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Barış GÖRÜNÜŞ
Gülşen TORUSDAĞ
Korkut Uluç İŞİSAĞ

Dilbilimi Deęerlendirmeleri

Barıř GÖRÜNÜř

Gölřen TORUSDAĖ

Korkut Uluę İřİSAĖ

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Dilbilimi Değerlendirmeleri

Yazar: Barış GÖRÜNÜŞ

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"Bu kitapta yer alan bölümlerde kullanılan kaynakların, görüşlerin, bulguların, sonuçların, tablo, şekil, resim ve her türlü içeriğin sorumluluğu yazar veya yazarlarına ait olup ulusal ve uluslararası telif haklarına konu olabilecek mali ve hukuki sorumluluk da yazarlara aittir."

LINGUISTIC VARIATION AND IDENTITY

Barış GÖRÜNÜŞ¹

Gülşen TORUSDAĞ²

1. INTRODUCTION

Language is not just a tool to start a conversation but rather it is a foundation of culture, a sign of acceptance, and a way of understanding the world. Language is full of with social meanings that can reflect and maintain hierarchies and norms, from linguistic diversity to choose of vocabulary and accent, dialect and register. Sociolinguistics, a branch of linguistics which focuses on the relationship between language and society has for a long time studied how language varieties reflect and determine status and power relations within society (Labov, 1972; Trudgill, 2000). The regional and social dialects provide important information about the person such as where he comes from, his social class and the groups he belongs to. Also, registers, jargon, and argot provide information about language variation according to context or to identify the members of a certain group. In addition, there are practices like code-switching in which a person moves from one language to another depending on the situation. However, such differences are not valueless or insignificant. While the case in most societies where some forms of speech are associated with certain levels of status that enable a person to move up the social ladder and gain better chances in life; the reverse is true for others, thus perpetuating inequality and exclusion (Bourdieu, 1991; Lippi-Green, 2012). The connection between language variation and status hierarchy demonstrates how language is a powerful tool in shaping people's perceptions, interactions and access to possibilities. As Wodak (2002, pp. 7-8) expresses, language use, in speech and writing, is a social practice that "implies a dialectical relationship between a particular discursive event and the situation(s), institution(s) and social structure(s) which frame it: the discursive event is shaped by them, but it also shapes them."

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People present themselves to others through their chosen language or language variety, so there is a relation between language and identity. Identity refers to the facts that separate the individual from others and make him different. Identity has two interrelated dimensions, one individual and the other collective or social. Language choice and language itself are part of both individual and collective identity construction. In the words of Vatandaş (2021, pp. 237-238), individual identity, in its shortest terms, refers to the individual's approach to the world he lives in and the beliefs and affiliations that determine his position in this world. Collective identity in its most general terms, corresponds to the individual's self-positioning, self-definition and the social relationships of which he sees himself as an inseparable part. Essentially, there is a social dimension in all identities. Since, even if it is individual, identity is constructed and gains meaning within the social structure and in the face of the other. On the other hand, identity is a matter of meaning and meaning always involves interaction.

As Wodak also points out people identify with others through language choice or language diversity. Languages and language use reveal 'who we are' and we define reality largely through our language and linguistic behavior. All human identities are inherently social, and identity is about meaning, and meaning is realized in contextual use (2012, p. 216). Blommaert's expressions support this view: "Identity is who and what you are" and identity is not a fixed state because "The 'who and what you are' is dependent on context, occasion and purpose" and "identity is semiotic through and through, and every act of semiosis is an act of identity in which we 'give off' information about ourselves." (Blommaert, 2005, pp. 203-204). For the writer, such acts are of enormous complexity, for they involve a great variety of positioning processes such as positioning the individual in relation to socially constructed categories such as gender, occupation, nation, culture, and ethnic language, positioning this complex in relation to other complexes such as young and old, highly educated and less educated, etc., and positioning this identity in relation to the situation at hand, making choices that result in the relevant identity. As Wodak points out, identities are constructed and reconstructed in specific contexts and they are 'co-created' through dynamic relationships. They are often fragmented, dynamic, and variable because individuals own various identities. Identity construction inevitably involves processes of inclusion and exclusion, particularly the portrayal of oneself and others. Individual and collective identities, both national and global, are symbolically

reproduced and manifested (2012, p. 216). For example, immigrants need to redefine or reconstruct their identities to adapt to their new environment. They construct an identity as a constituent of an ethnic group within the broader society. Wodak (2012, p. 216) expresses that language, along with other symbolic systems, is used to identify and describe similarities and differences, creating a distinction between ‘us’ and ‘them’ and for this reason the concept of identity presupposes the existence of both similarities and distinctions.

This chapter investigates the connection between discourse and social spheres, focusing on the important language variation including social dialects, accents, registers, jargon, argot, code switching, code mixing, convergence, divergence, stigma and linguistic prestige. Thus, by examining these aspects, it will be attempted to explain how linguistic behaviors shape and are shaped by identity, inclusion and power relations according to people’s differences in social fields based on the way they speak or their attempts to change their speech.

2. REGISTERS AND CONTEXTUAL ADAPTATION

Registers are the variations which are observed in language use according to the situation, context, and the people involved in the communication. While dialects are defined by geographical and social aspects and are more or less fixed, registers are variable and are defined by the formality, informality, or the technicality of the context. This is why the ability to switch between different registers is important in order to communicate effectively in various situations and to advance in the workplace (Ferguson, 1994). For example, at work, people use the formal register which requires precise language, elaborate sentence structure, and absence of slang. This language use signals the person as being competent, professional and complying with the expected culture at the workplace. On the other hand, the registers used in casual conversations are the ones that are associated with informal situations, and which allow the speakers to create a special relationship with the interlocutor and to reveal personal identity through the use of slangs or colloquial terms.

