

A Conversation about Communication-Based Marginalization in Everyday Life

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Abstract

Language and communication reflect, promote, and facilitate power structures in general, including discrimination and marginalization. Although this is well known, discrimination based on language or communication is rarely targeted in legislation (Ng 2007). In this chapter, we attempt to highlight the omnipresent but rarely tangible consequences of everyday communication-based marginalization for social cohesion. The concept of social cohesion has become more popular, particularly in relation to dangers to it. However, social cohesion in a positive manner, as lived and experienced, is characterized by a sense of belonging, trust, and participation in a certain group (e.g., Green and Janmaat 2011), all of which are conveyed through communication. In this chapter, we address communication in everyday life as a condition for social participation and cohesion. We call attention to marginalizing mechanisms and cohesion-promoting examples, illustrating possible and realistic, communication-based ways to substantially reduce or eliminate marginalization in order to facilitate a more cohesive society. We conclude with recommendations for more inclusive and cohesive communication practices.

Keywords: communication; marginalization; cohesion; exclusion

A Joint Beginning

In each society, there are normative expectations to mastering a certain (dominant) language. In contemporary Western Europe, it is also obligatory to be verbally conversant in a given language in order to fulfill role expectations as a member of a socially cohesive group. The conditions for success are linked to intersectional mechanisms. For example, when migrants and/or persons from lower socioeconomic status are not given opportunities to acquire a language proficiency or mastery. In addition, there are ableist ramifications: being non-verbal places one lower in societal hierarchies than being verbal. As such, intersectional communicative marginalization or exclusion has tangible consequences with respect to social inequality, which may, for example, manifest as lower educational, political, and social participation and restricted access to healthcare. Socially marginalized positions pose individual challenges, but they also result in threats to societal cohesion, both for the persons directly affected, but also on a macro-level.

Anne: With respect to social cohesion and given our backgrounds in social minority groups, we wanted to address language- and communication-based discrimination as a potential threat to inclusion and cohesion, as it can be “legal camouflage for other forms of discrimination that are in themselves unjustifiable in law or in terms of human rights” (Ng 2007, 108).

The idea for this chapter emerged in a conversation about verbal vs. non-verbal communication. We thought it would be a good idea to engage in communication ourselves, in order to trace how we try to make sense of each other’s arguments and language.¹ Thus, we begin by sharing our understanding of communication.

Yudit: I think it’s really striking that we started this recording session with a small miscommunication and the subsequent repairing of that miscommunication. For some reason, I thought we had scheduled our meeting on a different day. Our solution was to meet, but because our intention was to meet, we met each other halfway (earlier than I and later than you expected), and to ensure that the miscommunication be repaired.

¹ We recorded a spontaneous conversation on Zoom. We had prepared a short list of guiding topics we wanted to address. After transcribing the conversation, each edited her part. For example, we added literature, but also took the liberty to omit private sections and add content that was missing. Our last step was to revise it following the peer review process.

Communication

Yudit: At the core of my understanding of communication is the intention to communicate, not necessarily the modality of communication or the duration of communication. I am always interested in the intention. Sometimes we communicate to get a different perspective, sometimes to be heard by someone else, and sometimes it's a matter of practicality. But when I am thinking about communication, I focus on the intention behind it.

Anne: That's a great point. From my perspective, successful communication often goes unnoticed when it is working well but becomes a focal point when it fails. Maybe the intention cannot be realized, the conversational rules are not met, or a conflict occurs (Hitzler 2018). Maybe barriers to communication arise and cause lack of access for some groups. When this happens, such groups can become marginalized, communication becomes exclusive rather than inclusive. In these situations, it is important to identify and address barriers to ensure that communication remains open and accessible to everyone. Without accepting of diversity and inclusivity in communication, there cannot be social cohesion (Arant et al. 2021; Stöcker and Zurbriggen 2023).

