Original Paper

A Study of Language Harmony and Language Conflict in the Chengdu-Chongqing APP-Based Ride-Hailing Industry from the Perspective of Linguistic Ecology Ethics

Zhongwei Gan[1]

[1] School of Foreign Languages, Chongqing Jiaotong University, Chongqing, China

Abstract

In the new development stage, the language conflicts and harmony within the public service sector have garnered increased attention, with the State Language Commission closely monitoring enhancements in language competency in this field. The online car-hailing industry, as a vital component of the urban integrated transportation system, serves both as a functional complement to public transportation and as a window into the city's image. The use of language within this industry, as a key measure of service quality, directly impacts its sustainable development and service optimization. Drawing on data collected from ride-hailing experiences in the Chengdu-Chongqing region, examining the phenomena of language harmony and language conflict in the local industry from the perspective of linguistic ecology ethics. It analyzes specific manifestations of language harmony and language conflict with the goal of reducing language conflicts, improving service quality, and fostering a harmonious language environment that supports the industry's sustainable development.

Keywords

linguistic ecology ethics, ecological niche of discourse, language harmony, language conflict, online car-hailing industry

1. Introduction

Language harmony and language conflict are two opposing concepts. Language harmony refers to the use of language that is friendly, appropriate, and respectful in interpersonal communication, serving as a manifestation of social harmony (Bang, 2014). In contrast, language conflict denotes discord or

disputes in communication arising from differences in opinion, as a reflection of social conflict (He, 2009).

Currently, the language environment in China is generally harmonious. However, as the influence of language expands across various sectors, the rapid evolution of language use has also led to occasional language conflicts (Li, 2017; Li, 2023). Among these, language conflicts and harmony within the public service sector, particularly in transportation, have garnered widespread attention, with an increasing focus on enhancing language proficiency (Zhang & Liu, 2022). As a critical component of public services, the public transportation sector serves as a vital window into a city's image. Ride-hailing services, as part of the taxi platform, not only form an integral part of the city's overall transportation system but also serve as an important supplement to public transport. Data from the ride-hailing regulatory interaction system, covering orders from January 2023 to October 2024 (see Figure 1), shows a steady increase in order volume. However, in recent years, frequent language conflicts between drivers and passengers have led to multiple traffic accidents, sparking widespread public concern.

However, there is a notable lack of linguistic research on the ride-hailing industry in the Chengdu-Chongqing region. Given the region's significant strategic position in Western China, this study focuses on the Chengdu-Chongqing ride-hailing industry as an observational window. By analyzing data collected during actual ride experiences, this research identifies phenomena of language harmony and conflict within the industry from the perspective of linguistic ecology ethics. It further explores the specific manifestations of both harmony and conflict, offering insights to promote the healthy, sustainable, and high-quality development of the ride-hailing industry in the Chengdu-Chongqing region.
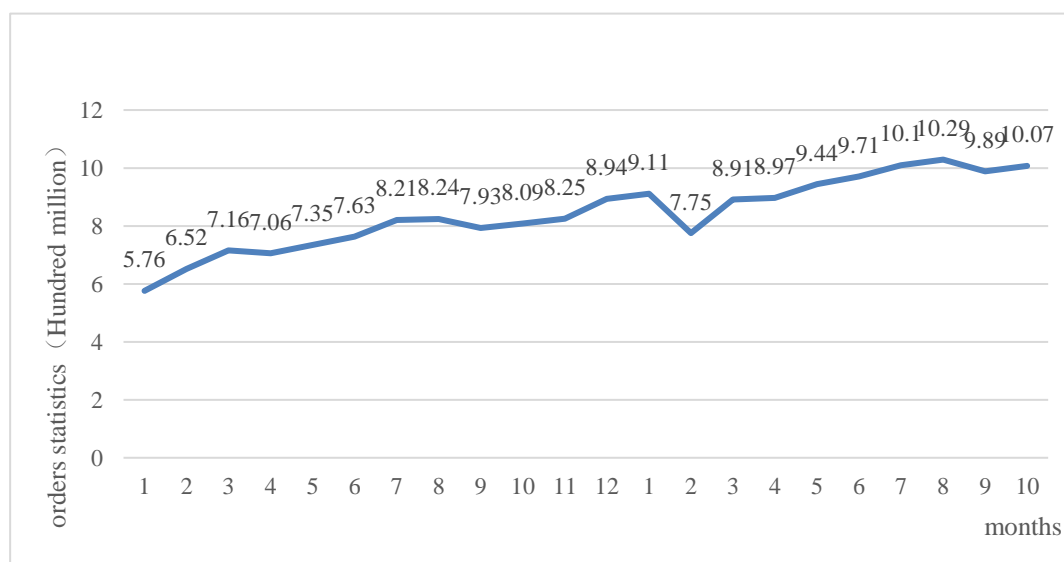

