The Use of Verbal Language
in Social Media in Turkey

Hüseyin Çelik[*]

Abstract

In recent years, the improvement of the new communication technologies has made it necessary to return the focus on verbal culture. In the messages transmitted in the social media which developed within the internet, the irregular and false use of Turkish is remarkable together with meaningless structures generated because of using English and Turkish simultaneously. This condition results in a different language which is not suitable for literacy. This article aims to extensively examine this structure of verbal culture which is newly generated due to the internet and demonstrate the contemporary transformations of the Turkish language.

---

1. The Concept of Language and New Communication Technologies

The head spinning development of the new communication technologies in the last twenty years has made it necessary to review the usage navigation of language. Language has continued to be the means for social change and transformation, the most powerful surface of transmission, and the place for the configuration of words since its existence. Writing and the following period of literacy has enabled people to realize new transformations. At the time before literacy, the most common way of communication had been verbal culture. The stories told among people belong to a culture which has been generated by filtering from several struggles. It involves people's collections, their forming of something new by shaping these collections, and their effort to pass it on to the next generation. History shaped by culture, heroic tales, religion, philosophy, ethics and emotional accumulation are all told through

[*] Arel University, İstanbul. hucelik@gmail.com

stories. People have made strong bonds, started to come over their fears, started to combine imagination with reality by means of stories in verbal culture. Language is the most important ingredient, way, and strategy of verbal culture. That is why the notion of language should be deliberated.

Language is the power that persuades people towards a communicative act. With their existence people have formed their voices with certain rules in order to transmit their thoughts and actions, therefore generating their natural language. In order to communicate with other people, only attitudes and behaviors were not sufficient enough; thus, they proceeded through a more efficient act of communication via sounds. People learned to shape their self-communication, exchange information with the society, and express their manners with the help of language.

Language is not only a sequence of figures but also a medium involving tradition where we feel and acquire our existence. Thus, language which provides communication in the society is not only the sign of the existence of a community speaking that language. At the same time, it is the constructor, exhilarator, and the transmitter and product of the unique culture that is inherited from generation to generation in that society. Language is a form of human culture. It is both a means that creates culture and the product of this culture[1]. It is a traditional and cultural world of meaning that we inherit. Every society can pronounce life and communicate with their existence by virtue of their language. They can construct their existence by means of language[2].

The significance and inevitability of language in communicative competence is an undeniable fact. Hence, people have always wanted to develop language within a frame of rules for the purpose of expressive communication and leave it to later generations. The more efficiently a language is organized with all its conditions, the more successful communicative communication becomes.

Development of language has been accomplished with the help of literacy. However, the generated written culture and several other conditions have weakened the impact of verbal culture. Walter J. Ong divided verbal culture into two as primary and secondary periods of verbal culture[3]. Primary verbal culture involves cultures whose communication is formed by only the vernacular and which are not aware of the concepts of writing and printing. Secondary verbal culture, on the other hand, consists of telephone, radio, television, and other electronic appliances which entered our lives with today's technology because their "verbal"

quality, production, and functions first come from writing and text and then are transformed to colloquial language[4]. The quality of this new verbal culture is considerably different than the written culture formed by literate people.

This article aims to examine the differences of the secondary verbal culture from the primary verbal culture as determined by Ong. Accordingly, the new verbal culture which generated in the context of new communication devices shows itself most deliberately in the social media on the internet. It is deliberately observed that this new form of culture which shows important development diverges from the traditional verbal culture in many ways. Several examples are given in order to show this difference. The transformations of the Turkish language are intended to be demonstrated by comparing the "secondary verbal culture" formed by the new communication technologies and concepts of verbal culture which Ong indicates as "Psychodynamics of Verbal Culture". Furthermore, the structure of the language of messages transmitted in the social media is studied. For this purpose, a qualitative research pattern is used. Several conclusions have been drawn by unfolding the differences among the examples of the Primary verbal culture period and the Secondary verbal culture period of the Turkish language. First and foremost, verbal culture should be held under a microscope to be examined by means of mass communication devices.