Failure to employ the appropriate register for a given context can result in social or professional misunderstandings. For example, using an informal tone in a job interview may be perceived as unprofessional, whereas excessive formality in casual interactions might hinder relationship-building. These

dynamics illustrate the social power embedded in linguistic choices, as well as the risks and rewards of register adaptation.

Register flexibility is particularly vital in multilingual or multicultural societies, where individuals navigate diverse linguistic expectations. For marginalized groups, however, the demand for register conformity may feel exclusionary, forcing individuals to suppress cultural expressions to meet dominant societal standards (Lippi-Green, 2012). This tension highlights the need to recognize and value diverse registers in fostering inclusivity and mutual understanding. In addition to social interaction, registers play a crucial role in specialized domains such as academia, law, and medicine. Technical registers within these fields allow practitioners to communicate precisely and efficiently. However, their exclusivity may alienate non-experts, creating barriers to accessibility and understanding. Balancing the technical demands of such registers with the need for inclusivity remains a pressing challenge.

3. JARGON AND ARGOT: TOOLS FOR INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION

Jargon and argot are the set of specialized language which is used in order to communicate the members of certain group, to be more precise, and to feel a part of the group. Although useful, such language tools create division between people and create social barriers that separate the insiders from the outsiders (Crystal, 2003).

Jargon used in professional and technical fields is crucial in it that provides the precision required in the specific field as well as efficiency in communication among the members of a certain field. For instance, medical people use such terms as ‘hypertension’ instead of ‘high blood pressure’ to avoid confusion in diagnosis and treatment (Ferguson, 1994). Likewise, the fields related to technology use terms which include ‘API’ or ‘cloud computing’ that can be easily understood within the field but cannot be understood by a layman (Crystal, 2003). Although jargon helps in communicating within a specific field, it also creates a problem in that it excludes others from understanding the discourse, which results in the perception of exclusivity and elitism (Lippi-Green, 2012). This has practical consequences such as, preventing people from understanding health issues and thus affecting their health decisions or not being able to access legal services.

Argot on the other hand is more or less connected with the minor or alternative groups of society. It is a resource which people use to unite themselves and to stand against conventional culture. For instance, the members of the LGBTQ+ have also created specific language to discuss things related to the community such as “reading” or “shade” as a way of creating an identity and protecting themselves from discrimination (Coupland, 2007). Other cultural groups that also employ argot include youth subcultures like the skateboarding flocks, and the hip-hop nations, to define the culture and defy conformity (Trudgill, 2000). While argot endows power to the members of the group, it may also create more stereotypes or confusion on the part of the non-members (Bourdieu, 1991).

The function of jargon and argot as a means of inclusion within specific groups and exclusion of the uninitiated is also a mirror image of larger cultural trends. On one hand, they create a bond within a group, and make people feel part of a particular community (Auer, 1998). On the other hand, they sustain the division, which excludes those who cannot understand the language. For example, legal terms like “pro bono” or “amicus curiae” not only allow for more specific expression but also excludes those without legal knowledge and thus hinders access to justice (Crystal, 2003). Some measures have been taken in order to break these linguistic barriers in different fields. This is especially so in health campaigns where technical jargon is translated into plain language to enhance understanding and participation especially among the vulnerable groups (Lippi-Green, 2012). Likewise, some educational programs try to help students to learn both the language that is used in specific professional context and the language of everyday use, to prepare them for various contexts (Cheshire, 2004). Such initiatives show how specificity and precision of language can be made more widely accessible without compromising the usefulness of the language.

4. SOCIAL DIALECTS AND GROUP IDENTITY

Social dialects or sociolects are varieties of a language which are linked with certain social groups, for instance, those based on economic status, ethnicity, gender or job status. These dialects reflect the experiences of the members of a certain group, their values and practices, and thus are an important tool of group identification and solidarity (Trudgill, 2000). But social dialects are also important in the member’s and group’s perception

as people within a larger framework, which sustains and deepens existing stereotypes and hierarchies.

For example, AAVE is one of the social dialects that can be attributed to the African American community in the United States of America. AAVE is a variety of English that is spoken by African Americans and has its own grammar, lexicon and pronunciation. AAVE makes people proud of their culture and gives them a sense of belonging to a group of people, but it is not accepted in most mainstream situations, including work and academic environments, where Standard American English is considered the standard (Lippi-Green, 2012). This forms the basis for other forms of discrimination such as linguistic discrimination since people with such accented languages are deemed to have other characteristics that are not desirable in the society. In a similar manner, Cockney English, a working-class sociolect from East London, shows how dialects are linked with class. Despite the fact that Cockney is used in the media, it is usually portrayed as more colloquial or less correct, which strengthens the classism (Coupland, 2007). Such stereotypes influence the behavior of people who speak such dialects in the workplace and other related settings.

The utilization of social dialects is not just a matter of choice of language but it is closely related to power relations and cultural identity. For many minorities, speaking a social dialect is a way of fighting against oppression and against the process of cultural and linguistic eradication (Bourdieu, 1991). Nevertheless, the obligation to adjust to the mainstream language standards makes people alter or hide their dialect, what is called linguistic accommodation. This results to identity crises as well as the loss of cultural identity.

There has been an increasing focus on accepting the right to use social dialects in the last few years. Some of these include educational programs which accept dialectal diversity for example when students are taught about the grammar of AAVE as they learn standard English (Cheshire, 2004). Also, media depictions of various dialects help to break down stereotypes and increase people's appreciation of language differences.

5. CODE-SWITCHING

Code switching which is defined as the process of switching between codes is the use of more than one language or dialect, or the use of formal and informal language depending on the situation is a social and linguistic phenomenon. It is common among the bilingual or multilingual and bicultural people and is a way of dealing with different social contexts. This adaptive behavior enables the speakers to compromise between the language variety that is considered appropriate for a particular context and personal identity as well as balance between the dominant and subordinate roles (Auer, 1998).

