CUDES JOURNAL CURRENT DEBATES IN SOCIAL SCIENCES

Rusieshvili, E. (2023). Internet Linguistics. *Journal of Current Debates in Social Sciences, Special Issue of Cudes 2023, 14. International Congress on Current Debates in Social Sciences*, 6(S2), 1-5.

Research Article

Internet Linguistics

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DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.29228/cudes.73853

Article Info

Received: 24.11.2023
Accepted: 05.12.2023

Keywords: Internet linguistics, socio-linguistic, educational, stylistic, applied linguistics

Abstract

The field of Internet linguistics offers a unique opportunity to explore the ever-changing language patterns and styles shaped by the digital realm. By delving into this dynamic subject matter, researchers can unlock valuable insights that can enhance our understanding of language evolution in the modern era. The socio-linguistic, educational, stylistic, and applied perspectives collectively form an interconnected web that influences the study and application of language. Combating the exploitation of the Internet demands a multi-faceted approach, with forensic linguistics playing a crucial role in identifying and apprehending offenders.

INTRODUCTION

Methods of teaching foreign languages are continually evolving, each with its own set of advantages and disadvantages. These changes stem, on one hand, from the emergence of various trends in linguistic and related disciplines, and on the other hand, from the imperative to enhance the quality of education for specific target groups. In the contemporary landscape, no single method enjoys exclusive preference, as there is no universally applicable approach to teaching a foreign language that suits all target groups. The efficacy of a particular method hinges on factors such as the learner's existing knowledge, cultural disparities, and distinctions between the native language and the target language.

Nowadays, Internet linguistics studies new language styles and forms that have arisen under the influence of the Internet and other New Media, such as Short Message Service (SMS) text messaging. Since the beginning of Human-computer interaction (HCI) leading to computer-mediated communication (CMC) and Internet-mediated communication (IMC), experts have acknowledged that linguistics has a contributing role in it, in terms of web interface and usability. Studying the emerging language on the Internet can help improve conceptual organization, translation and web usability. This will benefit both linguists and web users (Baron 2008).

The study of Internet linguistics can be effectively done through 4 main perspectives; sociolinguistics, education, stylistics and applied. Further dimensions have developed as a result of further technological advancements which include the development of the Web as Corpus and the spread and influence of the stylistic variations brought forth by the spread of the Internet, through the Mass Media and Literary Works. In view of the increasing number of users connected to the Internet, the linguistics future of the Internet remains to be determined as new computer-mediated technologies continues to emerge and people adapt their languages to suit these new mediums. The Internet continues to play a significant role in both encouraging as well as diverting attention away from the usage of languages (Crystal 2001, p. 282).

The distinction between the Internet and the World Wide Web, or simply the Web must be made clear. The Internet is a network of networks which connects computers worldwide while the

Web is one part of this network. It is the medium through which people access the information that travels over the Internet.

The study of Internet linguistics encompasses four main perspectives: sociolinguistics, education, stylistics, and applied linguistics. These perspectives have further expanded with technological advancements, including the development of the Web as a Corpus and the widespread influence of stylistic variations propagated through the Internet, Mass Media, and Literary Works. As the number of Internet users continues to grow, the linguistic future of the Internet remains uncertain, subject to the emergence of new computer-mediated technologies and the evolving language adaptations of its users. The Internet, on one hand, plays a vital role in promoting the use of languages, but on the other hand, it may also divert attention away from traditional language usage (Gumperz 1972).

It is essential to distinguish between the Internet and the World Wide Web, commonly known as the Web. The Internet constitutes a vast network of interconnected computers worldwide, while the Web represents just one part of this network, serving as the medium through which people access information traveling over the Internet. Understanding this distinction is crucial for a comprehensive perspective on the digital landscape (Schegloff 1972).

1. Sociolinguistic Perspective

The socio-linguistic perspective explores the dynamic relationship between language and society. It delves into how language is used within different social contexts, reflecting cultural norms, identities, and power structures. This perspective recognizes that language is not static but evolves alongside social changes. It encompasses the study of dialects, sociolects, and language variations based on factors like age, gender, ethnicity, and social class. Moreover, it highlights how language can both perpetuate and challenge societal inequalities. In turn, the socio-linguistic perspective draws upon insights from education, stylistics, and practical applications to better understand and address linguistic diversity. This broadened understanding of language education emphasizes the need for flexible and adaptive teaching methods that acknowledge and respond to the complex interplay between language and society.

