CROSS-CULTURAL PRAGMATICS IN MULTIMODAL ONLINE INTERACTION

Aminov Farrukh

Karshi State University, PhD student

aminov.fk@qarshidu.uz

ORCID: 0000-0001-5429-0929

Abstract. The present paper looks into the processes of pragmatic meaning construction and negotiation in cross-cultural multimodal online interactions. Using Pragmatics and Multimodal Discourse Analysis theories as theoretical frameworks, the qualitative methodology in order to investigate how multimodal communication resources are applied in intercultural contexts of online communication. According to the results of the study, online communication involves a combination of language and visual cues and creates its own culture, which requires understanding of the rules and principles of interaction within it. This includes knowledge about the ways different multimodal devices are combined in the process of meaning creation. The role of pragmatics in cross-cultural communication proves to be significant; this is evidenced by the considerable impact cultural factors have on the way pragmatic phenomena are perceived and interpreted by individuals. At the same time, digital communication makes possible some forms of interaction common for all users regardless of their background, but there may still be differences in interpretation caused by cultural specifics. Interactive functions also serve as pragmatic clues in online communication.

Keywords: Cross-cultural pragmatics; Multimodality; Online interaction; Digital discourse; Politeness strategies; Intercultural communication; Meaning-making; Computer-mediated communication.

MULTIMODAL O‘ZARO ONLAYN ALOQADA MADANIYATLARARO PRAGMATIKA

Annotatsiya. Ushbu maqola madaniyatlararo multimodal onlayn o‘zaro ta’sirlarda pragmatik ma’no qurish va muzokara qilish jarayonlarini ko‘rib chiqadi. Pragmatika va Multimodal Diskurs tahlili nazariyalaridan nazariy asos sifatida foydalanib, onlayn muloqotning madaniyatlararo kontekstida multimodal aloqa resurslari qanday qo‘llanilishini o‘rganish uchun sifatli metodologiya. Tadqiqot natijalariga ko‘ra, onlayn muloqot til va vizual ishoralarning kombinatsiyasini o‘z ichiga oladi va o‘z madaniyatini yaratadi, bu esa uning ichidagi o‘zaro ta’sir qoidalari va tamoyillarini tushunishni talab qiladi. Bunga ma’no yaratish jarayonida turli xil multimodal qurilmalarning birlashtirilishi haqidagi bilimlar kiradi. Madaniyatlararo muloqotda pragmatikaning roli sezilarli darajada o‘sib bormoqda; bu madaniy omillarning pragmatik hodisalarni shaxslar tomonidan idrok etilishi va talqin qilinishiga sezilarli ta’siri bilan tasdiqlanadi. Shu bilan birga raqamli aloqa barcha foydalanuvchilar uchun ularning kelib chiqishidan qat’iy nazar, umumiy bo‘lgan o‘zaro ta’sirning ba’zi shakllarini imkon beradi, ammo madaniy xususiyatlar tufayli talqin qilishda farqlar bo‘lishi mumkin. Interaktiv funktsiyalar onlayn muloqotda pragmatik ishoralar bo‘lib ham xizmat qiladi.

Kalit so‘zlar: Madaniyatlararo pragmatika; Multimodallik; Onlayn muloqot; Raqamli suhbat; Xushmuomalalik strategiyalari; Madaniyatlararo muloqot; Ma’no berish; Kompyuter vositasida muloqot.

МЕЖКУЛЬТУРНАЯ ПРАГМАТИКА В МНОГОМОДАЛЬНОМ ОНЛАЙН-ВЗАИМОДЕЙСТВИИ

Аннотация. В данной статье рассматриваются процессы прагматического конструирования и согласования значений в межкультурных мультимодальных онлайн-взаимодействиях. Используя теории прагматики и мультимодального дискурс-анализа в качестве теоретических основ, качественная методология исследует применение мультимодальных коммуникационных ресурсов в межкультурных контекстах онлайн-коммуникации. Согласно результатам исследования, онлайн-коммуникация включает в себя сочетание языковых и визуальных сигналов и создает свою собственную культуру, требующую понимания правил и принципов взаимодействия внутри нее. Это включает в себя знание о способах сочетания различных мультимодальных средств в процессе создания смысла. Роль прагматики в межкультурной коммуникации оказывается значительной; это подтверждается существенным влиянием культурных факторов на то, как прагматические явления воспринимаются и интерпретируются отдельными людьми. В то же время цифровая коммуникация делает возможными некоторые формы взаимодействия, общие для всех пользователей независимо от их происхождения, но все же могут существовать различия в интерпретации, вызванные культурной спецификой. Интерактивные функции также служат прагматическими подсказками в онлайн-коммуникации.