In its simplest form, code switching is a way of how polyethnic societies demonstrate their linguistic abilities. For example, a Spanish-English bilingual person working in the United States will use English in the workplace and switch to Spanish when at home; the language variation is based on the culture and relationship with others. This flexible language use is not only strategic but it is also a social act which shows the affiliation with a certain group or the expression of cultural background (Gumperz, 1982).

Code switching is usually used for a number of reasons in the communication process. It can also be used to strengthen a particular point, to elaborate on a message or to convey certain aspects that cannot be well captured in a particular language (Crystal, 2003). Moreover, code switching is commonly employed to display affiliation, especially in situations where language acts as a basis for rapport and group association. For instance, AAVE speakers will code switch and speak Standard American English in the workplace and then switch back to AAVE when not at work, this is done in order to preserve their culture (Lippi-Green, 2012).

However, the use of code switching is not always voluntary. In some instances, the speakers switch to the dominant language variety, sometimes to avoid being discriminated or stereotyped. This phenomenon is more evident in workplaces or schools where non-standard dialects or minority languages are not well received. Such linguistic pressure can cause psychological stress which leads to feelings of inauthenticity or cultural dissociation (Bourdieu, 1991).

Code switching as a process is always a function of the power relations of the society. Standard language varieties and registers which are linked with higher levels of social ranking have more authority. Hence, the speakers of minority languages or non-standard dialects may sometimes be forced

to switch to the standard variety in order to be understood or to be allowed to speak at all (Trudgill, 2000). This is a way of maintaining the existing inequalities, where people are not only evaluated based on their content, but also on the form of it. For instance, in the workplace, people with an accent or non-standard language variety may sometimes feel a pressure to conform to the dominant speech variety expected in the workplace. Also, students who grow up in bilingual environments often are supposed to limit themselves to the majority language when it comes to schooling even though using two languages is a plus (Cheshire, 2004).

Although code-switching has its advantages, it also has its disadvantages. For those people who constantly jump from one world to another, they tend to develop a fragmented identity where they are unable to distinguish between the cultural norms of the two worlds and their individual self (Auer, 1998). Moreover, the dominance of the dominant language varieties in the society threatens the growth of other languages making them die a natural death.

However, code switching also has its advantages in that it helps in creating cultural and inclusive environments. In multicultural societies, accepting and appreciating code switching as a language resource can go a long way in combating prejudice. It is thus important that educational systems which enforce the suppression of students' linguistic identity should be changed to allow students to accept code switching as a form of communication that should be embraced (Lippi-Green, 2012).

6. CODE MIXING

Code mixing is an important phenomenon in linguistics, defined as the use of more than one linguistic element in a single discourse or sentence by speakers of two or more languages (Poplack, 1980). This practice is most often observed in communities that are fluent in a language other than their native language. For example, people who frequently use Turkish and English in their daily lives may utter sentences such as, "Bugünkü meeting'e katılmayı düşünüyorum çünkü önemli hususlar discuss edilecek.", English equivalent, "I'm thinking of attending today's meeting because important issues will be discussed." In such sentences, codes are used jointly by adding an English word or expression to a Turkish structure. Linguists have studied the phenomenon of code-mixing from different perspectives. For example, Muysken (2000) focuses on the formal structure of code mixing and discusses

subcategories such as insertion, alternation, and congruent lexicalization. Accordingly, in the insertion type of code-mixing, only words from another language are added, while the syntactic structure of the specific language is preserved. In the case of exchange, the speaker switches from one language to another within a sentence. “Birazdan markete gideceğim, sonra da get back to work.”, English equivalent, “I will go to the market soon, then get back to work.” In the example, the phrase “get back to work” has been added using the syntactic rules of another language and marks a clear transition in the flow of speech. “Congruent code mixing” occurs when the structures of the two languages are largely similar. For example, since there are significant syntactic and morphological differences between Turkish and English, this category is more common in environments where languages such as Spanish and Catalan are used together (Muysken, 2000).

On the other hand, Myers-Scotton (1993) assesses code mixing in the context of strategic preferences and the construction of the speaker’s identity, emphasizing that this phenomenon is closely linked not only to grammar but also to sociocultural factors. Code mixing, especially in immigrant communities, allows people to simultaneously express a sense of belonging to both the language of the new society and their native language. For example, in Turkish diasporas in Europe, expressions such as “Let’s go have a coffee” can be found in everyday conversations. In this way, the speaker maintains his or her Turkish identity while also establishing a connection with his or her environment by using English or words from the language of the country in which he or she lives.

The concepts of code-mixing and code-switching are often confused. While code-switching usually refers to switching from one language to another during speech according to the needs of the context or discourse, code-mixing more often reflects the mixing of different linguistic elements in a single sentence or expression (Poplack, 1980; Romaine, 1995). In the code-switching example, the speaker constructs a sentence entirely in Turkish and then continues it with a sentence in English. In contrast, the code-mixing example uses both Turkish and English words or structures in the same sentence, such as “Bu hafta sonu biraz relax takılmaya ihtiyacım var.”, English equivalent, “I need to relax a bit this weekend.”

Sometimes people seek to increase intimacy by switching from one language to another, and sometimes they seek to create an intellectual impression. The effectiveness of the message, the characteristics of the target audience, and the demands of the context also shape code-mixing behavior.

7. CONVERGENCE, DIVERGENCE, LINGUISTIC PRESTIGE AND STIGMA

In linguistics, the concepts of convergence and divergence are very important when explained in the frame of language change and language contact.

