



Who Gets Heard? Money and Voice in Everyday Discourse

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ABSTRACT

In an era of growing economic inequalities and fast changing communications technology, the topic of who gets to speak in ordinary discourse is more relevant than ever. Countries may espouse freedom of expression as a basic right but the ability to influence discussion, shape public opinion and participate effectively in social and political life is not even distributed. This article analyzes the link between money and speech, researching how economic resources structure communicative power in interpersonal, institutional and digital contexts. The study is looking for a conceptual and analytical method, combines scholarship from language, communication studies, sociology, political theory and media studies to explore processes of conversion of economic capital into credibility, visibility and influence. The theoretical work of Pierre Bourdieu, Jürgen Habermas, Nancy Fraser, Michel Foucault and Nick Couldry, the paper argues that voice should be viewed not only as the ability to speak but the socially mediated capacity to be heard, recognized and taken seriously. That economic inequality extends beyond the material divide to influence access to means of communication, institutional legitimacy, social networks, and public attention and influence the contours of whose voices dominate ordinary talk. Digital media have created new possibilities for involvement, while replicating existing inequities through algorithmic prominence, commercialization, and unequal access to technological resources. The study argues that real communicative inclusions entails going beyond formal rights of free speech to include the structural constraints that determine whose voices matter. The variety of theoretical approaches, this paper contributes to continuing discussions of democratic participation, communicative justice, and social inequality by giving a conceptual framework for theorizing voice as a key dimension of power in modern contexts.

1. Introduction

Conversations alter how people see the world, how they negotiate relationships and how they influence decisions affecting their daily lives (Fairclough, 2015; Couldry, 2010). Everyday talk, whether in a family dinner table, a workplace meeting, a university campus, community gatherings or across digital platforms, is a space in which ideas are exchanged, identities negotiated and social realities constructed (Gee, 2014; Fairclough, 2015). In principle, these interactions are intended to mirror the democratic ideal that every individual has an equal opportunity to express thoughts and contribute to community understanding (Habermas, 1989; Young, 2000). But in actuality not all voices are equally weighted. Some voices are heard immediately, and their perspectives easily shape the direction of a conversation. Others are hard to hear, even if their thoughts are as informed

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or persuasive (Couldry, 2010; Fraser, 1990). Such a constant mismatch poses a simple question: who is heard and what decides the importance of voices in ordinary discourse?

The link between money and speech has garnered considerable scholarly interest as economic inequality has risen in many cultures (Piketty, 2014; Stiglitz, 2012). Traditionally, research on inequality has focused on inequalities in income, wealth, employment and access to education. However, there is a growing interest in the less obvious implications of uneven economic resources (OECD, 2021; Wilkinson & Pickett, 2018). One such result is communicative inequality, the unequal distribution of opportunities for participation in the public and private debate and recognition of one's opinions as acceptable (Couldry, 2010; Waisbord, 2020). Economic resources are about much more than material well-being; they determine access to education, professional networks, media platforms, technology resources, and institutional authority (Bourdieu, 1986, 1991). These advantages combine to affect not only who is allowed to talk, but also whose views are regarded to be credible, whose experiences are respected, and whose perspectives inform decisions in families, organisations, communities, and society in general (Fraser, 1990; Young, 2000).

problem has grown even more apparent in the digital age. Social media, online forums, podcasts and video-sharing platforms have revolutionised the communication environment by removing many of the barriers that traditionally hindered public participation (Castells, 2013; van Dijck et al., 2018). At present, those who could not access newspapers, radio stations, or television networks can talk directly to audiences worldwide (Jenkins et al., 2018). These advances have frequently been praised as signs of a more democratic communication environment where anyone with internet access can express views and mobilize support (Shirky, 2008, Ordu and Odukwu, 2024). But the The promise of digital democratization has proven more complicated than we thought. The online visibility of a given material is shaped by platform algorithms, business interests and advertising systems, technological infrastructure, and the ability to devote time and resources in developing interesting content (Gillespie, 2018; van Dijck et al., 2018; Zuboff, 2019). Thus, the digital space has created new chances for involvement, but also reproduced many of the inequities that define offline communication (Couldry & Mejias, 2019).

