COMMENTARY

AI Technologies in Intercultural Communication: Opportunities or Consequences?

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ABSTRACT *This paper examines the application of technologies in the context of intercultural communication to determine the opportunities and consequences associated with the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI). The use of technology of different forms can be remarkable tools that offer effective channels to help bridge cultural barriers, promote knowledge of shared interests and navigate challenges associated with accessing people at different locations. With a focus on AI, this paper evaluates the impacts of AI technologies on human communication. It further examines the social consequences of AI attributes, the opportunities resulting from AI usage in transforming the world into a digital age. The extent to which AI technologies may result in difficulties were identified using examples from different regions. As a result, rational deduction from this paper is to adopt AI technologies in the context of intercultural communication with caution, understanding its dual effects on communication outcomes in a diverse, yet digital world.*

Keywords: Intelligence, AI Technologies, Intercultural Communication, Social Consequences, AI Bias

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Introduction

AI technologies are computer systems and algorithms designed to mimic human cognitive functions such as learning, reasoning, and problem-solving. These technologies include machine learning, natural language processing, computer vision, and robotics.[1] Machine learning, for instance, enables systems to identify patterns and improve performance over time without being explicitly programmed.[2] Natural language processing allows computers to interpret and generate human language, which is widely used in applications such as chatbots and translation tools. AI technologies are increasingly integrated into cybersecurity, healthcare, finance, and other sectors because they can automate complex tasks and analyze large datasets efficiently.[3] Issues for consideration in relation to AI technologies include ethical, legal, social, and technical challenges.

One primary concern is bias and discrimination, as AI systems can replicate or amplify existing social inequalities if trained on biased data.[4] There is also the issue of transparency and explainability, since many AI algorithms, especially deep learning models operate as "black boxes," making it difficult to understand how decisions are made.[5] Privacy is another key issue, particularly in AI applications that rely on large-scale personal data collection and surveillance.[6] Furthermore, the lack of regulatory frameworks creates uncertainty about liability and accountability in cases where AI systems cause harm.[7] On the technical side, robustness and security are critical, as adversarial attacks can manipulate AI systems into making errors.[8] These concerns highlight the need for interdisciplinary governance and responsible development of AI technologies. Regardless of these concerns, AI technologies offer enormous benefits in helping to break down cultural barriers by facilitating real-time communication between people across the world regardless of remoteness and language. This draws attention to its merits in the context of intercultural communication.

Intercultural communication is the exchange of meaningful information between individuals or groups from different cultural backgrounds. It involves understanding and negotiating cultural differences in values, beliefs, norms, and communication styles to build mutual understanding and cooperation.[9] This form of communication is essential in an increasingly globalized world where interactions between people of different cultures are commonplace in workplaces, education, diplomacy, and online platforms. Intercultural communication also requires awareness of both verbal and non-verbal cues that may carry different meanings across cultures, such as gestures, eye contact, tone of voice, or silence.[10] Effective intercultural communication fosters tolerance, reduces conflict, and enhances collaboration across diverse communities. Against this introduction, this paper aims to answer two questions: i) How can AI technologies usage fa-

cilitate intercultural communication? ii) Is AI usage resulting in more consequences than opportunities? To answer these two questions, the impacts and social consequences of AI technologies on human communication are examined.

Impacts and Social Consequences of AI Technologies

AI technologies have significantly transformed human communication by enhancing efficiency, personalization, and accessibility, but they also introduce challenges related to authenticity, privacy, and social interaction. One significant impact is the rise of automated communication systems, such as chatbots and virtual assistants, that facilitate instant, scalable interaction between humans and machines.[11] These systems are widely used in customer service, healthcare, and education, streamlining processes but sometimes reducing opportunities for human connection. AI also enables personalized communication through algorithms that tailor content based on user behavior and preferences, commonly seen on social media platforms and in targeted advertising.

