

SOCIOLINGUISTIC FACTORS AND MULTIMODAL COMMUNICATION**Abdug'aniyeva Mohibonu**

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Abstract: This article analyzes the distinctive features of multimodal communication processes from a contemporary sociolinguistic perspective. The research examines in detail the influence of key sociolinguistic factors such as social context and discourse, gender, age, social status, as well as situational context and register on communication processes.

Keywords: sociolinguistics, multimodal communication, discourse, gender, social status, register

Introduction

Communication processes are undergoing dramatic changes in the 21st century. Contemporary communication is not carried out solely through spoken or written language. Today, people convey their thoughts and ideas through gestures, facial expressions, intonation, visual elements, and various technological tools. In linguistics, this multifaceted form of communication is referred to as multimodal communication.

Sociolinguistics is a discipline that deeply studies how language is used in social environments, how societal structure and social factors influence language choice and communication style. Research demonstrates that each communication situation has its own unique social context, and this context directly affects all aspects of communication.

Social Context and Discourse

Social context refers to the social environment in which communication occurs, the nature of relationships between interlocutors, and the system of cultural norms in society. The SPEAKING model developed by renowned American linguist Dell Hymes clearly demonstrates the multifaceted nature of social context. This model provides an opportunity for systematic analysis of various aspects of the communication process.

In contemporary linguistics, social context is divided into three important levels. Macrocontext encompasses the broad sociocultural environment, characteristics of the historical period, and the influence of the political system. Mesocontext represents specific norms and traditions formed within institutions, organizations, or communities. Microcontext includes the specific communication situation, its participants, and their interpersonal relationships.

Types and Characteristics of Discourse

Discourse is not merely a sequence of linguistic units, but a complex social practice. Prominent scholars such as Norman Fairclough and Teun van Dijk have studied how power relations and social inequalities in society are manifested through language by critically analyzing discourse.

Multimodal discourse encompasses various communicative channels. In oral discourse, lexical choice and grammatical structures, intonation and prosodic features, pauses and rhythmic patterns play important roles. Non-verbal discourse is manifested through physical movements and gestures, spatial distances, eye contact, and facial expressions. Digital discourse is realized through emojis and stickers, multimedia content, and interactive elements.

Discourse and Power Relations

During the communication process, participants not only exchange information but also display their social status and level of power. As French philosopher Michel Foucault emphasized, discourse is an important tool of social power and knowledge. Who has more right to speak in communication, whose opinion is accepted as more important, who controls the space - all of these directly reflect power relations.

The Influence of Gender, Age, and Social Status

Gender and Communication Styles

Gender is an important research direction in sociolinguistics, and the linguistic usage patterns and communication strategies employed by men and women are studied in detail. The scholarly work of renowned researchers such as Robin Lakoff, Deborah Tannen, and Janet Holmes has revealed the complex relationships between gender and language.

Gender differences in multimodal communication manifest in various ways. In oral communication, women tend to use more hedging expressions, cautious phrases, and question-form confirmations. Men are observed to prefer direct commands and categorical statements. Women use empathy and supportive signals in communication much more frequently than men.

Significant differences also exist in non-verbal communication. Women maintain eye contact for longer periods and widely employ facial expressions. Men tend to occupy more physical space and adopt expanded postures. In digital communication, women use emojis, exclamation marks, and images much more actively than men.

Importantly, these differences are not natural or innate, but are formed through the process of social conditioning, under the influence of cultural environment, and through mass media. Contemporary gender research attempts to explain these differences from the perspective of social constructivism.

Age Factor and Intergenerational Communication

Age is an important variable in sociolinguistics and directly affects linguistic repertoire, communication style, and the use of multimodal resources. Each age group has its own distinctive communicative characteristics.

Children primarily engage in intensive communication through physical movements and games, using simple lexical and grammatical structures. Adolescents create their own specific jargon, express

themselves through emojis, memes, and hashtags, and actively use digital tools. Young adults strive to balance professional and personal registers and communicate effectively across various platforms.