Yudit: This brings me back to intentions. Is the intention perfection, that is, to say what you mean in a perfect way? Is the intention to dominate, or to force the other person to communicate in a way that you want them to communicate? Or, is the intention to learn about what the other person has to say? I think if it is the latter, a genuine curiosity, it is so much easier to achieve inclusion. When the intention is self-centered, that is, when you want to communicate but you are not interested in the other person's perspective, you only want the other person to hear about yours, I think that's when communication becomes exclusive. When you center yourself in the communication you exclude the other.

Anne: Maybe we can clarify normative expectations of communicative capabilities?

Yudit: First of all, you have to be able to speak orally, with sound and articulation. Then you must speak the native language of that country and do so perfectly (Ng 2007). Writing may come next, but even if you are a great writer, if you are not able to articulate the writing in oral speech, then you are automatically immobilized in society. Your options become limited. If you are not able to orally speak a language, most people assume that you have no competence in that language at all, even when you can understand it and/or you can read and/or you use a differ-

ent way of communicating in it, but simply do not speak it for whatever reason. With all these skills that we have, we still feel like ghosts. Most people do not identify you as an agent who can comprehend and make decisions, unless these are verbalized. When you are a ghost, you are automatically excluded.

Anne: From her perspective as a disabled woman being reduced to her wheelchair, Judy Heumann says:

“They weren’t even ignoring me; I could tell by the way they looked right through me. They just didn’t even register my presence. It was as if they unconsciously categorized me as a nonentity” (Heumann 2020, 31).

Marginalizing Mechanisms

Anne: Now we already have the case of being a ghost and being excluded. But other, less absolute processes can occur beforehand. When one speaks in ways others find to be unclear, or when one is only understood by one’s family, they are often perceived as lacking cognitive competences, unable to make important decisions. This is true for people who suffer from conditions such as aphasia following a stroke, for example. A consequence of damage to parts of the brain controlling expressive or receptive language (or both), this language disorder hinders effective communication with others, impairing speaking, writing, and/or comprehension. Depending on when in their lives this condition arises, people may have already established themselves as capable actors and their surroundings may know of their abilities. But miscommunication or marginalization can still occur (Emry and Wiseman 1987), leading to assumptions of incompetence and the denial of their right to express their own thoughts, feelings, and wishes. Unfortunately, stigmatized and marginalized individuals can also be perceived as aggressive or confrontational when rightfully attempting to voice their opinions, because their expressions do not meet the general expectations of “appropriate” behavior for members of a certain ascribed category, leading to a further breakdown in communication (Haubl 2015). Such marginalization can become dangerous, even deadly for the communicator when they are Black, Indigenous, or persons of color.²

² Magdiel Sanchez, a Deaf and non-verbal man was fatally shot by the Oklahoma City Police in 2017 (Associated Press in Oklahoma City 2017).

On the other hand, a misunderstood political correctness can cause marginalization in communication. While there is tremendous value in being mindful of our language and avoiding language that is hurtful or exclusionary, insofar as discrimination also occurs through linguistic encoding and enactment (Ng 2007), in some cases we should prioritize open curiosity and a willingness to ask questions and seek understanding. Often, people who have disabilities or differences are open to questions and may even welcome them as an opportunity to educate others. It is when others become defensive or are prevented from asking questions that exclusion and misunderstanding can occur. For example, a colleague who uses a wheelchair is always very, very open to children asking him about it. They can even touch the wheelchair. It's that problems occur when the parents think this is offensive, and they hold back their children. This small communicative detail leads to exclusion and to two opposing positions in communicative settings.

Yudit: In your example, when parents hold their child back, they are actually saying that this person is not communicable. This is what I hear: you are not free to communicate with a disabled person the way you are able to communicate with a non-disabled person.

Anne: Very often, people with certain disabilities are not addressed directly. People talk to their company or assistants instead, and don't give them the opportunity to answer for themselves. Sometimes people, and in this case, the parents, may be uncertain or insecure about how to communicate with someone who is different from them, which can lead to avoidance or exclusion (Emry and Wiseman 1987). It is ironic, because, as you mentioned, simply talking and engaging in open and constructive dialogue can help break down these barriers and foster greater understanding and inclusion.

