ETHICS AND LANGUAGE: AN ANALYTICAL REVIEW OF LINGUISTIC INFLUENCE ON ETHICAL DECISION-MAKING

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines one of the most crucial areas of concern – language and ethics – through a critical analysis of how the choices made of language impact on the ethical concerns prevalent in different areas of practice. The paper reviews the effects of moral aspects of language framing in what concerns the problem of the so-called 'framing effect,' which refers to the differences in terms of ethical choices given the specifics of the linguistic representations used in framing a particular problem. Furthermore, the review also discusses the question of ethical uses of language in political, legal and media contexts as language can either be used to foster or negate ethical values. For example, employment of white-washing in political language can mask the ethical implications of policies as well as in bias language legal repercussions. Speculative in orientation, the study also discusses the content which promotes the rhetoric of ethical norms; the role of storytelling and metaphor in ethical thinking. The paper concludes with an evaluation of recommendation for increasing ethical language use in professional and public discourse with a view of increasing accountability and morality in communication practices.

Keywords: Language and ethics knowledge, ethical judgement, constructing the frame effect, linguistic determinism, politics, law, media, persuasion, ethical reasoning and ethical language.

I. INTRODUCTION

Language and ethics is therefore an exciting and vast research field or study that focuses on how and in what ways language shapes ethics, decision-making and the moral fiber of an individual or the society. Language is not a mere means of expression but a system within which the ethical ideas are formed, expressed and comprehended. It is very compelling to recognize that how ethical dilemmas are defined linguistically heavily influences people's perception and judgmental processes as well as resulting moral consequences. For example, Costa et al., (2014) found that when moral issues are put in a frame written in a foreign language, the workings of the emotional system is compromised or even diminished and hence people take decision that are more utilitarian and less deontological. Moreover, the extent to which

people recognize ethical consequences is masked by the language which includes the use of euphemisms, passive voice or ambiguous language through which one can indulge in ethically questionable behavior while reducing awareness of the ethical costs of such actions (Bandura, 1999). Studies in semiotics and semantics are therefore needed in moral philosophy in order to comprehend how moral norms and the forcefully of ethical decisions possible are mediated through language.

Scholarly research into the ways in which language impacts on ethical reasoning also holds priority because it is essential to provide insights onto the ways and the extent to which ethical propositions are made across different languages and cultures. Ethical decision making in this view is not seen as

a rationalistic model that is in fact deeply rooted in the language that one uses that bounds his ethical perception. Thus, focusing on how language forms ethical arguments, the researchers will be able to show how people manipulate arguments and how such manipulation is possible in ethical discussions (Hayakawa et al., 2017). It is a very important area of study in today's world of globalization, and the usage of more than one language in many business organizations. Linguistic framing varies the ethical perceptions and consequent choices sharply across politics, socioeconomic systems, and cultures and hence has clear relevance to subjects like International law business ethics and international governance. However, revealing these effects can contribute to creating such specific methods to promote ethical consciousness and bring about enhanced levels of ethical behaviors among the speakers of different languages.

Therefore, the main goal of the present review is to review and critically discuss the antecedents of language ethical considerations to understand how language plays out moral judgements and conveying the ethics of different linguistic actions. This review will therefore seek to generate a coherent summative understanding of how language constitutes ethical thinking from extant theories and empirical findings drawn from linguistics, psychology and ethics. The focus of the literature review will be both theoretical and empirical literature that discusses how the choice of language, grammar, and culture affect the morality of people's decisions. Besides, the review will also highlight the manager implications of the findings in areas like legal ethics, corporate responsibility and intercultural communication. Thus, it is hoped that this review would assist in the promulgation of better ethical rules and standards especially in multilingual and multinational contexts by isolating the variables that moderate the association between language and ethics.

