



DIGITAL CULTURE AND LANGUAGE

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Abstract

Digitalization is a very commonly problem and also an advantage for all the people around the world. Spending alot of time in front of the screen, has changed the understanding of people, cultures and languages as it changes everything through the process. All the communication systems especially education is reconsidered through the needs of people. By the help of technology, people interact with different kind of people facing different kind of culture; but the lingua franca language English, has also become the language of digital culture, so all the languages are affected by this language as the globalization continues its effects through digital world. Yet the use of mother tongue languages and the cultures with the effect of digitalization have not been expired but transformed. In this article, the transformation process of both written and spoken versions of mother tongue languages into new inevitable digital language and the effects on cultures is examined by giving examples from the world langauges and Turkish.

Keywords: Digitalization, Digital Culture, Digitilized Languages and Transformation Process

Introduction

Digitalization has brought human life into the process of irreversible change. Digital new technologies have changed the way people interact with each other, how experiences are shared and disseminated, and the way reality is presented and perceived. The reason why this process of change is irreversible is that as a result of children growing up with these new digital technologies, their lives and developments continue under the influence of these technologies. It is unthinkable that digitalization, which affects human beings from an early age, does not affect the languages that form the basis of human societies and cultures. These cultures are the sum of the values that societies have revealed in the historical-social evolution processes. In this article, the relationship between digitalization and language are focused on. The relationship between digitalization and language on two different platforms is considered: One of them; is the data flow from a certain center such as printing, publishing, radio, and television, but in return, the other one is the response platform of individuals. At this platform, the addressee is mostly a community and this community is in a passive state. Therefore, both the individuals of this community and the language spoken by the community are affected by the information flow and the language in which the information flow is provided, at the individual and community level, and sometimes they are put under pressure. The second platform is a common information network where individuals can interact with each other or with the system, although it partially contains some of the features of the first. This reciprocity, of course, affects the relationship of the whole with the language differently.

Another dimension that should not be overlooked in the relationship between digitalization and language is the relationship of digitalization with writing. Although the writing itself is not a part of the language directly, it is an element that should be taken into account because it is a means of visually conveying the sub-language.

Amalia E. Gnanadesikan, who has a global approach to the development of writing, calls the process that started with the printing revolution, carried out by Johannes Guttenberg in the German city of Mainz in 1447, as “the meeting of the alphabet with the machine” and describes the common information network as the last current stage of this process (Gnanadesikan, 2009:250). While there is no doubt that this is the case, the common information network has revealed a higher degree of communication than at any other time in the history of writing. Thanks to the common information network; a great breakthrough has been achieved in communication at the global level. Today, the common information network has spread to almost all countries of the world, and thus, people from all over the world have had the opportunity to connect each other directly.

When languages are taken into account in general, the negative effects of digital devices such as media and common information network on the language have been emphasized. Peck states that media, especially digital media, harms languages with its written, oral and visual forms (1998:28). She also adds that especially the verbal

