

## A Socio- Cognitive Linguistic Study of Establishing Common Ground in Conversations in English as Lingua Franca

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دراسة لغوية اجتماعية إدراكية لتحقيق التوافق في المحادثات باللغة الإنجليزية بوصفها لغة

تواصل مشتركة

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### Abstract

In daily interactions, finding common ground between interlocutors is essential for successful communication. Interlocutors from various linguistic and cultural backgrounds use English to communicate. Accordingly, English acts as lingua franca. In linguistics, the interdisciplinary approach of socio- cognitive linguistics comprises social, cognitive and linguistics factors which influence language use and progress. The present study aims at investigating the achievement of common ground in conversations in English as lingua franca. It intends to, first, assessing the extent to which interlocutors depend on their cooperative (intention) and egocentric (attention) tendencies; second, identifying the strategies followed by the interlocutors to ensure that their intentions are realized cooperatively; and, third, identifying the strategies followed by the interlocutors to ensure that they achieve egocentrism through maintaining attention. Methodologically, the study adopts Kecskes's (2023) approach of creating common ground. It is a socio- cognitive linguistic approach that employs cooperation (intention) and egocentrism (attention) principles to explore the components for achieving common ground. The data collected from analysis consist of the eight extracts selected from two real life conversations on You Tube. The findings of the study reveal that interlocutors participate in a dynamic exchange between cooperative intentions and egocentric attentions during their interactions in English as a lingua franca. As a result, these conversations are fluid and not fixed or predictable. More importantly, the study concludes that successful common ground requires balanced blend of cooperation and egocentrism tendencies. It also requires particular strategies (for both cooperation and egocentrism) which overlap depending on the context of situation. Keywords: common ground, cooperation, daily conversation, egocentrism, Lingua franca

### المستخلص

في التفاعلات اليومية، يُعد إيجاد أرضية مشتركة بين المحاورين أمرًا ضروريًا للتواصل الناجح. يستخدم المحاورون الذين ينحدرون من خلفيات لغوية وثقافية مختلفة اللغة الإنجليزية للتواصل. وبناءً على ذلك، تعمل اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة مشتركة. في علم اللغة، يشمل النهج متعدد التخصصات في علم اللغويات الاجتماعية والمعرفية على عوامل اجتماعية ومعرفية ولغوية تؤثر على استخدام اللغة وتوظيفها في التواصل.

تهدف الدراسة الحالية إلى البحث في تحقيق أرضية مشتركة في المحادثات باللغة الإنجليزية كلغة مشتركة. وهي تهدف، أولاً، إلى تقييم مدى اعتماد المحاورين على اتجاهاتهم التعاونية (النية) و التمرکز حول الذات (الانتباه)؛ ثانياً، تحديد الاستراتيجيات التي يتبعها المحاورون لضمان تحقيق نواياهم بشكل تعاوني؛ وثالثاً، تحديد الاستراتيجيات التي يتبعها المحاورون لضمان تحقيق التمرکز حول الذات من خلال الحفاظ على الانتباه. منهجياً، تتبنى الدراسة نهج كيكساس (٢٠٢٣) في خلق أرضية مشتركة. و هو نهج لغوي اجتماعي معرفي يستخدم مبادئ التعاون (النية) و التمرکز حول الذات (الانتباه) لاستكشاف مكونات تحقيق أرضية مشتركة. تتألف البيانات التي تم جمعها لغرض التحليل من ثمانية مقتطفات مختارة من محادثتين حقيقيتين على يوتيوب. كشفت نتائج الدراسة أن المحاورين يشاركون في تبادل ديناميكي بين النوايا التعاونية والانتباه المتمركز حول الذات أثناء تواصلهم باللغة الإنجليزية كلغة مشتركة. ونتيجة لذلك، تكون هذه المحادثات مرنة وليست ثابتة أو قابلة للتنبؤ. والأهم من ذلك، خلصت الدراسة إلى أن الأرضية المشتركة الناجحة تتطلب مزيجاً متوازناً من التعاون و التمرکز حول الذات. كما تتطلب استراتيجيات محددة (للتعاون و التمرکز حول الذات) تتداخل حسب سياق الموقف.