II. Theoretical Foundations

Ethical theories give the base paradigms from which to examine such reasoning and language is the primary mode in which such theories are articulated, transmitted and practiced in applied settings. According to deontological theories of ethical decision making based on duty ad probe moral principles, categorical imperative, and moral absolutes require explicit and accurate language (Kant, 1785/1993). On the other hand, the consequentialist theories include Utilitarianism which relies on language to put forward the equation of good and evils in which the formulation of the outcomes plays a major role in determining the moral choices (Mill, 1863/2001). Language forms part of the context of moral discourse in as much as it acts as the vehicle for presenting the issues for ethical decision making. For instance, the way mode used for presenting moral problems in form of dilemmas, for example, the 'killing' as opposed to the 'letting die,' may result to variation in the moral assessment even though the ethic involved is similar (Foot, 1967). Ethical theories are therefore influenced by the language in which they are couched and communicated thus making language essential in ethical decision making among individuals and societies.

The concept of linguistic relativity under which the language spoken affects people's thinking processes has important implications for ethical perspectives especially the understanding and application of morality in various cultures. Sapir-Whorf hypothesis in particular postulates that language determines Cognitive categories, the result of which can be Moral judgments and Ethical standards (Whorf, 1956). For instances, there are cultures whose languages do not have translations for a particular moral concept and therefore have a different way of understanding and solving the ethical issues than the cultures with well-developed moral vocabulary (Wierzbicka, 2006, p. 622). This should be of great significance to cross cultural morality, where even linguistic differences create a barrier to comprehension on moral judgment. Moreover, there is a linguistic theory that goes with relativism, proposing that actually ethical standards of a society depend not only on culture that people accept but also on the language that these people use. This actually brings into question of relativism, which argues that standards of right and wrong also transform with languages and cultures, meaning that any which may be right in the eyes of the international community may actually be wrong in the eyes of an individual or a culture, and this brings a need to understand things in a more relativistic approach.

Therefore, it is possible to note that rhetoric and discourse also play a significant role in the formation of ethical norms and Existential issues are the specific methods governing moral matters

and concerns within society. The issue of concern how to convince the audience and make ethical choice in terms of rhetoric is solved with the help of critical thinking, organizational plans, appeals to the emotions, values and culture of the audience as well as the choice of the type of narrative (Aristotle, 1991). For instance, the action that was rhetorically framed as 'self-defense' will be perceived completely ethically different from the action that was framed rhetorically as 'aggression'. Talking about the manner in which ethical issues are constructed, Fairclough (1992) argued that the manner in which ethical issues are constructed the debates – through the media and political speeches as well as in informal discourse – either supports the dominant moral paradigms or subverts them. Further, when ethical issues are put in specific terms involving use of certain styles of rhetoric like the use of analogies and metaphors they become readily understandable by the public, though there might be tendencies of bias or distortion of the ethical situation at hand (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Mining the relationship between science of rhetoric and science of discourse is significant to assess the moral arguments presented in various domains as well as to encourage ethical communications.

III. Language and Moral Judgment

Linguistic framing is therefore seen to be one of the key factors that contribute to ethical decision making since it defines how people view and understand moral issues. It is evident that how a situation is framed or described in terms of language, focus or point of view may result in varying moral consequences. For example, Tversky and Kahneman (1981) showed that people tend to behave differently in moral dilemmas that concern the so-called "trolley problem" depending on how the choice options are presented, in terms of gains or losses. Altruistic talk, as seen in the typical military's formalization of deaths of civilians as 'collateral damage', can make actions less psychologically aversive, and result in otherwise ethically questionable decisions (Bandura, 1999). These cases show how the words chosen to present a moral situation can affect decision making because of the predisposing of the judgment's focus on certain aspects of the issue as opposed to the downplaying of other aspects. Emotion and none emotional understanding of moral dilemmas vary with language used, such that

it influences how people respond to ethically challenging situations. Prior studies have indicated that when people are put in ethical dilemmas to make choice in their second language or a foreign language compared to their first language, those people are more likely to make what is known as utilitarian choices because the emotions from the second language are not as strong as those of the first language (Hayakawa et al., 2017). Recording the so-called ''Foreign Language Effect'' the study proclaims that the linguistic context in which moral decision is made, can influence the view and assessment of ethical dilemmas. Also, an aspect of perception can be defined by the relative specificity/vagueness of language-specific terms used in moral dilemmas. For instance, it has been found that there are outcomes when specificity of language used triggers a higher level of responsibility and moral personality different to the one elicited by vague or generalized language (Thomson & Byrne, 2010). So, it is necessary to pay attention to the linguistic features that act as the means of moral perception since the results of ethical reasoning can be significantly influenced by the audience.