and visual media have a higher destructive effect on them since they are much more commonly used. She states that the private radio and television channels, which are quite high in number, distort the structure of the language with their names. Peck emphasises the destruction of the language; since the names of some of these channels are completely foreign words. For example there are a lot of channels in Turkey having names of English words; such as Show Tv, Kiss FM, Best FM etc. ; further more, these words are not in compliance with Turkish. Situations such as mistakes in sounds seen in news programs, mispronunciation of letters, wrong choice and misuse of words, use of unnecessary foreign words and mistakes in structural units cause Turkish to deteriorate. In advertisements, the audience is influenced by the use of the language, formed by the direct use of foreign words, foreign idioms, translated sentences and causes a conflict between Turkish culture and popular culture based on foreign admiration. As a result of the carelessness in adapting the foreign films and TV series shown on Turkish televisions, many jokes foreign to Turkish culture, English terms, rules and phrases translated as they are, have become widespread in Turkey. With this regard, many phrases in English, which are not common in Turkish such as "take care of yourself", "oh my god", "damn it", "God", "For God sake", "gotta run" are used in daily life with English wording. Sloppy Turkish used in music-entertainment programs, children's programs, and sports, are mentioned to lead the destruction of Turkish (Şenyuva, 2017:1385). The use of words in the print media, inaccuracies and deficiencies in the spelling of affixes, lack of correction marks, inaccuracies in the use of apostrophes, errors in the spelling of some affixes and conjunctions *mi*, *da/de*, *-da/-de*, *ki*, *-ki -t*, also the wrong use of capital letters, all those draw our attention to language errors such as unnecessary use of foreign words and expression disorders. It means that all language mistakes seen in visual, oral and written media are continued in the virtual media (Şenyuva; 2017:386). Many writers have devoted their Works to this subject. Şenyuva focuses on the damage they caused in the mother tongue language, especially the pronunciation mistakes that the television presenters persistently made. Even some writers emphasize the meaningless letters like *off*, *ahhh*, *selamm* used in Turkish in their works in a joint information network, in order to reflect the spoken language and local dialects in writing to show intonations and to increase the effect of the word. etc., abbreviation in Turkish words like *mrb* (*hi*), *nbr* (*what's up*), *slm* (*hi*), *tşk* (*thanks*) etc., common use of slang, deriving new words from digital use of English in Turkish conversations like *internette chatleşmek* (*chat on Internet*), *ban*, *disconnect*, *guest*, *invite*, *thanks* etc, writing Turkish words with letters not found in the Turkish alphabet. They evaluated such situations as deviations. It is very well seen that not only Turkish but also all languages are affected by the digital language because it is commonly used. English is still *lingua franca* in digital world, too. By the beginning of the Internet, almost all the programs, games and social media used to be in English, so even though in 2022, almost all the countries can use their own languages, people are still on the influence of English as it is the popular culture language. Yet a lot of programs, films, serial films and popular social media platforms still use English as a common digital language so as to communicate around the world.

Emphasizing that mother tongue languages are not used well in media in many countries, Scoto also says that with the effect of the common information network language, young people distort words, speak a language that is a mixture of English and their own language, make different sounds (1997). As an inevitable result, an unspecified "internet language" has emerged and that the expressions of this language has started to be frequently used in daily speeches.

It is seen that the idea of the negative effects of digitalization on language is not limited to Turkey. In fact, Tomalin states that all the changes of the languages are also valid for English, although it is the dominant language of the information network (1993:35). However, Tomlinson does not see these as negativities, on the contrary, he thinks that a unique language or correspondence form of each field is beginning to emerge in the common information network or other digital environments (Tomlinson, 2004:6). He considers each of the fields such as e-mail, chat rooms, virtual worlds, world wide web(*www*), instant messaging, blogging/journaling as platforms with its own language and he argues that the language used on these platforms creates a common information network language by influencing the daily spoken language. However, it is seen that not everyone in the West is as optimistic as Tomlinson on this issue. As Thumim emphasizes; digitalization is an extremely unnatural transformation for people, she also states that the human being, who is an analog entity, is increasingly forced to live in a digital world and that the human brain is constantly forced to adapt thinking like a technological entity (2012:102). In this process, while the language is forced to digitalization, on the one hand, due to new digital technologies such as instant messaging, holistic sentences, even words lose their necessity and leave their place to abbreviations. As much as possible, information is tried to be conveyed with short language material. It is not just letters, words and sentences that are lost in this process.

Language is made up of feelings and thoughts and shapes how people experience the world (Wardhaugh, 2002:16). Taking these parts of the human mind and digitalizing it, is an unnatural process. The human structure is too complex that cannot be limited with some digital tools and systems. For this reason, the digitalization of the language also results in the suppression or compression of the language. Emojis represent one of the most extreme points of compression of emotions during instant messaging. There is little emotion or thought behind a small click expressed when choosing an emoji. The instantaneous nature of speech and word use in the digital space opens the gap between thinking and speaking. As a result, young people, especially students, may lose their ability to convey

their feelings and thoughts accurately and completely (Doueihi, 2011:123).