الكلمات المفتاحية: أرضية مشتركة، التعاون، المحادثة اليومية، التمرکز حول الذات ، اللغة المشتركة

## 1. Introduction

Recent research in cognitive psychology, linguistic pragmatics, and intercultural communication has shaped the concept of common ground. Cognitive researchers have developed a dynamic view of common ground, emphasizing its emergence through use. According to Heritage (1984) and Arundale (1999), everyday communication is more of a trial-and-error, collaborative process, where meaning is co-constructed by the participants (Kecskes, 2023). English as a lingua franca refers to an intercultural communication context in which speakers from various linguistic and cultural backgrounds use English to communicate (Marlina & Xu, 2018). In such interactions, finding common ground between speakers is essential for successful communication (Khalil, 2008). According to the researchers' knowledge, no previous study has tackled the investigation of achieving common ground in daily conversation in English as lingua franca. Thus, there seems to be a gap in literature in this respect. Therefore, this study intends to investigate the strategies of achieving common ground among people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds to overcome communication barriers. Meaning that, the study concentrates on whether the interlocutors follow cooperation or egocentrism while interacting. Thus, the study aims at:

1. Assessing the extent to which interlocutors depend on their cooperative (intention) and egocentric (attention) tendencies as components for achieving common ground in English as lingua franca in daily conversation.
2. Identifying the strategies followed by the interlocutors to ensure that their intentions are realized cooperatively.
3. Identifying the strategies followed by the interlocutors to ensure that they achieve egocentrism through maintaining attention.

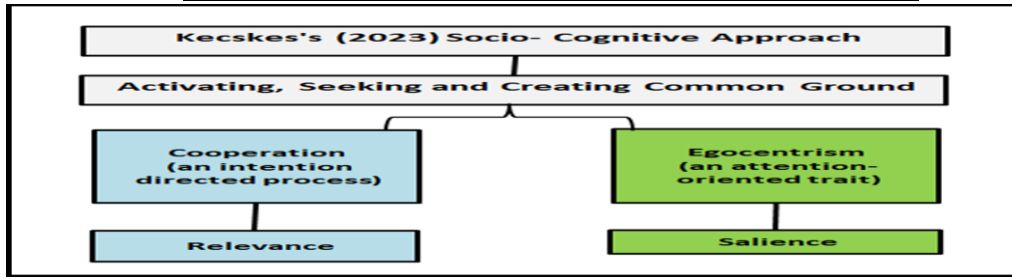
## 2. Theoretical Background

**2.1 English as Lingua Franca** Lingua Franca initially referred to a simplified pidgin or a contact language that emerge naturally to help people overcome language barriers. It had a basic grammar and a limited vocabulary, focusing only on essential concepts which are needed for communication. Over time, scholars began to define Lingua Franca as a contact language used by people who do not share a common native or national language and choose to communicate in English as their foreign language. This view suggests that this communication typically happens among bilingual or multilingual, bicultural or multicultural English users (Jenkins, Cogo & Dewy, 2011; Khalil, 2014). Today, English serves as a lingua franca number one in the world. It is used for many purposes, including technology, travel, commerce, and international relations. A lingua franca can be conveyed in various forms in various places differently since individuals differ in their ability to use it; for some speakers, English serves as a native language, and for others, as a second or a foreign language (Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2015). Several factors contributed to make English rather than other languages an international language or a global lingua franca. This is because English has spread widely all over the world , and it has been used in several international economic and cultural fields . The most important factor is the development of the electronic communication (Marlina & Xu, 2018). English serves as a language for international education, business, trade ,tourist , and communication. It helps to foster a greater equality between native and non- native English speakers . Another reason for this development which makes it a language for the world's population, is the increased virtual and physical closeness resulted from the process of globalization (Jenkins et al, 2011).

