Ideology of monolingualism: How ignoring bilingualism makes society less inclusive

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Abstract—The computing community is struggling to diversify its workforce and academic programs. We argue that more attention to bilingualism is needed to make Hispanics/Latinx feel welcome in the field. In this panel we make visible how the *ideology of monolingualism* influences the design and implementation of user interfaces in ways that negatively affect usability for bilingual users. We end by presenting some of the impact that a lack of support of bilingualism can have in society and discussing issues of work safety and workplace communication.

Keywords—ideology of monolingualism, bilingualism, translation, user interfaces, globalization, localization

I. Summary

The development of most technologies is influenced by an *ideology of monolingualism* and therefore only supports *monolingual interactions* [4]. An *ideology of monolingualism* is the notion that communication only happens through and by one language at a time. While it is clear that linguistic diversity is the norm and not the exception, the *ideology of monolingualism* is pervasive and present in all aspects of our daily lives. This ideology within the design and implementation of user interfaces not only neglects to account for the large portion of the population that is bilingual and multilingual, but by building monolingual interfaces, designers disregard the nuances of linguistic diversity and ignore the bilingual individual as a bona fide user class.

This panel will engage the audience in a conversation on the hidden ways in which the *ideology of monolingualism* prevents bilinguals to fully express themselves. It normalizes design and usability assessment around single-language use ignoring the negative impact this practice has on bilinguals.

II. Panel Structure

Each panelist brings a different point of expertise in the area of bilingualism. Each will present their view and expertise in the area for 7 minutes. After the individual presentations, we will open a discussion addressing the following themes and the other questions that might come from the audience.

1) Why is an understanding of linguistic diversity, such as bilingualism, an important criteria for an inclusive society?
2) Why don't we just use Google Translate and be done with it?
3) With an understanding of how bilingual users view and use language and navigate technology what might happen when you have multiple languages available at the same time?

III. Position Statements

A. Consuelo Carr Salas, SDSU

Position: What is an *ideology of monolingualism*, where does it come from, and what are the consequences of this view of language? In this presentation, Salas will present on monolingualism and bilingual language use. Salas will begin this presentation with a discussion of the concepts of monolingualism and the *ideology of monolingualism* as outlined in [2]. Salas will then dismantle this view of language use to reveal the more true-to-life understanding of everyday linguistic practices, where monolingual communication is the special exception to bilingual interactions. For example, even if someone is only familiar with one language group, English for example, they have fluency in multiple dialects of that language, academic, professional, etc. This is even more apparent in the large global population of multilingual speakers. Salas will conclude her presentation by arguing that the ideology of monolingualism eliminates the true reality of language use as "mobile," demonstrates a lack of respect for the cultural wealth of multilingual individuals, and has far reaching implications on the construction of communication systems.

Bio: Consuelo Carr Salas is an assistant professor of Border Rhetorics at San Diego State University. Her areas of interest include foodways rhetoric, the scholarship of teaching and learning, information literacy, and the intersections of translanguaging and monolingual technological interfaces. She is the author of the award-winning co-edited collection [1]. Her work can also be found in edited collections, such as *Visual Imagery,*

Metadata, and Multimodal Literacies Across the Curriculum, Food Feminism and Rhetoric, as well as in peer reviewed journals, such as the *Community Literacy Journal*.

B. Laura Gonzales, UF

Position: How do bilingual individuals localize technologies for their own needs and purposes? What could technology designers learn from the technology localization strategies of bilinguals? In this presentation, Gonzales will present data from two research projects that focus on understanding how bilingual individuals navigate what she calls *translation moments*–or those instances in time when bilingual and multilingual communicators make rhetorical decisions about how to translate a specific word or idea from one language to another. By sharing data regarding how bilingual individuals pair cultural and linguistic knowledge with their understanding of digital translation software, Gonzales will highlight several strategies that technology designers can learn from the localization strategies of bilingual communicators.

Bio: Laura Gonzales is an assistant professor of digital writing and cultural rhetorics in the Department of English at the University of Florida. Her research focuses on the intersections of language diversity, community engagement, and technology design. She is the author of the award-winning monograph [3], as well as dozens of articles published in interdisciplinary journals. Gonzales is the current Chair of the Diversity Committee for the Council of Programs in Technical and Scientific Communication. She has been awarded the 2020 7Cs Technology Innovator Award, a Coalition of Women of Color in Computing Research Fellowship, and the 2020 Advancement of Knowledge Award for her groundbreaking research in translation and technology studies.

C. Carlos Evia, VT

Position: The literature on content translation tends to follow a workflow based on a dominant culture converting a source language into a secondary target language. This workflow is not ideal for contemporary work environments where the majority or most of the consumers (and some developers) of content speak what would traditionally be considered the secondary or target language. The potential for code switching or bilingualism in those content consumers further complicates the traditional model. A specific work environment in which this model needs to be revised is the U.S.-based construction industry, where more than 2.8 million workers identify as Hispanic or Latinx and many are foreign born. Recently arrived migrant construction workers probably do not speak English, but they most likely will acquire a level of bilingualism in the workplace. Translation research and practice needs to revise its terminology to accommodate for these possibilities of bilingualism or code switching. Content taxonomies, frequently used to organize topics into categories, can be helpful in this type of situation. This session will introduce a Voice-based Intelligent Virtual Agent (VIVA) prototype for construction worker safety and communication that implements a content taxonomy approach to translation and bilingualism.

Bio: Carlos Evia, a Professor in the School of Communication at Virginia Tech, is also associate dean for transdisciplinary initiatives and chief technology officer in the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences. He is also affiliated with the Virginia Tech Centers for Human-Computer Interaction and Communicating Science. Dr. Evia is a member of the stakeholder committee for the Virginia Tech Center for Humanities, and during the 2020-2021 academic year is the faculty fellow at El Centro—Virginia Tech Hispanic and Latinx Cultural and Community Center. His research focuses on planning and developing technology-based solutions for workplace communication problems, particularly in situations involving multicultural audiences. Those technology-based solutions frequently include technical content structured in a workflow following the Darwin Information Typing Architecture (DITA).

D. Manuel A. Pérez-Quiñones, UNCC

Position: Most technology gives you a choice of one of many languages. After that choice is made, the system becomes mono-lingual. Technology language support is built following two processes called Globalization and Localization. Globalization is the process of designing a user interface by identifying and separating those parts that are different for each country/culture. Localization is the process of changing those parts that are different for each locale. It is no surprise that language settings are then found under "International" settings, equating the use of multiple languages with country or nationality. Interfaces built this way ignore bilingual users assuming they are just multiple monolingual users fused into one person. This makes interfaces harder to use for bilingual people. For example, spell checkers and auto correct features often get in the way ignoring the fact that the user is bilingual. We need new development processes that go beyond internationalization and localization to better support bilingual users.

Bio: Dr. Pérez-Quiñones is a Professor in the Software and Information Systems Department at UNC Charlotte. His research is in HCI, CS education, and diversity in computing. He serves on the SIGCSE Board, Advisory Board for CMD-IT, Steering committee for the BPCNet Portal, and Technical Consultant for the Center for Inclusive Computing at Northeastern. His professional service has been recognized with an ACM Distinguished Member status, CRA's Haberman award, and Tapia's Achievement Award. He is originally from San Juan, Puerto Rico.

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