It is clear that all of these problems are situations that should be taken very seriously. However, many of these issues are problems that can be solved with the effective measures to be taken by the political powers that govern the societies. On the other hand, of course, the relationship between digitalization and language is not limited to these problems. An intricate relationship has emerged between language, which forms the basis of the society and is the instrument of the expression of all kinds of life experiences, namely culture, and digitalization. The fact that children grow up and acquire language in a digital environment affects language acquisition above all else. Another issue that needs to be emphasized is the effect of languages on the common information network. The rate at which languages are digitalized shapes the collaborative computing network itself. In this context, it is seen that a complex relationship has emerged between digitalization and languages. On the one hand, it is seen that highly digitalized languages suppress other languages, on the other hand, digitalization provides the languages that are in danger of extinction or threatened with survival. Another situation that arises as a result of the effect of digitalization on language is the effect of digitalization on language learning. It is seen that a new era has opened in the field of language learning with digitalization. It is useful to have a close examination at all the situations that arise as a result of the relationship between digitalization and language.

Digitalization and Language Acquisition

Existing theories on language acquisition draw attention to the importance of language input in children's language development and the child's interaction with the environment. At this point, there are several questions that need to be answered about the effects of this new digital environment on the acquisition problem of language and communication by children, which form the basis of human behavior. How do the new digital environment and the new form of interaction affect the children's language acquisition qualities? Is the use of new types of media beneficial to children's linguistic and cognitive development? Or is it harmful? Can new technologies be designed to improve children's language learning? Some studies have been able to answer these questions. Interaction and mutual verbal exchange have an important place in children's language acquisition. It has been observed that the children who interact with robots can acquire language and as well as socialize with them. However, there is still no data that shows that this situation makes a serious contribution to language learning. It was observed that a limited contribution was made only with vocabulary (Kennedy, 2015:5). This result is undoubtedly related to the absence of the above-mentioned language in terms of emotion and thought in robots. Considering the unsatisfactory results of experiments with robots for the acquisition of language which were only limited to laboratory environment so far, the result of children's interaction with the screen (television, computer, tablet, smartphones) which is much more common in everyday life can be predicted. Robots can interact with children even at the level of conversation. However, such an interaction with the screen is not possible. The fact that the young people Kennedy mentions, may lose their ability to convey their feelings and thoughts accurately and completely should be related to this situation.

The Impact of Language on Common Information Network

A situation that can be considered contrary to the effect of digitalization on language mentioned is that language shapes the common information network. What is meant here is the language that the network users use as their mother tongue or in the common computing network. The language used by network users seriously affects their experience with the shared information network. The language used, draws the boundaries of who can be contacted on social media and affects the behavior patterns in the virtual community in contact. Likewise, the language used determines the limits of the results that can be found in searches or Wikipedia, Wikizero etc. It also determines the amount of information that can be accessed in online encyclopedias. In other words, the width of the common information network for the user is directly proportional to the rate of use of the language he/she uses. According to a study conducted in 2013 with the support of the British Academy, the view from the top ten languages used in the common information network was as follows; English 800.600.000, Chinese 649.800.000, Spanish 222.41.K) Arabic 135.600600 Portuguese 121.800.000, Japanese 109600 Russian 87.500.500 German 811006100, French 78.900900 lava 75.500.500 and all other languages 440.100.100. In 199011, English covered almost the whole area with 80% in the common information network. Although the landscape in 2013 is quite different compared to years, it is still not very pleasant in terms of world languages. Only ten of the languages, which are thought to be around 6000-7000, correspond to the language of 82% of the content available in the common computing network (<https://labs.theguardian.com/digital-language-divide> (Access Date: 19.06.2020)).

As can be seen from this table, the situation of languages in terms of shaping common informatics, in other words, in terms of the place it occupies in the common informatics network, is not encouraging at all. Although Turkish has a large speaking audience, it has not entered the top ten languages, so this shows the frequent use of English both in digital world and in real life in Turkey. The most popular the language is, the most used it is all around the world.