**2.2 Daily Conversation** As humans are inherently social, communication is a vital component of everyday life (Hapsari, 2011; Wasen & Khalil, 2025). Levinson (1983) describes conversation as an informal, spontaneous exchange of everyday dialogue between two or more individuals, where participants take turns speaking freely. To fully grasp the context of these conversations, pragmatics can be applied to understand the meaning and context (Khalil & Al- Zubaidi, 2022; Yule, 1999). The speaker's intended meaning is based on the shared assumptions and knowledge between the speaker and listener. While the speaker has a particular message they aim to convey, it is up to the listener to interpret the implied meaning (Yule, 1996). Daily conversation represents the cornerstone of facilitating human interaction, understanding, and collaboration. Grasping the impact and importance of daily conversation enhances the communicative skills and deepens social relationships to raise a belonging sense. In the present study, the definition adopted for daily conversation is that it involves informal and spontaneous exchanges where participants use both language and nonverbal cues. It can be either dyadic or multi-party conversation. The topics can shift speedily and individuals need to cope with various subjects. Digital daily conversation is an alternative to face-to-face daily conversation since it offers alternative ways of social engagement. It plays an important role in maintaining and establishing social relationships by employing various media such as text messages, video calls, emails, and social media programs. Recently, digital daily conversation has proved to be the primary interaction mode around the world.

**2.3 The Socio-Cognitive Interdisciplinarity** Sociolinguistics is the study of how language relates to society to better understand language structure and its role in communication. This involves cognitive linguistics which is a modern approach that is not a specific theory but rather a movement based on a shared set of assumptions, principles, and perspectives (Evans & Green, 2006). Sociolinguistics and cognitive linguistics are combined to form another approach to language study known as the socio-cognitive approach. According to Atkinson (2010), the socio-cognitive view is a fusion of social and cognitive elements. The internal processes are referred to as cognitive, while the external interactions are referred to as social. Such an interdisciplinary approach comprises both social (including cultural) and cognitive factors, which are linked to language and language learning / acquisition (Matsouka & Evans, 2004). The socio-cognitive approach investigates the effects of social factors such as age, gender, class, and ethnicity on language variation. For instance, in the interaction between a younger speaker and an older one, there is a notable increase in code-switching. This phenomenon reflects the cognitive abilities of the speakers and their capacity to shift between languages depending on the social context in which they are communicating. Another important aspect of the socio-cognitive approach is the analysis of language use within specific social settings. The language used throughout many domains like media, government, and education, has specific linguistic processes and changes within each context. By investigating the cognitive processes in each of these domains, researchers may clarify the cognitive demands imposed on language users and their techniques to overcome linguistic obstacles (Sumartono & Tan, 2018).

**2.4 Kecskes's (2023) Model of Achieving Common Ground** Before Kecskes' (2023) socio-cognitive approach, two different perspectives on common ground need to be presented here: the pragmatic view and the cognitive view. The pragmatic view highlights the importance of cooperation in communication. On the other hand, the cognitive perspective suggests that the shared knowledge, which exists in the speaker's mind prior to interaction, plays a crucial role in shaping and guiding the conversation. This common knowledge helps facilitate understanding and directs the dialogue toward a particular goal. Accordingly, Kecskes's (2023) approach employs both semantics and pragmatics. On the pragmatic dimension, relevance theory is employed to investigate the relevance of certain words and propositions. Relevance here is a tool for measuring intention which is a cooperation oriented aspect. On the semantic dimension, salience is employed to investigate the salient meanings of words and phrases. Salience here is a tool for measuring attention which is an egocentrism oriented aspect. The following figure summarizes the frame work of Kecskes's (2023) socio-cognitive approach to achieve common ground:



Figur (2.1) Kecskes's (2023) socio-cognitive approach model

### 3. Methodology

The present study is a socio-cognitive one. It employs Kecskes's (2023) socio-cognitive approach of activating, seeking and creating common ground to investigate the way common ground is achieved among people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. It tries to find out the way such people communicate effectively by using English as lingua franca as a means to overcome social, cultural and linguistic barriers. Kecskés's (2023) approach is particularly used in this study because it presents a comprehensive understanding of communication and it integrates both cognitive processes and the social context of communication. Integrating these two aspects together is essential because it helps to acknowledge that communication is influenced not only by individual cognition but also by social interaction and mutual understanding. This model helps investigating the interplay between cognitive processes and social dynamics in language use. It offers a more comprehensive description of communication. This framework combines cognitive science, sociology, and linguistics together creating an interdisciplinary approach. By integrating theories and insights from several disciplines. This way, the research becomes more promoting and offers an extensive understanding of communication. All traditional theories and existing communication models mainly address cognitive and social aspects in isolation. In contrast, Kecskes's (2023) approach bridges this gap by integrating both social and cognitive aspects of communication. It provides more comprehensive investigation of meaning construction in both cognitive and social contexts, which is not provided in older models. This approach mainly highlights the significance of "common ground" which refers to the mutual knowledge, values, and assumptions between interlocutors as these constitute an essential elements of communication which, in turn, helps in recognizing how mutual understanding is reached and sustained in interactions. Kecskes's (2023) approach helps in understanding how interlocutors establish, sustain, and adapt common ground, considering it as a crucial framework in understanding dynamic interactions. This approach is particularly useful in analyzing intercultural communication, where interlocutors from diverse backgrounds seek to achieve mutual understanding. This is considered as a framework for examining the construction of common ground within diverse cultures. Kecskes's (2023) approach is a socio-cognitive one that employs both semantics and pragmatics to investigate the achievement of common ground. On the pragmatic dimension, Sperber and Wilson's (1986) relevance theory is employed to investigate the relevance of certain propositions. Relevane theory is used for measuring the cooperation of the interlocutors which is an intention-directed practice. Relevance in this approach is exclusively a pragmatic effect caused by relations to intention; only information that relates to intention is considered relevant in communication. On the semantic dimension, saliency is employed to investigate the salient meanings of words and phrases. Saliency is used for measuring the egocentrism of the interlocutors. Egocentrism is an attention oriented trait. Saliency refers to the contingent effect of salient knowledge as a result of the attentional processing of communication in a particular situation, which facilitates or hampers the expression of intention and the subsequent achievement of communicative effects (Giora, 2003). The social aspect of the study is English as lingua franca which is adopted for communication in conversation among individuals who have different linguistic backgrounds. English as lingua franca has been used by scholars and researchers to refer to an intercultural communicative setting in which speakers from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds use English as the medium of communication (Marlina & Xu, 2018). The importance of English as a lingua franca in daily conversation lies in its ability to facilitate communication among people from diverse linguistic backgrounds, enabling effective global interaction, collaboration, and exchange of ideas. Thus, achieving common ground among interlocutors in such conversations is a key component for successful communication. This study involved the analysis of the eight extracts which are taken from real life conversations on You Tube.

### 4. Findings and Discussion

After analyzing the eight extracts, the findings show that there are 22 instances of cooperation (intention strategies), and many of these were repeated multiple times by the speakers, resulting in a total of 65 instances of cooperation. There are 21 instances of egocentrism (attention strategies), and most of these are also repeated several times, leading to a total of 62 instances of egocentrism. This suggests that there is insignificant difference in the number of cooperation (intention) instances and that of egocentrism(attention).The insignificant difference of just three instances between cooperation (intention) and egocentrism (attention) suggests that, although cooperation slightly predominates, both cooperation and egocentrism are nearly equally present in the interaction. The interlocutors fluidly switch between cooperative and egocentric behaviors, rather than rigidly favoring one, in order to adapt to the interaction effectively.The analysis has also revealed the following strategies followed by the interlocutors to ensure that their intentions are realized cooperatively:Table (1): The strategies of cooperation (intention)