To understand these processes, we need to move beyond the idea that freedom of expression alone guarantees equitable participation. The legal right to speak is certainly necessary to democratic life, but the capacity to influence what is said depends on a wider range of social, economic and institutional conditions (Habermas, 1989; Young, 2000). Certain individuals have more options for education, professional qualifications, social networks, technical resources, and symbolic recognition (Bourdieu, 1986, 1991). These kinds of advantage sometimes feed each other, giving some voices significant visibility and others a peripheral status (Bourdieu, 1986). Communicative inequality cannot be reduced, then, to inequalities in personal confidence or rhetorical ability. It is part of broader systems of social stratification that determine the ways in which authority, credibility and knowledge are recognised (Couldry, 2010; Waisbord, 2020).

This approach is increasingly reinforced by study in sociology, communication studies, political philosophy, and media studies. Pierre Bourdieu's theory of capital offers an important basis for exploring how economic, cultural, social and symbolic resources interact in producing uneven influence within society (Bourdieu, 1986, 1991). Bourdieu explains that economic capital is not just a cash asset but can be turned into several kinds of advantage, including educational qualifications, professional prestige, important networks, and symbolic legitimacy. These interconnected resources construct the conditions within which people talk and are listened to, so that voice itself becomes an act of power, not a neutral act of communication.

Similarly, the notion of the public sphere as articulated by Jürgen Habermas emphasises the significance of inclusive discourse in democratic governance and points to the ways in which economic and political factors can disrupt rational public discourse (Habermas, 1989). communicative space in which arguments are judged on their merit rather than the social position of the individuals presenting them, later scholars have questioned the extent to which such equality can be achieved in societies characterized by structural inequalities (Fraser, 1990; Young, 2000). As an example, Nancy Fraser (1990) argues that historically dominant public spheres have barred many groups from meaningful participation, and that marginalised communities have formed alternative venues in which to voice their experiences and opinions. Her study shows that participation in public discourse is not simply a matter of statutory rights but also social factors that decide whose perspectives are considered valid.

Michel Foucault's work on knowledge and authority also helps us to understand the link between discourse and power. According to Foucault (1980), power is exercised through discourse in the definition of what can be said and who can talk, as well as what knowledge is considered true. In this sense, communication is never a neutral activity, but is embedded in institutional practices and social conventions that elevate some voices and marginalise others. Nick Couldry (2010) goes on to say that voice is not just speech but a fundamental human value. For Couldry, meaningful engagement is only possible when there are social mechanisms in place to ensure that people's stories are heard and treated seriously. The issue, then, is not

simply to broaden chances for expression but to confront the unequal conditions that decide whose comments are paid attention to and influence.

Existing scholarship is robust, but most of the literature has studied economic inequality, political engagement, media access, and democratic discussion as discrete fields of inquiry (Dahlgren, 2021; Waisbord, 2020). Less attention has been paid to understanding how these dimensions connect in the daily talks that make up everyday life. But it is in the everyday interactions inside families, businesses, schools, religious organisations, neighbourhoods and online communities that social inequalities are regularly perpetuated or challenged (Fairclough, 2015; Gee, 2014). Everyday talk is the site where assumptions about knowledge, credibility, authority, and legitimacy are implemented through everyday communicative behaviours. These exchanges provide important insights into how economic inequality is ingrained in social relations and how communication power is deployed outside formal political institutions.

This research fills that vacuum by analysing the relationship between money and voice through a conceptual synthesis of literature on communication, inequality and democratic engagement. Instead of offering fresh empirical findings, the article synthesises perspectives from communication studies, sociology, political theory, media studies and critical social theory to provide an integrated framework for understanding how economic resources determine communicative influence. The analysis takes into account both traditional environments of interpersonal communication and the growing importance of digital platforms in shaping public attention and engagement. The text focuses on how economic capital affects credibility, access to communication infrastructures, institutional recognition, and possibilities for civic engagement.

The paper's primary point is that voice is not just the capacity of the individual to communicate, but a socially mediated kind of power (Couldry, 2010). Economic resources create the circumstances in which voices are amplified, silenced, legitimised, or marginalised, impacting not only who participates in quotidian conversation, but whose viewpoints shape collective decision-making (Bourdieu, 1991; Fraser, 1990). This awareness of this relationship widens the conversations on inequality beyond socioeconomic consequences and emphasises communication as an important aspect of democratic life (Waisbord, 2020). This paper brings together influential theoretical perspectives and contemporary scholarship to contribute to ongoing debates about communicative justice, democratic inclusion and the social consequences of economic inequality. It provides a framework for understanding why some voices consistently receive attention while others struggle to be heard.