The term convergence is used to describe two related but distinct phenomena. One at the macro level, involving entire language systems, and the other at the micro level, involving individual speakers' behavior. On the macro level, structural convergence refers to the process by which different languages start to resemble each other in terms of grammar, syntax, or morphology due to long-term contact. This can happen in the societies where multiple languages are spoken, and the language features, including phonetics, morphology, and syntax, get influenced and change to some extent. For instance, it is possible for one language's phonetic system to change in a way that it becomes more similar to another language. Kachru (1986) explained how, with the spread of English around the world, the forms of English have been influenced by the local languages and reflected this phenomenon. A well-known example of this is the Balkan Sprachbund, where languages from different families developed similar features over time as a result of extended interaction (Thomason & Kaufman, 1988). On the other hand, in the field of sociolinguistics, Howard Giles's Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) describes convergence at the speaker level, where individuals adjust their speech such as pronunciation, style, or word choice to align more closely with their conversation partner. This typically happens in an effort to gain social approval, create a sense of similarity, or feel a stronger sense of group belonging (Giles, Coupland & Coupland, 1991). The key difference between these two types of convergence lies in their scope and timeframe: structural convergence unfolds over long periods and affects entire languages, whereas speaker-level convergence occurs in real-time during everyday interactions. Still, despite these differences, it's possible to see a connection between these two types of convergence.

Divergence, on the other hand, is defined as the process of languages or dialects evolving in a way that they become different. This process can happen in the course of language change where some people or groups of people develop different language varieties from others based on factors like ethnicity, social class, or region. Divergence is depicted in Labov's (1972) study where he shows how and why social groups use language to mark their identity, especially along the lines of social class. Both convergence

and divergence are very important in the analysis of language change and its use in society. Convergence and divergence show that language is not a static concept and that it is very much defined by its users. These concepts are often debated in such fields as language planning, language teaching, and sociolinguistics.

Language is not only a means of expressing and sharing ideas but also a way of determining one's social position and power. Language prestige is the approval given to certain ways of speaking, which are usually related to higher social rank, learning or dominance. On the other hand, stigma is the disapproval and low status given to other forms of language use which are usually associated with minorities or the lower classes (Bourdieu, 1991). Such mechanisms show how language contributes to and maintains the existing order based on the power differentials.

Standard or what is referred to as 'proper language' enjoys prestige while any variation to this is considered to have no prestige. For instance, Received Pronunciation (RP) in the United Kingdom and Standard American English (SAE) in the United States are perceived to be hallmarks of intelligence, professionalism and authority by Coupland (2007). This speech variety is linked with power relations and it is considered as essential in most professional fields including academic, business, and political arenas.

For instance, research has revealed that job seekers with 'neutral' or 'prestigious' accents come across as more credible and professional than their counterparts with regional or non-standard accents (Labov, 1972). This in turn exposes the existing biases which favour the linguistic forms of the dominant groups in the society and which give the users of such forms an edge in competition for social and economic resources.

On the other hand, linguistic stigma impacts primarily the users of non-standard dialects, accents or minority language. Such forms of speech are generally deemed as 'wrong', 'casual', 'unformal' or 'unprofessional', which reinforces stereotypes about the individuals who use them in terms of their intelligence, character or competence (Lippi-Green, 2012). For example, speakers of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) in the United States and Cockney English in the United Kingdom are often discriminated against because of their accents, preventing them from being accepted in educational and business environments.

These forms of stigmatization do not only have an effect on the chances of an individual but also leads to social exclusion. The users of stigmatized varieties sometimes experience pressure to shift their speech, which makes them conceal their linguistic identity. This phenomenon known as linguistic insecurity is the process of internalizing societal biases and can cause psychological stress and cultural estrangement (Bourdieu, 1991). Bourdieu's theory of linguistic capital shows how language serves as an asset which is spent and invested to gain social and economic returns. Such owners of linguistic capital, that is those who command the standard language forms are in a vantage position to get opportunities and exercise power (Bourdieu, 1991). This framework shows the relations of power which comes with linguistic prestige where the dominant groups impose their language standards and anyone who does not conform to them is considered substandard. For instance, in multilingual context, national or dominant language takes the premium over the regional or indigenous language hence controlling cultural power. In India, English and Hindi rule the roost in the public and the professional world leaving other languages to be used in the private or domestic environment. This kind of situation not only deprives the value of the regional languages but also sustains the social hierarchy based on the language skills (Trudgill, 2000).

Linguistic prestige and stigma are the concepts that show how language is interlinked with authority and inequity. While the former provides a way of advancing within the social hierarchy and having an impact, the latter sustains oppression and exclusion. These dynamics can only be tackled by combating prejudice in the society, accepting and embracing the different languages and making sure that all forms of communication are inclusive. In this way we can work towards the creation of a society that appreciates the diversity of language practices.

8. CONCLUSION

People present themselves to others through their chosen language or variety of language. Language choice and language itself are part of both individual and collective identity construction. Language can reveal a lot about one's identity because each one of our discourses/textes is multiple meaning sign that can reveal our nationality, culture, religion, age, gender, education level, socio-economic class or profession. Language is a part of a

person's identity. People engage in identity rituals all the time. For example, making friends or dating involves telling about oneself and wanting same thing from one's interlocutor, a matter of getting to know each other. People identify with others through language choice or language variation. Language or linguistic variation refers to the different ways in which language is used and differentiated within various social, regional, and contextual settings. This phenomenon can include social dialects, accents, registers, jargon, argot, code switching, code mixing, convergence, divergence, stigma and linguistic prestige demonstrating how language evolves and reflects identity. Understanding linguistic variation is crucial to appreciating cultural diversity and ensuring effective communication between different communities.

These linguistic behaviors are not only a way of defining and constructing identity and of showing belongingness to a group but also are a way of maintaining and reproducing power relations and inequality and access to resources. As a fact that shape social structure and is shaped by it, language can become a weapon, paving the way for physical violence, or it can be used to prevent violence and ensure peace.

Regional and social dialects are examples of how language is connected with class, ethnicity, and geography and how language varies according to the situation and context in which it is being used. This is further seen with jargon and argot as language is also used as a means to be very specific and exclusive thus including particular members while excluding others. Code switching on the other hand is a form of linguistic flexibility, which allows the individuals to move from one cultural and or social context to another while at the same time subjecting them to the pressure of conformity and feelings of fragmentation of identity.

