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AI Voice Technologies and the Politics of Human-Machine Communication: A Neo-Political Perspective

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Abstract

The language of artificial intelligence (AI), the ability of AI systems to generate speech sounding natural due to technologies that partially generate speech, including text-to-speech (TTS) and voice synthesis, has become a revolutionary part of human-computer interaction in the modern, rapidly changing digital environment. In addition to technical possibilities, AI voice recognition is becoming more influential in the development of how people interact with information, power, and the decision-making process. The neo-political approach is an interesting avenue to critically evaluate such developments. Such a view transcends the orthodox ideological demarcations and is rather about the convergences of digital media, globalization, identity politics, and networked power politics. It is more than a neutral interface, and according to a neo-political perspective, AI is engaged in the creation of political and cultural meaning. Voice-enabled AI systems are made with assumptions of gender, class, and authority, which are often based on the interests of the institutions and corporations that create them. In that regard, AI vocalization helps subtly reconfigure a power structure, affecting citizen-citizen and citizen-system interactions, as well as the digital systems mediating the lives of the population. With the growing prevalence of these technologies, human and machine communication is becoming unclear, raising significant ethical and political concerns. The political implications of AI voice technology are not a mere theoretical issue because they serve as the key to the promotion of transparent, inclusive, and democratic governance in the digitally mediated world. One of the ways to unveil these concealed concepts is the application of neo-political analysis, which indicates the immediate necessity of critical participation and control.

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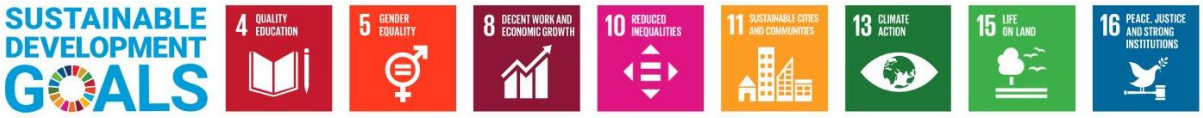

1. Introduction

As AI was gradually beginning to talk on behalf of institutions, in plain English, it means the ability of artificial intelligence systems to produce or recreate speech like that of a human being through synthesized voice technologies, which involves an array of processes, including text-to-speech (TTS) synthesis, voice cloning, and emotion-conscious speech modulation, and is the foundation of interface of many voice-driven AI systems such as digital assistants, chatbots, automated news anchors, accessibility devices, and political messaging, where vocal outputs gain symbolic power. In the view of neo-politics, AI vocalization presents a center of algorithmic authority, where individuals are listened to, and where individuals are heard, and where credibility is determined (Couldry & Mejias, 2023; Mphathisi Ndlovu, 2024). Jurafsky and Martin (2023) indicate that the practice of AI vocalization is possible by transforming phonemic and prosodic written or spoken input to the deep learning model, such as, Tacotron and WaveNet, which produce high-quality and naturalistic speech (Jurafsky and Martin, 2023, p. 711). Not only can these systems replicate natural human patterns of speech, but also replicate certain speakers, certain emotional tones and dialects; "The objective of speech synthesis is to create intelligible and natural-sounding speech based on text" (Jurafsky and Martin, 2023, p. 707). According to the report penned down by Sonali Acharjee,

> Vidhushi Dalmia, 58, says the oddity of her 88-year-old mother, a dementia patient, spending all her time conversing with a voice assistant has faded. "It helps her stay active. An instance is that her Alexa device, being an AI, recalls her favourite songs after she herself has forgotten them, says the homemaker from Delhi. Similarly, for Varun Nathvani, 28, his voice assistant serves as a wingman, helping him write poems for his girlfriend and sort out his professional crises. "I have to ask my device – 'tell me how to convince my father that I didn't damage the car' or 'can you write a love poem about loyalty' or 'if I don't pass my UPSC exams, what should I do'". Nathvani says he has shared a lot about himself and the people in his life with the device. "Now it reasons through all that and gives me answers. I would rather be without a home than my voice assistant", says Nathvani, a student from Mumbai who uses the ChatGPT-powered Siri on his iPhone. (Acharjee, 2025)