1.1. Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. How does economic position affect whose perspectives are heard, acknowledged, and taken seriously in everyday conversations?
2. How do economic resources affect participation and impact in interpersonal, institutional, and digital communication?
3. How do contemporary social and institutional arrangements produce communication inequities in the economic realm?
4. What theoretical perspectives might be used to understand the relationship between money, voice and communicative power in contemporary society?

1.2. Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are to:

- To study how economic position shapes who gets heard, acknowledged and recognized as credible in talk in everyday life.
- Examine the influence of economic resources on participation and power in the interpersonal, institutional, and digital communication contexts.
- Describe the role of social, cultural and institutional institutions in the creation of communication inequalities in terms of economic position.
- Construct a conceptual framework based on communication studies, sociology and political theory to understand the relationship between money, voice and communicative power.
- Suggest ways of encouraging more equal and inclusive involvement in ordinary talk by dealing with structural factors affecting communicative disparity.

2. Related Works

2.1. Conceptualizing Voice and Everyday Discourse

The notion of voice has grown more significant for scholars in communication, sociology, political science and media studies as it is about more than speech itself but involves acknowledgement, involvement and impact in social life. Freedom of expression is often seen as one of the cornerstones of democratic society. However, scholars have pointed out that having the right to speak does not mean that people's opinions will be heard, appreciated or acted upon. Current scholarship has thus moved from studying voice as an individual communication capacity to exploring it as a socially and politically mediated resource constructed by power, institutions and inequality (Couldry, 2010; Young, 2000).

Everyday discourse is the basic space within which voice is practiced and negotiated. Everyday discourse refers to everyday encounters in families, businesses, schools, religious contexts, community organisations, and increasingly in digital communication contexts, in contrast to formal political debate or contact with institutions. (Odukwu and Ordu, 2025) These interactions affect how people view social reality, form identities, negotiate relationships and make collective decisions. Language in everyday use is not neutral, Fairclough (2015) argues, as discourse reproduces and reflects social processes. Societies utilise recurrent patterns of communication to build norms about who is informed, trustworthy, or authoritative, and hence whose viewpoints are powerful.

Communication experts have increasingly emphasised that voice should be seen as a question of communicative justice, rather than simply as a matter of individual expression. Voice, according to Couldry (2010), is the ability of people to tell their stories and to have a real say in issues which concern them. From this perspective, voice is a fundamental human value, not just regarding the possibilities of expression, but also in relation to the social conditions for hearing and recognition. Ordu & Odukwu (2024) A person can be freely speaking yet effectively silenced if their inputs are constantly rejected, dismissed or removed from serious discourse. Consequently, the difference between speaking and being heard has been one of the major issues in recent study on communication.

More recent work has extended this notion to include the ways in which structural inequalities shape communicative involvement in a range of social contexts. Waisbord (2020) believes that democratic communication is not only about access to communication technologies, but also about institutional frameworks for participation by different social groups on approximately equal conditions. In a similar way, Couldry and Mejias (2019) argue in their analysis of data colonialism that digital cultures are increasingly organising communication through mechanisms that benefit some forms of visibility and disadvantage others that are less obvious. Digital technologies have opened up more chances for engagement, but they have also created new ways in which attention and influence are allocated unequally.

The connection between voice and recognition is also a subject of great interest in contemporary democratic philosophy. Mansbridge et al. (2012) argue for the need of institutions that can include varied experiences and perspectives, rather than merely privileging those already in social positions of advantage. Their work reveals that effective participation is not simply a matter of formal inclusion but of how communication settings are responsive to disparities in lived experience and social location. Likewise, Dryzek (2022) notes that deliberative processes work best when diverse voices, in particular those of marginalised groups, are able to shape public thinking free from the constraints of existing hierarchies of power.

The increasing power of digital communication has changed scholarly conceptions of voice. Social media platforms have substantially lowered the barriers to content creation and public interaction, allowing people to reach previously unreachable audiences. However, experts warn against thinking that technological accessibility inevitably creates communicative equality. Gillespie (2018) shows how platform governance, content regulation and algorithmic ranking are key to selecting what voices are visible in digital contexts. Similarly, van Dijck, Poell and de Waal (2018) argue that platformization has re-shaped public communication by embedding commercial and algorithmic logics into everyday encounters that often privilege exposure on the basis of engagement metrics over democratic values.