Metaphor and narrative constitutes two of the most effective means of endowing ethical discourse with the sorts of imagery and storylines that engage individuals' reason emotionally and cognitively. This is so because metaphorical mappings which contain high level moral concepts with more concrete objects or events assists people in understanding or comprehending ethical dilemmas and also aid them to arrive to a proper moral decision. For example, The candle metaphor of moral balance embodies ethical practices such that people's understanding of justice and fairness motivates them into moral actions that aims to 'set aright' social interactions (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). On a different note, narratives offer a systematic approach to presenting ethical dilemmas besides mobilizing empathetic feelings, moral reasoning, and contemplation of a various result of actions (Nussbaum 1995). There is evidence that narratives are useful to engage people in ethical questions and reframe moral dilemmas in a way that touches emotions to a level that it can deeply affect the ethical decision making process. As this paper has pointed out, metaphor and narrative use are therefore a significant aspect of ethical deliberation in determining moral dilemmas

and their possible solutions to the society and in people's day-to-day conduct.

IV. Selected Issues in Cross Cultural Communication: Ethics and Language

Due to cultural differences and differences in people's moral beliefs, ethical norms also differ from one language to another. These variations are mostly due to the differences in language that is, the differences in lexical and grammatical scripts that define a language type influence how ethical concepts are defined and used. For example, in some collectivistic societies, which include most of the cultures belonging to East Asia, the language itself focuses on the importance of collectivism and proper role in the society, which often results in ethical systems that are based on the idea of people's collectivism rather than individualism (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Western languages such as English often use individualism in respect to rights and self-determination in relation to ethical standards which involve freedom and or responsibilities to be independent (Triandis, 1995). Thus, the linguistic and cultural differences can manifest themselves in differing moral judgements in the given position since morality determined by the language priorities for ethical thinking in practice impacts on options for addressing moral issues. Knowing these cross cultural variations is considered crucial in explaining many ethical dilemmas in the multicultural world because the dissimilarities in ethical standards as for the university notions may result in local and international mission and conflict in interpersonal, business, and global interactions.

Language significantly nurtures and defines cross cultural ethical comprehension since ethical concepts are translated and interpreted within a given linguistic context. When ethical issues are presented in a world perspective, people of different language backgrounds may find it easy or hard to comprehend each other. For instance, the words like justice, fairness, rights and etc may have different implications in different languages and therefore, may be given a wrong meaning when translated (Wierzbicka, 2006). Also, the grammar of a language seems to determine how people who speak the language perceive moral responsibilities. For example, languages that do not contain specific future tense might act as a constraint which forces the speaker towards having a present bias ethical

approaches towards long term responsibilities for instance, environmental conservation (Chen, 2013). These language effects establish and reinforce the significance of cultural and linguistic sensitivity in cross-cultural ethical transmission, as such transmission goes beyond use of language proficiency, which involves cultural and ethical consideration of different societies at large.

Explorative examples of ethical decisions in multicultural environments are good to discover more about the effects of language difference in choosing the right ethic to undertake. Such case studies, therefore, portray the difficulties that are likely to emerge when people from different language systems analyze ethical issues or even make ethical decisions. For instance, Hayakawa et al, (2017) in their research aimed to understand the process of decision making on ethical dilemmas in the first and second languages. This paper demonstrated that with moral dilemma, the participants tend to make utilitarian decision – decisions in which the common good prevails – when reasoning in second language which further supports the claims that language fluency and emotional detachment play a role in ethical decision making. Another cross national business negotiations example demonstrated how cultural and language differences can result in ethical dilemma because people from different linguistic backgrounds can perceive contract and ethical behavior in dissimilar ways and thus experience disagreements (Gelfand et al., 2013). These case studies make it pertinent that the question of language and cultural relativity cannot be over emphasized not only in ethical decision making but in a more globally interconnected and diverse society.