Figure 1. Order Data Statistics of the Ride-hailing Regulatory Interaction System from January 2023 to October 2024

2. The Linguistic Ecology Ethics and the Ecological Niche of Discourse

Since the 1970s, as global ecological issues have intensified and ecological awareness has grown, ecolinguistics has emerged as a new discipline, attracting attention from scholars across various fields (Ha, 2023; He & Gao, 2020). Its research scope encompasses not only the impact of the environment on the survival and development of languages (Haugen, 1972), but also the influence of language on the ecological environment (Halliday, 1990). Ecolinguistics emphasizes that language is not an isolated structural system but is embedded in dynamic interaction with its environment, urging a reevaluation of language from the perspective of its ecological context. As a result, eco-linguistic research has increasingly exhibited a transdisciplinary nature, integrating insights from ecology, ethics, linguistics, and sociology (He, 2018; He & Wei, 2018; Huang, 2022).

Influenced by the transdisciplinary nature of ecolinguistics worldwide, Chinese scholars have also begun to integrate ecolinguistics with other disciplines to expand its theoretical framework and address a broader range of issues. A notable example is Professor Pan Shisong's intersection of ecolinguistics and ethics, which led to the concept of "linguistic ecology ethics." This concept was first introduced in his paper *Theoretical Basis and Practicality for the Concept of Linguistic Eco-ethics*, where the core idea is a multidimensional analysis of disharmonious elements in social language. Pan argues that the emergence, development, acquisition, and use of language—whether at the group or individual level—are inherently tied to moral considerations, and discussions of linguistic ecological issues cannot be separated from ethical concerns (Pan, 2013, p. 146).

Subsequently, scholars such as Pan Shisong, Yang Bin, Zeng Dan, and Wang Guiliang have collaboratively refined the concepts of linguistic ecology ethics. They have provided a comprehensive discussion on the theoretical foundations, practical possibilities, necessities, and prerequisites of the concept, as well as its nature, principles, and normative aspects. They argue that guiding and regulating social language has become one of the pressing challenges in building a harmonious linguistic ecological civilization and conducting linguistic research. In this context, the perspective of linguistic ecology ethics can serve as a key to addressing these issues (Pan & Zheng, 2018).

A key concept in the perspective of linguistic ecology ethics is the ecological niche of discourse. Borrowed from ecology, this concept reinterprets the notion of a species' ecological niche and is an ecological metaphor applied by linguistic ecologists to terms such as "niche," "habitat," and "support system" (Bang, 2014; Mühlhäusler, 2017). The ecological niche of discourse refers to the "residence" or "habitat" of discourse, indicating the extent or range within which a discourse is tolerated or can "survive" (Pan, 2013, p. 147). Pan Shisong expanded the concept of the discourse ecological niche by introducing the concept of political science terminology, further categorizing deviations from this niche into three manifestations: "absence," "misalignment," and "transgression" (Pan, 2013, p. 148). According to Pan, "absence" occurs when the speaker fails to express the intended content accurately or sufficiently, resulting in vague or inadequate expression. "Misalignment" refers to discourse that is out of place, where the speaker's words are disconnected from the current context or use expressions

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that are not typical in the given discourse ecological niche. "Transgression" involves the speaker saying things that should not be said, sometimes even crossing ethical boundaries of discourse. This includes unclear self-positioning, language overstepping, and making inappropriate or immoral evaluations of others' identities.

3. The Ecological Niche of Discourse in the Chengdu-Chongqing Ride-hailing Industry

Based on the concept of the "ecological niche of discourse," the discourse ecological niche within the Chengdu-Chongqing ride-hailing industry refers to the language expressions that ride-hailing drivers must adhere to according to national and local industry standards. These include national regulations such as the *Specification for taxi operation service* and *Specification for app-based ride-hailing operation service*, as well as local regulations such as the *Interim measures for the administration of app-based ride-hailing services in Chongqing* and the *Specification for taxi operation services in Chengdu*. These documents not only standardize the language expressions used by drivers but also define the compliance boundaries for their language behavior. In other words, they outline the tolerance limits and survival scope for the language used by ride-hailing drivers. Key excerpts from these provisions are shown in Table 1.