The age range with the highest computer common information network usage rate is the 16-24 age range with a rate of 487%. Computer and shared information network usage is 59% and 58.1% for males aged 16-74, respectively, while 38.5% and 37% for females (Deuze, 2006:64). It can be thought that these rates have increased in the last eight years. The access to the common information network, which was 47.2% in 2012, has also increased according to the data. It was 429% one year ago. As mentioned above, the language used also affects the results that can be reached with the search, and even the ability to search. For example, the famous search engine Google recognizes an African language while it recognizes 30 European languages and does not recognize any American or Pacific indigenous languages (Deuze, 2006:65). Likewise, much of Wikipedia content is in English, and nearly half of the content is written in European languages. This disproportionate situation between the languages used in the common information network poses a serious obstacle for companies such as Facebook, SpaceX and Amazon that want to connect the entire population of the world to the common information network. The majority of common information network users use Facebook and Google, where communication is always provided in the same dominant languages. In this case, it causes the cultural diversification of the common information network. Wikitongues officials are believed that the culprits are companies and governments that do not provide the necessary resources and support to bring minor languages online (Westlund, 2016:561).

One more situation that should be noted is, research shows that the use of common information networks is concentrated in North America and Europe, especially in the United States. These geographies are also the regions with the least linguistic diversity in the world. In addition, in Africa, the region with the highest linguistic diversity in the world, the common information network is almost non-existent (Week, 1990:143) For this reason, it would not be wrong to think that the dominance of the languages that currently dominate the common information network will be shaken in parallel with the spread of the common information network in the world and the digitalization of local languages.

Digitalization and Documentation of Languages

Many languages with fewer speakers which are already under the threat of extinction, for not being adequately represented in the common information network. This threat of extinction has increased even more as a result of the fact that some languages especially English have taken up a large part of the usage area in the common information network (Henrichsen, 1998:35). Some steps have been taken to avoid this situation. The Global Language Digitalization Initiative is an important step forward in this context. It turns out that only about 1000 of today's languages have been digitalized, which is estimated to be around 6000-7000, meaning that at least around 5000 of today's languages do not represent at all on a shared computing network. This, on the one hand, causes these languages to be put under pressure by the above-mentioned dominant languages and quickly fall out of use, and on the other hand, a significant part of the world's population cannot access the common information network. The Global Language Digitalization Initiative, with its volunteer localization and internationalization experts, is trying to eliminate language barriers in the information network through translators (Dijk, 2012:45). This effort was made purely for linguistic concerns. This initiative not only allows many languages to become visible in the common computing network through digitalization, achieving the possibility of living in the digital age, but also offers large companies the opportunity to reach people who speak the languages. It is not correct to think that this economic relationship is unilateral, that is, only for the benefit of the companies. Many of these relations are instrumental in solving many socio-economic problems of the communities in question, many of which are already economically underdeveloped. Of course, digitalizing all languages and making them online will not solve all the problems related to this issue, people need to have the ability to read, write and even speak their mother tongue online in order to use their mother tongue effectively in the common information network. This raises another difficult problem.

The digitalization of Indian languages is a good example of this. It is significant that India, with its population of close to one and a half billion, is targeted in digitalization. The statement of B.Santhanam, a member of Saint-Gobain India, the Indian branch of one of the world's largest construction companies, that "India is the largest digitalization experiment in the world" actually sums up the issue. Only 4% of the Indian population can speak English fluently. 80% of the population cannot speak English at all. This corresponds to 1,188,000,000 people. In 2016, it was determined that 47% of this population, 558.360.000 people, who could not speak English at all, used the common information network (Dattatreyan, 2019:6). It is clearly seen that this access is provided by the digitalization of the local Indian language. This means a huge market.