V. The Pragmatics of Language of Power and Ethical Decision Making

Language is highly effective method in constructing power relations as well as ethical choices of behavior in different social and institutional settings. Language use either perpetuates or undermines the power relations prevailing in a society as the voices of some communities are privileged while others' are silenced. In legal and political practical discourses, such language reinforces-and reproduces pre-existing hierarchical power relationship that is evident in ethics decisions and rationalizations

(Bourdieu, 1991). For instance, the writing style as influenced by the legal formalism and bureaucratic language hinders comprehension with the overall effect of restricting inclusion of separate groups within ethics decisions (Solan & Tiersma, 2005). In addition, one can note that language control is also used by the powers that be to affect perception and ethical judgments, including through deceptive rhetoric or language, for example, through the use of euphemisms, obscuring the negative impact of some action or policy (Fairclough, 1989). It is important to learn about the processes of language and power because knowing that values and our perception of what is moral is constructed, one needs to be aware that similarly, decisions regarding power is also constructed and needs to be questioned.

Language choices is also an important ethical issue because it deals with the formulation and expression of political and legal actions as well as decisions that affect the laws of the society. Language use in political contexts is also used in an attempt to reframe certain issues in the society in order to fit and push for specific political agendas, to shape the opinion of the people and to justify some decisions (Lakoff, 2004). Problems of ethics are most evident when language is employed as a tool to lie, deceive, or stir the audience emotionally and this occurs when contested policies are re-framed in politically correct language termed as 'spin' or 'double-speak.' In the legal profession the choice of words or lack of them can define the legal actions that are brought or the end result of the legal battles that precede them depending on the actual mean and reference of the words and phrases that are used (Solan, 2016). Politicians and legal professionals are in direct touch with society and as such, they should use words in truthful and clear manners because their words can cause effect changes within societies. The complicated nature of language in these fields demands responsibility to clarify, to be truthful and to be answerable to the public, and to judiciary.

The decision of the media to present, report or even depict the contexts of news, events and issues under construction of ethical standards have an influential impact on the public ethical judgments. It is with regard to the breaking down of props and dissection of the objects that highlight that the choice of words, tone, and structure of narratives used by media definitely affects the ethical evaluation made by the audiences and therefore is influential in driving public opinions within certain directions (Entman, 1993). For example, the details such as the choice of words, or the title of the story may even caused some features of the story to be exaggerated, leading to an increase in moral feelings such as anger or fear, when compared to other aspects that may moderate feelings such as empathy or sympathy that may result from other details of the story (Iyengar, 1991). Furthermore, media influence in agenda-setting by deciding which issues to bring to public attention or to disregard contribute in ethical discussions among the public as well as repeated stories may play a role in changing the ethical values and direction of the society by the constant reinforcement of certain narratives (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). The authors, media outlets and more generally the people then have the ethical responsibility of making this reporting as objective and fairly as possible, as the language used does have deep repercussions on the audience's morality and perception of justice.

VI. Language in Ethical Discourse

I found a high degree of language in constructing ethical arguments, as it is through language that arguments for and against a particular morality are presented, defended and disseminated. Language is used as the means to put forward the ethical principles to be followed, give examples, and respond to arguments against the norms. For instance, Walton (2006) noted that the level of abstraction in ethical arguments defines the persuasiveness of the language used, including the choice of words that helps explain moral values and principals. In addition, we can also use reason or emotion in order to build up ethical appeals, by using tools like; analogies, metaphor or appeal of emotion are used to further buttress ethical arguments; making them more understandable (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). In the ethical argumentation, the organization of points, that is the order of presentation of a particular point and others and the language used to link these points is very crucial in shaping the morality of the audience and in leading them to accept a certain moral conclusion. Learning how good and bad ethical arguments are performed with language is important when working on ethical case as it opens the curtain to how sophisticated ethical argumentation entails mastery of language skills.