However, this personalization can create echo chambers, reinforcing users' beliefs and limiting exposure to diverse perspectives.[12] Additionally, AI-generated content, such as deepfakes and synthetic text, raises concerns about misinformation and trust in digital communication.[13] Moreover, using AI in communication has implications for language evolution and interaction patterns, as people adjust their language when interacting with AI systems.[14] This can influence how humans relate to one another, especially when mediated by AI.

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Algorithmic biases and systematic and unfair discrimination embedded in AI decision-making processes can produce profound social consequences by reinforcing existing inequalities and marginalizing vulnerable groups. One significant consequence is discrimination in access to opportunities, particularly in hiring, credit scoring, and law enforcement. For example, Amazon's AI recruitment tool was found to downgrade résumés that included the word "women's," leading to gender-based discrimination in hiring.[15] Similarly, ProPublica revealed that the COMPAS algorithm used in U.S. criminal justice systems disproportionately labelled Black defendants as high risk, perpetuating racial disparities in sentencing.[16]

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Algorithmic bias also contributes to the amplification of stereotypes and social exclusion. Social media algorithms that optimize for engagement often prioritize controversial or biased content, reinforcing harmful societal narratives.[17] Moreover, facial recognition systems have shown significantly lower accuracy rates for women and people of color, leading to misidentification and public safety concerns.[18] These biases erode public trust in technology, especially among historically marginalized communities, highlighting the urgent need for transparency, accountability, and inclusive data practices in AI development.

The social consequences of digital transformation on a global scale are multifaceted, affecting economies, societies, and individual lives in profound and uneven ways. One significant consequence is the deepening of the digital divide. While digital technologies have accelerated innovation and connectivity, access remains uneven globally. Low-income and rural communities, particularly in the Global South, often lack the infrastructure to benefit from digital transformation, exacerbating existing inequalities in education, healthcare, and employment.[19] Digital transformation has reshaped labor markets, leading to job displacement due to automation and the rise of precarious gig work.

Although the level of digital transformation experienced in the world creates new economic opportunities, these benefits are unequal, and vulnerable populations often face increased insecurity.[20] Digital transformation influences identity, relationships, and political engagement on a social level. Social media platforms and digital communication reshape how individuals interact and contribute to polarization, disinformation, and surveillance capitalism.[21] Surveillance capitalism as mentioned here refers to the harvesting of personal data without consent or explicit awareness of an individual to generate data for economic purposes.[22] The rationale behind such action is to influence behavior and generate predictive insights that can be commodified. For example, data misuse in political campaigns as seen in the Cambridge Analytica scandal illustrates how digital tools can manipulate public opinion globally. Other social consequences of AI technologies and digital transformation prominent in different regions are presented in Table 1.

As observed in Table 1, there are different algorithmic biases that tend to deliberately or inadvertently result in social consequences from AI technol-

Table 1: Consequences of AI Technologies

Region	Algorithmic Bias: Main Themes	Social Consequences
North America	Racial and gender bias in facial recognition and predictive policing [23]	Misinformation and political polarization via digital media[24]
Europe	Discriminatory recruitment algorithms[25]	Increased surveillance and privacy concerns with digital ID systems[26]
Sub-Saharan Africa	Data exclusion due to underrepresentation in AI datasets[27]	Widening digital divide and limited access to digital education or health platforms[28]
South Asia	Caste-based discrimination in credit scoring algorithms[29]	Rise in precarious gig work with limited labor protections[30]
Middle East and North Africa	Language bias in natural language processing tools[31]	Internet shutdowns limiting access to essential services and civil liberties[32]
Latin America	Algorithmic profiling in social welfare distribution[33]	Unequal access to e-government services exacerbates marginalization[34]
East Asia and Pacific	Gender bias in algorithmic content moderation[35]	Hyperconnectivity leading to rising youth anxiety and online addiction[36]

Source: *Created by the author*

ogies in the context of human communication. Furthermore, it is observed in the Western world that the shift toward digital public services can exclude populations lacking digital literacy or access to technology, especially the elderly and marginalized, creating barriers to essential services such as healthcare, banking, and social support.[37] In summary, while digital transformation drives innovation and global connectivity, it also reinforces inequalities, alters labor and political structures, and raises urgent ethical and governance questions worldwide.