These advances have prompted scholars to distinguish between communicative access and communicative influence. Access is the technological capacity to participate in communication; influence is the power to shape conversations, public agendas and collective knowledge. This divide is especially significant to the relationship between economic inequality and voice since financial resources tend to amplify communicative influence through education, access to technology, professional networks, and institutional legitimacy. As Castells (2013) notes, power in networked societies is increasingly based on the ability to influence flows of communication rather than just possession of physical resources. In this way, speech is embedded in larger systems of economic and social power.

The research suggests that the best way to conceptualise voice is as a multidimensional term comprising expression, acknowledgement, legitimacy and influence. These characteristics are played out mostly in everyday conversation, which demonstrates how communication reflects and reproduces larger socioeconomic inequalities. Digital technologies have created new opportunities for involvement, but not fixed inequities in whose voices are heard and who shapes shared outcomes. This knowledge enables us to prepare the ground for a discussion of the impact of economic disparity on communicative power, a question I will address in the next section.

3. Research methodology

This study uses a qualitative conceptual research design, based on an integrative literature review. Conceptual research refers to a type of study that is generally related to abstract ideas or concepts. The main objective of conceptual research is to construct a conceptual model or theory to comprehend a phenomenon. It is a type of research that is based on abstract ideas or concepts. The conceptual research is different from empirical research. Empirical research is based on seen and measured phenomena and derives knowledge from actual experience rather than from theory or belief. This is a suitable choice of technique because the study is interested in exploring how economic resources impact voice and involvement in ordinary discourse, drawing together concepts from communication studies, sociology, political science, media studies and critical social theory. The literature evaluated in this study was identified using a systematic search of major academic databases including Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, JSTOR, ScienceDirect, SAGE Journals, Taylor & Francis Online, SpringerLink, and Wiley Online Library. These databases were chosen because they index high quality peer-reviewed papers in the relevant areas of communication, sociology, media studies and political science. The material was chosen based on explicit criteria to assure its quality and relevance. Peer-reviewed journal articles, scholarly books and edited volumes from recognised academic publishers were prioritised.

3.1. Theoretical Framework

The present study is based on Pierre Bourdieu's Theory of Capital and Symbolic Power, is reinforced by the Theory of the Public Sphere of Jürgen Habermas and the Theory of Voice Nick Couldry. These theories offer a rich framework to analyze the role of economic resources in the constitution of communicative involvement, credibility and recognition in ordinary talk. The study's main analytical framework is Bourdieu's theory. For Bourdieu (1986, 1991) economic capital is not just financial wealth but can be translated into cultural, social and symbolic forms of capital all of which have a role in an individual's ability to affect social interactions. The theory explains how those with more economic advantages are usually able to build more credibility, have better access to powerful networks and have more opportunity to impact discussions and public opinion. It also indicates that communication is enmeshed in current power dynamics, not a neutral exchange of ideas. This perspective is supplemented by Habermas's Theory of the Public Sphere (1989), which emphasises the significance of inclusive and rational dialogue in democratic societies. According to Habermas, public debate must give equal chances for citizens to participate in deliberation, regardless of their social status. Yet, economic and institutional inequities can impact contemporary communication environments in ways that limit equitable participation and make the public sphere less inclusive than the democratic ideal implies. The study also uses Couldry's Theory of Voice (2010) that sees voice as more than the ability to communicate. Voice, as defined by Couldry, is the socially legitimate capacity of people to tell their stories, to express their experiences and to participate meaningfully in the decisions that shape their lives. This view emphasises the difference between being permitted to talk and being listened to and appreciated for what one brings. The study combines various theoretical approaches to discuss the role of money as a source of communicative power that determines whose voices are heard, whose ideas are credible, and whose viewpoints inform ordinary speech, as well as an economic resource. The paradigm also offers a platform to propose strategies of communicative justice and a more inclusivity in interpersonal, institutional and digital communication.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1. Economic Capital, Credibility, and the Politics of Voice in Everyday Discourse

The primary argument to emerge from this conceptual study is that speech is neither evenly distributed or equally valued across society. Freedom of expression is usually considered a universal right in democratic cultures. But the ability to steer conversations, influence public opinion and have a genuine say in decision-making is highly dependent on access to economic resources. The literature continuously shows that money is not just a material resource but also a social mechanism that produces and sustains credibility, legitimacy, and communicative influence. The subject of 'who gets heard' cannot be fully grasped without understanding the relationship between economic inequality and the unequal distribution of communication power.