NO.	Strategies	Freq.	Per.
1.	Maintaining the flow	10	15.38%
2.	Maintaining mutual	8	12.31%
3.	Inviting other to	6	9.23%
4.	Evoking emotion	6	9.23%
5.	Initiating a topic for	5	7.69%
6.	Showing agreement	5	7.69%
7.	Making conversation	3	4.62%
8.	Showing contrast	3	4.62%
9.	Maintaining social	3	4.62%
10.	Providing shared	2	3.08%
11.	Providing	2	3.08%
12.	Shifting the focus of	2	3.08%
13.	Maintaining social	1	1.54%
14.	Prioritizing certain	1	1.54%
15.	Showing interest in	1	1.54%
16.	Expressing personal	1	1.54%
17.	Challenging common	1	1.54%
18.	Expressing doubt	1	1.54%
19.	Create a kind	1	1.54%
20.	Correcting	1	1.54%
21.	Using temporal	1	1.54%

22.	Producing	1	1.54%
<b>Total</b>		<b>65</b>	<b>%100</b>

The table above indicates that the interlocutors focus on specific strategies to demonstrate their cooperation (intention), as evidenced by the frequent repetition of these strategies. The most repeated strategies are: maintaining the flow of the conversation which has been repeated for 10 times (15.38%), maintaining mutual understanding which has been repeated for 8 times (12.31%), inviting other to respond which has been repeated for 6 times (9.23%), and evoking emotion which has been repeated for 6 times (9.23%). The strategy of maintaining the flow of conversation is the most frequently used because it plays a crucial role in building and preserving meaning. It ensures continuity, which is essential for mutual understanding. If the conversation is disrupted by silence, hesitation, or interruption, it can lead to misinterpretation or even cause the conversation to be lost. The strategy of maintaining mutual understanding has also been used frequently, as it is a key component of effective communication. It demonstrates that the interlocutors interpret the message in a similar manner. However, understanding is not static and can change when the topic shifts or new information is introduced. To ensure mutual understanding is maintained, the interlocutors may consistently engage in activities like clarification, paraphrasing, and providing feedback. Making conversation more exciting, showing contrast and maintaining social relations have been repeated 3 times (4.62%). Providing motivations for engaging in conversation, providing shared cognitive resources so that interlocutors would discuss the same issue, and shifting the focus of the conversation have been repeated for 2 times (3.08%). The analysis has also identified the following strategies that are employed by the interlocutors to maintain attention and achieve egocentrism: Table (2): The strategies of egocentrism (attention)

NO.	Strategies	Freq.	Per.
1	Showing contrast	11	17.74%
2	Evoking emotions	6	9.68%
3	Anchoring the conversation around specific geographical origins	5	8.06%
4	Using repetition for emphasis	5	8.06%
5	Prioritizing certain information	5	8.06%
6	Inviting others to respond	4	6.45%
7	Creating a focal point for the conversation	4	6.45%
8	Shifting the focus of the conversation	4	6.45%
9	Creating a kind engagement to make more interactive conversation	2	3.23%
10	Maintaining social relations	2	3.23%
11	Maintaining the flow of the conversation	2	3.23%
12	Showing agreement	2	3.23%
13	Maintaining mutual understating	2	3.23%
14	Providing reasons for particular assumption	1	1.61%
15	Providing reasons for particular action	1	1.61%

16	Exaggeration	1	1.61%
17	Providing examples to support claims	1	1.61%
18	Challenging common beliefs	1	1.61%
19	Encouraging critical reflection	1	1.61%
20	Providing more details	1	1.61%
21	Using temporal markers	1	1.61%
<b>Total</b>		<b>62</b>	<b>100%</b>