AI Technologies in Intercultural Communication

The impact of AI usage on intercultural communication is multifaceted, offering both opportunities and challenges, both are briefly reviewed in this section.

Enhanced Language Translation and Real-Time Communication: AI-powered tools such as Google Translate and real-time speech recognition systems facilitate communication across language barriers, making intercultural dialogue more accessible and efficient.[38] These technologies help in overcoming linguistic differences and promote inclusivity in multicultural settings.

Standardization of Communication Norms: AI often relies on training data from dominant cultures (usually Western), which can unintentionally standardize communication styles and norms. This may lead to suppressing culturally diverse ways of expressing ideas or emotions.[39]

Bias in Communication Technologies: AI tools may carry algorithmic biases that reflect cultural assumptions embedded in their training data. These biases can misinterpret, stereotype, or marginalize certain cultural expressions, harming intercultural communication and reinforcing systemic inequalities.[40]

Loss of Cultural Nuance and Context: AI systems may struggle with understanding cultural subtleties, metaphors, humor, or indirect communication styles, leading to miscommunication or cultural insensitivity.[41] This limits their effectiveness in sensitive intercultural contexts such as diplomacy, humanitarian work, or education.

Opportunities for Cultural Preservation and Exchange: Despite challenges, AI can also preserve endangered languages and cultural narratives through digitization and AI-generated storytelling, thereby enriching intercultural dialogue.[42]

Regardless of the dual position of AI technologies in intercultural context, the social consequences of algorithmic biases that significantly impact intercultural communication, often reinforcing inequality, misunderstanding, and exclusion in digital and real-world interactions. Some are highlighted as follows:

Marginalization of Non-Dominant Cultures: In terms of social consequences, algorithmic systems trained primarily on data from dominant cultural groups (e.g., Western, English-speaking populations) can misinterpret or ignore expressions from minority cultures. This leads to unequal representation and inhibits authentic intercultural dialogue.[43]

Reinforcement of Stereotypes: Biased algorithms may amplify racial, ethnic, or cultural stereotypes, for instance, in search engine results or content recommendations, shaping perceptions and attitudes between cultural groups based on misrepresentation.[44] This undermines mutual respect and intercultural trust.

Erosion of Cultural Nuance in Communication Tools: AI-driven translation and communication tools often fail to recognize the subtleties of culturally specific idioms, humor, and non-verbal cues. Such oversights hinder accurate intercultural communication and may cause offence or misunderstanding.[45]

Discriminatory Moderation and Filtering: Content moderation algorithms on social media platforms may disproportionately flag or suppress expressions from certain cultures or languages as offensive or inappropriate due to biased training data, limiting their voices in intercultural exchanges.[46]

Loss of Trust in Digital Platforms: When users from marginalized groups notice consistent bias in how algorithms interpret or treat their cultural identity, it leads to disengagement or distrust in digital spaces, weakening opportunities for genuine intercultural engagement.[47]

As observed, though not exhaustive, social consequences abound when marginalization of non-dominant cultures, reinforcement of stereotypes, erosion of cultural nuance in communication tools, discriminatory moderation and filtering as well as loss of trust in digital platforms result from AI usage in intercultural context. Deductions from these social consequences have theoretical explanations.

Digital transformation can create a more interconnected world. Still, it can also lead to the centralization of power in large tech companies and deepen inequalities between digital "haves" and "have-nots"

Deductions and Theoretical Explanations

Evaluation of different consequences of AI technologies have revealed specific social consequences that are worth discussing and explaining using relevant theories. Algorithmic Biases and its Social Consequences may be explained using social constructionism, critical race theory (CRT) and the theory of technological determinism.