Yudit: This brings me back to intention. If you want yourself or your child to have the experience of knowing someone, you find a way. You can for example ask the person: "I really want my child to get to know you, how do I do that? What would you recommend?" There's always a way to communicate. I think sometimes this is a manifestation of a form of exclusion on a societal level: people can be fearful or anxious about making a mistake, which I think is more prevalent in certain cultures than others. Being open to making a mistake and repairing that mistake shows the other person that they are worth knowing. It shows that the person is a "concrete" rather than a "generalized other" (Benhabib 1987). In that sense, repair is a fundamental component of social cohesion. I think the fear of making a mistake and subsequently refraining from communication can send the mes-

sage that some people are not worth all this trouble. Which then makes me think: maybe the intention to communicate and know someone is not so strong.

Anne: It would require recognizing the other as an equal, as a human being, and overcoming the hierarchy or the supposed higher position of someone who may be native to the country or not disabled, among other things. Additionally, it takes a certain level of vulnerability and humility to recognize and acknowledge the experiences and perspectives of those who may be marginalized or different from oneself. It requires us to step out of our own comfort zone and challenge our own assumptions and biases. And it's true that it can also be risky in terms of social status or perception. It can mean realizing that causes for marginalization are an imminent possibility of life and everybody can experience them (Emry and Wiseman 1987; for disability Haubl 2015).

Yudit: Cohesion and inclusion take work. Sometimes it is extra work, but it should be worth it.

Anne: We have seen that exclusion can happen through avoidance and lack of intention. These are not even concrete language barriers, but conditions to engaging in communication. This can happen both verbally and non-verbally. Capabilities like being able to speak, to hear, read, and write in a language provide access to general communication, rather than merely figuring as an object of it. Language in general is also a symbol of power and hierarchy. As such, legitimized languages used in a society are crucial, insofar as language minorities, including people communicating in sign or non-verbal languages, can experience marginalization. We do not only mean sign languages, although they sure experience marginalization, but also persons using assistive technologies or gestures to communicate. Such marginalization in everyday communication can result in or stem from a lack of representation in societal macro structures (Ng 2007). This can even prevent representation in historical accounts.

Yudit: One way I have seen this manifest is with regard to how diversity is measured in certain historical settings. For example, an innovative method is to go back to school records and see how many languages were spoken in that school (Kemper and Supik 2020). This method assumes two things: that children speak one language at home, or that a language is *spoken* at home. Not all households are speaking households, or certain households speak a language they're not necessarily comfortable sharing due to forms of persecution. Sometimes a language is directly tied to an ethnic identity, and it is not safe to disclose that ethnic identity. Sometimes languages are homogenized as part of one linguistic family even

though they are different from each other in terms of grammar, history, region. For example, Kurmancî and Soranî are both Kurdish languages, but they have different alphabets, grammatical structures, and histories, to name a few differences. So, this is another way we don't become aware of certain histories, when there is just no way of knowing whether a form of communication existed or not.

Anne: Apart from the historical dimension, it is crucial to include marginalized perspectives in political and societal discourse. We need to pay attention to experts in their own fields, for example in participatory research or in the mainstreaming marginalization (e.g., regarding disability or gender). But as you mentioned earlier, it requires effort and hard work to ensure inclusion and find common ground among diverse perspectives. This would enable cohesion among all. It's much easier to exclude others and maintain the status quo.

Yudit: It is work that people are either not willing to do, or that systems make it really difficult. Being exclusive does not require extra thought, you can simply do everything the way you have always done. If you are not from a marginalized group, then there will probably be no negative consequences for yourself. This implies that a lot of the responsibility lies with people who have privilege (Lépinard 2020). I know this requires a lot of convincing as people with privilege are fine living their life the way that they have always done, so why should they change anything?

"The truth is, the status quo loves to say no. It is the easiest thing in the world to say no, especially in the world of business and finance. But for the first time we were discussing civil rights, and no other civil rights issue has ever been questioned because of the cost" (Heumann 2020, 152).