The basic theoretical features of sociolinguistics and the context of its practice lend foreign language education its rich social content. To illustrate, when one considers language education in a school context, noting student-teacher interactions alongside educational components of teaching and learning, the significance of social interactions is readily perceived. Regarding communicational functions, the application of sociolinguistics in a classroom context can contribute enormously to the development of foreign language teaching techniques. Foreign-language-education-related research in areas listed above has been well developed and applied. The theme of this article is the interaction between sociolinguistics and foreign language education because in FLT research sociolinguistics has been an ignored or overlooked area of study. Generally, the FLT researchers do not make any connection between the two even though they make inferences about the significance of the context in developing the communicative competence of the learners of a foreign language. Therefore, it is essential to see the attributes of both sociolinguistics and foreign language education disciplines, such as language attitudes, language and culture, and policies governing the selection of foreign languages to be taught. In this article these will be examined

1.1. Educational Perspective

The educational perspective concentrates on language acquisition, literacy, and the role of language in learning. It examines how language is taught, learned, and used in educational settings. This perspective is crucial in developing effective teaching methods and promoting language development among learners of all ages and backgrounds. Understanding the socio-linguistic aspects of students' linguistic backgrounds can enhance educators' ability to create inclusive and culturally responsive learning environments. Additionally, the educational perspective informs stylistic choices in educational materials and curricula, which can impact students' language proficiency and overall academic success. Integrating both socio-linguistic and educational perspectives allows for a comprehensive and nuanced approach to language instruction.

1.2 The Stylistic Perspective

The stylistic perspective analyzes the expressive and artistic use of language. It explores how language choices, such as tone, register, and rhetorical devices, shape communication to elicit specific responses or convey particular emotions. Stylistics examines written and spoken language in various contexts, such as literature, poetry, advertising, and public speaking. This perspective recognizes that language is not just a tool for conveying information but also a means of crafting compelling narratives and evoking meaning on multiple levels. Moreover, the stylistic perspective draws insights from socio-linguistics to consider how stylistic choices may be influenced by social and cultural factors (Maynor 1994).

1.3 The Applied Perspective

The applied perspective bridges theory and practice, focusing on the real-world applications of language studies. It involves using findings from socio-linguistics, education, and stylistics to address practical challenges related to language use. Applied linguists work in diverse fields, including language teaching, language policy, translation, and communication consultancy. This perspective seeks to improve language learning methodologies, enhance cross-cultural communication, and develop language interventions that cater to specific needs and contexts. Furthermore, it recognizes that practical applications can, in turn, inform and enrich the other perspectives, leading to a continuous cycle of growth and refinement (Mc Elheam 2000).

1.4 Language Documentation

Firstly, the Internet facilitates language documentation. Digital archives of media such as audio and video recordings not only help to preserve language documentation, but also allows for global dissemination through the Internet. Publicity about endangered languages, such as Webster (2003) has helped to spur a worldwide interest in linguistic documentation (Goffman 1981).

Foundations such as the Hans Rausing Endangered Languages Project (HRELP), funded by Arcadia also help to develop the interest in linguistic documentation. The HRELP is a project that seeks to document endangered languages, preserve and disseminate documentation materials among others. The materials gathered are made available online under its Endangered Languages Archive (ELAR) program.

1.5 Language Revitalization.

Other online materials that support language documentation include the Language Archive Newsletter which provides news and articles about topics in endangered languages. The web version of Ethnologue also provides brief information of all of the world's known living languages. By making resources and information of endangered languages and language documentation available on the Internet, it allows researchers to build on these materials and hence preserve endangered languages.

