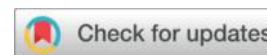




THE IMPACT OF DIGITAL LINGUISTIC DISCOURSE ON POLITICAL ACTION FROM THE COMMUNICATIVE PERSPECTIVE OF JÜRGEN HABERMAS



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Abstract

This study aims to explore the nature of the digital space and the type of language used in political discussions. It examines the extent to which political engagement is possible for citizens seeking improved public services, and how digital language reflects ethical communication practices with the prevailing system, often through civil society as a mediator. The study also questions the success of this communication in reducing conflict, while addressing the real influence of multinational corporations as dominant actors in the digital sphere.

Keywords: Digital language, digital space, political action, domination, multinational corporations, agency.

INTRODUCTION

In the age of digitization, rationalization tends to direct political action toward transparency in public service. Today, digital discourse holds the power of a "fifth authority," a fact recognized by political actors. Citizens now possess information that allows them to assert themselves as agents within this space. Digital language has compelled both rulers and the ruled to adopt ethical standards in communication.

Sociology, as a critical science, reveals the hidden aspects of social phenomena, including the linguistic dimensions of political action through social media. Political action is now more exposed, and no one

can monopolize or dominate the digital space without engaging in open communication and dialogue. This space challenges the traditional authoritarian structures that have become outdated due to the influence of digital discourse.

Research Problem

How does digital linguistic discourse influence political action from the communicative perspective of Jürgen Habermas?

1. Previous Studies

1.1 First Study

PhD dissertation by Amina Attallah, titled “New Media and Its Use in Political Communication: A Survey Study on a Sample of Algerian Politicians,” Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Mohamed Khider University, Biskra, Algeria (2019–2020).

This study investigated the use of new media in political communication and asked: How are digital social networks used for political purposes by both politicians and the public?

The study adopted a descriptive survey method and reached the following findings:

- Algerian politicians use digital social networks almost daily, averaging two hours per day.
- The main variables influencing patterns of use are gender, age, and, to a lesser extent, political position.
- The political authorities respond to public demands expressed through new digital media, which have gained significant public attention and support.
- Personal relationships and traditional media remain the most preferred means of communication for Algerians. (Attallah, 2020)

1.2 Second Study

By Ben Malek Mohamed El Hassan, titled “The Role of Digital Media in Changing Political Behavior in Algeria.”

This study examined the impact of digital media on political change in Algeria, particularly in the context of the 2019 protests and the 2017 parliamentary election boycott campaigns. The main research question was: What is the role of digital media in changing political behavior in Algeria?

The study employed a descriptive-analytical method and concluded the following:

- Digital media created opportunities for the emergence of political influencers—bloggers and YouTubers—who became key figures in the virtual space due to their content followed by thousands.

- These influencers contributed significantly to the political maturity of Algerian citizens, prompting the government to present more realistic and credible electoral outcomes. (Ben Malek Mohamed El Hassan, 2022, pp. 121–139)

1.3 Third Study

By Jamal Noon and Anan Murad, titled “Digital Political Action in the Arab World: Value Systems and Transformations.”

The study asked: Can the digital revolution be relied upon to raise public cultural awareness and empower citizens beyond their marginal roles?

The researchers used a quantitative descriptive approach with a sample size of 105 participants. Key findings included:

- Several Arab leaders do not manage their Twitter accounts personally; others tweet through designated teams.
- Most politicians' accounts lack the verification blue badge, though content analysis confirms the accounts are official. (Noon & Murad, 2019)

1.4 Commentary on Previous Studies

All reviewed studies used the descriptive-analytical method, which we also adopt in this study. This method aids in analysis, interpretation, and understanding of complex phenomena. These studies align with our research in focusing on core variables such as political action and digital language.

However, our study differs in its theoretical framework. We adopt Habermas’s communicative action theory, given its emphasis on fostering dialogue to avoid conflict. The theory prioritizes communicative action over rational action, acknowledging that human reasoning often leads to disagreement and misunderstanding, which may cause crises.