Convergence and divergence are key notions in linguistics especially in the study of language change and contact. Convergence takes place when languages mix and borrow elements from each other and this results in the convergence of the phonetics, morphology or syntax of the languages involved and is common in multilingual countries and also at the speaker level, where individuals adjust their speech such as pronunciation, style, or word choice to align more closely with their conversation partner. On the other hand, divergence entails languages or dialects developing differences based on ethnic background or class. Thus, these processes present the complex process of language change, which is driven by speakers and situations, and are central to sociolinguistics, language teaching, and policy.

Linguistic prestige and stigma also reinforce the notion that language variety carries social value and worth in society. Standard forms of language variation have privilege while the stigmatized dialects serve to exclude communities and therefore, perpetuate inequality. But language policies and inclusive educational practices provide measures to counter these injustices and thus underlines the importance of acceptance of language differences. Research focusing on the cultural and linguistic value of stigmatized forms in order to promote acceptance of linguistic diversity, mediatic portrayals of diverse accents and dialects can help reduce linguistic stigma by changing stereotypes and encouraging people to be more accepting.

Finally, it is possible to state that language is not only the tool of expression but the representation of human development, the store of knowledge, and the instrument of social change. In the globalized environment of communication, languages and cultures should be respected and protected in order to avoid discrimination and disrespect. Thus, accepting and appreciating all the voices and all the dialects, the society will be able to progress into the future where everyone will be accepted for their cultural diversity. Language, in its diversity, has the potential of changing the world and bringing people together as one family.

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ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND PRAGMATIC COMPETENCE IN CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION

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1. INTRODUCTION

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has been a big part of how we connect and communicate in different languages on the internet recently. As AI increasingly acts as an intermediary in intercultural exchanges, how well it handles pragmatics becomes critically important for global communication. This chapter tries to find out where AI-mediated communication meets cross-cultural pragmatics.

The internet has changed the way people talk to each other over the past few decades. Xie, Yus, and Haberland (2021) describe it as “indispensable to the social and communicative life of many human beings” (p. 1). However, the internet-driven change makes understanding pragmatics more complicated, and researchers are still working on figuring it out. Mediating intercultural interactions is challenging for AI because it requires a deep grasp of different cultural norms, hidden meanings, and what is appropriate or not in each context.

Being ChatGPT as the most obvious example, the emergence of large language models has further complicated intercultural conversations. Studies are starting to explain some problematic patterns of bias that affect how well these technologies can actually mediate between different societies. Ghosh and Caliskan (2023) analyzed multiple low-resource languages and found that these systems “perpetuate gender defaults and stereotypes assigned to certain occupations” (p. 901). When examining Bengali, Farsi, Malay, Tagalog, Thai, and Turkish, they put forward consistent patterns where AI converts gender-neutral pronouns into gendered assumptions based on job stereotypes. Thus, it becomes harder for different cultures to fully understand each other.

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Addressing these challenges comprehensively requires examining what pragmatic competence actually means when people from different backgrounds try to communicate. Pragmatic competence means knowing how to use and understand language depending on the situation. It includes both the speakers' ability to use language for different purposes and the listeners' ability to understand the speaker's real intentions (Bialystok, 1993, p. 43). This definition points to the complexity facing AI-mediated communication systems, which have to navigate not just linguistic differences but also expectations around formality, social hierarchies, and appropriateness.

Research on how pragmatic patterns transfer across languages indicates complications with implications for AI design. Takahashi and Beebe (1993) identified in their work that "Japanese are very conscious of social status while Americans are relatively less status-conscious" (p. 139). Their comparative study also shows that "Americans use by far the highest percentage of positive remarks and Japanese use the lowest with the Japanese speakers of English in between" (p. 141). Thus, cultural background has an influence on both communication patterns and expectations. These patterns directly affect AI trying to mediate between speakers from different backgrounds, since the technology needs to recognize and handle these deeply embedded norms.

Recent evidence of language-dependent bias in cultural representation raises particular concerns for AI-mediated intercultural exchange. Cao et al. (2023) tested ChatGPT extensively with some revealing results. When they prompted the system in English about Chinese cultural values, it said that interesting work was 'of utmost importance.' However, when the same question was posed in Chinese, the system indicated such work was only of 'moderate importance' (p. 61). Therefore, the way people ask questions affects how the AI answers, and it might even make different cultures' ways of speaking seem more similar. The inconsistency brings forward serious questions about whether we can rely on AI-mediated exchanges between cultures and suggests current models might misrepresent different societies depending on what language is being used.

Despite these concerning findings, research on AI-generated conversations in pragmatic analysis presents a more complex picture. Chen et al. (2024) did a detailed evaluation comparing 148 ChatGPT-generated conversations with 82 human-written ones, plus 354 human evaluations. They indicated that "ChatGPT performed equally well as human participants in four out of the five tested pragmalinguistic features and in five of the six sociopragmatic

features” (p. 26). These results suggest how problematic it is to judge how well AI understands practical language use. Hence, such performance measures might not capture the cultural understanding gaps that could weaken the cross-cultural communication.

2. THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Understanding AI’s role in intercultural interaction calls for pulling together theoretical frameworks from multiple disciplines. The following frameworks offer insight into both what is possible and what is not with current AI-mediated communication systems.

2.1. Internet Pragmatics and Digital Value Systems

Internet-mediated communication has pushed scholars to develop new theoretical frameworks for understanding pragmatic competence in digital environments. Mey (2021) distinguishes between extending and expanding pragmatics and notes that “expanding pragmatics goes beyond extending its scope in space and time” to tackle critical questions about how users actually realize values through digital language use (p. 28). This expansion remains particularly relevant for AI-mediated intercultural communication, where values emerge through interaction rather than staying static.

The complexity deepens when analyzing how different cultures engage with digital communication. Valdeón (2023) points out that pragmatic force in translation depends heavily on context and argues that “pragmatics has evolved in many directions since its emergence in the mid-20th century” and that “pragmatic force depends on a division of labor between code and interpretation” (p. 449). This distinction presents particular difficulties for AI making immediate decisions about meaning without full awareness of cultural background. The gap between processing surface-level code and deeper interpretation becomes especially critical when meaning depends on factors that these technologies cannot access or process in the moment of interactions.