Secondly, the Internet facilitates language revitalization. Throughout the years, the digital environment has developed in various sophisticated ways that allow for virtual contact. From e-mails, chats to instant messaging, these virtual environments have helped to bridge the spatial distance between communicators. The use of e-mails has been adopted in language courses to encourage students to communicate in various styles such as conference-type formats and also to generate discussions. Similarly, the use of e-mails facilitates language revitalization in the sense that speakers of a minority language who moved to a location where their native language is not being spoken can take advantage of the Internet to communicate with their family and friends, thus maintaining the use of their native language. With the development and increasing use of telephone broadband communication such as Skype, language revitalization through the internet is no longer restricted to literate users (Herring 1996).

Hawaiian educators have been taking advantage of the Internet in their language revitalization programs.] The graphical bulletin board system, Leoki (Powerful Voice), was established in 1994. The content, interface and menus of the system are entirely in the Hawaiian language. It is installed throughout the immersion school system and includes components for e-mails, chat, dictionary and online newspaper among others. In higher institutions such as colleges and universities where the

Leoki system is not yet installed, the educators make use of other software and Internet tools such as Daedalus Interchange, e-mails and the Web to connect students of Hawaiian language with the broader community.

Another use of the Internet includes having students of minority languages write about their native cultures in their native languages for distant audiences. Also, in an attempt to preserve their language and culture, Occitan speakers have been taking advantage of the Internet to reach out to other Occitan speakers from around the world. These methods provide reasons for using the minority languages by communicating in it. In addition, the use of digital technologies, which the young generation think of as 'cool', will appeal to them and in turn maintain their interest and usage of their native languages.

1.6 Forensic Linguistics.

Exploitation of the Internet; Forensic linguistics. The Internet can also be exploited for activities such as terrorism, internet fraud and pedophilia. In recent years, there has been an increase in crimes that involved the use of the Internet such as e-mails and Internet Relay Chat (IRC), as it is relatively easy to remain anonymous These conspiracies carry concerns for security and protection. From a forensic linguistic point of view, there are many potential areas to explore. While developing a chat room child protection procedure based on search terms filtering is effective, there is still minimal linguistically orientated literature to facilitate the task. In other areas, it is observed that the Semantic Web has been involved in tasks such as personal data protection, which helps to prevent fraud (Kawasaki 1996).

The Internet, while a remarkable tool for global connectivity and information exchange, unfortunately, can also be misused for nefarious activities such as terrorism, internet fraud, and pedophilia. In recent years, there has been a concerning increase in crimes perpetrated through the use of the Internet, utilizing channels like e-mails and Internet Relay Chat (IRC), which offer relative anonymity to the offenders. Consequently, these digital conspiracies pose significant security and protection challenges.

From a forensic linguistic perspective, exploring various avenues becomes imperative to tackle these issues effectively. Although developing a chat room child protection procedure that relies on search term filtering has proven to be efficient, it remains evident that there is a lack of adequate linguistically-oriented literature to support such efforts fully. This knowledge gap hinders the progress in dealing with these criminal activities effectively.

In different domains, the Semantic Web has emerged as a valuable asset in tasks like personal data protection, significantly aiding in fraud prevention. Leveraging such technological advancements can be instrumental in safeguarding individuals from the dangers of internet exploitation.

1.7 Dimensions of Internet Linguistics.

In addition to these perspectives, the field of Internet linguistics adds another dimension to the study of language. This dimension encompasses various aspects, including treating the Web as a corpus and addressing issues of language identification and normalization. The impacts of Internet linguistics on everyday life are further examined through the lenses of the spread and influence of Internet stylistics, trends of language change on the Internet, and conversation discourse (Talbott 1995). This multi-dimensional approach recognizes the evolving nature of language in the digital age and emphasizes the importance of considering online communication patterns and linguistic phenomena in the broader context of language studies.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, As the Internet continues to evolve and influence communication, the study of Internet linguistics will remain at the forefront of linguistic research, providing valuable knowledge for linguists, language enthusiasts, and all those engaged in the digital world.

Understanding the interplay between these perspectives is essential for a comprehensive grasp of language's multifaceted nature and its profound impact on individuals and societies. As language continues to evolve, so too will our comprehension of its complexities through these dynamic and interrelated lenses.

By advancing research in linguistically-oriented methodologies and leveraging cutting-edge technologies like the Semantic Web, we can work towards a safer online environment for all users.

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