

Halcyon Lawrence

"Inauthentically Speaking: Speech Technology, Accent Bias and Digital Imperialism"

Although the number of second language speakers of English has already exceeded the number of native English language speakers worldwide, foreign-accented speech quite often is not recognized by speech-mediated applications, like iPhone's Siri or Microsoft's Cortana. As a result, foreign accented speakers of English often have to make adjustments to their speech to be understood by speech technology. In this talk, I ask us to consider the way in which emerging speech technologies advance new forms of digital and linguistic imperialism. I address the subtle ways that speech technologies can de-legitimize and marginalize users and I examine the results from a study that investigates the acceptability of foreign-accented speech in speech technology. I conclude with a few guidelines for a more inclusive approach to speech interaction design.