Habermas argues that science requires philosophy—its foundational discipline. His critique of both Marxism and capitalism leads to communicative action as an alternative. With the spread of digital technologies like social media and AI, the public—once silenced by traditional media—has gained the right to express opinions.

At the same time, these digital platforms reveal a troubling reality: multinational corporations dominate the digital space, turning active participants into mere consumers. Thus, the citizen is shifted from being an agent to being acted upon.

2. Identity and Digital Language

Language in the digital age has shown a remarkable ability to adapt. It now expresses itself in ways that go beyond narrow identity frameworks. Through emotional symbols—of joy and sorrow—and the speed of translation in the era of artificial intelligence, language has crossed national borders. It has also moved beyond local linguistic boundaries, allowing people to understand others and engage in dialogue on various social, cultural, and political matters.

This has contributed to shaping a new global form of identity. This identity reflects tolerance, acceptance of the other, and attentiveness to the concerns of the Global South—issues such as poverty, exploitation by the Global North, widespread corruption, and civil and sectarian conflicts. These topics have now become part of global discussions. It is also possible to hear the voices of oppressed peoples, like the Palestinian people, despite the silence, complicity, and disregard of the Western world regarding their suffering and destruction.

Such developments have led to a political discourse that responds to current events. Western societies themselves are now protesting and showing solidarity. The once passive public has become an influential actor in global events. This has disrupted the silence maintained by major global news networks and challenged their neglect by producing a new kind of political language. This language resists the dominance and media control historically exercised by the West.

Today, digital language has taken the form of communication through various social media platforms. People from all over the world are expressing their dissatisfaction. A new ethical and communicative discourse has emerged. It goes beyond the traditional authoritarian practices of Western powers, which now rely on the use of force to control events and suppress this new global identity.

This identity has become a counterforce to hegemonic narratives and control of public opinion. Multinational corporations now play a central role in distorting facts, spreading misinformation, and distracting social media users. They flood platforms with content that undermines critical thinking and replaces it with trivial concerns.

Digital identity is defined as: “A collection of traces (texts, audio or video content, forum messages, user IDs, links, etc.) that we leave behind, consciously or unconsciously, during our navigation online. These traces reflect our digital image, as it appears to search engines.” (Nabti, 2017, p. 534)

3. The Formation of Digital Public Opinion

Digital public opinion is shaped in virtual spaces by a new class of influencers. They resemble the early generation of bloggers. Before the rise of social media, influencers gathered followers through personal blogs. Today, we see the emergence of what is known as citizen journalism. These are individuals who produce content that attracts large audiences who engage with and are affected by what they consume.

This new activity has moved beyond the controlled space of mass media, which traditionally mobilized the public without giving them space to voice opinions. Now, through these digital platforms, individuals have gained the right to participate—especially in political matters. This right is no longer within the authority’s power to deny. Governments are increasingly forced to respond to social media debates and adjust to this new reality.

Digital political engagement has become a natural and necessary part of modern political life. It no longer relies on outdated methods. Authorities now find themselves having to react to public sentiment. For

instance, officials may attend the funeral of a poor individual who died due to neglected road infrastructure. This kind of action places them in a constant state of defense and pressure to improve public services.

In a recent speech, the President stated he would not tolerate two consecutive days of water cuts in residential neighborhoods. This reflects the strained relationship between citizens and public administration, revealing systemic neglect in basic services.

According to Jürgen Habermas, such conditions lead to the formation of civil society. The President has recently institutionalized this idea through constitutional reform. Civil associations now engage with authorities in transparent negotiations, conveying citizens' daily needs to reduce tensions. This form of negotiation, according to Habermas, emerged as a solution when democracy entered a state of crisis. Electoral processes became dominated by bourgeois capitalists, while the majority gained little from participation. This led to voter apathy and a democratic impasse.

Habermas proposed a communicative solution through the activation of civil society. Associations would negotiate with the state over practical, everyday issues. This would serve the majority who had withdrawn from political life.

Today, civil society must also organize in digital spaces. It must engage with public opinion through these new arenas. For example, social media pages have emerged to defend cancer patients. Others advocate for sports, culture, or environmental causes. Thus, digital public opinion now takes many forms, discussing diverse problems with a rational spirit.