Anne: Regardless of personal opinions on inclusion, it is important to acknowledge that basic human rights, regardless of abilities or differences, have been established since 1948 (Universal Declaration of Human Rights; United Nations 1948). However, it is unfortunate that the UN has had to create additional conventions to address the marginalization of certain heavily marginalized groups (e.g., the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, United Nations 2007). If we were to fully respect these human rights, we could build a more inclusive and cohesive society where individuals do not have to fear being marginalized due to unexpected circumstances.

Yudit: Welfare states, discussed in another chapter of this book, also come with a lot of burden on people to prove that they fit a certain category. For example,

you have to prove that you are disabled and “disabled enough”³ in order to benefit from specific measures. In this sense, requirements themselves can reproduce what they intended to ease.

Society teaches us that we have to conform and do not have the right to ask questions or make requests. Asking for accommodation means you are taking up space. If you are asking for an interpretation, you are actually taking a lot of space in the room. For example, when my own need is to be in a quiet place or to reduce sensory input, such as light, I rather take less space, so I tend to exclude myself rather than making myself vulnerable and sharing my needs with people. I am never sure how people will respond to my requests for accommodations. Many times, I have excluded myself from participation because I was not sure how much space I would be allowed to take.

Anne: I would say it’s an interactive situation. If you anticipate that it will not be welcomed, you hold back in order to avoid creating conflict and getting hurt (Emry and Wiseman 1987; Haubl 2015). On the one hand, there are structural barriers and discrimination linked to intersecting dimensions that make it almost impossible for some people to participate and thus to belong. On the other hand, people may also have their own internal barriers, which might not be a problem if they were in an ideal situation. For example, people may not be able to communicate on a certain day, but in an ideal society, they could just say so, and their request would be respected. However, since we do not live in an ideal society, people often establish their own protective barriers.

Yudit: Because you have to ask. It is not ingrained into the system. You are always asking for an exception to be made in your case. You can never simply be: “Today I’m just not speaking” or “Today I am communicating by writing”. The burden of explanation is by itself a form of exclusion.

Anne: Nor is it part of inclusive communication, nor does it allow to be cohesive. Heumann (2020) shares your experiences. As you mentioned earlier, people often feel the need to justify themselves in order to avoid being discredited in some way. It’s unfortunate that some may question the validity of others’ barriers, assuming that they’re just excuses. This is an unfortunate assumption that needs to change.

Yudit: I think that this assumption you mention stems from the lack of understanding in the mainstream of how marginalization is multilayered and inter-

3 We thank Julia Gspandl for pointing this out to us.

sectional. In this book, there is a comprehensive discussion on intersectionality (Ashour and Holz) so we encourage the readers of this chapter to read that chapter first. But in terms of communication, the intersectional aspect of marginalization can be quite visible. Certain markers of identity, such as migration history or socioeconomic status, can already carry stigma and lead to fewer opportunities in life, which manifests intergenerationally. Such complex identities and trajectories are typical in modern societies (see Arant et al. 2021; Ng 2007). We have previously discussed how stigma prevents learning from the experiences of others (Namer and Razum 2021). Often communication is part of the resulting stigma. Majority communities use certain non-mainstream articulation and minoritized vocabulary that groups use as weapons in order to delegitimize these groups as knowers, rather than viewing these as linguistic richness. Add to this layers of gendered communication and communicative (dis)ability and you get a very complex picture of how communication becomes a tool of marginalization. García-Sánchez (2016) also writes about this marginalization occurring within unequal structures, power, and everyday practices.

