devil take you away’;

(48) *X1y жиндли арук* ‘May the jin take you away’;

(49) *X1ези жинд бик* ‘May you be possessed by demon’;

(50) *X1y шайт1унтази вик* ‘May you get to devils’.

The Lak believes a person may be mad because he or she possesses the evil spirit:

(51) *Га цяйт1антрал увуу ур* ‘He is pissed off about jins’;

(52) *Жиндрал хьуну ур* ‘The demon took possession of him’;

(53) *Ганаву цяйт1ан цябик1ур бур* ‘The demon took possession of him’;

(54) *Ганайх жиндалулу хъа ришуну дур* ‘He was hit by a demon’s wing (he was driven mad by a demon)’.

3.5. Religiously reasoned cursing

Patrick (1901) considered different kinds of religious swearwords related to sacred places or sacred matters of religion, be the origin of "cursing." Cursing phrases of this group in Dargwa and Lak are based predominately on Islam tradition and often have borrowings from Arab: *Аллагъ* ‘Allah/God’, *кьяяма* ‘judgment day’, *жагъаннаб* ‘hell’, *алжана* ‘paradise’, *итил дунья* ‘afterlife’, *жан, рух1* ‘life/spirit’, *ахир* ‘afterlife’:

(55) *Жан дурасаб сунела!* ‘May life be taken away from him’ (Dargwa);

(56) *Рух1 музадухъаб сунела!* ‘May his soul be in a search’ (Dargwa);

(57) *Вил ахир пуч шибуй!* ‘May end of your life be bad’ (Lak).

Some curses that used frequently are short and express anger and hostility, as in Dargwa: (58) *Жагъаннаб!* ‘Hell’; (59) *Жагъаннабла ц1а х1ед!* ‘May hell fire burn you’, in Lak: (60) *Дуржагъ!* ‘Hell’; (61) *Дуржагърал ц1у вин!* ‘Hell fire on you’. The speaker and the target person clearly understand the meaning of these curse words. They are likely to be addressed to close people (relatives) not like a real wish for harm happened to them but as alternative verbal and symbolic aggression instead of act of physical aggression.

Religiously motivated cursing is often used in episodes of strong anger and the purpose of its usage is 1) to affect emotionally the wrongdoer and 2) to ask the most powerful being, Allah, and other phenomena mentioned in The Holly Book, for justice.

Dargwa:

(62) *Я, Аллагъ, кьяяма кадизаб х1ед!* ‘Oh, Allah may the judgment day come to you’;

(63) *Кьяямала барх1и кабизаб х1ед!* ‘May you have the judgment day’.

Lak:

(64) *Я, Аллах, ина ласи кьисас!* ‘Oh, Allah may the judgment day come to you’;

(65) *Аллагънал рища вийх!* ‘May Allah punish you’;

(66) *Я, Аллагъ, вил ахир оьнин дукканнавча!* ‘Oh, Allah, may you have an awful end’.

The goal for every Muslim is to gain God’s favor so that he or she can be free from the punishment of hell, and curse somebody ends with him/her going to hell is one of the most terrifying.

Dargwa:

(67) *Жагъаннабла лут1улизи кааби* ‘May you get at the bottom of hell’;

(68) *Жагъаннабла ц1али вигаби* ‘Let the fire of hell consume you’;

Lak:

(69) *Дуржагърал ц1арал чучу ина!* ‘May you burn in the fire of hell’.

The curser may wish the wrongdoers with their deaths they would not enter paradise of the afterlife.

Dargwa:

(70) *Алжанализи мавикаб сай!* ‘May him not to get to heaven’;

(71) *Алжана чемаабааб сунени!* ‘May him not to see heaven at all’.

People curse in order to fulfill their emotional needs, thus the cursers may fear that the curse will harm them and their descendants, if they are wrong and curse an innocent person not that one who has done the evil act. A person being dissatisfied with the people, in case of disaffection, and no longer willing to live under the conditions may curse:

(72) *Ахир заман бивзун бур!* ‘Life got corrupted, the judgment day to come (extremely unsatisfied by somebody’s behavior)’ (Lak).

3.6. Similarities and differences between Dargwa and Lak cursing

The nature of cursing is almost the same in these languages. Cursing seems to be realized through much the same means in both cultures. These people living in a well-defined area have quite the similar experiences, values and attitudes. By studying the culture of cursing, in fact culture is being studied. Cursing of these two languages refers to bodily functions, supernatural beings and religion. Cursing phrases often contain invocations of heavenly or infernal powers, as in these societies calling on evil supernatural beings is believed to cause bad luck, death, illness, and offensiveness for a wrongdoer.

Conclusion

Documentation of the curse set phrases can be a resource for dictionary making and global lexical databases, where such vocabulary is often neglected. The study can be significant for taxonomy of cursing through documentation of the various

socio-cultural meanings of cursing used by native speakers of the two languages. The findings of this comparative study contribute to the field of socio-cultural and anthropological linguistics in general.

Конфликт интересов

Не указан.

Рецензия

Все статьи проходят рецензирование. Но рецензент или автор статьи предпочли не публиковать рецензию к этой статье в открытом доступе. Рецензия может быть предоставлена компетентным органам по запросу.

Conflict of Interest

None declared.

Review

All articles are peer-reviewed. But the reviewer or the author of the article chose not to publish a review of this article in the public domain. The review can be provided to the competent authorities upon request.

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