The communication scholarship has progressively been sceptical about the claim that the involvement in public discourse happens on equal terms. Rather, current scholars suggest, communication is interwoven in wider systems of social inequality. People come to talks with different amounts of economic capital, education, social networks, institutional recognition and cultural competence. These distinctions dramatically influence who gets to be heard, but also whose contributions are seen as authoritative, trustworthy or deserving of prolonged attention (Couldry, 2010; Fraser, 1990).

From this approach, ordinary conversation is not only an interchange of ideas but a venue where social inequities are formed, negotiated and sometimes resisted. Power structures that dictate who gets heard and who is silenced affect conversations in homes, businesses, schools, community organisations, and on-line spaces. Communication is not just something that happens outside social structures it often reproduces and reflects them.

One way to start to grasp this relationship is through Pierre Bourdieu's theory of capital. Bourdieu (1986) suggests that economic capital is just one dimension of social power. Material resources combine with cultural capital, social capital and symbolic capital to generate permanent systems of advantage much beyond financial prosperity. Those with more economic resources are more likely to afford higher education, develop social relationships that provide access to social influence and gain cultural capital that makes them more credible in public debates. These types of capital multiply one another over time, enabling some groups to become legitimate producers of knowledge and others to strive for recognition.

In this sense, voice itself might be seen as a type of symbolic force. Speech is more than stating a viewpoint. It entails societal acceptance that what you say is worthy of notice. Bourdieu (1991) suggests that much of the authority of language comes from the social position of the speaker, not from the quality of the message itself. Thus, same arguments may generate quite varied responses depending on the financial standing, institutional affiliation, or perceived prestige of the person making the argument. Thus, the authority of speech is socially constructed rather than objectively determined.

This concept helps to explain why economic privilege so often transfers into communicative impact across a wide spectrum of social circumstances. People are generally assumed to have better judgement if they have more money, career achievement, or institutional reputation, even when they are talking about subjects outside their formal expertise. People tend to pay more attention to their opinions because economic success is often seen as a sign of ability, intelligence and leadership. These beliefs are normalised via everyday interactions and ultimately become cultural expectations about who we should listen to.

The link between economic success and credibility is strengthened by broader social narratives which connect financial success with human excellence. Liberal market countries often emphasise entrepreneurship, professional achievement and wealth creation as markers of human potential. These stories are definitely inspiring for innovation and economic progress, but they risk creating the idea that financial success is a reflection of better knowledge or decision-making skills. Accordingly, economically disadvantaged people may have small communicative disadvantages that are loosely correlated to the quality of their thoughts.

This pattern resembles that of Habermas's (1989) analysis of the public realm. For Habermas, democratic communication is a process where citizens can engage in rational-critical debate, free from the interference of state or commercial interests. Ideally, the merit of arguments would be judged on the basis of their reasoned content rather than the social position of individuals advancing them. But even Habermas admitted that the historical development of capitalist societies was gradually blurring the divide between public discussion and economic power. Commercial interests, media concentration and unequal access to communication resources have influenced the conditions of public discourse. This has in turn limited the realisation of an inclusive public sphere.

Later scholars have built on this argument, claiming that structural inequalities mean that many persons are unable to participate on equal terms. According to Fraser (1990), the concept of a singular, unified public sphere fails to account for the ways that marginalised groups have traditionally been excluded from dominating places of communication. Economic disparity, gender, colour, ethnicity, and other forms of social stratification influence access to discourse much before the start of official participation. To this end, Fraser offers the notion of subaltern counterpublics, alternative communicative spaces in which marginalised people form common understandings of their experiences and voice views that are typically ignored in dominant discourse.

Fraser's reasoning has clear ramifications for the relation between money and voice. If the major public arenas are constituted disproportionately by the viewpoints of economically privileged actors, then communicative equality cannot be reached by the mere protection of freedom of speech. Instead, real involvement means engaging with the institutional and structural conditions

that decide whose speech gets to be seen in public, whose experiences are treated as valid evidence, and whose perspectives are the basis of collective decision-making.

