AFTER THE TOWER OF BABEL: UNDERSTANDING AND DESIGNING FOR COMMUNICATION ACROSS LANGUAGES

presented by

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Abstract:
Multilingual teams in which people who speak different native languages come together to achieve a common goal play an important role in today’s workplace. Despite the promise of multilingual teams for integrating diverse resources on a global scale, this potential is often hindered by problems regarding the use of a common language (e.g., English) to communicate. Tools like automated speech recognition (ASR) and machine translation (MT) offer potential technical solutions to these problems, but to date, they do not allow for multilingual interaction that is as fluid and natural as native language interactions. In this talk, she will present a series of studies addressing the intrapersonal and interpersonal processes that are essential to achieving successful communication across language boundaries. This research concerns three ways of understanding and supporting communication in multilingual teams: 1) ASR supported conferencing tools that provide the transcripts of everyone’s speech in a common language; 2) MT-mediated communication tools that allow everyone to use his/her native language; and 3) informal conversation strategies where people shift between different languages to satisfy their situational needs. She will conclude by describing what she is currently doing to build on these results.

Bio:
Ge Gao is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Communication at Cornell University, with a minor in Information Science. Prior to Cornell, she received double Bachelors’ Degrees in Psychology and Philosophy and a Master’s Degree in Social Psychology from Peking University in China. She also worked in the Human Computer Interaction (HCI) group at Microsoft Research Asia and NTT Communication Science Laboratories in Japan. She conducts research that examines how linguistic and cultural differences influence computer-mediated communication and team collaboration. She also works with computer and information scientists to design and test new tools to facilitate multilingual communication. Ge has published ten papers and received two best paper honorable mentions at the ACM CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems (CHI) and Computer-Supported Cooperative Work and Social Computing (CSCW). She is enthusiastic about promoting language and cultural diversity within the research community and has helped provide translation support at CHI and CSCW since 2011.