Based on the regulations that constitute the discourse ecological niche, it is clear that within this niche, the language expressions of drivers are permitted. However, deviation from this range can lead to the "absence," "misalignment," and "transgression" described by Pan, resulting in conflicts between drivers and passengers and causing language conflicts. In this sense, "absence," "misalignment," and "transgression" can be seen as specific manifestations of language conflicts, while the corresponding situation that aligns with the discourse ecological niche can be referred to as "congruence", which represents a manifestation of language harmony.

Moreover, based on Pan's definitions of "absence," "misalignment," and "transgression," and combined with the ecological niche of discourse in the ride-hailing industry, it can be observed that "absence" deviates from five key regulatory standards, including: "*Can speak Mandarin, but can use local dialects or foreign languages according to the passenger's needs*," "*Service language should be standardized and accurate, polite and courteous. During service, the tone should be calm, expressions should be clear, volume should be moderate, and speaking speed should be appropriate*," "*The driver should enthusiastically and patiently answer the passengers' questions*," "*After successfully booking a ride, the driver should proactively confirm the pick-up time, location, and other details with the passenger. For immediate ride services, the driver should also inform the passenger of their current location and the estimated time of arrival*," and "*Based on the order information, the driver should arrive at the pick-up location at the agreed time and wait for the passenger in a designated parking area. The driver should also proactively contact the passenger to confirm both parties' identities*."

"Misalignment" deviates from two standards, including: "*Drivers should not interrupt when passengers are talking*," and "*Smoking is not allowed inside the vehicle, and drivers are prohibited from making or receiving phone calls while driving.*"

"Transgression" also deviates from two standards, namely: "*Drivers should not engage in uncivilized behavior or use inappropriate language*" and "*Uncivilized language is prohibited during operations.*"

Table 1. National and Local Ride-hailing Industry Standards

Documents	Standard regulations
Specification for taxi operation service	"Can speak Mandarin, but can use local dialects or foreign languages according to the passenger's needs."
	"Service language should be standardized and accurate, polite and courteous. During service, the tone should be calm, expressions should be clear, volume should be moderate, and speaking speed should be appropriate."
	"The driver should enthusiastically and patiently answer the passengers' questions."
	"Drivers should not interrupt when passengers are talking."
	"Drivers should not engage in uncivil behavior or use inappropriate language."
Specification for app-based ride-hailing operation service	"After successfully booking a ride, the driver should proactively confirm the pick-up time, location, and other details with the passenger. For immediate ride services, the driver should also inform the passenger of their current location and the estimated time of arrival."
	"Based on the order information, the driver should arrive at the pick-up location at the agreed time and wait for the passenger in a designated parking area. The driver should also proactively contact the passenger to confirm both parties' identities."
Specification for taxi operation services in Chengdu	"Smoking is not allowed inside the vehicle, and drivers are prohibited from making or receiving phone calls while driving."
	"Uncivil language is prohibited during operations."
Interim measures for the administration of app-based ride-hailing services in Chongqing	"Must not violate national relevant operational service standards."

4. The Analysis of Language Harmony and Language Conflict in Chengdu-Chongqing Ride-hailing Industry

4.1 Language Harmony

Language harmony, referred to as "congruence," exhibits hierarchical distinctions based on the collected data. It can be further categorized into "strong congruence," "moderate congruence," and "weak congruence," reflecting varying levels of harmony in linguistic interactions.

4.1.1 Strong Congruence

Strong congruence represents the highest level of "congruence." This category of driver language expression strictly adheres to the national and industry standards regarding service language for drivers. It appropriately employs polite expressions and actively offers passengers advice and recommendations concerning personal and property safety. For example:

(1) 司机："安全带系好噢。"

[D: *Fasten your seatbelt.*]

(2) 司机："坐稳了哈。"

[D: *Sit tight.*]

(3) 司机："好，慢走哈，东西拿好哈。"

[D: *Alright, take care, make sure you have your things.*]

(4) 司机："注意看车。"

[D: *Watch out for the passing cars.*]

Service phrases such as *Fasten your seatbelt*, *make sure you have your things* and *watch out for the passing cars* fall under the standardized expressions outlined in national and industry regulations. These phrases reflect the requirements listed in Table 1, which include *Service language should be standardized and accurate, polite and courteous. During service, the tone should be calm, expressions should be clear, volume should be moderate, and speaking speed should be appropriate.* The strong congruence category primarily includes imperative sentences without subject-verb structure and verb-predicate sentences in declarative or interrogative moods. These expressions typically feature fewer modal particles, clear pronoun references, and a rare use of vague pronouns. Additionally, a significant proportion of drivers in this category use Mandarin. This suggests that drivers at the strong congruence level in the Chengdu-Chongqing ride-hailing industry possess a certain degree of linguistic proficiency and self-discipline, enabling them to effectively use standard service language and adhere to industry norms. Such standardized language not only ensures service effectiveness but also emphasizes the importance of passengers' personal and property safety, enhancing their sense of security and overall service experience, thus demonstrating a high degree of language harmony.