Social constructionism suggests that societal norms and biases shape how we understand and interpret reality. In the context of algorithmic biases, this theory posits that algorithms reflect the societal values and biases of the individuals or groups who design them.[48] The unintended amplification of biases in algorithmic decisions can perpetuate inequality and reinforce existing social hierarchies. For example, the use of biased data in predictive policing tools, which may over-represent minority communities in crime predictions.[49]

However, CRT offers a more specific position in terms of law, technology and society. CRT examines how race and racism intersect with law, technology, and society. It argues that algorithmic biases are not just technical flaws but reflect systemic racial and social inequalities embedded in technology.[50] CRT helps explain why biased algorithms disproportionately impact certain marginalized groups, as these systems often mirror structural inequities. An example to illustrate this is the discriminatory practices in hiring algorithms that disadvantage women and racial minorities.[51] While this is a possibility, it is not always the case which is why the application of theory of technological determinism may also be applied to the social consequences of algorithmic biases. Technological determinism posits that technology shapes society and its values, rather than society shaping technology. Under this theory, the widespread implementation of biased algorithms can shape societal norms and practices, mainly when technology influences policy, employment, and social services.[52] For instance, the role of algorithmic content moderation shaping freedom of speech in social

Automated systems, including translation tools and chatbots, can facilitate intercultural communication but often fail to capture the nuances of cultural differences, leading to misunderstandings

media platforms, which might disproportionately silence marginalized voices.[53]

The combined consequences of stereotypes, erosion of cultural nuance and moderation and filtering all attest to the social consequences of digital transformation. All these may be explained through diffusion of innovations theory, network society theory and post modernism theory respectively.

Diffusion of Innovations Theory proposed by Rogers (1962), explains how new technologies spread and become adopted by society. In the case of digital transformation, it helps explain the uneven access and impact of digital technologies across regions, social groups, and sectors. This uneven diffusion can exacerbate inequalities, particularly regarding access to digital resources, education, and employment opportunities. For example, the digital divide, where rural and economically disadvantaged communities lack internet access, leads to inequality in the adoption of digital tools.

However, the network society theory by Manuel Castells' Network Society (1996) highlights the role of communication networks (such as the internet) in reshaping power, social structures, and cultural identities. Digital transformation can create a more interconnected world. Still, it can also lead to the centralization of power in large tech companies and deepen inequalities between digital "haves" and "have-nots." This can be observed through the power dynamics between tech giants and governments in shaping how digital policies impact global governance.[54] But postmodernism offers a wider societal dimension. Postmodernism focuses on the fragmentation of society, particularly the breakdown of traditional structures and identities. Digital transformation disrupts conventional communication systems, leading to new ways of organizing information, identities, and social relations. However, it also challenges understanding cultural diversity and maintaining cohesion. For example, the shifting dynamics in media consumption and the rise of influencer culture, where traditional gatekeepers (e.g., news outlets) lose influence, giving rise to new forms of influence and information flow.

Overall, all social consequences identified and examined in this paper, including the loss of trust in digital platforms, may impact intercultural communication. These consequences can be explained or understood using communication accommodation theory (CAT), cultural dimensions theory (CDT), and face negotiation theory respectively.



AI algorithms were used to restore ancient books during the 2024 World AI Conference and High-Level Meeting on Global AI Governance, held at the Shanghai World Expo Exhibition and Convention Center on July 7, 2024.

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CAT developed by Giles (1973), CAT explains how individuals adjust their communication styles to accommodate others in intercultural interactions. This theory helps understand how algorithmic biases in communication technologies might impact intercultural communication, as these technologies can either facilitate or hinder cultural exchange based on how they mediate communication. An example of this is the language translation tools and automated chatbots may inadvertently fail to recognize cultural nuances, leading to misunderstandings and miscommunications in intercultural contexts. Such cultural nuances allude to the relevance of cultural dimension theory.

Geert Hofstede's CDT (1980) identifies how values in the workplace and society vary across cultures. These differences can influence how individuals from different cultural backgrounds interact with digital tools and platforms, especially in the context of digital transformation and algorithmic biases. Misalignments between these cultural values and how algorithms are designed can result in poor communication and misunderstandings in intercultural settings. For example, an algorithm designed with a Western-centric worldview may not work effectively in non-Western societies, leading to issues in cross-cultural communication on digital platforms.[55] Regardless, access to digital platforms that enable people to interact and see one another are beneficial for human interactions and communication. With such degree of access comes its challenges which can be explained through the face negotiation theory.

