DEPENDENCY ON AI LANGUAGE TOOLS: A THREAT TO LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY?

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Abstract: In recent years, language tools powered by artificial intelligence (AI), such as translation apps and multilingual chatbots, have changed how people communicate across languages. These tools make life easier, especially for non-native speakers, but they also bring risks. This paper argues that relying too much on AI in language use can harm linguistic diversity, especially for minority and endangered languages. Because AI systems are mainly trained on data from widely spoken languages like English, Chinese, and Spanish, less common languages—such as many Indigenous or regional languages—are left behind. This can cause those languages to fade away, along with the cultural knowledge they carry. Using ideas from sociolinguistics and language ecology, the paper looks at how AI might unintentionally promote language loss and suggests ways to build technology that helps protect and promote all languages, not just the dominant ones.

Keywords: AI tools, linguistic diversity, language extinction, machine translation.

Artificial intelligence is changing the way we use language in our daily lives. Tools like Google Translate and AI chatbots can translate speech and text instantly, breaking language barriers that once made communication difficult. For many users, especially in multilingual countries like Uzbekistan, this technology is incredibly useful. Students, travelers, and professionals all use it to connect with people across the world.

However, there's a downside that is often overlooked. While AI tools make it easier to understand other languages, they may also influence people to stop using their native or minority languages. If people begin to rely too much on AI, languages that are not well-supported by these systems may slowly disappear. According to UNESCO (2021), nearly 40% of the world's 7,000 languages are at risk of disappearing. This paper explores how AI language tools might speed up this process and what can be done to prevent it.

2. The Digital Gap Between Languages

Most AI tools learn from data taken from books, websites, and news articles online. These materials are mostly written in major global languages like English, Chinese, and Spanish (Joshi et al., 2020). As a result, these languages receive more attention in AI systems, while less common ones—such as Uzbek or Tajik—often get ignored or poorly translated.

This creates a kind of digital gap. Languages already at risk of disappearing in the real world are also left behind in digital tools. If Uzbek or Karakalpak is not well supported online, young people may stop using them on the internet, preferring

Russian or English instead. This reduces the presence of native languages in digital spaces and makes them seem less important (Blasi et al., 2022).

Unfortunately, big tech companies often don't invest in smaller or regional languages because they don't see a clear business reason to do so. This continues the cycle where dominant languages become even stronger online, and weaker ones are pushed aside.

3. How AI Affects Everyday Speech

AI tools are designed to make language simple and easy to understand. To do this, they often leave out important cultural expressions and local meanings. This makes the translation fast, but it can also remove the richness of a language.

For example, in Uzbekistan, people often use sayings like **"Ko'nglim xira"** to show emotional discomfort. A machine might translate this as "my heart is cloudy," which sounds confusing in English and loses the real meaning. Another common phrase is **"Yuragingni yeb qo'ydimi?"**, meaning someone is deeply worried. AI systems may not know how to explain this phrase correctly. There's also **"Choy ichib ket,"** which literally means "have tea and go," but in Uzbek culture it really means "come in and stay for a while." These are not just words—they are pieces of identity and emotion (Tojiboyev, 2021).

When AI tools can't understand or express these ideas properly, people sometimes stop using them. This can happen even without realizing it. Speakers begin changing how they talk to fit what AI tools can understand—a process called **linguistic accommodation** (Crystal, 2010). Over time, this makes our languages more similar and less unique.

4. Losing a Language Means Losing a Culture

A language is more than just grammar or vocabulary—it carries stories, traditions, and ways of thinking. In Uzbekistan, local languages include knowledge about farming, family customs, and nature that has been passed down through generations. If the language is lost, that special knowledge can be lost with it (Harrison, 2007).

Many small communities in Uzbekistan speak dialects or minority languages that have never been written down fully. When young people grow up using mostly Russian or English—especially through AI tools—they may begin to think their own language is less valuable. This belief can weaken the desire to pass the language on to children, making it even more likely to disappear (Austin & Sallabank, 2011).

5. How to Build Fair and Inclusive AI Tools

The future of AI language tools doesn't have to be harmful to diversity. With care and planning, these tools can actually help protect minority languages. Here are a few ways this can be done:

• **Work with communities:** Instead of only using online texts, researchers can partner with native speakers to gather and document local languages. This helps build tools that reflect real-life usage and respect cultural meanings.

• **Support open-source efforts:** Projects like **Common Voice** by Mozilla and **Masakhane** in Africa collect voices and data from local speakers to create better AI tools for low-resource languages (Nekoto et al., 2020).

• **Create fair policies:** Governments and education systems should include digital tools that support minority languages in schools and public services (Pennycook, 2010).

• **Use ethical design:** Developers must check if their systems are unfairly ignoring some languages. Regular reviews and feedback from language communities can help AI be more inclusive (Bender et al., 2021).

6. Conclusion

AI tools are helpful and powerful—but if we're not careful, they may unintentionally harm the very thing that makes human communication so rich: language diversity. Languages like Uzbek, Karakalpak, and other regional tongues are part of who people are, not just a way to talk.

To protect these languages, everyone needs to take part—tech experts, local communities, linguists, and educators. We need to build tools that help all languages survive in the digital world. This is not just about saving old words—it's about keeping culture, memory, and identity alive.

As we continue to use AI in our daily lives, we must make sure it supports the right to speak, learn, and live in one's own language. Technology should help us grow, not make us all sound the same.

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