4.1.2 Moderate Congruence

Moderate congruence is the second level of "congruence." Although the driver's language may not fully align with the standardized expressions mandated by national and industry regulations, it still reflects a strong sense of initiative, ethics, and responsibility. For example:

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(5) 司机："我可能还有几分钟，还有五六分钟到你那里。"

[D: *I might need a few more minutes, about five or six, to get to your place.*]

(6) 司机："美女，你的手机尾号是好多呢？"

[D: *Miss, what are the last digits of your phone number?*]

Although the language used by drivers in the Chengdu-Chongqing app-based ride-hailing industry may not be fully standardized, They typically use verb-predicate sentences in an interrogative mood to actively confirm passengers' identities, communicate pick-up and drop-off times and locations, and enthusiastically answer passenger questions. This proactive and warm communication style not only improves communication efficiency but also provides both drivers and passengers with time to adjust and respond to unexpected situations. Moreover, the driver's display of personal care and warmth in these interactions helps foster a closer connection between the driver and passenger, creating a harmonious atmosphere.

4.1.3 Weak Congruence

Weak congruence represents the lowest level of "congruence." In this case, although the driver may show limited initiative in providing service, they still maintain a calm tone and stable demeanor. Their language expression generally adheres to basic standards and does not exceed the regulatory boundaries set by national and industry guidelines. For example:

(7) 乘客："师傅，就在这儿靠边儿停。"

[P: *Sir, pull over here please.*]

司机："就在这里吗？"

[D: *Right here?*]

乘客："对，就在这里，谢谢。"

[P: *Yes, right here, thank you.*]

司机："没事儿。"

[D: *No problem.*]

(8) 乘客："老师，像你们是拉到车站还是送拢？"

[P: *Sir, do you usually drop off passengers at the station or send them home directly?*]

司机："主干道可以送拢。"

[D: *I can take you home if it nears the main road.*]

Chengdu-Chongqing app-based ride-hailing drivers who exhibit weak congruence may provide relatively passive service, but they still demonstrate a high level of cooperation and remain open to passenger suggestions. These drivers show considerable patience in communication and are committed to finding optimal solutions to issues, reflecting a certain degree of language harmony.

4.2 Language Conflict

Being similar to "congruence," language conflict can be categorized into different levels based on the different causes of ecological niche violations and their different impact. "Transgression," characterized by offensive language or inappropriate evaluations of others, is the most likely to provoke conflict.

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Following this is "absence," which manifests as irregular expressions or complaints that easily create a discordant atmosphere. The lowest level is "misalignment," referring to the use of inappropriate language by drivers in driving contexts. While "misalignment" may lead to conflict, its occurrence is relatively rare. Based on the collected data, the three types of language conflict—"absence," "misalignment," and "transgression"—can be further subdivided into specific forms, requiring detailed analysis according to context and content.

4.2.1 Transgression

Transgression refers to instances where ride-hailing drivers' language use exceeds professional or ethical boundaries. This includes making inappropriate evaluations of others, lacking clarity about their professional identity, or using offensive language. Such behavior reflects an imbalance in identity positioning and linguistic boundaries, undermining passengers' recognition of and trust in the drivers' professional role. Transgression is the most conflict-prone type of language use and is particularly likely to escalate disputes.

4.2.1.1 Inappropriate Evaluation

(9) 司机："但是像，像你们学了那个语言出来欸，以后面临的工作可能最好的就是能够，能够在一个学校当一个老师。对于你们妹妹家来说哈。"

[D: *But for example, after you all have learned that language, the best job you might face in the future could be becoming a teacher at a school, especially for you young girls.*]

(10) 司机："勒些娃儿读大专的，都是读不得书的娃娃才得来大专读书撒，他一读书欸，完全就是来混日子的晓得嘛。"

[D: *These young people going to vocational colleges are usually the ones who aren't good at studying. When they go to school, it's entirely just to waste the time, you know?*]