As Bouddada (2019, p. 514) notes: "Various forms of digital media have demonstrated their capacity to shape the political orientations of Algerian youth. These platforms foster discussion, political knowledge, and participation. The political news they circulate contributes positively to the youth's awareness and understanding of present realities. Apathy, as a form of political rejection, is now reflected in election results."

4. The Power of Digital Language and Political Practice

The emergence of political blogs has brought direct criticism of power structures. Technology has created a digital language aimed at challenging traditional authority and holding it accountable for its actions—something that was previously rare. As technology evolved, state power became more exposed to the public eye.

In this era of digital transparency, authorities can no longer act as they did before. They cannot simply accuse individuals or groups and imprison them without consequence. Public opinion now engages directly with political and social developments. Political action is no longer confined to official institutions. Citizens, through social media, now have the right to criticize unlawful practices, including corruption and the restriction of political spaces.

Digitization has enabled new levels of freedom. It has made it possible for citizens to take part in political decision-making. This shift has required constitutional changes to allow for greater political expression. Traditional security responses are no longer effective. The technological revolution has sparked a broader revolution against political isolation.

This change is also tied to long-standing social problems, such as migration, suicide, unemployment, and financial corruption. Traditional mass media—newspapers, radio, and television—have often served the interests of ruling powers. However, the rise of the internet has enabled bloggers and content creators to engage in political activity. These new digital tools have reinforced principles of equality and created pressure on traditional authorities to reconsider their methods.

Digital platforms now carry real power. They offer a space where people expect accountability. They represent a new force that obliges traditional powers to adapt to changing realities.

As Yassine (2010, p. 133) explains: “Under the influence of the communication revolution, a new social space has emerged. In this space, writers and intellectuals have gained the freedom to oppose the political systems to which they belong. Electronic blogs have become a new form of intellectual practice. They created a social environment marked by absolute freedom, free from the restrictions imposed by political regimes and governments.”

5. Digital Language and the Public Sphere

The traditional public sphere was once shaped by intellectual elites. They discussed specific issues with the aim of dialogue and persuasion, seeking to resolve disagreement through rational means.

According to Habermas, who introduced the concept of the “public sphere,” instrumental reason enhances dialogue within a flexible space and can lead to practical outcomes, such as building factories or roads. But with the shift of this sphere into the digital realm, the conversation is no longer limited to experts or scientists. The general public now participates. This has allowed multinational corporations to step in and reduce the quality of discourse. The space moved from reason to unreason.

These corporations work to render public debates ineffective. They replaced genuine thought leaders and opinion-makers with artificial influencers whose main goal is to spread triviality and superficial content. This transformation turned the individual from an active participant into a passive consumer.

Artificial intelligence also plays a role. What appears to be a dialogue between a human and a machine is often a way to gather data. Algorithms analyze users' responses to suggest products based on their interests. As a result, these dialogues lack depth and become tools for commercial surveillance. All personal data are monitored and used for targeted marketing—often without the user's awareness.

As Azri (2023, p. 116) explains: "Modern liberalism is built on competition, individual material interests, and freedom of action and innovation, which have led to the fragmentation of primary relationships. These economic dynamics shape the public space into a marketplace for the exchange of goods and the organization of production and consumption."

6.1 The Digital Public Sphere and Economic Activity

Economic activities now occupy a significant part of digital spaces, especially on social media. While these platforms appear to support open discussion and connection, in reality, they have become major arenas for promoting economic interests.

The digital sphere operates like an open marketplace. The digital language exchanged—such as likes, comments, and search behavior—acts as data about individual preferences. Algorithms collect this data

and connect sellers with users' profiles. Thus, social actors in this space become passive participants. Their data is accessed by those who pay to advertise and promote within the platform.

While access to digital platforms is free, their real function is economic. What looks like a place for political or social transformation is, at its core, a space for commerce. Those who pay to promote goods become the true power holders. They are the real owners of this market-like space.