Ключевые слова: Межкультурная прагматика; Мультимодальность; Онлайн-взаимодействие; Цифровой дискурс; Стратегии вежливости; Межкультурная коммуникация; Создание смысла; Компьютерно-опосредованная коммуникация.

Introduction. Rapid developments in digital communication technologies have brought about changes in the ways in which people from varied cultural backgrounds communicate with each other in virtual spaces. These developments in technology have made possible instant and worldwide communication, connecting users from various linguistic backgrounds and cultures. Online communication has therefore turned into a complex mode of cross-cultural communication, in which meanings are no longer solely expressed verbally, but are also produced through a number of modes, including visual imagery, emojis, videos, etc. It becomes important to consider the manner in which pragmatics can help us understand meanings produced within such diverse and multimodal virtual worlds.

In this regard, the study of Pragmatics has been helpful in identifying various contextual cues that affect the way in which meaning-making takes place. This field studies meanings based on context and intention. Within cross-cultural settings, it also becomes necessary to pay attention to differences in pragmatics since there could be considerable variation in the meanings due to different politeness strategies and speech acts. On the other hand, the study of multimodality has posed many challenges to pragmatics due to the addition of another layer of meaning through images and other modalities.

According to the theory of multimodality advocated by such scholars as Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen, communication is seen as a process that results from the integration of different semiotic modes which bring different potentials to the

communicative situation. In digital settings, semiotic modes can be combined using specific affordances offered by different platforms, which allows the combination of text, visuals and other interactive elements. In consequence, the production of meanings through online interaction may be considered a process of multimodality that requires not only linguistic analysis but also visual and symbolic considerations.

Although more and more scholars have started paying attention to discourse in digital communication, there is a lack of consideration of the application of cross-cultural pragmatic rules in online communication. Up till now, studies focusing on cross-cultural pragmatics or multimodality were carried out but rarely were they integrated together. The current project aims at investigating the issue of cross-cultural pragmatics in online communication with special emphasis on multimodality.

The purpose of the proposed research is to explore the impact of multimodal means on the development of cross-cultural pragmatic meaning in digital communication. To achieve the research goal, it seeks to answer the following questions: (1) what is the role of multimodal means in developing pragmatic meaning in the process of digital communication; (2) what is the impact of cultural differences on the use of multimodal means in online communication; and (3) what is the role of platform affordance in mediating cross-cultural communication?

Methodology. The study employs a qualitative design to investigate the construction and interpretation of pragmatic meaning in multimodal cross-cultural interactions taking place on the internet. The theoretical framework underpinning the research is built on the integration of ideas from two domains, namely, Pragmatics and Multimodal Discourse Analysis, and helps gain a deeper understanding of meaning creation processes and the role of various resources, whether linguistic or non-linguistic, in digital communication. Qualitative research can be considered highly relevant in this case since it will enable the researcher to examine the contextual aspects of meaning creation and cultural diversity in online discourse in detail.

The sample used in this study consists of a collection of publicly available online interactions gathered from popular social media platforms, such as Instagram and Twitter (X). The selection of such websites was prompted by their reliance on a wide range of multimodal resources, namely, text, image, emojis, video, audio, as well as interactivity tools, including liking and sharing of others' posts and commenting. A purposeful maximum variation sampling strategy will be employed in this study since diverse kinds of interactions, including replies and comments posted by users from different cultures, will be analyzed.

Data was collected by way of systematic observation as well as by hand-coding instances of digital communication over an extended period. All publicly available material was considered for inclusion in the dataset, which took care to consider ethical issues by remaining anonymous and avoiding the use of private information in all cases. The dataset includes both primary communicative data (posts, captions, videos, and similar) as well as response interaction data (comments, replies, and reactions).