The table above indicates that the interlocutors focused on specific strategies to achieve egocentrism (attention), as evidenced by their frequent repetition. The most repeated strategy is that of showing contrast. It has been repeated in the eight extracts 11 times (17.74%). Evoking emotions strategy has been repeated 6 times (9.68%). The strategies of anchoring the conversation around specific geographical origins, using repetition for emphasis, and prioritizing certain information have been repeated 5 times (8.06%). Inviting others to respond, creating a focal point for the conversation, and shifting the focus of the conversation have been repeated 4 times (6.45%). The strategies of Creating a kind engagement to make more interactive conversation, maintaining social relations, maintaining the flow of the conversation, showing agreement, and maintaining mutual understanding have been repeated 2 times (3.23%). Providing reasons for particular action, providing reasons for particular assumptions, exaggeration, providing examples to support claims, challenging common beliefs, encouraging critical reflection, providing more details, and using temporal markers have been used only for 1 time (1.61%).

The strategy of showing contrast is the most frequently used in the eight extracts to demonstrate the interlocutors' egocentrism (attention). This frequent use suggests a focus on highlighting differences, personal views, and individual perspectives within the conversation. It reflects a conscious effort to express one's own thoughts and ideas in opposition to those of others, aiming to establish a presence in the interaction. The focus on contrast also enhances the dialogue by introducing various viewpoints. The frequent use of the evoking emotion strategy highlights a strong focus on personal involvement and emotional reactions as means of achieving egocentrism (attention). By using emotion as a central strategy, the interlocutors aim to capture attention by forming deeper, more personal connections, as emotions can evoke empathy and prompt reactions that create a sense of shared experience. In doing so, they enhance the communicative impact and strengthen interpersonal bonds. The strategy of focusing the conversation on specific geographical origins (used 5 times; 8.06%) allows the interlocutors to highlight their personal and cultural backgrounds in relation to their geographical roots. This approach directs attention to individual identity and fosters a sense of belonging, helping to establish common ground based on shared or differing geographical experiences. The analysis has revealed that some of the strategies including: showing contrast, maintaining the flow of conversation, maintaining mutual understanding, shifting the focus of the conversation, maintaining social relations, creating a kind engagement to make more interactive conversation, inviting others to respond, prioritizing certain information, challenging common beliefs, evoking emotions, showing agreement, and using temporal markers, have been used with both cooperation (intention) and egocentrism (attention). This is connected to the idea that some communicative strategies are versatile and can be effectively used in various contexts, whether in cooperation or egocentrism. This results challenge the traditional view which states that successful communication is mainly based on cooperation and special approaches and strategies must be devoted for establishing cooperation (Bara, 2010). The shared strategies highlight that the role of individual cognition for establishing egocentrism (attention) is no less important than that of cooperation (intention) in achieving common ground even between interlocutors who have diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

### Conclusion

The thorough analysis conducted sheds light on the balance between cooperation (intention) and egocentrism (attention) in conversations in English as lingua franca. There is an intricate interplay between these two facets. There seems to be a balance in the frequency of instances where both cooperation and egocentrism are employed. This balance clarifies the adaptive nature of the interlocutors as they move between cooperative and

egocentric behaviors. The highlighted strategies of cooperation emphasize mutual understanding, maintaining the conversational flow, and inviting responses. They act as pillars for successful communication. The strategies of egocentrism revolve around evoking emotions, showing contrast, and anchoring conversations around personal experiences or geographical origins. Obviously, these strategies aim to assert individuality, evoke emotions, and emphasize personal perspectives within discourse. Moreover, there are shared strategies that are employed to achieve both cooperation and egocentrism. These strategies are maintaining social relations, shifting focus, and evoking emotions. They serve as flexible tools which facilitate effective communication. This flexibility challenges conventional notions that effective communication mainly depends on cooperation. It shows the importance of cognition in establishing egocentric viewpoints and achieving common ground.

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