2. The voice of authority and the impersonal institution

AI voice cloning applications have demonstrated a disturbing capacity to produce authentic sound of prominent personalities giving misleading speeches. In a study, 80 percent of the tests created convincing voice replicas of political leaders and that would present significant threats to electoral integrity (Tests find AI tools readily create election lies using the voices of well-known political leaders, 2024). The examples illustrate how institutional credibility can be imitated by synthetic vocal authority and disseminate lies.

2.1. Neo-political Governmentality and Voice Surveillance

In 2019, C. Katzenbach and L. Ulbricht argue that the conflict of the binaries, optimist and pessimist visionaries, has sparked considerable debate of "the integration of AI" into the socio-political landscape (Katzenbach & Ulbricht, 2019; Saetra, 2021, p. 29). The systems of voice synthesis and voice recognition normally encode the presumptions of the standard language, a bias rooted in the Western, white, normative patterns. A technology-driven voice conformity is indicated by automated tone analysis that employs the phrase only works best with American

English (A New Lexicon: Voice, 2021). In effect, this will make speakers conform to standardized speech, which will exclude those with the so-called accented English (Lawrence, 2021, pp. 179-180).

Although it was formulated scientifically or neutrally, Michel Foucault (1980) conceptualized it as biopolitical control, the management of populations on the basis of the regulation and division of life itself. Once the voice is detached and removed from the body, broken into information, and evaluated as a point of origin, identity becomes diminished to a sound file, and one loses control over their own narration. According to Foucault, power would cease to be concerned with legal subjects only but with living beings and their biological attributes (Foucault M., 1980, p. 143).

The fact that AI vocalization and migration governance converge shows that there is so much colonialism in voice-based technologies. This is especially vividly evident in the field of voice analysis in asylum practices, where voice patterns, intonation, and even phonemes undergo algorithms that define the nationality or the region of origin of a person. This practice has also been vividly revealed in a project by Lebanese-British artist and researcher Lawrence Abu Hamdan, who through his work titled The Freedom of Speech Itself, (2012) investigates the idea of the use of accent tests as a forensic method by the United Kingdom in asylum hearings. In this case, the right to safety or refuge of a person depends on his or her compliance with the algorithmically determined national or ethnic expectations in her pronunciation. According to Hamdan himself, the voice is some sort of a biometric passport, an inclusion or exclusion brand (Abu Hamdan, 2012).

Further, the implementation of these technologies replicates colonial reasoning whereby, historically Western states identified and dominated colonized populations by extraction of physical, language and cultural identifiers. The voice analysis of AI is a digital continuation of this tradition - it turns asylum seekers into sound data points and reduces the diversity of diasporic identities. The AI Now Institute (2021) cautions that voice and accent recognition technologies tend to publish the existing disparities and makes decisions guided by subjective assumptions regarding what could be considered linguistic regularity (A New AI Lexicon: Voice, 2021). Such systems hardly consider aspects such as multilinguality, traumas of displacement or linguistic hybridity that are deeply embedded in the lives of most asylum seekers. Put simply, a voice, which was a means of self-expression, is now a place of judgment and surveillance. It ceases to be the medium in which one speaks, but the thing in which one is spoken of, classified, and it may be chucked out.