Anne: Communication is not limited to language, as García-Sánchez (2016) demonstrates as well. Communication includes diverse forms of expression. In a very broad sense, someone may be ostracized for wearing clothes that are different from the dominant culture, or for bringing food from their own cultural background. In a more focused understanding, subtle practices and language of discrimination can become normalized and turn into a routine in everyday discourse (ibid.; Ng 2007). These forms of social exclusion and discrimination can have serious impacts on wellbeing, mental health, and experiences of pain and stress (Büttner et al. 2022). Such barriers are a pervasive issue for marginalized groups in all aspects of life. It can be seen when a person is unable to access certain opportunities, like inclusive schools or the labor market (Powell and Pfahl 2019). They can even impact something as basic as finding an apartment in a foreign country, where one's name or background can prevent them from being considered. They can limit opportunities and create a sense of not belonging that can affect all aspects of one's life, including self-expectations and the willingness to explore new experiences and environments (Powell and Pfahl 2019).

Yudit: See, a poorer life because of it. It just takes so much away from you. You shrink. It has so many other consequences.

Anne: It's interesting to note that even in multilingual countries, power structures still exist. There are still certain languages that are associated with power, education, and societal status (Ng 2007). The beautiful atmosphere of multiple lan-

guages may, however, only persist superficially. Even when more languages may be permitted, alternative forms of communication are often not included.

Yudit: But isn't multilingualism a wonderful thing, when you are in school and there are so many students who speak so many different languages? Or communicate in so many different ways other than speaking? Such richness in a schoolyard! How could this be interpreted negatively? A lot of my friends who grew up in Turkish-speaking households in Germany say that they were not allowed to speak Turkish in the schoolyard, some informally in terms of discouragement, some formally in terms of punishment. There is even a court case on this issue (Moody 2020). My parents grew up in a time when languages other than Turkish were not allowed to be spoken in Turkey. Still today, non-Turkish communities do not have any rights to learn their native languages. It is also dangerous to speak any language other than Turkish outside of your home because it shows that you are not ethnically Turkish. I have partly lost my native language because of this. I just think how much you lose in your life by just not having the opportunity to be multilingual or communicate in a multitude of ways. We could all have had a richer life but now we do not.

Inclusive and Cohesive Communication

Anne: You already refer to multilingualism being a benefit of inclusive communication. What other arguments in favor of inclusion, inclusive communication, and inclusive cohesion come to mind?

Yudit: My answer is that there is so much richness that can come from knowing a person who communicates differently than you do, or who sees things differently than you do. Knowing a person who communicates outside of the mainstream is not a service performed in the interest of inclusion; it is simply an intrinsic part of a richer, better life. I sometimes think people who are not marginalized consider inclusion to be a duty, or the right thing to do rather than a part of living a better life.

Anne: I would go as far as saying, even economically, the society would benefit. Investing in education and inclusive workplaces can benefit the economy in the long run. While some may argue that special education or accommodations are costly, it is important to consider the high cost of sorting and attempting to reintegrate marginalized individuals into society. In Germany, there are currently many job

openings that remain unfilled, and further education and training can help individuals to take on these roles and contribute to society in practical ways.

Yudit: When I think about the economic arguments I'm also thinking: so what if it costs more? Let's say that states spend more money on disabled communities than non-disabled communities. Let's say it costs more money to foster special education. What if it actually costs more money to give healthcare to all the asylum seekers than not? It's still the right thing to do. What is the purpose of having money?

Anne: Absolutely. There are many people who would benefit if we spent money on things like providing adequate support for marginalized communities or investing in education and training programs. Investing in inclusive communication would be a rather easy measure in favor of "increasing neutral and positive intergroup contact, particularly in socioeconomically weaker communities [...] to secure the social cohesion of [...] societies" (Arant et al 2021, 10).

Being included would be a condition to cohesion (Stöcker and Zurbriggen 2023). And cohesion on various social levels would contribute to quality of life. While there are dangers of highly cohesive societies, especially with respect to the exclusion of others, by adding inclusion to the goal of cohesion, we could strive for "happier, healthier and emotionally more stable individuals" (Arant et al. 2021).