In contrast, users who engage with ideas or produce critical content often hold no influence. They are simply consumers—subject to the logic of market forces. Many of us have purchased products online, guided by digital intermediaries. These platforms serve commercial interests far more than democratic ones.

Even when individuals express joy, grief, hope, or criticism of political systems, their language becomes data. This information is collected and used for marketing purposes, often without coercion or awareness. In the end, it serves commercial objectives.

As Pflieger (2006, p. 35) writes: "Castells described them as gatekeepers. The network offers so many opportunities that life outside it becomes difficult. At the same time, being present—or absent—in a network, and how it relates to others, is a key source of power and change in our society."

6.2 Triviality and the Flattening of Thought in Digital Space

The goal of those who control social media companies is profit. To achieve it, they must keep users engaged with superficial and trivial content. This ensures that people remain consumers of the products displayed through these platforms.

An aware and rational user does not serve the needs of the consumption cycle. Such individuals would save their earnings and spend wisely. But an unaware user buys things they do not need. Many times, we ask ourselves: "Why did I buy this?" The answer lies in how our minds react to marketing stimuli. During the purchase, we believe we need the product. Afterward, we realize it was unnecessary and could have waited.

Ads reach users' screens without their conscious choice. This is the hidden logic behind digital language in commercial spaces. Even those who believe they are raising awareness through meaningful content become tools in spreading consumer culture.

What used to be a conscious public sphere is now a space of manipulation. Complex algorithms gather personal data and push users to consume products they think are necessary—though often they are not.

Artificial intelligence has further amplified this manipulation. It interferes with the user's decision-making, making it easier to influence them. The digital space, although visually crowded and dynamic, creates a deep sense of isolation for the individual. In that state, manipulation becomes easier.

As Hamraoui (2024) notes: "The digital economy has not escaped the influence of triviality; it has, in fact, exploited it. The industry of trivial content generates massive profits. In 2022 alone, spending on digital advertising linked to superficial entertainment content reached approximately \$455 billion, according to eMarketer, a leading authority on digital transformation forecasts."

6.3 The Digital Sphere and Dialogue through Artificial Intelligence

Algorithms bring individuals closer to certain pages while limiting access to others, based on knowledge of personal preferences. However, the integration of artificial intelligence into the digital space—such as ChatGPT—has introduced a new form of interaction. Users can now engage in personal conversations with AI-powered systems. Tech companies promise greater privacy, but this often results in deeper isolation from society.

Through these interactions with intelligent robots, individuals often share personal details they would not disclose to others. They trust the system, assuming their digital conversations are private. In reality, these personal confessions are collected, processed, and converted into data. Algorithms then use this data in e-commerce, selling access to paying clients.

Although users may believe they are receiving helpful information, the system manipulates their emotions. It encourages them to reveal even more about their interests, feelings, hopes, and frustrations. These digital disclosures become data used in cyberattacks. Personal accounts can be breached and exploited by multinational companies involved in online trade.

Additionally, artificial intelligence is increasingly familiar with regional dialects, enabling forms of cultural infiltration. People have become fascinated by chatting with AI bots. Yet this form of unethical intrusion plays a role in cyber warfare, commercial competition, and cultural conflicts. In actual warfare, the data is often leaked to major powers with ties to AI-investing companies.

As a result, the cultural anthropology of different populations is no longer hidden. In the past, colonial powers used anthropology to study and dominate societies. Today, artificial intelligence makes cultural penetration easier and faster, turning populations into mere consumers in global markets.

7. The Theoretical Approach to Communicative Action

This theoretical framework is based on analyzing and interpreting social realities through conceptual tools. The goal is to understand and anticipate social phenomena. Habermas's theory of communicative action draws on several key concepts, including the public sphere, communicative reason, dialogue-based action, and language as a tool for understanding.

7.1 Communicative Reason

Communicative dialogue on social media aims to avoid conflict. Yet it faces major obstacles, especially algorithmic systems. These systems determine the nature of the discussion, its reach, and the flow of information. Instead of empowering the individual, algorithms impose restrictions. They are designed in advance to serve specific ideological agendas.