The majority of default AI voices are constructed based on phonetic databases of the representation of the Anglo-American linguistic norm and convey empathy, professionalism, or authority in relation to norms adopted in the Western, patriarchal, and corporate setting (Lawrence, 2021, pp. 178-180). It turns into a techno-linguistic imperialism, where the imposition of what qualifies as a proper or intelligent voice is done in a more subtle manner. In a recent empirical case study, Zimbabwean audiences felt discomfort and cultural disassociation when introduced to an AI-generated news anchor, that is, a voice with a British accent. The name of the newscast anchor was Alice, and she had no idea how to pronounce the local Shona names (Mphathisi Ndlovu, 2024). The reactions of the audience indicated that AI was no longer welcome due to its robotic condition, but its colonial tones demonstrated that even non-human voices make it possible to repeat geopolitical hierarchies. It should not

become the voice of its previous colonizers, who have become the voice of AI in Africa (Mphathisi Ndlovu, 2024).

2.2. Gender, Race, and Vocal Hegemony

AI voice technologies, especially digital assistants, such as Siri, Alexa, and Google Assistant, are not mere practical technologies. They are cultural objects, encoded with gender, racial, and power presuppositions. The accumulating literature and institutional research inform the perpetuation of gendered subservience and racial prejudice into these systems, which strengthen social hierarchies with sound. Among the most quoted accounts on this issue is the one by UNESCO (2019) titled I'd Blush If I Could after a programmed reply of Siri, Apple's personal assistant, to sexually inappropriate remarks by users. The report is critical of the application of the female-sounding voices as a default in the AI assistants, stating that they imply an appearance of a digitally coded servility (UNESCO, 2019, p. 5). Such voices are meant to be helpful, polite, and deferential, which, since the code of being feminine in patriarchal societies, by making AI assistants female by default, companies reinforce ingrained notions of women as obliging, docile, and eager-to-please helpers (UNESCO, 2019, p. 5).

This gendered vocal design not only expresses aesthetics but also has an influence on perception and behaviour. Research indicates that users are, more frequently, prone to give orders and demonstrate anger with female-rooted assistants, which reflects gender relations in reality (West, Kraut, and Chew, 2019). The way AI voices are designed is therefore symptomatic of reproducing the power relationships already in place, conditioning the user to respond to femininity by obeying and emotionally labouring.

Other than gender, the other aspect of vocal hegemony is racial bias in AI voice systems, specifically in automatic speech recognition (ASR). A study conducted by Koenecke et al. (2020) reported that the word error rate of major ASR systems (Google, Apple, Amazon, and IBM) was almost twice in Black speakers as in white speakers; "The mean word error rate was 35% in black speakers and 19% in white speakers across all systems" (Koenecke, et al., 2020). This disparity is what media theorist Jonathan Sterne (2021) describes as the sonic coloniality privilege of some voices and accents as being considered as neutral or intelligent and marginalizing the rest as being unintelligible or mistaken. Within this framework, voice is an inclusion / exclusion filter in line with historical patterns of racial and linguistic hierarchies; voice interfaces are not universal, but racialized and gendered constructs (Sterne, 2021, p. 13).

Therefore, AI vocal systems are not just the imitation of speech; they are the imitation of power. This is because gendered servility, coupled with racial misrecognition, adds up to the effect of putting some users, particularly women and blacks, in a subordinate or non-recognized status quo, in their interrelationship with machines. Such technologies are not only talking about social prejudice, but also the tones, the accents, and the mistakes they make or the mistakes they do not.

2.3. Democratic Foolhardiness and Demon Anabaptism

Deepfake voice increases political misinformation. Saturated by micro-targeted propaganda, AI systems destroy the accountability of democracy by distorting the voter perception and eroding truth as an object of mutuality (Nye, 2024). Liturgical discourse is undermined when false statements are spread through reputable voices, such as in the Mass.

> ChatGPT launched the GenAI boom at the end of 2022. Based on media and IT platform, Inc42, the market of GenAI in India is expected to exceed 17 billion (Rs 1.47 lakh crore)

> by 2030, compared to 1.1 billion (Rs 9,522 crore) in 2023, with a CAGR (compound annual growth rate) of 48 per cent. According to a survey of the 92,000 Indians in 309 districts by the community social media platform Local Circles in 2025, one in every two Indians uses GenAI platforms. (Acharjee, 2025)

AI voice content is an extremely effective type of neo-political weapon used by politicians. At the beginning of 2024, the Center against Digital Hate (CCDH) established that several AI-based tools could easily be used to create audio videos of key political figures, including Joe Biden, Donald Trump, and Rishi Sunak, propagating election disinformation. This points to the end of textual propaganda and the rise of sonic propaganda, which capitalizes on the reality we subconsciously place on an unknown face.

