Automatic translation into English of Ernesto Priani Saiso's talk

Hello, I am Ernesto Priani Saisó from the National Autonomous University of Mexico. I was recently part of an international project that used English as a common language within a multilingual group to carry it out. From the experience of being in it, the idea of this talk was born about what to consider if you are in a multilingual project and you want it to be truly multilingual.

But before moving on I would like to thank Paul, Renata and Noami for making this meeting possible. Breaking digital monolingualism is an urgent matter for those of us who think that languages always enrich our exploration of the world.

I'm going to start by talking to you about the project in which I participated. The name of the project is Ocean Exchanges and its objective is to study the flow of news in 19th century newspapers using and creating digital tools for it.

The project is multilingual for many reasons. First, it had a research team from six countries where at least four different languages were spoken.

In addition, the corpus of work had been obtained from eight national libraries in five languages and to it were added, for specific works, newspapers in Russian, Swedish and French.

However, one of the characteristics of this project is that it was practically carried out from the beginning and almost entirely, in English.

In particular, I was surprised that multilingualism was not raised within the project. It was assumed that the project was multilingual due to the characteristics I mentioned before, but that it was not necessary to make an additional effort so

that the communication between the members, the translation of the results or the tools or the publications were done in one language. other than English.

As is often the case in many projects of this nature, English was adopted as a lingua franca and efforts were made to ensure that practically all communication was done in that language.

Knowing what the dynamics are in these projects, I wondered what could have been different. What things should we have considered, what things could we have done, to make this project truly wider in a multilingual sense.

And the conclusion is actually quite simple: we should have avoided the easy way.

Instead, we have set out to follow a path that is surely much more elaborate, much more arduous, which is trying to break digital monolingualism.

Digital projects that bring together a multilingual team could consider four points to avoid monolingualism.

The first is what I noticed was missing at the start of Ocean Exchanges: be aware. If we are going to work with a multilingual corpus, if we are a multilingual group, why make it monolingual? Why not think, instead, of making use of and exploiting the richness of all the languages in which they communicate and research?

This implies, of course, devising strategies to make use of these languages within the working group and in the processes of investigation and delivery of results.

One possible strategy is to assess whether there are other languages common to all or at least part of the team. In the humanities it is not uncommon to find multilingual academics.

So that communication in that common language could be promoted in addition to English or in as many as there are common within the group. Typically large

research groups are subdivided to carry out tasks, and consideration might be given to adopting another language for them.

Another strategy is to think that if any result, material or tool is going to be translated, it will be translated into the group's common languages.

At Intercambios Oceónicos we translated using automatic tools a large amount of material and results into English to be able to use them in common. It remains a mystery to me why we don't use the same tools to translate them into the other languages of the group.

The paradox is that they were translated into English so that Finnish colleagues, for example, could understand the news in Spanish or the results of prosecutions with natural language processing tools. Why not translate them directly into Finnish, or German, if they were done automatically?

Here it can be seen how the lack of a multilingual will ends up turning the tangled path, when having it would be a much richer way of working.

Finally, and this seems to me the most important point, it must be published in all the languages of the project. Mainly because this impacts three fundamental things: one, the recognition of the importance of generating knowledge in languages other than English, two, in strengthening the academic life that works mainly in those languages and giving prominence to collaborators whose language is not English .

Of course, all this involves an enormous effort and can introduce tensions within the groups, but exploring ways to promote the use of all possible languages, particularly in the digital world, is an effort that not only enriches the work of those who undertake it. , but contributes to the preservation and cultivation of these languages.

Thanks you