2. The Evolution of Verbal Culture and Mass Communication Devices

It is not necessary to learn anything new in orality. Moreover, there is no need for hurry. Inevitably, everything is learned by time. This, in a way, is like jazz. The members of the jazz band already know what they will play when they appear on stage. With years of experience, music is interpreted again by changing some of its parts in an improvisational manner. While doing this, they do not have to remember every detail exactly. This way, the audience has to evaluate the new interpretations with the previous ones. This situation reminds of the verbal confrontation of minstrels in an Anatolian village. They aim for surpassing the other verbally while struggling. In this struggle, minstrels are on top of their virtuosity.

Verbal culture seems to be related to the ear. However, mimicry, costumed plays, theatrical expression, in short, everything with visual dimension is related to verbal culture. When the eye is in action, first books come, then cinema and television, and finally, computers follow. The eye experienced in verbal culture functions as complementary to this

culture. In this regard, when the eye meets something new, it recalls what it has seen before; in addition, it not only remembers what it read but also what it heard. It tries to comprehend the new with its experience. Since the new communication devices and printed discourse depend on the functions of vision and variations of its manners, orality has been made inflexible and frozen besides being come down to diagrams, graphics, curves, and statistical representations with the frequent use of these devices. These representations cause the assumption of an empowered precision, existence, and moment by making discourse a technical object[5].

Today, the effect of electronic devices on verbal development has been widely discussed. Entering the verbal area is learned at age two or three which is the period in the life of a juvenile before he becomes literate. Until school age, in other words, a few years spent before literacy is the time span during the juvenile's experience of the world and his/her inner world. After the Medieval Age, discourse and literacy started to separate from each other, with literacy gaining more significance. Therefore, verbalization did not function anymore and people saw that literate individuals who could read and write permanent things like texts were one step ahead of others. With the proliferation of literacy, ideas of enlightenment were generated and they reached our day.

The media neither expresses verbal nor written culture. Mass communication devices are rather far from verbal culture since interruption, discussion, asking questions, repetition, and people getting out of control and reorganizing create the essence of orality. During conversation, attendees can break the rules but prohibitions are always in the background. Radio and television present us a message in a package. The images on television move along much more rapidly than young brains can realize and analyze them[6]. Due to this reason, television is in no way connected to reality, which causes their imagination to die down[7]. That is why the issue of the bringing of discourse back by mass communication devices is discussed.

The structure of culture shaped by the alphabet has started to change its form with computers. The controllers of the education system depend on computers in order to solve the problem of illiteracy, which draws them away from the traditional learning systems. For instance, there is a decline in the percentage of reading books. In the research conducted by the Ministry of Education in the U.S.A., the literacy rates were below the medium to be 13.8% in 2003[8].

The duplication of texts with several computer programs is considered to be an advantage together with easy and widespread access. Nevertheless, degrading language to this

kind of "communication" where it gains an instrumental form means trivializing and commoditizing the culture that humans have been generating for thousands of years. Thus, a person who has formal education turns out not to have read much after graduation. Only people who go through an instructional learning phase can expertise in a field. The "ball of works" created by human culture is imprisoned in a single area of human skill. Hence, people cannot benefit from all human knowledge and skills earned by culture, being deprived of a vast activity of thought.

In a computerized culture, behaviors have become in correspondence with computer language. In the logic of computers, dimension is associated with yes/no structure. The solutions of complex problems are simple options[9]. That is why the human being who has created the computer logic is drifted to think in terms of the simple yes/no logic formed by the computer.

Literacy is one of the most significant elements in the generating of civilization because it presents a rule based, in other words, a disciplined learning frame. Thus, people give direction to their behaviors with the help of rules and this helps the formation of their character. As a result of the cooperation between grammar and morphology formed by written culture (i.e. between rules and content), expressing oneself with rules is achieved. today, written culture has been going through a metamorphosis due to computers. Text is blurring the space by digitization. It does not exist on the page of a book anymore. ın addition, it is removed from its cultural context by being torn from where it really belongs to by several techniques.

