



PRAGMATIC FEATURES OF ONLINE COMMUNICATION AMONG GENERATION Z

Alisherova Diyora Islamovna

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Abstract: This thesis examines the pragmatic features of online communication among Generation Z, focusing on how young users express meaning, emotion, identity and social intention in digital interaction. The study is based on the principles of pragmatics, computer-mediated discourse analysis and cyberpragmatics. It considers such features as contextual dependence, emoji use, abbreviations, multimodality, indirectness, politeness strategies, code-switching and rapid turn-taking. The findings show that Generation Z's online communication is not chaotic or linguistically poor; rather, it is adaptive, context-sensitive and socially functional. Digital platforms create new communicative norms in which verbal and non-verbal signs interact to produce meaning. The thesis concludes that online communication among Generation Z should be studied as a dynamic pragmatic system shaped by technology, social identity and communicative purpose.

Keywords: Generation Z, online communication, pragmatics, digital discourse, emoji, speech acts, multimodality, cyberpragmatics.

Online communication has become one of the main forms of social interaction among Generation Z. This generation grew up in a digital environment where messaging applications, social networks, video platforms and online communities are part of everyday communication. As a result, their language behavior differs from traditional face-to-face interaction not only in form but also in pragmatic function. Pragmatics studies language in context, speaker intention, implied meaning and the relationship between linguistic expression and communicative situation. In online communication, these aspects become especially important because users often interact without physical presence, voice tone or facial expression.

Generation Z compensates for the absence of direct non-verbal signals through emojis, stickers, memes, gifs, abbreviations, hashtags and visual signs. These elements are not merely decorative. They perform pragmatic functions: they soften statements, express irony, signal agreement, show emotional attitude, maintain group identity and regulate interpersonal distance. Therefore, the relevance of this topic is connected with the need to understand how young people construct meaning and manage social relations in digital space.

The thesis is based on a qualitative pragmatic approach. The research relies on theoretical works in pragmatics, cyberpragmatics and computer-mediated





discourse analysis. The analysis focuses on common forms of online interaction among Generation Z, including short messages, comments, social media captions, group chats and informal educational communication. The main analytical categories are speech acts, implicature, deixis, politeness strategies, contextual meaning, multimodal signs and code-switching.

The methodological basis includes the interpretation of online utterances according to their communicative purpose and social context. Special attention is given to how users express approval, disagreement, humor, solidarity, criticism and self-presentation. Since online discourse is strongly platform-dependent, the study also considers the influence of technical features such as character limits, reaction buttons, reposts, hashtags and comment threads.

The analysis shows that Generation Z uses online communication as a flexible pragmatic system. One of the central features is economy of expression. Short forms, abbreviations and clipped phrases help users save time and create informal closeness. However, brevity does not reduce meaning. In many cases, short utterances contain strong pragmatic signals understood only within a specific digital context.

Another important feature is multimodality. Emojis, memes and gifs often replace intonation, gesture and facial expression. For example, the same sentence may sound serious, ironic or friendly depending on the emoji added to it. This means that pragmatic meaning in Generation Z communication is frequently distributed across words and visual elements.

The study also reveals the importance of indirectness and irony. Generation Z often uses humorous exaggeration, sarcasm and playful language to express criticism or emotional reaction without direct confrontation. Such strategies help maintain social balance and avoid open conflict. At the same time, they require shared background knowledge between participants.

Code-switching is another characteristic feature. Young users frequently combine languages, especially English expressions with their native language, in order to show digital competence, group belonging or emotional emphasis. This phenomenon has a pragmatic function because language choice becomes a marker of identity and social positioning.

Politeness strategies in online communication are also transformed. Traditional formal politeness is often replaced by friendliness, emotional support, quick reaction and shared humor. Likes, short replies, emojis and supportive comments function as signs of attention and solidarity. Silence, delayed response





or seen status may also carry pragmatic meaning and can be interpreted as disinterest, disagreement or social distance.

The pragmatic features of Generation Z's online communication demonstrate that digital discourse follows its own norms. These norms are not random; they are shaped by speed, interactivity, multimodality and the social structure of online platforms. Meaning is produced not only through grammar and vocabulary but also through timing, visual signs, platform affordances and shared cultural references.

The results also show that online communication among Generation Z has a strong identity-building function. Young users present themselves through language style, emoji choice, meme culture and interaction patterns. Pragmatic competence in this environment means the ability to choose appropriate digital signs, understand implied meanings and adapt communication to a particular platform and audience.

At the same time, online communication may create misunderstanding. Irony, abbreviations and visual symbols are context-dependent, and their interpretation may differ across age groups, cultures and communities. Therefore, the study of Generation Z communication is important not only for linguistics but also for education, intercultural communication and media literacy.

Online communication among Generation Z is characterized by brevity, multimodality, contextual meaning, irony, code-switching and transformed politeness strategies. These features prove that digital interaction has developed its own pragmatic mechanisms. Generation Z does not simply transfer spoken language into online space; it creates new ways of expressing intention, emotion and identity. The study confirms that pragmatic analysis is necessary for understanding modern youth communication and for explaining how digital technologies influence language use.

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