Ting-Toomey's (1985) Face Negotiation Theory focuses on how individ-

Case studies in non-Western contexts, especially in developing nations, could provide insights into how local cultures and socioeconomic conditions affect digital transformation outcomes

uals from different cultures manage face (self-image) during communication. Digital transformation can impact face negotiation, especially in intercultural interactions, as online communication often eliminates non-verbal cues, leading to misunderstandings, particularly in intercultural settings. For instance, automated responses in customer service systems that fail to respect cultural norms of politeness and respect, resulting in frustration and damage to relationships.

Conclusion and Way Forward

This paper explored the social consequences of AI technologies such as algorithmic biases, digital transformation, and their impacts on intercultural communication. It has offered further insights into how emerging technological trends may impact intercultural communication in global societies using theoretical frameworks to explain these phenomena and their consequences. It is shown that while AI technologies offer opportunities, there are consequences that ought to be considered in relation to the intended goals of intercultural communication.

Algorithmic systems can reflect and amplify societal biases, reinforcing inequalities related to race, gender, and socioeconomic status.[56] This creates feedback loops perpetuating discrimination in employment, law enforcement, and welfare services. The lack of diversity in tech design teams often leads to the development of systems that fail to account for the needs and experiences of marginalized groups.[57] While digital transformation has increased connectivity and access to information, it has also led to a digital divide, exacerbating inequalities between regions and social groups.[58] Wealthier nations and individuals benefit disproportionately from technological advancements, while poorer areas lag behind.

The rise of algorithmic governance and platform-based economies raises questions about power dynamics, surveillance, and digital sovereignty.[59] Automated systems, including translation tools and chatbots, can facilitate intercultural communication but often fail to capture the nuances of cultural differences, leading to misunderstandings.[60] This is particularly problematic in multicultural settings where the interpretation of social cues may vary. The removal of face-to-face interaction in digital communication also impacts how people manage their "face" (self-image) in intercultural exchanges, sometimes leading to the breakdown of trust and the mismanagement of cultural identities.[61]

The significant social consequences of algorithmic biases and digital transformation on intercultural communication have been highlighted in this paper. While no major project can be referenced as an example of how all social consequences from AI usage are resolved, the theoretical explanations for AI usage in intercultural context offer opportunities that can be explored and leveraged in international relations and by countries in an increasingly diverse world.

This paper has shown that substantial progress has been made in understanding these dynamics, though gaps remain in fully addressing the intersectionality of biases, regional impacts, and emotional intelligence in AI systems. Therefore, future research should focus on these areas to better understand and mitigate the adverse effects of AI and digital technologies on diverse global communities. Potential future research areas may include but are not limited to:

Intersectionality in Algorithmic Biases: Future research could focus on how different social categories intersect to amplify biases in digital systems. This could involve exploring biases in algorithmic systems that affect marginalized groups differently depending on their intersectional identities (e.g., Black women or disabled people).

Cultural Sensitivity in Digital Transformation: There is a need for more studies that address how cultural values shape the way digital tools and AI are received and used in different parts of the world. Research could explore how intercultural communication strategies can be integrated into digital tool design to ensure inclusivity.

Human-AI Interaction: Research on the relationship between AI and emotional intelligence in intercultural communication is crucial. Future studies could explore how AI systems can be designed to be more emotionally aware and culturally competent.

Policy Implications and Governance: The digital divide and issues of algorithmic governance call for more research into international policies and regulations that can bridge gaps and ensure fairness in the use of AI and digital technologies. Research could investigate the role of global governance bodies in shaping fair digital transformation and protecting cultural identities.

Regional and Contextual Variability: More focused research is needed on the impact of algorithmic biases and digital transformation in different regions. Case studies in non-Western contexts, especially in developing nations, could provide insights into how local cultures and socioeconomic conditions affect digital transformation outcomes.

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