The process of analysis will include a multilayered coding process focused on both the pragmatic and multimodal aspects of the communication process. First, the communication process will be analyzed pragmatically through the use of speech acts, politeness theories, implicature, and situational context. Second, multimodal aspects are identified and analyzed in each case, including linguistic (written text), visual (including images, emojis,

and formatting), audio (sound or voices), and interactive (the unique interactive elements of the platform). Third, special consideration will be paid to the interaction between these modalities in producing pragmatic meaning.

For the study's rigorous analysis, an iterative process of coding is employed, which involves a repetitive process of categorization. The comparative analysis method is applied in order to uncover trends in the usage and interpretation of the multimodal tools across different cultures. The results obtained are then interpreted using the theories of pragmatics and multimodality, especially with regard to the mediation of digital affordances in cross-cultural interactions.

Results. The results show that pragmatic meaning created by cross-cultural interaction in multimodal online environments is a result of the intricate interdependence between linguistic means, multimodal devices, and the set of communication practices that are characteristic of particular cultures. It is found that users use the combination of visual, textual, and interactive means in order to demonstrate their pragmatic intent, and that interpretation of those means can be culture-specific.

One of the most significant aspects of the study concerns the way in which multimodal means are used in the realization of various pragmatic purposes, such as being polite, evaluating the topic, and expressing attitude. In this case, linguistic means, including comments and captions, provide the main information while visual means, including emojis, pictures, and GIFs, help to achieve pragmatic goals through modification. Thus, for instance, emojis can serve as indicators of tone used by the person, helping to mitigate face-threatening acts and demonstrate friendliness. At the same time, the use of such visual aids may be culture-specific.

Moreover, another critical outcome from the investigation pertains to the variations in politeness strategies used across various cultural settings. It emerges that there is variation in the choice of either directness or indirectness by participants to express politeness in communication. Indeed, multimodal features may be deployed in lieu of paralinguistics to manage interpersonal relationships in virtual spaces, but the incongruity between pragmatic expectations may lead to communicative failures.

Another important aspect to be mentioned about the outcomes of the study is the impact of interactive affordances on intercultural communication. Such affordances as likes, responses, and shares constitute the practical means of showing agreement, sharing views, or making evaluations. Interaction is one of the means of meaning-making, and its realization is associated with the ability to engage in communication, which varies according to culture.

In addition, it is important to highlight that the study shows that the use of multimodal communication online creates conditions for both convergence and divergence. First, it can be argued that the availability of global communication platforms creates preconditions for the development of convergent communicative norms that are expressed in the use of emojis and other linguistic peculiarities specific to the Internet environment. At the same time, there are certain differences in their perception due to the existing pragmatic norms and values, which emphasizes their divergent side.

Thus, it can be concluded that cross-cultural pragmatic meanings in online communication cannot be analyzed effectively without taking into account the impact of the multimodal resource usage and affordances of the particular platform.

Discussion. From an analytical point of view, it is evident that the findings generated in the course of this study shed new light on the processes through which pragmatic meanings are made in online communication. In line with the theoretical assumptions of Pragmatics, the data analyzed suggests that pragmatic meaning-making is highly context-dependent. At the same time, however, it should be noted that the current study reveals that the process of pragmatic meaning-making is significantly affected by multimodal factors, thus, suggesting the need for an expanded understanding of communicative practices.

Following the conceptual framework of Multimodal Discourse Analysis, the study finds that multimodality represents the fundamental feature of online discourse. Thus, just as argued by Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen, the findings indicate that each mode has its own meaning potential, and, what is more important, all these modes interact with one another contributing to the formation of pragmatic meanings. This study, therefore, demonstrates that pragmatic meanings can be formed through interactions between different modes, including those that operate in culturally diverse communication.

One of the implications of this research is that multimodal resources, such as emojis, images, and interactions, operate as pragmatic markers that assist users in negotiating their understanding of messages and managing their interpersonal relationships. Multimodal markers usually play the role of compensating for the lack of non-verbal behavior, which is characteristic of face-to-face communication, helping users convey their emotions, attitudes, and intentions better. Nonetheless, the data gathered during this study suggests that interpreting multimodal markers is culture-specific. It means that digital interactivity is prone to cross-cultural challenges caused by different interpretations of multimodal resources.

Another implication is that the concept of digital communication is necessarily related to interaction and co-construction. Taking into consideration the findings obtained during the analysis, one may suggest that users take an active part in shaping discourse via interacting with it, leaving comments and using other affordances. Affordances used for interacting with discourse work as pragmatic markers, helping participants communicate better and make their meaning negotiation more effective. At the same time, affordances are used differently in various cultures.