For example, during the recent events in Gaza, expressing a particular viewpoint could result in penalties, including account suspension. Platforms no longer allow free discussion of such issues. They quickly flag and censor certain topics, even identifying the tone and structure of language used.

These systems permit the circulation of selected information and suppress other content. The result is a distorted version of events. Algorithms act as gatekeepers, similar to traditional mass media. They

promote entertainment, luxury lifestyles, and advertisements. This creates a new language that distracts the public from the reality of unfolding events.

After obscuring the truth, these multinational corporations focus on silencing awareness by promoting shallow, trivial debates. Sports, games, jokes, and visual entertainment dominate online discourse. These distractions weaken the individual's agency and allow covert political or economic projects to pass unnoticed.

Even when pages emerge to raise awareness, algorithms work to marginalize them. Like mainstream media, digital systems control the visibility of content. Algorithms intentionally direct users' attention toward consumption and distractions, away from critical issues.

7.2 Digital Communicative Action

Communicative action in digital spaces goes beyond mere dialogue. It reflects the essential need for understanding and cooperation among humans. Social media offers platforms where such action can take place. One key example is the work of civil society organizations. These groups act as bridges between citizens and the state.

Through their digital presence, they promote dialogue aimed at resolving conflict and advancing development. For example, an environmental group focused on tree planting can play an important role in addressing climate change. These actions, made possible through digital platforms, often yield positive results.

Another case is cancer awareness associations. By launching digital campaigns, they can generate faster responses from both the government and the public. These include donations, care, and education. In this sense, modern and advanced societies depend on civil society to turn rational dialogue into practical action.

Digital communicative action also helps to reduce state dominance. The state is no longer able to carry all responsibilities without feedback or pressure from society. Civil society has become a vital artery between citizens and institutions. It ensures that citizens' voices are heard, regardless of their demands.

Such actions represent a higher level of civic responsibility and modern awareness. When discussions lead to action, and these actions are shared digitally, they spread quickly and have real impact. This includes solidarity campaigns that raise public consciousness and influence state decisions.

7.3 Ethics of Dialogue

The tension between rights and duties requires us to prioritize duty as a standard for communication. Instrumental rationality today reaches people quickly and understands their concerns, needs, and expectations. This happens through various forms of interaction and connectivity.

At this point, we must distinguish between communication and connection. Communication may only require listening. Connection, however, implies empathy and awareness of the other. Ethics, in this sense, becomes a form of communicative action.

7.4 Communicative Rationality and the Lifeworld

Today, we live in a world that acknowledges cultural difference and supports coexistence. A refined digital language promotes social integration. It helps people move beyond individualism, toward openness and solidarity.

When disasters such as earthquakes or volcanic eruptions occur, the world responds with compassion—both in material and symbolic terms. No country can isolate itself. All require communicative action to engage with the global community.

The world today is more open and peaceful, thanks to communicative practices. Through digital language, people engage with ongoing events collectively and instantly. This builds unity and peace.

Human dignity requires shared living, understanding, and global cooperation. Even in areas such as counter-terrorism and financial crime, international collaboration is necessary. The world is starting to think with one mind, seeking freedom from domination and exploitation.

Study Findings

- Traditional political action has been overtaken by the rise of digital power.
- Transparency in digital governance requires equal transparency in political action.
- Dialogue through digital platforms is now subject to ethical boundaries and surveillance.
- The digital sphere appears to offer open discussion, but it is, in fact, driven by commercial interests.
- Algorithms serve as gatekeepers, suppressing free media by hiding truths and promoting fabricated content through AI.
- Digital anthropology has become a tool for cultural and economic colonization of societies worldwide.

CONCLUSION

Digital media today is directed by algorithms and data systems that hinder authentic and free discourse. Multinational corporations play a key role in concealing and manipulating the truth to serve ideological and economic interests.

These corporations have become the main actors in shaping events within the digital sphere. In contrast, genuine political action is fading. The spread of superficial content and entertainment weakens public awareness.

Inside this digital environment, the dominant language is that of advertising, commerce, and profit. What appears to be public debate is often a hidden commercial agenda. This is the real but invisible conversation of the digital age.

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