> It is not entirely clear whether the advancement of the AI-based technologies will lead to the radical change of the current political paradigm and facilitate the transition toward the Direct Democracy or other unpredictable practice of political engagement. We cannot tell what may be the potentially harmful effects of their dispersion. Nevertheless, it appears obvious that AI technology can and must be implemented to allow more diffused versions of political involvement, giving citizens more control over the running of the government. (Savaget, Chiarini, & Evans, 2018, p. 378)

It is difficult to exaggerate the emotional effect of listening to a familiar voice. Unlike other textual misinformation, vocal deepfakes capitalize on para-social intimacy, the cognitive proximity humans have with mediated personalities. Political AI voice clones increase the undermining of a common reality, which Nye cautions against in her post-truth situation, where trust is no longer tied to truth (Nye, 2024, p. 15). The edge between voice and vote is frighteningly vulnerable as AI vocal systems get bigger, like the scandalous example of AI robocalls in U.S. primaries; when AI says it, and it sounds real, voters do not simply read it, they believe it. The manipulation is realized in the voice" (Nye, 2024, p. 16).

3. AI Ethics: Vocalisation and Inclusivity

> The point of ethics of the tech companies to implement privacy through their design principles and assurance of robust data protection measures is humongous. In digital relationships, “informed consent” is crucial and raises concerns regarding consumers' comprehension of how their data is used. In order to promote fairness and explainability, AI systems, algorithmic accountability and transparency are crucial. (Bhagra, 2025, p. 19)

Although it is just to criticize the reproduction of race, gender, and class hierarchies in AI vocalization, a neo-political approach cannot help but deal with the prospects of resistance and reclaiming as well. Voice technologies do not always have to be oppressive; they can be redesigned to incorporate more equitable, inclusive and pluralistic values. This necessitates a re-evaluation of not only the data that is being used to train the vocal systems, but also of the epistemologies, communities and ethics that inform their development.

Multilingual, Culturally Situated Voice Models are the voice systems that are multilingual and reflect the multilingual nature of the world. Most commercial AI systems are trained unbalanced on English, especially on North American or British English, and other languages and dialects do not become intelligible or are not well-performing. The speech tools are being

based on African languages, accents, and cultures, as Masakhane (considering African languages NLP) and Vambo AI are under development; We are not just localizing global technologies, we are building on our own linguistic realities (Strengthening African languages in NLP, 2023).

These are not limited to inclusion as a token gesture. They seek linguistic justice where they understand that linguistic data is not data but a location of cultural identity, memory and power. Neutral and Queer Vowel Choices have been used instead of male or female stereotyped voices, in AI interfaces to criticize the gender norms. Developers have, in turn, responded by developing other vocalities that dismantle the binary. One of the most notable ones is the development of a (gender-neutral) voice of AI named "Q", which was developed by Virtue Nordic, Copenhagen Pride, and Equal AI. "Q" was trained on audio of 'non', and 'trans' people and acoustically tuned to live in the range of traditionally male and female frequencies; Q is everyone who has ever felt that technology has not addressed them. It is a voice that questions the way society generates gender" (Virtue-Nordic, 2019). These interventions are a form of queer techno-politics, which critique the defaults of gendering machines. According to them, voice is not a biological category; it is a flexible social and cultural category.