Language is a critical tool in ethical processes and for ethical arguments as it gives voice to ethical stances and as it is the field where ethical visions clash. The success of an ethical debate depends on how far the disputants are able to stick to clear language and not aggressive as well as having a respect for the opposite side. I have learnt that in such debates, people will use language that can either promote conversation and understanding or make strife worse depending on which way the language is used. For example, a style of speaking that includes the opponents' viewpoints as viable can improve the climate of the discussion (Tannen, 1998). On the other hand, ethical language includes such language attractions as polarized language, which presents issues as black or white; this type of language can prevent ethical discourse because it cannot offer a real portrayal of ethical issues since it narrows down all moral issues as binary ones that do not deserve any ethical reasoning. The fact that language played a critical role in ethical debates only but reveals the manners in which people have to be sensitive to the ways in which language shapes the ethical discussions by how they use the words.

For that reason, language in any of human vital facets particularly the medicos legal field implicates a heinous ethical burden since words chosen are capable of impacting lives. For instance, to the medical practice, it has been found that the words employed by health care professionals while interacting with their patients can have an influence on the patient's knowledge of his or her sickness, the choices they make concerning their treatment, and even the perception that they have concerning their treatment (Epstein & Street, 2007). The issue of ethics is in the conflict between the best practice of being completely explicit with the patient and the best empathetic practice of being sensitive to the patient's feelings. Likewise, the language employed in and by legal practitioners such as lawyers, judges and even other legal officials has to be clear and bias – free because it can determine judicial decisions and the dispensation of justice (Solan & Tiersma, 2005). That is why the problem of language as a tool in these contexts implies the respect for the dignity of the person and his rights, as well as the identification of how it is possible to convey important information, which can be critical, in such a way that it would not be distorted.

VII. Implications for Practice
Ethical communication in professional contexts is becoming crucial for building up the trust and reciprocal accountability with generations, customers and other significant stakeholders. In the business field and other sectors of the community, (healthcare, law, and education) how a professional conduct himself in language has a direct impact on the ethical fabric of his company/firm and the relations with customers/clients and other members of the society (Mayfield, Mayfield, & Sharbrough, 2015). Ethical communication means that information must be communicated clearly and honestly and that all involved are aware of the facts and that nobody's rights are violated and their dignity compromised. For instance, in health care, ethics is a critical factor when communicating patients to enhance informed consent and ensure that the patient understands the advantages and disadvantages of certain treatment procedures in order to give his/her consent voluntarily (Epstein & Street, 2007). Solan and Tiersma (2005) created a list of principles of ethical communication in legal contexts including telling the truth when communicating as well as avoiding using words that are likely to skew the result of any legal processes. It is vital that the professionals are conscious of the machinations at play in their communication and try as much as possible to employ language that will not exploit the weaker parties hence upholding of professionalism in the communication.

Ethics is important in organizations and in the society and language is an essential factor that supports the claim. The various aspects of ethical communication considered here show that it is as important to how guidelines or policies are received by ethical subjects as it is to formulate policies and guidelines for ethical consideration in the first place. To promote ethical behaviors, one has to ensure that all forms of communication is clear, unambiguous and inclusive to everyone (Bazerman & Tenbrunsel, 2011). For example, the language employed on the codes of ethical in organizations must be clear and mean what they convey in order to facilitate the understanding of expected ethics by the employees as well as the possible repercussions of ethic violation (Treviño & Nelson, 2016). Also, the use of language which

underscores ethical values in relation to integrity, fairness and respect fosters understanding that ethical practice is the order of the day not the opposite. On the other hand, the language that is not very clear or is even contradictory can create confusion, and as a result, the ethical standards may be violated since some people will not understand or will choose to ignore the set rules. Thus, meanings constructed through written and spoken language for expressing norms and expectations of ethical behavior within the organizations should be picked very cautiously.

