

SOCIOLINGUISTICS IN THE 21ST CENTURY: CHALLENGES AND CURRENT ISSUES

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Relevance of the topic. Sociolinguistics, as the study of the interaction between language and society, has traditionally examined how social variables such as class, gender, and region shape linguistic practices. However, the 21st century presents new and complex challenges that extend beyond classical concerns. In this context, modern sociolinguistics must expand its scope to address the realities of globalization and digitalization. The field now focuses not only on describing variation but also on understanding how language policies, technological innovations, and social inequalities shape linguistic practices in contemporary society.

Materials and Methods. This study applied a mixed-methods approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative research techniques to explore current sociolinguistic issues such as language endangerment, migration-related multilingualism, and digital communication.

1. Quantitative Data Collection
2. Qualitative Data Collection
3. Analytical Framework

This multi-layered methodology ensured that the study not only captured statistical trends in language use but also documented the lived experiences of speakers navigating complex linguistic environments in the era of globalization and digital transformation.

Results and Discussion. Contemporary sociolinguistics identifies several pressing issues:

1. Language Endangerment – Many minority languages face extinction due to the dominance of English, Spanish, Chinese, and other global languages. This threatens cultural identity and diversity.
2. Migration and Super-diversity – Urban centers such as London, New York, and Berlin host hundreds of languages, leading to new hybrid dialects and complex patterns of code-switching.
3. Digital Communication – Social media reshapes language use, encouraging abbreviations, emojis, and multimodal communication. This raises questions about the long-term effects on grammar, spelling, and literacy.
4. Language and Inequality – Access to prestigious language varieties (e.g., Standard English) often determines social mobility, while speakers of minority or non-

standard dialects face discrimination.

5. Identity and Globalization – Young people often adopt global linguistic styles (slang, internet language) to express modern identities, sometimes at the expense of local linguistic traditions.

Conclusion. The findings also underline the role of language in maintaining or challenging social inequalities. Access to standard or prestigious varieties remains a gateway to education and employment, while non-standard and minority language speakers often experience marginalization. At the same time, young generations are redefining linguistic norms through digital platforms, reshaping what counts as legitimate language use. In light of these challenges, future sociolinguistic research should not only document linguistic variation but also contribute to practical solutions. This includes supporting bilingual education, developing inclusive language policies, and promoting awareness of linguistic diversity as a cultural resource. By doing so, sociolinguistics can help societies navigate the balance between preserving linguistic heritage and embracing new communicative realities.

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