Middle-aged individuals possess stable communicative strategies, pay attention to hierarchical relationships, and take an adaptive approach to technological tools. Representatives of the older generation remain loyal to traditional communication methods, prefer face-to-face communication, and adapt more slowly to new technological tools.

In intergenerational communication, problems such as different multimodal repertoires, differences in respect and etiquette standards, technological competence gaps, and mismatches in communicative goals and expectations may arise.

Social Status and Prestige

Social status refers to a person's position in society, status-role position, and economic opportunities. In the concept of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, the influence of social stratification on language and communication is deeply analyzed through the concepts of "social capital," "cultural capital," and "symbolic capital."

Individuals with high social status employ standard language variants and use professional terminology and words from foreign languages. Groups with lower social status are observed to use regional dialects, vernaculars, and everyday jargon. Accent and pronunciation also play an important role as markers of social identification.

In non-verbal terms, high status is manifested through clothing style and brands, organization of work environment, and open and expanded physical postures. In digital communication, the quality of profiles on professional networks, technological devices used, and the degree of formality in online language reflect social status.

Situational Context and Register

Situational Context Models

Situational context refers to the specific situation in which communication occurs and its parameters. Within the framework of systemic-functional linguistics developed by British linguist M.A.K. Halliday and Ruqaiya Hasan, three important components of situational context are distinguished.

Field indicates the topic of communication and type of activity, and the participants' connection with this activity. Tenor expresses who is addressing whom, the social distance between participants, the distribution of power and authority, and the formal or informal level of the relationship. Mode specifies how communication is being carried out - whether through oral, written, or multimodal channels, whether spontaneous or prepared, interactive or monologic.

The Concept and Types of Register

Register refers to the language variant and communication style appropriate to a particular situational context. Register choice is necessary to ensure that speech is appropriate to the purpose, topic, addressee, and situation.

Registers are divided into several types according to their degree of formality. Frozen register is used in standardized and unchanging situations such as national anthems and religious ceremonies. Formal register is used in academic lectures and official documents. Consultative register is employed in professional but interactive communication such as doctor-patient or teacher-student interactions. Casual register is used in conversations among friends, while intimate register is used among family members.

Functionally, academic register possesses scientific terminology and complex syntax. Journalistic register is distinguished by precise facts and accessibility to the general public. Literary register is rich in metaphor and imagery. Official business register requires standard formulas and precision. Everyday conversational register is characterized by simple lexicon and ellipses.

The Phenomenon of Code-Switching

Code-switching refers to the transition between two or more languages, dialects, or registers during the communication process. This phenomenon is very widespread in conditions of bilingualism and multiculturalism.

Situational code-switching is associated with changing language when the context changes. For example, a person may communicate in Russian at work but use Uzbek at home. Metaphorical code-switching is carried out to create a certain psychological or emotional effect. Intrasentential code-switching manifests as a mixing of languages within a single sentence.

In multimodal contexts, code-switching occurs not only between languages but also between communication channels. For example, switching from professional jargon to everyday language in formal meetings or effectively combining oral speech with visual presentation are various forms of code-switching.

Conclusion

Contemporary sociolinguistic research clearly demonstrates that communication is a complex and multifaceted process. Social context and discourse characteristics, gender and age factors, social status and prestige, as well as situational context and register choice profoundly affect all aspects of multimodal communication.

According to research findings, communication always occurs in a specific social context and simultaneously creates new social realities. Gender, age, and social status are not merely external factors influencing language use, but important identification markers that actively manifest in various channels during the communication process - through word choice, intonation, physical movements, and appearance.

Effective communication requires participants to correctly assess the situational context and choose an appropriate register. The appropriate use of various semiotic resources significantly increases the accuracy, expressiveness, and overall effectiveness of communication. In the context of globalization and technological progress, intercultural communication skills are becoming increasingly important.

In conclusion, research on sociolinguistic factors and multimodal communication is one of the most dynamic and practically significant directions in contemporary linguistics. Scientific research in this field not only enriches theoretical knowledge but also produces valuable results that can be directly applied in education, business, diplomacy, healthcare, and many other fields.

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