(11) 司机："我有时候哎，以前拉人也遇到过，就是很麻烦的一些乘客。像勒种乘客欸，真的都不愿意拉。他就觉得他跟那个老板儿一样。结果我一问，他一个小老板儿，还没得我的钱多，我说我还不是老板儿，真的是你算啥子嘛。我说我谈生意说的话也比你还多嘛。"

[D: *Sometimes, back when I was giving rides, I'd come across really troublesome passengers. For passengers like that, I really didn't want to pick them up. They act like they're some big boss. But when I asked, it turned out they were just a small-time boss who didn't even earn as much as I do. I told them, I'm also a boss, so who do you think you are? I said, 'I'd probably dealt more business than you'd done anyway!'*]

Inappropriate evaluations refer to instances where drivers' verbal behavior transgresses the ethical boundaries of linguistic expression. Examples (9) illustrates drivers' improper stereotyping and gender bias toward female passengers. This linguistic behavior reflects the speaker's inequitable perception of gender. It reveals the sarcastic and contemptuous attitude of the ride-hailing driver towards women, which can easily offend the female passengers and trigger conflicts. The other two examples demonstrate drivers' disparaging remarks about previous passengers, and prejudice against vocational students. Such behaviors undermine passengers' trust in drivers and diminish their overall assessment.

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As a result, when disagreements arise between drivers and passengers, peaceful resolution becomes less likely, and conflicts are more prone to escalation.

4.2.1.2 The Lack of Boundaries

(12) 司机："你信不信嘛，你跟他们…搞不定的。因为我，那我待会我就去把那个老大爷给搞定啊。那早有…我都不知道你们看到…出门要嘴甜知道吧，要会来事儿，有眼色，有眼力劲儿。"

[D: *Do you believe me? You can't deal with them. But me, I'll go and sort out that old man in a bit. There was… I don't know what you saw… You know, when you're out and about, you need to be sweet-talking, you know? You have to know how to handle things, be observant, and have a sense of what's going on.*]

(13) 司机："像你以后毕业了过后，你有没有打算，比如说对个人的未来呀，反正哪方面的工作呀，有没有想，想，想过勒些？你们出来还是不好找工作噢。"

[D: *After you graduate, have you thought about your future? Like, what kind of job you'd want to do? Have you considered any of these things? It's not easy for people like you to find a job, you know.*]

The lack of clear boundaries is evident in drivers' verbal behaviors that significantly exceed their professional roles, failing to delineate their responsibilities. Drivers not only assume the role of guides, judging and lecturing passengers on their behavior, but also intervene in passengers' career development and future planning. This overstepping, compounded by insufficient mutual understanding between drivers and passengers, may lead to passengers questioning the drivers' professional competence, increasing the likelihood of disagreement and even conflict between the two parties.

4.2.1.3 Vulgar language

(14) [*The driver is insulting another driver.*]
司机："**，走哇。"
[D: **, just go!*]

(15) [*The driver is insulting a passing pedestrian.*]
司机："***，像你*个**。"
[D: ***, you like a ***.*]

The use of vulgar language by drivers exemplifies a phenomenon of linguistic incivility, largely stemming from the influence of Chengdu-Chongqing dialect culture, which shapes the habitual use of crude expressions. This behavior reflects the lack of self-discipline among ride-hailing drivers in the region. These instances reflect unethical judgments toward others, transgressing the ethical boundaries of discourse and potentially inflicting psychological harm on recipients, which also represents a form of linguistic violence to some extent. Furthermore, such verbal behaviors during driving may exacerbate conflicts with other drivers and even lead to traffic accidents. Additionally, the employment

of inappropriate language contravenes professional standards, undermining passengers' evaluations and trust in drivers, thus representing a failure to adhere to the expectations of the role.

4.2.2 Absence

Absence refers to the failure of ride-hailing drivers to effectively convey necessary information during service interactions. This is evident in the lack of linguistic standardization and the presence of emotional expressions in their service language, which significantly undermines communication effectiveness and service quality. The irregularity and emotional undertones of such language may cause passengers to perceive drivers as indifferent or unprofessional, potentially leading to dissatisfaction due to the transmission of negative emotions. Consequently, absence ranks as the second most likely cause of conflict.