The rich verbal culture has met the communication needs of people for years with its ear-pleasing structure. Today, it continues to exist in patches. Traditions of verbal culture have deeply affected the Turkish culture. For years, the communication mode of the people of Anatolia has depended on verbal culture.

3. The Turkish Language and Social Media

With the emergence of various computer software, human beings have possessed a device with which they can immediately and effectively spread their experience and thoughts to millions of people. They now try to communicate with familiar or unfamiliar people with the help of a huge virtual environment called the internet instead of slower and less effective interpersonal communication methods. Therefore, people have found an opportunity to

transmit their thoughts, experiences, and messages to a wider community and to reach others' at different levels.

On the websites configured as social networking internet sites and shortly called as the social media, the texts, pictures and images used put forward the interest of the human being in verbal information which is known to exist from the past to the present. Humans developed the written culture and reached a certain development level until the 21st century while constantly involving in verbal culture. Such harmony of the opportunities on the internet with verbal culture is one of the reasons for the appeal of the internet.

People's exhibitionistic demonstration of their emotions, texts, pictures, of what they ear-witnessed and eye-witnessed by means of computers and the availability of this execution in the virtual world rather than in social life are remarkable. As people digitize diaries and transform texts beyond literal and normal texts to hypertexts, the structure of the text gains a quality that keeps its distance to original texts. For instance, sentence structure changes with the expressions like "slm, nbr, nslsın, hg, tşk, kib, iim, msn'dym, tklyrm", transforming the planning skills, calculating skills, and memory skills of humans who transmit their plans and lives to a machine.

In recent years, social networking sites which emerged with several formats and opportunities have continued to attract people widely. For instance, although the aims and contents of websites like *youtube*, *facebook* and *twitter* are different; their aim is usually social networking. With the removal of the barriers in media production, everybody becoming a cameraman, electronically sending and broadcasting the images they take with the help of the mobile phone cause the person to be a "virtual and stand-alone" media.

As Ong indicates, verbal culture should find a new place for itself in the digitized culture by metamorphosis and develop in this setting. In this aspect, the most important feature of verbal culture is its lack of text. When the qualities of texts formed by verbal culture are compared with the language which emerged with digitized culture, the following issues are put forth:

In verbal culture, the articulated style of expression is dominant. Simple sentences are joined by various connectors. There is neither a detailed discourse nor complex grammar rules because rules are out of context. Today, in social media, choppy sentences are preferred in Turkish. In messages, irregular structure dominates. For example, affixes are misused. In the mails on the internet, the conjunctions "de, da, ya da, ki" are used contiguously.

In verbal culture, several patterns are used in reinforcing memory[10]. Descriptive words are used to express verbal thoughts. For instance, with nicknames and several adjectives, the quality of a phenomenon is expressed. In the Turkish verbal culture, these clusters are frequently encountered. Objects are described with basic adjectives such as the description of people by the clusters "akça kızlar" (pretty girls) and "koç yiğitler" (brave boys) in a poem by the Turkish minstrel Karacaoğlan.

Today it is observed that adjectives or names are used in an ornamented and exaggerated manner in the social media such as "güzeller" (the pretties), "kankalar" (buddies), and "deliler" (the mads). Repetition and ornamentation to express something in verbal culture reinforce recalling it later. In rhetoric, words are consumed in a fruitful and exaggerative manner[11]. Also named as the art of oratory, in rhetoric one should impress and convince people. Yet, it is difficult to encounter examples of the art of oratory among the words in the social media. Sentences are short and simple, without any purpose of impressing people. What is important is to seize the moment and send messages.

In the traditional verbal culture, the conceptualized information is trapped in traditions to prevent its extinction. Thus, information passes on to the following generations. In the social media, information is transmitted via electronic script and symbols in the messages. Similarly, in the West, the old, voiced mental structure did not disappear in a moment with the invention of writing but gradually changed with the invention of the printing press and the supervision facilities of information and memory[12]. These changes finally penetrated into the internet. Information is momentarily transmitted in the social media. There is neither a cultural frame nor qualities around the information. In addition, symbols are used beside the text in messages sent via the social media. For instance, small images describing several human emotions such as laughing, feeling angry or surprised appears on their own or between the lines.