Participatory Design and Community-Led datasets are also the most transformative solution, where marginalized communities are not only the sources of data but also voice technology creators. Instead of obtaining voices of underrepresented groups, ethical systems engage them in dataset management, model assessment, and deployment management. This is what Mohamed, Png and Isaac (2020) describe as the so-called sociotechnical foresight, the act of predicting the social implications of AI technology and proactively designing towards justice. They claim that the ethics of AI should be shifted off the abstract ideals to the material redistribution of voice, power, and design authority: "The decolonial AI work is not to make extractive systems more diverse, but to remake systems altogether through inclusion as process, rather than outcome (Mohamed, Png, and Isaac, 2020).

4. Critiques and Resistance

Although AI vocalization technology has attracted considerable praise over the past few years due to its efficiency and realism, more scholars and practitioners working in AI ethics and decolonial studies are of the view that such systems are replicative and not transcendent of hierarchies of power in the world. The central question in this criticism is: whose voice is AI taught to imitate, and whose voices are lost in the process?

4.1. Rejection of the Western Vocal Dominance

The voice AIs that most companies have commercially released, including Siri and Alexa, are trained on phonetic data guided by Western and Anglo-American speech patterns, and commonly use standardized English with explicit class, race, and gender overtones (Sterne, 2021). This normativity is an expression of what decolonial scholars regard as epistemic injustice, in which a single worldview, in this case, the Western, corporate, male-coded one, is perceived as the universal one.

In response, Mohamed, Png, and Isaac (2020) suggest that AI development practices will undergo radical change. They coined the term "reverse tutelage", a process through which the marginalized communities are turned into teachers and not the learners when it comes to

developing technology. This will not only involve gathering data on these communities, but these communities in all levels of system architecture, system ethics, and system deployment; in fact, instead of AI being imposed on the marginalized communities, reverse tutelage requires them to teach the system, socially, linguistically, and structurally (Mohamed, Png, and Isaac, 2020).

4.2. Grassroots Resistance: Zimbabwe Case

Not only is opposition to the vocal hegemony of AI a theoretical concept, but it also emerges among users who reject new technologies that fail to reflect the linguistic or cultural realities of their world. Mphathisi Ndlovu, a Zimbabwean media scholar, examined how audiences responded to an AI-generated newsreader with a British accent, named Alice, in 2024. Alice's mispronunciation of "Shona" names and tonal dissonance immediately alienated viewers, as the voice was seen as not advanced or global, but colonial; the voice claiming to represent Zimbabwe was not Zimbabwean (Mphathisi Ndlovu, 2024). This episode can be viewed as an instance of sonic resistance which is a kind of ordinary politics that is used by users to resist technologies that threaten their lingual autonomy. The kickback is not merely an accent, but it is a sovereignty of sound and representation.

4.3. Genderless Voices and Sonic Counter-Politics

Along the same lines as racial and regional criticism, gender norms in AI voices have also become the focus of criticism. The voice assistants are over-representing female-sounding roles, which contributes to the stereotypes of women being servants, polite, and always available, which are years old (UNESCO, 2019). Designers and activists have reacted to this challenge by making non-binary and queer voice options.

The case in point is "Q", the first genderless voice in the world, created by a coalition consisting of Copenhagen Pride and Virtue Nordic. "Q" is the space between the male and female voice frequencies, and it was conditioned to contradict the binary expectations of the voice; "Q" is not merely a voice, it is a protest. It is one thing that technology is not supposed to recreate the very norms that we are attempting to reverse" (Virtue-Nordic, 2019). The projects of that kind are examples of what Sterne (2021) refers to as the "sonic counter-politics the intentional reengineering of sound to disturb the hegemonic norms. The auditory realms have been a battlefield of inclusive design, identity affirmation, and, by extension, activism, just as visual culture has been throughout history. Theoretical criticism of daily struggle, the vocal hegemony movement in AI points out a bigger requirement of vocal justice, the privilege to be heard in the right way and respectfully in their own voice. With the growing role of AI systems in the sphere of discourse, education, and governance, the concept of their ethical pluralism and participatory foresight is no longer a choice, it is a necessity.