4.2.2.1 Inadequate Expressions

(16)司机：”好多？”

[D: *what is?*]

乘客：”1954。”

[P: *1954.*]

(17) [*The passenger, carrying luggage and needing to cross a pedestrian bridge, found the journey inconvenient and thus hoped to negotiate with the driver to board at the current location to reduce walking distance.*]

乘客：”喂，你好。我在 xxx 对面，一定要过去吗？”

[P: *Hello, I'm across from XXX. Do I really have to go over there?*]

司机：”要过来，要过来，嘿，我逗在嘞里接人呐，快，都过来了哈，都要过来。”

[D: *You need to come over, come over. Hey, I'm over here picking you up. Hurry up, come over here.*]

乘客：”好嘛，你车牌号是好多欸？”

[P: *Alright, what's your license plate number?*]

司机：”地，地下通道左手边儿出来哈，你过这个地下通道过后从左手边儿，我人站到嘞节的哈。”

[D: *A-After you come out from the underground passage, take the left side. I'll be standing there..*]

(18) [P: *Among the passengers, there is an out-of-town passenger who does not understand the Sichuan-Chongqing dialect.*]

司机：”哎呀，妹儿，我们就用重庆话交流好不好嘛，好费劲儿噢。”

[D: *Ah, Miss, can we just use Chongqing dialect to communicate? It's really tiring to use Mandarin.*]

乘客：”她不是这里的人。”

[P: *She's not the local person.*]

司机：”听不听得懂嘛？听不懂的话就抱她大腿，是吧？”

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[D: *Can you understand? If you can't, just asking for her help, right?*]

(19) 乘客："9233。"

[P: *9233.*]

[D: *No answer.*]

Inadequate linguistic norms are primarily reflected in the overly simplistic and direct communication or lack of response from drivers in the Chengdu-Chongqing app-based ride-hailing industry, which results in a failure to maintain necessary standards of politeness and professionalism. Therefore, in this category, sentence variants often involve ellipsis and inversion, with many sentences lacking complete syntactic structures, exhibiting a predominance of colloquial features. In Example (16), although the driver attempts to verify the passenger's identity by asking for the last digits of their phone number, the language used does not meet the standard that "service language should be accurate, polite, and courteous." In Examples (17) and (19) the drivers not only fail to use proper language but also neglect key responsibilities, such as not answering the passenger's inquiry about the license plate or requiring the passenger to provide identity confirmation rather than verifying it themselves. These omissions indicate a clear failure in fulfilling communication duties. Moreover, example (18) violates the regulation that drivers "should speak Mandarin and may use local dialects or foreign languages based on passengers' needs." In this case, the driver insists on using a local dialect, disregarding the non-local passenger's preference for Mandarin. Such instances of absence in linguistic norms negatively impact service quality and can lead to language conflict in specific contexts. This indicates that there are weakness in the language proficiency of Chengdu-Chongqing ride-hailing drivers. Even if some drivers do not intend to cause conflict, their inability to use language appropriately and effectively results in inadequate service to passengers and failure to meet the linguistic standards required by the ride-hailing industry.

4.2.2.2 Emotional expression

(20) [*Due to being pressed for time, the passenger selected a private ride service on the platform but discovered there was a carpool passenger from another platform. This led to concerns about being delayed due to the potential detour caused by the unexpected carpool.*]

乘客："你嘞个是拼车的吗？后面那个？"

[P: *Are you carpooling with this person? The one in the back?*]

司机："你莫管嘛，你管嘚个多。"

[D: *Mind your own business. Don't care too much.*]

(21) [*Due to the late hour, the passenger hopes the driver can drive the vehicle into the gate and drop them off directly downstairs.*]

乘客："看一下能不能开进去。"

[P: *Can you check if you can drive into it?*]

司机："开不进去。"

[D: *I can't drive in.*]

乘客："跟保安说一下看能不能开进去呢？"

[P: *Can you talk to the security guard and see if you can drive into it?*]

司机："开不进去。"

[D: *I can't drive in, I can't drive in.*]

(22) [*The driver messes the right pick-up point.*]

乘客："你如果在一号门，那有修修车那边那个门的话，你把它往前面开，然后右转过来。"

[P: *If you're at Gate One, the one near the repair shop, just drive forward and then turn right.*]

司机："好嘛，好好好，我转，我转。"

[D: *Alright, alright, I'll turn, I'll turn.*]