2.2. Multimodal Communication and Intercultural Frameworks

Communication across cultures involves difficulties that surpass analyzing text since it covers multiple dimensions of human interaction. Contemporary digital environments demand systems that can process diverse ways of communicating while navigating the complex frameworks that shape meaning across different societies.

The shift toward multimodal communication produces particular difficulties for AI to handle conversations between cultures. Blitvich and Bou-Franch (2019) note that while “all human communication is multimodal,” “digital technologies are almost always, and are becoming increasingly, vastly multimodal by combining writing, images, sounds, and other semiotic modes” (p. 5). Similarly, Yus (2019) claims through his analysis of multimodal memes that effective interpretation calls for processing both text and visuals at the same time. Users engage in multiple inferential strategies: decoding verbal content, figuring out what the text implies, processing visual information, and inferring “possible combinations of text and picture to yield interpretations that are only possible from the combination of these sources of information” (p. 108). When translating things that include cultural references, symbols, or humor, it gets more challenging. These elements can be hard to carry over because they often rely on shared knowledge or feelings that might not exist in another culture.

Kecskes (2012) defines intercultural pragmatics as “a relatively new field of inquiry that is concerned with how the language system is put to use in social encounters between human beings who have different first languages, communicate in a common language, and, usually, represent different cultures” (p. 67). Intercultural skills go beyond just language as they include different ways we communicate and understand each other. Visual symbols, paralinguistic cues, and contextual markers carry culturally specific meanings that exhibit considerable variation across societies. When AI tries to mediate such interactions, it has to process not only linguistic codes but also culturally embedded visual and contextual information. It is a task that demands sophisticated understanding of how different cultures construct and interpret multimodal messages.

2.3. Enhanced Contextual Processing in AI Systems

Recent research on argument structure extraction offers insights into how AI processes contextual information across cultures. The technical challenges of contextual processing have direct implications for intercultural pragmatic understanding as effective communication between cultures depends heavily on accurate interpretation of contextual cues that differ substantially across boundaries.

Luo et al. (2023) noted that “having the right background or surrounding details is important when building a good model to pull out argument structures”. They pointed out that just sticking sentences together does not make good use of all the context. Sometimes, it even causes the model to focus too much on sentences that are not very informative (p. 7563). The study shows how AI struggles with efficiently using contextual cues that matter for pragmatic understanding between cultures. These technical limitations point to a serious problem. While AI can process large amounts of contextual data, it often fails to prioritize culturally relevant information over less important elements. Such inefficiencies become problematic when cultural cues are embedded within broader conversational contexts.

Different technical methods have been developed to handle the challenges of understanding context in various languages. Huang et al. (2023) developed Cross-Lingual-Thought (XLT) prompting, which “is a generic template prompt that stimulates cross-lingual and logical reasoning skills to enhance task performance across languages” (p. 1). Similarly, Matusov et al. (2019) achieved improvements in neural machine translation for subtitling. They reported ‘a notable productivity increase of up to 37% as compared to translating from scratch’ (p. 82). These new technological developments display some promising ways people might make AI better at understanding and using the language. However, the innovations remain primarily focused on technical efficiency rather than sensitivity to cultural differences. This focus ends up making a divide between high-tech skills and understanding the culture better.

The biggest issue in developing AI for intercultural conversations is that it often struggles to balance technical skill with understanding different cultures. While systems become increasingly capable at processing linguistic patterns and structural relationships, they continue to have hard time with the culturally embedded meanings that determine appropriate communication

across different societies. Therefore, future AI development needs to weave cultural competency frameworks alongside technical improvements.

3. MAJOR CHALLENGES IN AI-MEDIATED CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION

Even with all the progress in AI, it continues to struggle when it comes to bridging gaps in communication between people. These challenges span technical limitations, biases, and essential gaps in how AI processes meaning in multicultural contexts.

3.1. Interactive Repair and Cultural Bias Issues

Contemporary AI faces two fundamental interconnected limitations that seriously compromise its effectiveness in intercultural communication. These limitations are ongoing barriers to creating technologies that genuinely support real communication. They also point to how much human communication skills still outpace what current technology can do.

3.1.1. Interactive Repair Mechanisms

The first limitation is that there are not any built-in ways to fix things automatically. Dingemanse and Enfield (2024) describe interactive repair as a teamwork process where people work together to figure out and fix communication problems. They point out that this process helps make sure the message gets across clearly and also holds people accountable socially. (p. 31).

AI, in contrast, typically operates in isolation without the ability to negotiate meaning collaboratively with users. While human communicators naturally engage in clarification, confirmation, and correction during conversations, current AI-mediated communication systems lack these fundamental capabilities. The absence of interactive repair mechanisms becomes especially problematic when cultural differences in communication styles and expectations cause misunderstandings rather than linguistic errors themselves.

This absence generates a paradox: the very contexts where interactive repair is most needed, namely those involving cultural misunderstandings, implicit meanings, and pragmatic failures, are precisely where present-day AI is least equipped to provide support.

3.1.2. Cultural Bias and Alignment Issues

While the absence of interactive repair poses structural difficulties, the second limitation involves systematic bias embedded within AI training data and algorithmic processes. Hancock et al. (2020) observe that “AI-mediated communication systems are trained, at least initially, on existing human communication; extant biases in training data are likely to be replicated and amplified by AI” (p. 95). This bias replication creates a particularly concerning feedback loop where Western-centric perspectives dominate while marginalized cultures become further underrepresented. The extent of this problem becomes clear through empirical research, which reveals that AI shows strong alignment with American culture while adapting less effectively to other societies.