Yudit: It is baffling to me why anyone would not want to be in a space where someone isn't forced to communicate with you, or where someone is using a communication method that is most comfortable for them. Everyone should be given the opportunity to communicate in their preferred way. I do not mean that people who use dominant forms of communication and don't demand inclusive communication for everyone are intentionally exclusionary. Because of how forms of communication are hierarchized, non-dominant forms of communication are not accessible to everyone. For example, sign language is not taught as an elective in every school. However, I do believe the demand for inclusive communication should be shared and raised by everyone, so that everyone has an equal opportunity to communicate with one another, regardless of whether, what, and how they speak.

Anne: Like in the ideal inclusive education, where resources are available to all depending on current needs, we could create an ideal system in which many different means of communication are available and equally rightful. For instance, if you had to go to a certain agency, there could be little symbols and checkboxes

indicating your preferences, such as if you prefer to be contacted by phone, email, or in person. Maybe there could also be options for those who require assistance or have a hearing aid that requires certain accommodations.

It would be so helpful if we could establish practical measures, such as ramps that should be available everywhere, handrails that extend the full length of stairs to prevent falls, and language that is easy to understand.⁴ We should train our officials to communicate in a more sensitive and culturally aware manner, also when dealing with individuals who require assistance. There are many aspects that we could implement to make society more inclusive and accessible, without requiring individuals to prove their disadvantaged status and reproducing it at the same time.

Yudit: If the structure itself is not inclusive, then we are relying on people to practice inclusion. For services to be inclusive, the structure itself should be inclusive, not only individual service providers. Rather than investing in sensitivity trainings to non-disabled officials, why not hire actual disabled people who are officials? Then they actually are the ones who are providing the service and leading by example. Not that I am suggesting segregation in services, but people already feel included when they find their own people in service roles.

Anne: Yes, that's an important point. Inclusion is rarely thought of with respect to roles of authority. It is mostly reduced to recipients of services or clients. When will dozens of teachers or healthcare providers come from marginalized perspectives? When will they no longer face marginalization?

Yudit: But there is usually a hierarchy of communication, and you need to have a higher communicative status in society in order to inhabit these roles.

Anne: As we already mentioned, it's important to acknowledge that inclusion and other forms of normative agreements are civilizational achievements. We should not hesitate to celebrate them. Thanks to our formally established human rights, we can now have discussions on how everyone can be included and how society can be more cohesive. We can use this opportunity to explore how we can include everyone who wants to be included.

⁴ Accessibility to many products and services throughout the European Union will have to be secured by 2025 at the latest, as regulated in the European Accessibility Act currently coming into force in the European countries. The demands target private companies and include easy-to-understand language.

Yudit: This requires efforts to include various languages, assistive technologies, and different groups' participation in the design of certain spaces. Such efforts could be affordable in our institutions and countries. It is an active choice when they don't do it.

Anne: And not only that, but when we design for the most marginalized and excluded members of our society, we end up creating more inclusive and user-friendly products and environments that benefit everyone. For example, closed captioning can be used by millions of people who watch videos in noisy environments or in quiet spaces where they don't want to disturb others. Similarly, curb cuts were initially created to assist people in wheelchairs, but they have since become an essential feature for anyone using a stroller, bicycle, or rolling luggage. Making technology and services more accessible can have far-reaching positive impacts.

Inclusive communication is not only about accommodating specific disabilities or language backgrounds, but also about recognizing that people have different learning styles and preferences. By providing multiple forms of communication, we can ensure that everyone has equal access to information and can fully participate in society, without having to out themselves in any way.

Yudit: As long as we make sure that there are different ways for people to participate. I do research with heterogeneous linguistic groups without formal translators/interpreters, and I always get asked: how is that possible? Where are the translators? I always have to explain that work does not have to happen in spoken language and that we also don't have to speak with each other in the same language even if we are speaking to each other. Many people have passive language skills that are not recognized at all.

Anne: I must admit that I don't have much experience in groups that don't share at least one language to some extent in this area. Recently, however, I discovered just how insecure I felt when attempting to learn a new language at my age. I'm afraid of making mistakes or forgetting things altogether, which makes me hesitant to even speak up among those closest to me. Successful communication despite language barriers is an experience that not many people share, so please share stories of these experiences and illustrate ways in which we can communicate effectively despite seemingly insurmountable obstacles.