Michel Foucault's theory of power and discourse further reinforces these theoretical perspectives. Foucault (1980) does not believe that power resides with governments or elites, but rather that it is dispersed throughout institutions, practices and systems of knowledge that determine what can be said legitimately, who is permitted to speak, and what knowledge is regarded as truthful. In this perspective communicative inequality is not a matter of individual prejudice but is ingrained in broader discursive frameworks that promote some voices and marginalise others.

These structures are typically made available by economic means. Wealth provides possibilities to gain prominent educational qualifications, join influential professional organisations, publish research, achieve media recognition, and hold positions from which one's views are seen as authoritative. The benefits add up, they don't stand alone. Once one is granted institutional legitimacy, opportunities for influence grow easier and easier to find, reinforcing the established hierarchies of voice.

This argument is further developed by Couldry (2010) who introduces the concept of voice as a human capacity and as a normative value. Voice, writes Couldry, is more than the capacity to speak. It is also the social conditions that allow people to tell their stories, to participate in collective decision-making, and to have their experiences regarded seriously. In modern cultures, chances for expression are frequently lauded, yet there is a tendency to overlook the unequal distribution of attention. They may have multiple channels of communication, but if institutions habitually prioritise certain narratives over others, then their power to shape public discourse is curtailed.

This contrast between speaking and being heard is especially important in modern democracies. Freedom of expression gives the legal right to express opinions, but not the right to have these beliefs taken seriously. Democratic inclusion is more than formal involvement, as Young (2000) says. It involves communicative practices that recognise difference, listen respectfully, and open up room for opinions that arise from different social experiences. Without such recognition, formal equality may exist alongside great inequalities of influence.

The dynamics play out in subtle but important ways in everyday interactions. In organisations, organisational hierarchies often prescribe conversational authority. In meetings, people at higher managerial levels tend to get heard more, and younger personnel may be less willing to offer other perspectives, especially when economic stability is tied to good relations with supervisors. This tendency is, in part, a function of organisational authority, but is also supported by broader cultural norms that equate income and knowledge with unequal participation. Same thing goes for families. The more money you bring in, the more say you have in what goes on in the family. Same thing goes for communities. The more economic power you have, the more likely you are to get a leadership role or a say in the community.

Not least, these inequalities of communication are seldom maintained by explicit control. More frequently, they are the result of ordinary actions such as selective attention, unequal appraisals of credibility, conversational interruptions, agenda shaping, and institutional gatekeeping. As people experience recognition or dismissal repeatedly over time, this will affect their willingness to participate in future talks. Those who are regularly affirmed are likely to develop more secure in speaking their minds, whereas those who are regularly ignored may progressively withdraw from the public sphere. In this way, the unequal distribution of voice becomes self-reinforcing, perpetuating broader patterns of social inequality throughout generations.

Overall, the evidence demonstrates that economic capital is not just a financial asset, but also a communicative resource that promotes visibility, legitimacy and influence. Therefore, the politics of voice is inseparable from the politics of inequality. Democratic societies that are committed to inclusive participation have to acknowledge that statutory rights cannot compensate for communication inequalities that are built into unequal distributions of economic, social and cultural capital. To understand who gets heard, we need to look beyond what is being said to the social mechanisms that decide whose voices become authoritative in everyday life.

5. Conclusion

The aim of this article was to investigate the link between money and voice in everyday conversation by examining the way in which economic resources affect opportunities of participation, recognition and influence in modern society. The analysis, using a conceptual synthesis of scholarship from communication studies, sociology, political theory and media studies, shows that voice is not simply an individual's ability to speak but a socially mediated form of power that is deeply shaped by economic, cultural and institutional factors. Freedom of expression is a core principle in democratic society but not everyone has equal access to having their ideas heard, valued and included in decision-making processes.

The discussion has demonstrated that economic capital includes not just literal wealth, but also access to education, professional networks, communication technology and institutional platforms that increase the credibility and visibility of individuals and groups. Drawing on Bourdieu, Habermas, Fraser, Foucault, Couldry and others, the study shows how communicative inequality is interwoven within wider systems of social stratification. Moreover, those with more economic resources are more likely to have better access to influence public narratives, institutional agendas, and garner attention across interpersonal, organisational, and digital contexts. Conversely, economically disadvantaged individuals typically experience obstacles that limit not only their participation but also the degree to which their ideas are acknowledged as valid.