Emotional expression refers to the tendency of app-based ride-hailing drivers in the Chengdu-Chongqing region to express emotions during communication, which results in a lack of essential service support and ultimately leads to a decline in service quality. In example (20), the driver illegally picked up a ride-sharing passenger, infringing on the passenger's legitimate rights. Moreover, the driver's use of harsh language to evade responsibility demonstrates a failure to fulfill communication obligations, leaving key issues unaddressed and poorly communicated. This situation creates a high potential for language conflict. Similarly, in examples (21) and (22), the drivers responded impatiently to passengers with phrases like "*I can't drive in, I can't drive in*" and "*Alright, alright, I'll turn, I'll turn*," which clearly violate the regulation that drivers should maintain a calm tone, clear expression, appropriate volume, and moderate speed while providing service. Indeed, discourse is a form of emotional expression; however, such dismissive responses not only hinder effective communication but may also escalate tensions in certain situations, increasing the likelihood of conflict. As service industry professionals, drivers should adopt a positive and optimistic attitude toward passengers, offering empathetic care rather than displaying impatience or negative emotions. This phenomenon stems from the insufficient self-discipline of Chengdu-Chongqing ride-hailing drivers, who fail to effectively manage their emotions, thereby potentially compromising the interests of consumers.

4.2.3 Misalignment

Misalignment refers to the mismatch between the language used by ride-hailing drivers and the current driving context. This is exemplified by drivers in the Chengdu-Chongqing region making contextually inappropriate remarks, interrupting conversations arbitrarily, or making and receiving phone calls while driving. Such behaviors not only disrupt passengers' travel experiences but may also pose safety risks. Although misalignment is a form of language conflict, its potential to provoke disputes highly depends on the context and content. Drivers may simply be attempting to ease the atmosphere, but this kind of actions violate the social and cultural ecological requirements of the ecological niche of discourse and disregard passengers' willingness to engage in conversation indeed. As a result, misalignment represents the lowest level of language conflict, with a lower likelihood of triggering disputes compared to absence or transgression.

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4.2.3.1 Context Misalignment

(23) 司机："你们家里面的是几个，你们是几个子女哎。"

[D: *How many… How many siblings do you have in your family?*]

乘客："一个就我一个。"

[P: *One, just only me.*]

司机："就你一个哦？你爸爸妈妈是干啥子工作的欸？"

[D: *Are you the only child? What do your parents do for a living?*]

(24) 司机："我老婆，我老婆出来，毕了业之后，毕了业出来之后，从来都没找过工作，都是我帮她找的。"

[D: *My wife, after graduating, has never looked for a job on her own; I've always been the one to find jobs for her.*]

乘客："噢噢，挺好，互相帮助。"

[P: *Well, that's nice—helping each other out.*]

The Chengdu-Chongqing ride-hailing industry has its own corresponding sociolinguistic ecological environment. So, in the app-based ride-hailing industry, context misalignment occurs when drivers frequently engage in conversations unrelated to the driving process, departure point, or destination. As demonstrated in Examples (23), the driver deviates from the current context, intruding on the passenger's privacy. In the enclosed space of the vehicle, this misaligned discourse may cause discomfort and a sense of insecurity, potentially leading to language conflict. Furthermore, Examples (24) illustrates that drivers often disregard passengers' willingness to communicate, instead imposing self-promotion and sharing personal experience. It even extends to the driver's family relationships, which are unrelated to the passenger. In such highly interactive and immediate communication context, achieving harmonious interaction requires drivers and passengers to engage in effective feedback based on shared information. When passengers lack knowledge of the topic and have weak communication intentions, this forced interaction can escalate tensions, potentially leading to verbal disputes. Additionally, in this category, Chengdu-Chongqing ride-hailing drivers frequently use long and complex sentences, resulting in a high volume of information, much of which is irrelevant. This can impose a cognitive load on passengers, causing discomfort. If crucial trip-related information is buried in lengthy expressions, passengers may miss or overlook key details, leading to communication breakdowns. This is especially problematic when passengers urgently need information or are in a negative emotional state, further increasing the likelihood of discord.

4.2.3.2 Conversation Interjection

(25) 乘客 1："会不会有一个人身体上任何一个地方都没得任何的毛病？有这种人吗？我觉得应该没得这种人吧？"

[P1: *Is it possible for a person to have no problems in any part of their body? Is there such a person? I don't think there is, right?*]

乘客 2："不晓得。"

13

[P2: *I don't know.*]

司机："理论上没得撒。"

[D: *Theoretically, there isn't.*]

乘客 1："啊？"

[P1: *what?*]

When a driver interjects in a conversation between passengers without invitation, it violates the rule that drivers should refrain from interrupting passenger discussions. Such interruptions can, to some extent, also be seen as a disregard for the passenger's privacy. This rule is designed to prevent drivers from intruding into conversations that are independent of their ecological niche of discourse. When a driver intervenes without being invited, it constitutes a misalignment within the established ecological niche of discourse. Such behavior may give passengers the impression that the driver is eavesdropping, which can trigger conflict. This is also an indication of the driver's lack of self-discipline.