In verbal culture, depending on human life, information has to verbalize and conceptualize the foreign and objective world within the frame of familiar human contact[13]. In other words, verbal culture is in accordance with human life. For example, in order to learn something, the education is given through the mentor system, without referring to books. The messages sent in the social media reflect a mechanized cultural structure. Messages such as "*aynı partlar elimde yoktur*" (I don't have the same parts), "*qimse çocuğun üzerine gitmesin agresif press-over olmasın su enteresan topicte*" (nobody should give a hard time to the boy he shouldn't be aggressive and press-over about this interesting topic) are examples to the use

of computer language in the social media. For example, in this sentence, the mixed expressions from both Turkish and English and inverted sentence structure draw attention.

Most verbal actions dependent on or bearing trace of verbal tradition, differ from literacy with their contentious manner. Bodily behaviors and physical violence are particular to verbal culture. Swearing, name-calling, and strict polarizations like good-bad, virtuous-virtueless, traitor-hero are more explicit in verbal culture. Here, language receives a combatant manner in order to reflect what happens in human life. In verbal culture, the constant superiority race among heroes results from this property of verbal mental phases, not from an aggressive or romantic life style[14]. In the social media, the same unfavorable behaviors are encountered. In the messages, although this is controlled electronically or by administrators, computerized attacks have been increasing. However, the interesting point is that the attackers and victims do not know one another.

Text not only differentiates the known from the unknown, but also aims to make the information "objective" by removing it from personal perception[15]. Hence, information gains freedom by avoiding human monopoly. In verbal culture, there are no boundaries between the listener who narrates a myth and an imaginary hero. The plot, listener, and narrator somehow identify with one another. In written culture, as legends and myths are transformed into modern literature, the purpose is to maintain both literature and culture. Turks have succeeded in maintaining their language with the help of verbal culture. However, today, this cultural structure is speedily transforming[16].

In verbal culture, the constant equilibrium of the setting is to be at stake. Since out-dated recollections are easily removed from memory, the balance of the moment is not readily disturbed for the verbal society[17]. In the structure of written culture, this balance is impaired as information is recorded and passed onto the following generations. In verbal culture, the focus is on seizing the moment. There is no structure formed by the past. In verbal culture, words are uttered and then forgotten. In the social media, the most important feature of verbal culture, seizing the moment is the point. It is not permanent like written culture.

Since verbal cultures use notions based on the situation within the frame of functional relation and this frame stands close to human life, the abstractness of the notions is at the minimum level[18]. In verbal culture, tangible phenomena are much more significant. Notions are used not virtually or stylistically, but functionally and depending on the situation[19]. For instance, people who are shown the shape of a circle will materialize it as a plate since for them, opinions beyond functional thought are of no significance, besides being boring and

non-functional[20]. Verbal cultures are not interested in geometrical figures resulting from text-shaped opinion, abstract categories, stereotyped logical examination periods, definitions, even detailed descriptions or exquisite ego analysis[21]. Contrary to verbal culture ruled by concrete life, the abstract structure of the social media is interesting. Despite the reality of people, the vagueness of time and space strengthen this abstract structure.

Illiterate people do not use deduction much[22]. Due to this reason, they do not move from the general to the specific. Nobody is interested in the general. What is important is the experienced things. Since the reality of what is encountered in the secondary verbal structure is under suspect, it diverges from verbal culture in which concrete phenomena is examined.

In the social media, the definition of "toprak" is as follows: "*Topraq askerde ayni $ehir ya da uc a$$agi be$ yukari civar $ehirlerden gelen er ve erba$larin birbirlerine kullandiklari hitap $ekli*". (*Topraq* is a way of addressing among soldiers or privates who come from neighboring cities in military service). In this way, a structure is formed by words and letters against the grammar rules in Turkish. With this feature, it diverges from verbal cultural structure. As above mentioned, the letters w, q, x, used in English and symbols like $ are used in messages. In addition to this, words of English origin like "bye, from, ok, pls, pc, tnx: thanks" are frequently used such as "*pls asl-Please age, sex, loacation-lütfen yaş cinsiyet bölge*", "*bradır-erkek kardeş*", "*F.M-female-male-kız-erkek*", "*hand-have-nice day-iyi günler*"[23].