5. Conclusions and Future Projections

The vocalization of AI is at an extremely important junction of the evolving techno-political field that combines algorithmic authority, emotional manipulation, and socio-linguistic control. It is no longer an enabler, a tool, or a interface, synthetic voice is now a potent cultural actor: it speaks on our behalf as well as sometimes in our place, representing the politics of speech, recognition, and identity: "Now, these new voice-enabled assistants are mediating between

that body of knowledge and a human on the other side," says Prasanto K. Roy, vice president at NASSCOM (National Association of Software and Service Companies) (Acharjee, 2025). Voice is a site of contestation along with the site of becoming an automated and authorship site. The fact that voice AI can now easily mimic the subtlety of emotions, imitate actual human speech, and share content on a large scale similarly requires its re-evaluation within the realm of popular discussion:

> There are concerns too. First of all, among young people those spend so much time with voice assistants. Children should not learn to feel human attachment and emotion towards such technologies. Abhishek Bhatnagar is the founder and editor of the Twitter account, @gadgetstouse, and says that there should be a disclaimer that you are speaking to a computer program. (Acharjee, 2025)

Mohamed, Png, and Isaac argue that AI should not be seen as a neutral infrastructure and should be viewed as political actors rather than neutral ones, systems that entrench, uphold or disrupt established power dynamics based on how it is constructed and managed; Voice AI must not be regulated by technical standards or efficiency measures, morality, inclusivity and democratic responsibility should shape it (Mohamed, Png, and Isaac, 2020). In this regard, new studies and regulations should be rigorous in doubting questions at the core, such as:

- Who builds voice models, and which voices are used?

The proprietorship and authorship of voice data is mostly obscure. Tech giants usually use voices collected through these methods to train their models without having strong consent, which prioritizes Western linguistic standards (UNESCO, 2019; Sterne, 2021).

- How do you think auditory consent is tangible in the era of voice cloning?

It should be considered that, what constitutes permission in voice reproduction, as AI-generated voices seem nearly authentic. Laws should be adjusted to establish and safeguard the sonic autonomy, the right to own the use of voice, transformation and dissemination of it (OpenAI, 2024).

- Is it possible to create AI, that would be a listening machine, which would be accountable and equitable?

An ethical voice system should not only be constructed so that it is able to speak clearly, but it should also be in a position to listen to its context, language, and lived realities so that it is able to understand what the communities are expecting. A collaborative design framework run by marginalised individuals as well as others would provide a fresh approach to relational AI systems that acknowledge and represent social diversity and balance.

Finally, such politics of voice in AI include speed and clarity along with who speaks, how they speak, and the values they convey; this is being ignored, which turns technology into a tool and speech into just sound. However, being critical allows space for AI that is not necessarily imitating humanity but co-evolving with humanity in a morally and responsibly accountable way.

The use of AI vocalization is not a neutral development but instead a political gesture that may strengthen or weaken the power system. Voice is a conflicted terrain that we need to revise by asking the question, to which voice is given prominence, which voice is silenced, and to what purpose. Justice Gavai, who will become the next Chief Justice of India in May, told the newspaper that AI integration, however, must go at a slow pace. It should be a supplement

and not a substitute for the human mind and judgment" (Rajagopal, 2025). Though AI is reported to enhance various politically important decision-making processes, such a statement is premised on two controversial assumptions, according to Henrik Skaug Saetra. It is assumed first that some political issues can be described as technical and, hence, considered as objects of optimised performances with minimal political connotations. This disregards the impact of all political activities on the distribution of a broad spectrum of both benefits and detriments, and therefore is both a moral and a political problem per se. Second, it is true that taking humans out of the equation will improve the lone judgment, whereas doing so will also wipe out the huge advantages of having people actively playing politics. The inclusive design, regulation, and decolonial solidarity should be redefined as a political voice for AI to ensure that all voices are amplified equally by voice technologies.

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