Digitalization Foreign Language Learning

It can be said that digitalization, and especially the common information network, offers many opportunities that were not possible before. It would not be wrong to say that the issue has yielded very positive results for both sides, both in terms of education and financial aspects. If we look at philosophy from the perspective of those who offer foreign language education, it is seen that it provides more than one financial benefit. Above all, thanks to online

courses, foreign language education providers have the opportunity to simultaneously offer an unimaginable number of students. The opportunity to provide foreign language education to an unprecedented amount of students not only creates the educational dimension of the issue, but also means much more financial input for real and legal persons who provide foreign language education. In addition, online language courses reduce financial costs as they provide the opportunity to train as many people as possible with as few people as possible. When the savings from space are added to this, it is seen that the size of the material benefit increases many times more. This situation, on the one hand, provided foreign language education to many people in an amount that was not possible before, on the other hand, as a natural consequence of this situation, the business line of foreign language teaching developed at a level that it has never been in any period of history. However, what is interesting is that as much as those who give foreign language education, those who receive foreign language education benefit from the opportunities offered by the common information network.

Thanks to the online foreign language courses offered in the common information network, more people can access foreign language learning compared to the past. Moreover, this access is possible even from the most remote places where the common information network can reach. This means both time and financial gain for foreign language learners. Everyone has had the opportunity to access foreign language courses from their own home, which could be reached as a result of traveling for kilometers or hours before. However, the opportunities offered by the common information network to foreign language learners are not limited to these. Discussion rooms, which exist in the common information network, offer unlimited communication opportunities to everyone, regardless of geographical, linguistic or cultural boundaries. Newspaper networking sites offer forums in many different areas, from current affairs to crossword puzzles. More specialized sites offer discussion on just about every imaginable area, from musical instruments to growing squash or heart surgery (Pegrum, 2014:25). All these and more mean unique practice opportunities for foreign language learners. However, application opportunities that can be reached as a result of kilometers and often international travels come to their homes for foreign language students

Conclusion

It is seen that digitalization and especially the common information network creates an intricate relationship with language. There are many opinions in Turkey and in the world that digitalization in general and especially the common information network has some effects on individual languages. Moreover, it is witnessed that these effects are seen even on English, which is considered as the world wide language today. However, it seems that these effects are not interpreted in the same way by everyone. These effects, which are generally interpreted by linguists as the degeneration or deterioration of mother tongue languages, are interpreted by Prensky, for example, as the formation of new special variants of the language specific to different platforms of the common information network (2001:4). It is seen that there is an approach that is diametrically opposed to each other. It is also witnessed that digitalization affects language in a more fundamental way. In today's world, due to the fact that children are familiar with digital devices from a younger age, this enables the human beings' language ability to be under the influence of digitalization in the early stages and also progress the language development in this direction, however there is no data that this progress is positive.

In the relationship of digitalization or common information network with language, it is also seen that the affected side is not always language. Languages shape the common information network in parallel with the relations of their speakers with the common information network. We are witnessing that the common information network, which was almost completely dominated by English in the past, has gradually become multilingual and multicultural. Although most of the world's languages still have not had the opportunity to meet with the common information network, the monopoly of English on the network has completely disappeared. As a result of the digitalization of languages, on the one hand, the pressure of the dominant languages in the common information network is reduced to some extent. On the other hand, hundreds of millions of people who cannot speak this dominant language are provided with access to the common information network. The visibility of these languages in the common information network increases the possibility of living against dominant languages in the future. However, besides this situation, the digitalization of languages also enables giant global companies to reach larger audiences. In other words, the digitalization of languages is not only a language issue, but also an economic issue. Another part of the relationship of the common information network with language, which has both linguistic and economic consequences, is foreign language learning and teaching. However, the financial gain resulting from the relationship between foreign language education and the common information network seems to be much more fair when compared to the digitalization of languages. Because as a result of this relationship, the financial benefit is shared between those who offer foreign language education and those who demand it. In addition, this relationship ensures that foreign language education can be delivered to more people. As a result, it turns out that the relationship between digitalization in general, and especially the common information network and language, is too complex to be characterized as a positive or negative effect of one side on the other. From this relationship, both the language, the person who is the speaker of the language, and the common information network are affected, and even shaped according to this effect.

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