According to recent studies, these biases are remarkably consistent through careful testing. Cao et al. (2023) claimed that “English prompts reduce the variance in model responses, flattening out cultural differences and biasing them towards American culture” (p. 54). However, their study revealed concerning inconsistencies. When researchers probed Japanese cultural values about work-life balance, responses ranged from “utmost important” in English prompts to “moderate important” in Japanese prompts. Moral reasoning across cultures presents additional challenges. Ramezani and Xu (2023) show that “pre-trained English language models predict empirical moral norms across countries worse than the English moral norms reported previously” (p. 428). This inadequate representation results in systematic blind spots in understanding between cultures.

These empirical findings exhibit how training data biases lead to cascading effects that go far beyond simple translation errors. The consequences affect core aspects of understanding between cultures, moral reasoning, and pragmatic appropriateness across diverse global contexts.

3.2. Linguistic Processing Failures

Beyond basic translation mechanisms, AI faces serious linguistic and cognitive challenges that seriously affect its performance when mediating between cultures. These challenges cover both basic linguistic operations and complex variations in how different societies realize speech acts. Such complexity produces compounding difficulties for effective communication.

The abovementioned technologies fail to process negation effectively, undermining their capacity for intercultural communication. Ettinger's (2020) NEG-136 test proved that "Bidirectional Encoder Representations from Transformers prefers the true completion in 0% of items, assigning the higher probability to the false completion in every case" when processing negative statements (p. 44). This complete failure in negation processing has some implications since negation works differently across languages and cultures. The inability to process negation accurately affects everything from politeness strategies to logical reasoning patterns. Because of this, challenges may arise when trying to communicate clearly between various cultures.

Beyond this principal processing failure, notable variations in speech act patterns create additional obstacles for AI navigating intercultural communication. Research on patterns across societies reveals substantial differences in politeness strategies that current AI systems struggle to recognize and appropriately deploy. Takahashi and Beebe (1993) identified how "Americans felt the need to preface their refusals with what we called 'positive adjuncts': for example, 'I'd love to, [but]...' or 'That sounds wonderful, [but]...' (p. 141). Japanese ESL learners show different patterns for social and psychological distance of the addressees" (p. 139). Cultural environment basically shapes not only what gets communicated but how communicative strategies are implemented. Cultural differences in speech act realization challenge AI systems that should interpret semantic content while accounting for how cultural context shapes pragmatic force and appropriateness.

The intersection of linguistic complexity and cultural variation generates additional problems for AI when trying to mediate communication between cultures. Studies analyzing automated translation and pragmatic force stress that successful translation demands familiarity with "the politeness conventions of the two cultures" (Valdeón, 2023, pp. 455). This requirement encompasses not only lexical accuracy but also knowledge about appropriate

speech act realization across different contexts. The challenge intensifies when AI must simultaneously process linguistic structures, expectations, and pragmatic appropriateness in immediate intercultural interactions.

How these linguistic and cultural complexities come together creates a compounding effect that contemporary AI struggles to address effectively. While technical advances continue to improve surface-level accuracy in translation and text generation, the deeper difficulty lies in developing systems capable of simultaneous processing across multiple dimensions such as linguistic structures, expectations from different backgrounds, and pragmatic appropriateness.

3.3. Knowledge Requirements and Data Representation Issues

The problems facing AI in intercultural exchange extend to key questions about knowledge representation and data adequacy. These interconnected issues indicate both the scale of information needed for effective pragmatic competence and persistent problems in how current models acquire and represent diverse perspectives.

The scope of knowledge required for competent AI communication across cultures is extensive. Fung et al. (2024) developed the CultureAtlas dataset to display this complexity by covering “over 1,089 state or province level regions, 10,436 city level regions, and 2,557 ethnolinguistic groups” (p. 4). Hence, good systems need to handle not just different ways people speak, but also the subtle customs, values, and ways of communicating that can change a lot depending on where someone is or their background. The researchers also found that modern AI performs differently across “high-resource” cultures (such as US, China, France) compared to “mid-resource” (Turkey, Egypt, Iran) and “low-resource” cultures (Laos, Bhutan, Congo), with performance dropping noticeably for less-represented groups (p. 6).

As Ghosh & Caliskan (2023, p. 907) also note that low-resource languages suffer from ‘low levels or a general unavailability of large corpora of text data’. This shortage makes it harder for different cultures to communicate well with AI. In addition, the quality and amount of training data can be all over the place. This data inequality not only affects translation accuracy but also limits AI’s ability to understand and appropriately respond to diverse communication patterns. The systematic analysis of low-resource languages

brings to light that beyond mere data scarcity, the challenge extends to the quality and authenticity of available information. Many datasets exhibit a Western take on non-Western societies instead of showing what those societies are really like. It is about how AI understands cultures by fitting them into pre-made ideas, rather than grasping them on their own. When there is data in multiple languages, it is usually made up of translations, not original local sayings. Relying on translation tends to make things more similar and can turn diverse ideas into something more uniform.

The classification of cultures into resource categories gives rise to particular challenges for AI trying to serve diverse global communities with appropriate sensitivity. When AI lacks adequate information, it defaults to dominant patterns. The gap in knowledge affects beyond how well things work technically. This imbalance causes a kind of weird situation where technology meant to bring different cultures closer together might actually end up making things worse by distorting or losing some of the original meaning.

3.4. Digital Pragmatic Function Recognition

The interpretation of pragmatic functions in digital communication presents additional difficulties compounding the complexity of AI-mediated intercultural dialogue. Digital communication has evolved its own sophisticated system of meaning-making that extends far beyond literal textual content by incorporating visual symbols, contextual cues, and culturally specific interpretive frameworks that AI struggles to decode accurately.

Dainas and Herring (2021) suggested that while users generally agreed on basic semantic meanings, “tone modification was their default interpretation” for pragmatic functions (p. 108). People’s ideas about what different emojis mean could change depending on the type of emoji. These variations often correlate with background. Therefore, a critical situation occurs where the same digital symbol can mean very different things depending on who is sending it and who is receiving it.