A significant implication also lies in understanding the importance of digital platforms as active agents in communication. From the study, one can note the significance of affordances, and structure algorithms of different digital platforms in influencing the nature of communication, its interpretation, and distribution. This supports a wider theoretical framework on technology and social interaction where technology is not considered a mere mediator but plays a significant role in shaping such interaction. Thus, any analysis of cross-cultural pragmatics within the context of digital communication must necessarily involve a consideration of technological elements involved in the process of communication.

In summary, from the study presented above, the implication is clear that a comprehensive approach should be adopted for analyzing communication in contemporary digital contexts. A combined pragmatics and multimodal approach is necessary for gaining an adequate understanding of communication. The study focuses on the convergence of culture, multimodality, and interactivity.

Conclusion. The current study has provided insight into the impact of multimodal features on pragmatic cross-cultural interpretation in online discourse. The results suggest

that online communication is a multifaceted process, involving the use of various semiotic modes, such as visual, auditory, and interactivity modes. Moreover, it was found that multimodal features are essential for the realization of different pragmatic functions, such as politeness, stance, and interpersonal alignment, especially when participants of the communication belong to different cultures.

The research has also shown that cross-cultural differences greatly affect multimodal communication, although modern technologies create opportunities for the development of some universal standards of pragmatic discourse. In particular, despite convergence in the form of adopting globally recognized digital conventions, cross-cultural pragmatic discourse remains differentiated due to differences in pragmatic norms, including directness, expressiveness, and politeness strategies.

Furthermore, the research demonstrates the significance of interactive affordances in helping users co-create discourse. Such affordances as comments, likes, and shares serve as pragmatic signs that aid meaning negotiation and participation in the conversation. Thus, these interactive affordances do not merely make interaction possible; they affect the processes of communication by impacting interpretation and responses. Thus, the concept of digital environment should not be conceived as a passive one. Instead, it is important to acknowledge its active character in shaping communicative activities.

From a theoretical standpoint, the presented study advances the connection between Pragmatics and Multimodal Discourse Analysis and highlights the significance of their interaction. Indeed, the analysis of digital discourse reveals that culture and multimodality should both be taken into account when studying communication in the modern online world.

Yet, the study faces limitations due to its qualitative character and the choice of platforms used for analysis, which may fail to fully capture the diversity of digital communication around the world. Future studies can consider expanding the database, using quantitative research methodologies, as well as analyzing newer modalities of communication, such as those involving the use of artificial intelligence and virtual reality technologies.

In summary, cross-cultural pragmatics in multimodal online communication presents a developing area of academic research. It is critical for the development of communication theory and for promoting intercultural communication in the modern digital age.

References

1. Erving Goffman, E. (1981). *Forms of talk*. University of Pennsylvania Press.
2. Michael Halliday, M. A. K. (1978). *Language as social semiotic: The social interpretation of language and meaning*. Edward Arnold.
3. Monica Heller, M. (2011). *Paths to post-nationalism: A critical ethnography of language and identity*. Oxford University Press.
4. Dell Hymes, D. (1974). *Foundations in sociolinguistics: An ethnographic approach*. University of Pennsylvania Press.
5. Daniel Z. Kádár, D. Z., & Michael Haugh, M. (2013). *Understanding politeness*. Cambridge University Press.
6. Adam Kendon, A. (2004). *Gesture: Visible action as utterance*. Cambridge University Press.

7. Rodney Jones, R. H. (2012). *Discourse and digital practices: Doing discourse analysis in the digital age*. Routledge.
8. Sigrid Norris, S. (2004). *Analyzing multimodal interaction: A methodological framework*. Routledge.
9. Elinor Ochs, E. (1992). Indexing gender. In *Rethinking context: Language as an interactive phenomenon* (pp. 335–358). Cambridge University Press.
10. Ron Scollon, R., & Suzanne Wong Scollon, S. W. (2003). *Discourses in place: Language in the material world*. Routledge.
11. Helen Spencer-Oatey, H. (2008). *Culturally speaking: Culture, communication and politeness theory* (2nd ed.). Continuum.
12. Richard Watts, R. J. (2003). *Politeness*. Cambridge University Press.