Improving ethical language use is a process that requires techniques that will help in the clear, nonbiased, and appropriate usage of language. That is why one of the prevention methods is to organize training seminars that would teach the employees and professionals how to use ethical language and where they can learn concrete tips for its usage in their daily practice (Crane & Matten, 2016). Indeed, training can involve sessions around issues of inclusive language, listening exercise and harmonizing on how language influences ethical choices. Another approach is the formulation of procedures within the organization to protect ethics of language, for example, policies that will govern the manner in which communication is bound to be conducted, policies that promote honesty and policies that ensure everyone within the organization is treated with respect (Mayfield et al., 2015). Together with that, teaching the organization's employees to communicate with each other and discuss the examples of unethical language usage can guarantee consistent promotion of ethical communication inside the organization. Last but not least, the use of ethical language within the leadership's communication can become an example for others, stressing the significance of the ethical language to build ethical atmosphere, foundation for trust, collaboration and ethical acts throughout the organization.

VIII. Conclusion
In this chapter the interdependency of language and ethics has been discussed with focus on the way language constructs and is constructed by ethical discourse, with regard to the social structuring of power and the capacity to reason ethically in discursive practices. Thus, the analysis has revealed that language cannot be viewed as a 'transparent medium' for the processes of ethical

communication. Linguistic framing has been observed to go a long way especially in ethical decisions based on investigations on the "foreign language effect" as well as euphemistic language's effect on moral disengagement (Costa et al., 2014; Bandura, 1999). The chapter also pointed out how language is used in professional scenario where effective and ethical communication is important for developing and sustaining trust (Epstein & Street, 2007). Furthermore, the cross-cultural analysis revealed how language plays a central role in posing and solving ethical dilemmas in the international community as pointed out by Wierzbicka (2006). In conclusion, it is possible to state that the research presented indicates that ethical communication is more than accurate word choice, but it also speaks to cultural and social realities of language.

The further development of the theoretical framework should involve an increased focus on synch and diachronic perspectives, as well as increase quantitative research in various languages and cultures. In pursuit of these goals, one potential avenue for future research is the exploration of the effects of relatively newly developing ''digital media'' including social media on ethical decisions and moral evaluations. One set of research questions could explore whether brevity and the real-time use of digital communication changes the ethical behavior of the users as compared to conventional forms of communication (McNamee, 2019). The first major direction for future research is related to bilingual and multilingual ethical decision-making, the question of how code-switching might affect moral choices in a way that differs from monolingual ethical decision-making (Hayakawa et al., 2017). Moreover, the topic of language ethicality in AI and machine learning could also be developed in how such technologies decode and reconstruct human language while also reproducing and sustaining specific ethical standards (Floridi & Cowls, 2019). These research directions will help develop more insight into the place of language in influencing ethical conduct in the globalized world and through the use of ICT.

As mentioned in this chapter, these findings are highly relevant for the field of ethical theory and the ways in which language is used. From a theoretical point of view, linguistic imperialism raises an interesting question of how language control affects ethical decision making and

indicates that ethical decision making is not a matter of reason that has no language and culture involved. Rather, these insights are more in line with a realist epistemology of ethics which acknowledges language as resource in mediating perceptions and judgments of morality (Glover, 2014). This perspective requires moral theories that are able to accommodate the vagaries entailed by different language systems and how these systems may influence the moral input output system. In specific relation to linguistic practice, the chapter stresses the function of ethical language use in the professional and public domains. It is for the practitioners to understand how the choices made in language can shape ethical beliefs and choices especially in warranted domain like health, legal and political spheres(Solan and Tiersma, 2005). when ethical factors are incorporated into language practice, then practitioners of language will help create more fair and positive useful language that will help create just purposeful and moral language.

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