4.2.3.3 Loudspeaker Phone Calls

(26) [*The driver loudly broadcasts phone conversations with other drivers during the journey.*]

司机："喂，xxx，还在搞？早都丢了，我**你不是没法接嘛，你，你接，你去了吗，**，今天走哪里……"

[D: *Hello, xxx, are you still doing that? I already threw it away, didn't you ******* say you couldn't pick it up? Did you go to pick up? ****. Where will you go today?*]

Loudspeaker phone calls by drivers in the app-based ride-hailing industry exemplify language conflict. Firstly, these conversations misalign with the current ecological niche of discourse, distracting drivers and compromising traffic safety. Secondly, such behavior generates noise pollution in the confined space of the vehicle, subjecting passengers to unnecessary disturbances. Finally, drivers' phone interactions often involve coarse language and complaints, which can propagate negative emotions and escalate conflicts. This category reflects that Chengdu-Chongqing ride-hailing drivers not only fail to adhere to industry standards but also lack awareness of the dangers associated with making phone calls while driving. Distracted driving can lead to traffic accidents, endangering the lives of those in the vehicle and potentially causing greater social harm. Therefore, unless in exceptional circumstances, drivers should avoid making calls during trips, especially with other ride-hailing drivers.

5. Conclusion

The statistical results of language use among ride-hailing drivers in the Chengdu-Chongqing region reveal that language harmony accounts for 40%, while language conflict constitutes 60%, with language conflict significantly outweighing harmony. Specifically, the most prominent phenomenon is "absence," which accounts for 23%, followed by "transgression" at 21%. "Weak congruence" represents 19%, while "misalignment" and "moderate congruence" account for 16% and 13%, respectively. "Strong congruence" is the least frequent, comprising only 8% (see Figure 2). Overall,

language conflict is notably prevalent in the Chengdu-Chongqing ride-hailing industry, indicating an unfavorable overall situation.

Given this, the practical application of linguistic ecology ethics education is critical. For instance, developing training materials, guides, and hosting seminars tailored to the discourse ecological niche of the ride-hailing industry can significantly enhance drivers' language knowledge, helping them understand the appropriateness of their expressions and reducing instances of "absence." Additionally, such education can foster greater self-regulation regarding linguistic ecology ethics, ensuring drivers proactively and consciously adhere to ethical boundaries and pragmatic norms, thus preventing "transgression" and "misalignment." By promoting the standardization and optimization of language expression in the Chengdu-Chongqing ride-hailing industry, language conflicts can be minimized, service quality improved, a harmonious linguistic environment cultivated, and the sustainable development of the industry advanced.
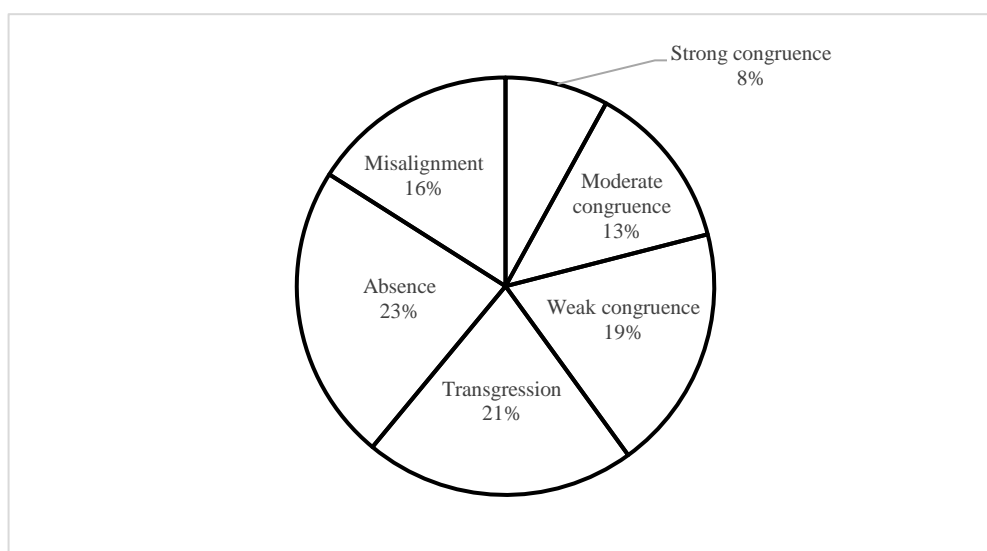

Figure 2. The Ratio of Different Manifestations of Language Harmony to Language Conflict

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