The investigation also reveals the double-edged character of digital communication technology. On the one hand, digital platforms have broadened the prospects of involvement by lowering the conventional barriers to communication and allowing individuals to communicate their thoughts with greater audiences. Yet, these same platforms have also produced new forms of inequality via algorithmic curation, financial incentives, and unequal access to technology resources. The design of platforms, data-driven recommendation algorithms and the economic capacity to sustain online engagement increasingly shape the visibility of content and users in digital environments. Thus technological innovation has not eradicated inequalities in communication power but has changed the means by which such inequalities are formed and sustained.

A key contribution of this paper is the claim that discussions of inequality should not only focus on income, wealth and material living conditions, but should also include communicative opportunities. The ability to participate meaningfully in ordinary talk is an important facet of democratic participation because public talks impact collective understanding, social relationships, and policy outcomes. Repeatedly giving preference to some voices and excluding others diminishes the quality of democratic discourse and erodes the diversity of experience on which inclusive decision-making depends. The recognition of voice as a type of social power thus expands traditional conceptions of inequality, and offers a more comprehensive framework for analysing participation in contemporary societies.

The work also contributes to the literature by combining theoretical viewpoints that are generally studied independently. Bourdieu's capital and symbolic power concepts explain how economic resources become communicative authority, Habermas's theory of the public sphere stresses the importance of inclusive deliberation, Fraser's idea of subaltern counterpublics points to the communicative experiences of marginalised groups, Foucault's analysis of discourse reveals how institutions define legitimate knowledge, and Couldry's theory of voice emphasises the importance of recognition in democratic life. Combining these viewpoints provides a more nuanced understanding of the intricate relationship between money and speech and shows that communicative inequality is both a structural and relational reality.

While this study is conceptual, it provides a basis for future empirical research. Future research could examine the effects of economic inequality on communicative participation in various cultural settings, analyse voice patterns in digital and face-to-face environments, or study the experiences of particular social groups whose voices are under-represented in public discourse. Mixed-methods and longitudinal research may also offer useful insights into the ways in which economic changes impact communicative behaviours throughout time. Further comparative research across rich and developing nations could enhance knowledge of the interaction between institutional, cultural and technological elements and economic resources in shaping everyday communication.

In practical terms, the results demonstrate that communicative inclusion cannot be achieved simply by safeguarding the legal right of free expression. Governments, educational institutions, media organisations, civil society groups and digital platform providers all have vital roles in building environments where various perspectives can engage on more equitable terms. Measures that increase access to excellent education, minimise digital inequalities, strengthen media diversity, encourage transparent platform governance, and promote inclusive deliberative processes might help eliminate communicative disparities. Such efforts are vital not only for promoting democratic engagement but also for ensuring that public discourse represents the diversity of experiences and opinions in contemporary society.

In the end, the question of who is heard is inseparable from bigger questions of power, justice, and social equality. Democratic institutions or communication technology do not automatically distribute voice. Voice is conditioned by the economic and social contexts within which communication takes place. To confront disparities of voice, then, needs ongoing attention to the conditions that enable individuals and communities to participate meaningfully in the debates that shape their lives. In foregrounding voice as a core characteristic of social inequality, this research contributes to existing discussions on democracy, communication, and justice and provides a conceptual foundation for future research on the politics of ordinary discourse.

5.1. Recommendations

Governments, educational institutions, media organizations and digital platform providers should establish policies that encourage inclusive and equitable communication by ensuring that various viewpoints are represented in public conversation. Awareness campaigns should highlight the need for identifying and correcting communicative inequities connected with economic status. encourage participatory spaces where ideas are judged based on their quality and not the social or economic status of individuals who propose it. There should also be efforts to expand access to excellent education, digital technology and communication platforms to decrease obstacles for economically disadvantaged people to participate meaningfully in everyday conversation.

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Contribution: To understand the impact of economic disparity on communication and involvement in contemporary society, we must understand who is heard in ordinary speech. Relationship between money and voice can help to understand the role of economic resources in building credibility, access to communication platforms, social recognition and influence in interpersonal, institutional and digital contexts. which linguistic disparities are formed and maintained in everyday interactions, reproducing pre-existing social and economic inequities. These dynamics, the study contributes to ongoing debates on democratic participation and communicative justice and social inclusion, while advocating for more equitable communication environments in which individuals are valued the merit of their ideas rather than for their economic status.

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