Yudit: I can think of so many different examples where I communicate by gaze or stare, yet I communicate. Some facilitators of communication do not necessarily

have to be translated, and therefore they do not need to be formalized. For example, in the research setting, you can bring a friend you trust who understands the language and then informs you about what is happening. You can communicate using summaries; you can have interpretation circles where one person who speaks two languages sits in a corner and conducts this informal kind of interpretation; you can have one person visualizing the discussion for others to see. When a person displays an emotion, for example when they cry, it does not have to be spoken. You take in the emotion, you accept the emotion. Not every form of communication is cognitive or conceptual. We communicate other things to each other as well. Research does not have to be conceptual and cognitive. Sometimes it is enough to share a space and an emotion. Then you come with one emotion you leave with another emotion. Isn't that a form of valuable exchange?

Anne: As you previously mentioned, the intention behind communication is crucial for its success. Your experiences reflect what communication should be about, understanding one another and respecting everyone's voice. This is not about preserving power structures and taking the easier route. Communication can work under inclusive conditions with flexibilized expectations (Hitzler 2018). Then, insecurity and avoidance can give way to reducing anxiety and getting to know one another, a more cohesive society (Arant 2021; Haubl 2015).

I would like to emphasize the relevance of respecting a preferred or chosen mode of communication or language. Language should be viewed more broadly than solely as speech. For instance, I recently learned more about the Deaf community and the choice of many of its members to solely use sign language, even though they may be able to use spoken language. Unfortunately, people are often unfamiliar with alternative forms of communication, such as assistive technologies like a talker or a tablet that can voice out loud. Those who use these devices take pride in being able to make themselves understood, but it may be uncomfortable or strange for those who are not accustomed to it. However, there are established and effective ways of alternative communication that could be normalized, including assistive technologies. Even laptops and computers have countless functions these days, which is truly incredible.

Yudit: There has to be openness to it. A few times, in spaces where I was among those benefitting from interpretation circles as a listener, other people shushed us because the informal interpretation was considered too noisy. Even listening becomes normative. When I am not able to follow the language though silence, it is not possible for me to understand it. I have to create noise. I know that interpretation circles are not necessarily assistive technologies, but it's a form of as-

sistance, a community technology. Often, organizers do not use this community technology. At any given conference, for example, you would have many people speaking many languages who are also happy to facilitate an interpretive circle. You do not need a budget, or you do not need organizational skills to make this happen. All you have to ask is: "How many people speak A in this room? How many people speak B? How many speak C?" And they organize the room: "OK, this is an A circle, this is a B circle, this is a C circle." See, we just made it happen, it's a little noisy but now we all understand each other. Of course, there should be standards and accessible professional translation available. Translation should not be an afterthought. But in situations where resources are scarce, creativity should be employed rather than discarding the opportunity to be inclusive.

Anne: I love this idea, and with a bit of humor, I would say that the intention of understanding each other can sometimes be disruptive to social situations, which can be intimidating to people.

Yudit: It gets noisy, it gets messy, it gets uncomfortable, but this is okay because it is inclusive.

Recommendations

1. Inclusion of diverse forms of communication and preferences should be a fundamental component of a theoretical framework of diversity. This would entail recognizing and valuing all modes of communication, including sign languages and non-verbal communication.
2. Practitioners in fields such as education, healthcare, and social services should actively seek to understand and incorporate alternative modes of communication based on individual preferences and needs. This could involve providing assistive technologies or training staff in non-verbal communication methods.
3. Awareness-raising campaigns and training programs should be developed to educate the public about the importance of inclusive communication and its impact on social cohesion.
4. Policies and guidelines should be established to promote inclusive communication in public spaces and workplaces. This could involve providing materials in multiple languages, accommodating individuals with disabilities, valuing non-verbal communication, and opening all roles to marginalized groups.

5. Research and development should be encouraged in the field of assistive technologies and alternative forms of communication, with a focus on reducing barriers to communication and promoting social inclusion.

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