These difficulties intensify when examining specific patterns in digital communication. Kavanagh (2021) found differences in emoticon usage by noting that “Japanese users employed emoticons typically more than

Americans” with distinct patterns reflecting values of “wa ‘harmony,’ amae ‘dependency or interdependence,’ and enryo ‘reserve or restraint’” (p. 314). The findings reveal that digital communication practices are deeply embedded within value systems. Understanding things correctly needs a level of knowledge that AI does not quite have right now.

Such specificities in digital communication present additional layers of complexity for AI trying to mediate intercultural interactions. The problem requires more than simple emoji interpretation as AI must understand how digital symbols carry deeply embedded meanings that differ markedly across societies. For instance, the frequency, placement, and combination of emoticons can signal different levels of formality, intimacy, or respect. What may appear as informal expressiveness in one society might be interpreted as inappropriate informality in another.

4. APPLICATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

While challenges persist, researchers and developers have made progress in addressing pragmatic competence in AI-mediated intercultural dialogue. Recent developments encompass technical innovations, novel assessment methodologies, and emerging ethical frameworks that may influence future research directions.

4.1. Neural Machine Translation Advances

Recent advances in neural machine translation have begun addressing pragmatic problems in communication between cultures. Matusov et al. (2019) developed a customized neural machine translation system for subtitling. This boost in productivity shows how AI can be personalized to fit different ways people communicate. Their approach involved “a novel subtitle segmentation algorithm that predicts the end of a subtitle line given the previous word-level context using a recurrent neural network learned from human segmentation decisions” (p. 82).

Contemporary findings suggest even advanced neural machine translation demands substantial development to handle pragmatic problems effectively. The failure to recognize gender-neutral pronouns and systematic application of occupational stereotypes indicate primary gaps in current neural approaches to pragmatic understanding.

The development of Cross-Cultural Intelligent Language Learning Systems (CILS) represents a notable advancement in addressing pragmatic competence in AI-mediated communication. Xia et al. (2024) present CILS as “a novel approach integrating AI into language education to enhance cross-cultural communication” that “take advantage of advanced AI technologies to provide adaptive, personalized learning experiences that cater to the unique linguistic and cultural backgrounds of each learner” (pp. 5650-5651).

These systems show a lot of potential for AI to get better at adapting in conversations. But whether they really work well depends on how good and varied the information is that they are trained on. The systematic biases revealed in prior research suggest there is considerable work left to ensure these systems can adequately represent diverse perspectives.

4.2. Enhanced Processing Approaches and Cultural Assessment

Recent research suggests promising approaches for improving AI’s handling of contextual information in settings that span cultures. Luo et al. (2023) introduced a sequence-attention module that “aggregate contextual information and argumentative information” while using “distance-weighted similarity loss to aggregate contextual information” (p. 7563). Their model was the best of its kind on a bunch of different datasets. This kind of performance makes clear that better understanding of context might help improve tools for people from different cultures talking to each other. Still, these technical improvements must be combined with knowledge and sensitivity training to address the deeper challenges. Successful communication between cultures demands understanding not just linguistic context but also cultural background as pragmatic meaning depends on external factors including norms and expectations.

People have also started using regular surveys to figure out how well AI aligns with what people want. These simple tools are becoming key ways to check progress. The methodology developed by researchers involves “utilizing culture-related questions from Hofstede Culture Survey” to “measure the correlation of the model’s responses with those of human societies” (Cao et al., 2023, p. 54). This approach provides a standardized method for evaluating how well AI represents different perspectives. Such assessment methods are important for identifying and addressing biases before deployment in contexts that span cultures. Based on these results,

people need better ways to evaluate these systems, not just by how often they are right, but also by how suitable and careful they are.

4.3. Ethical Considerations and Transparency

The development of transparent AI-mediated communication systems represents both an important opportunity and a difficulty. As Hancock et al. (2020) discuss, “there may be other ethical and social reasons for transparency,” though “even when transparency is warranted, there are important questions about what transparency requires and what goals it serves in different contexts” (p. 96).

The ethical implications of transparency become particularly complex when different norms might exist around privacy, directness, and the appropriateness of AI mediation in sensitive communications. Recent empirical findings about bias raise important questions about developers’ responsibility to ensure fair representation of diverse perspectives. These ethical concerns extend to all forms of AI-mediated intercultural communication that include automated translation.

Research about automatic translation emphasizes how important it is for these systems to be responsible and ethical. Studies note that failure to consider pragmatic concepts “is likely to create, to say the least, communication problems with the target audiences” (Valdeón, 2023, p. 462). This finding carries particular importance given the global reach and impact of AI-mediated communication systems.

5. CONCLUSION

The findings throughout in this study imply three important things. First of all, the technical-cultural competence gap is not simply a developmental problem but the recognition of a structural limitation. Current approaches prefer efficient language processing to cultural sensitivity. Simply making small adjustments will not help people understand their own misunderstandings about their differences.

The second issue is about how much data people have and whether the way people show or understand that knowledge makes sense and is reliable. Such considerations bring forth some questions about knowledge, cultural

authenticity, and distortion. Whose knowledge counts? How do we preserve cultural authenticity in algorithmic systems? Do these systems always distort the cultural differences they are designed to bridge?

Finally, without interactive repair processes, AI has a serious shortcoming; AI is incapable of joint meaning-making that is the hallmark of successful intercultural communication. These findings suggest that AI should enhance human-centered communication frameworks, not replace human mediation.

These results are useful in terms of what we should focus on when developing AI. Future studies should not only focus on improving technology, but also pay attention to cultural matters, algorithmic bias and whether it is ethical to allow AI mediation. The aim is not simply to develop better technology but to create frameworks which can represent and respect the complexity of human culture in a genuine way.

The goal of AI development could be misguided across cultures for practical ability. In the future, the system should admit its limitations, indicate uncertainty in culturally ambiguous situations, and help rather than replace the natural expertise of people

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