In messaging in the social media, Turkish haplology and elision are encountered such as "*bişi-bir şey* (something)*, 1 dakka- bir dakika* (one moment)*, 1 şey-bir şey, brz-biraz* (a little)*, cvp-cevap* (answer)*, efem, efendim* (sir/well/sorry)*, gzl-güzel* (nice)*, hşçkl-hoşçakal (good bye), 2miz-ikimiz* (2 of us), *ktrl-kontör* (unit)*, izm-İzmir* (Smyrna)*, msj-mesaj*(message)*, nbr- ne haber* (howdy?)"[24].

In the messages, there are expressions without vowels like "*Cvp-cevap, tmm-tamam, , smd-şimdi, gb-gibi, kdr-kadar, drs-ders, hyr-hayır,* and *snr grşrz-sonra görüşürüz*"[25]. Besides, there are expressions without the use of consonants as well: "*ii-iyi, özlüorm-özlüyorum, olum-oğlun, öle-öyle, hatılamak-hatırlamak, diosam-diyorsam*"[26]. Phrasal verbs are worth mentioning, too, like "*k.i.b.-kendine iyi bak*" (take care of yourself)*, "tşk-teşekkür ederim*" (thank you), "*Noldu-ne oldu*" (What happened?)[27]. Sometimes, there are differences in spelling such as "*yüsünden-yüzünden, sisde-sizde, tikat-dikkat, bis-biz, güsel-güzel, efet-evet*"[28]. Especially in short messages, there are voice changes like "*bij-biz*", "*çaar-çağır*", "*reca-rica*", "*saten-zate*"[29]. In the messages, elements of colloquial language are common;

for example "*güsel olur walla yaa, ne diyon yaw, ii be kanka senden nbr, yuvarlanıoz denir yaa, nbr lan*"[30]. The repetition of certain words for the purpose of emphasis is also frequently encountered such as *"Hayırrrrrrrrrrrr"* (Nooooooooo), *"hımmmmmmmm"* (Wellllll,), *"heeeeeeeyyyyyy"*, *"neeeeeeee"* (Whatttttt), *"eeeeeeeevet"* (Yesssss), *"haaaaaaarika"* (Woooonderful)[31]. In the messages, prepositions are either shortened or changed like *"Böle-böyle"*, *"hps-hepsi"*, *"n-ne"*, *"yni-yani"*[32].

There are also structures against Turkish grammar rules. Capital letters are used together with small letters in the spelling of words like *"valla sagol BEN KAÇIOM"*, *"HEMEN geLİYOM, Telefonu AÇ"*. Compound and separate words are misused such as *"bikere, bşi-bir şey, Kız nededı"*[33].

4. Conclusion

Since the new communication devices started using information, new problems have emerged as well as new opportunities. With the internet, a new setting of verbal culture has come to the scene. This new setting is quite different from both traditional verbal culture and written culture.

People have communicated with the help of language and formed a cultural setting whose words and manners are to be passed on from generation to generation within the community. Literacy has greatly affected the development of language. Culture has made orality permanent with certain rules of writing and its disciplined structure. Today, literacy has lost its importance and people have been face to face with a cultural setting similar to verbal culture which is the first requirement of a language. Therefore, the study of the new form of language which generated with help of new technological devices has become necessary.

Used in the transmission of culture to large masses, the media has generated a one-way communication flow until today. The setting of communication started with the new communication devices differs from the traditional media with its interactionist character. For instance, with the internet, an indigenous computer language emerged. This computer language is like neither traditional verbal culture nor written culture. In this new setting called as the internet culture, the use of language changes with differing expressions. This new type of language is used in the communication medium of the internet called social media.

The articulated and irregular structure of verbal culture is valid in this new culture, too. Several adjectives that are used in verbal culture are sparingly and inelaborately used in the social media. In verbal culture, information is transmitted to the following generations

with the help of traditions. In the social media on the internet, the use of information applies to the particular moment and there is no concern for future use.

Verbal culture is in accordance with human life and nature. On the other hand, social media stands for a computerized cultural structure. Several strict polarizations in verbal culture are more explicit. In the social media generated by the internet, this polarization is more ambiguous.

In verbal culture abstractness is at the minimum level. However, in the social media, communication takes place in an abstract setting. Although people are real, time and space are almost indefinite. Situations contrary to the rules of language emerged with the new communication devices. For instance, irregular words and letters are used in messages. Distorted words and letters in English are used in a confusing and meaningless manner. In these messages, there are expressions without the use of vowels or consonants besides haplology and elision. Several sentences are used just by writing the initials. Moreover, letters of words are changed. There are also sentences belonging to colloquial language and words changed for emphasis.

All these changes experienced in communication technologies have decreased the effect of literacy which was formed by writing. Messages transmitted in this medium are meaningless and superfluous. Transformations of the language negatively affect and spoil the written culture. Therefore, the social media setting should be focused on more, without ignoring the significance of academic studies in this aspect.

---

[1] Aliye Çınar, Modern Batı Düşüncesinde Dilin Kökeni Olarak Ontolojik Farklılık Sorunu, **Uludağ Üniversitesi. İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi**, Cilt: 16, N: 1, 2007 p: 200.

[2] ibid., p.,201.

[3] Walter J. Ong, **Sözlü ve Yazılı Kültür: Sözün Teknolojileşmesi**. Trans.: Sema Postacıoğlu Banon, İstanbul, Metis Yayınları. 1999. p.22-23.

[4] ibid., p., 23-24.

[5] Eser Köker, **Kitapta Kurutulmuş Çiçekler yada Sözlü Kültür Üzerinde Düşünmek**, Ankara, Dipnot Yayınları, 2005, pp., 60-61.

[6] Barry Sanders, **Öküzün A'sı: Elektronik Çağda Yazılı Kültürün Çöküşü ve Şiddetin Yükselişi**, İstanbul, Ayrıntı Yay, 1999, p.,45.

[7] ibid., pp.,46-50.

[8] National Center for Education Statics, National Assessment of Adult Literacy, Retrieved December 30, 2011 from **http://nces.ed.gov/naal/estimates/overview.aspx**. p.,1.

[9] Sanders, **Öküzün**. , p.,135.

[10] Ong, **Sözlü**, p.,54

[11] Ong, **Sözlü** p.,57.

[12] Erol Göka, **Türklerin Psikolojisi**, İstanbul, Timaş, 2008, p., 128.

[13] Ong, **Sözlü**, p.,59.

[14] Göka, **Sözlü** p.,121.

[15] Ong, **Sözlü**, p.,62.

[16] Göka, **Türklerin** p.,132.

[17] Ong, **Sözlü** p.,63.

[18] ibid., p.,66.

[19] Göka, **Türklerin** p.,121.

[20] Ong, **Sözlü** p.,69.

[21] ibid., p.,72.

[22] ibid. p.,70.

[23] Mehmet Aksüt ve diğerleri, "Sanalca, Sanal Odalarda (İnternet) İletişim ve Türkçe", Retrieved from **http://www.ab.org.tr/ab06/bildiri/23.doc**, *p.,4.*

[24] ibid., p.,4.

[25] Havva Yaman, ve Yavuz Erdoğan, " İnternet Kullanımının Türkçeye Etkileri: Nitel Bir Çalışma", **Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies,** Vol.3, Bo.2, October 2007, p.,243.

[26] ibid., p.,243

[27] Aksüt, "Sanalca"., p., 5.

[28] Yaman, "İnternet", p.,243.

[29] Aksüt," Sanalca"., p., 6.

[30] Yaman, "İnternet",., p.,244.

[31] ibid., p.,244.

[32] Aksüt, "Sanalca"., p., 6.

[33] Yaman, "İnternet",., p.,244.