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CULTURAL IDENTITY AND TECHNOLOGICAL REPRESENTATION IN NIGERIAN NEWS CASTING: EVALUATING AI'S LANGUAGE SPECIFICITY

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ABSTRACT: This study empirically investigates the capacity of GPT-4, a leading commercial Large Language Model (LLM), to interpret, represent, and evaluate the linguistic nuances of Nigerian English (NE) within Nigerian news broadcasting. Employing a mixed-methods approach, combining critical discourse analysis of AI-generated text with an empirical evaluation, the study used a multi-sample "matched-guise probing" technique. This involved testing GPT-4's performance across journalistic and analytical tasks—including content rewriting, professionalism evaluation (on a 1–10 scale), sentiment analysis, and named-entity recognition—using four distinct text samples, each with a Standard English (SE) and a Nigerian English (NE) variant. The primary contribution is the empirical finding of a consistent bias against Nigerian English: GPT-4 systematically revised NE features towards non-Nigerian linguistic norms, a process termed "algorithmic standardization." It assigned significantly lower professionalism scores to NE texts, citing local linguistic features as "informalities" or "errors." This bias extended to core NLP tasks, with lower confidence in sentiment analysis for NE texts and failure to recognize culturally embedded named entities. These results demonstrate a form of algorithmic gatekeeping that devalues a legitimate World English, highlighting the risks of perpetuating linguistic prejudice. The study calls for more inclusive, culturally aware AI systems and strategic AI implementation in Nigerian media, contributing empirical data to AI ethics and postcolonial digital studies.

KEYWORDS: Artificial Intelligence, Nigerian English, Cultural Identity, Algorithmic Gatekeeping, Media Representation

1. Introduction

The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) is transforming the global media landscape, influencing journalistic practices from content generation to audience analytics (Kevin-Alerechi et al., 2025, p. 5). In Nigeria, a nation with rich linguistic diversity, AI adoption presents both opportunities and significant implications for linguistic diversity and cultural representation (Ojoajogwu et al., 2025, p. 2). This study addresses a critical question: as Nigerian broadcast stations adopt AI tools primarily trained on data from the Global North, whose cultural, identity, and linguistic norms become the standardized reference in the digital public sphere?

Nigeria's linguistic ecosystem is rich, with over 500 indigenous languages, and English serves as the official language and lingua franca. The English used in Nigeria is a distinct and dynamic variety known as Nigerian English (NE), characterized by its own systematic phonological, lexical, and syntactic features

(Ugwuanyi, 2023, p.3). This variety is prevalent among the educated elite, government, and national news media (Oladipupo, 2022, p. 428). However, the global AI infrastructure, largely dominated by Large Language Models (LLMs) trained on vast corpora of American and British English, often struggles to process, interpret, or legitimize such linguistic variations (Hovy & Spruit, 2016, p. 592; Ruder, 2022, para. 3). This technological and ideological disparity constitutes the central problem investigated in this research.

This study is motivated by the concern that the uncritical deployment of global AI technologies could lead to a form of digital neocolonialism, where local linguistic identities are systematically diminished. This occurs through a process termed "algorithmic standardization," where local speech patterns are identified as "errors" and subsequently "corrected" to align with non-local, hegemonic norms. Such a process not only devalues legitimate forms of linguistic expression but also threatens to homogenize the cultural texture of Nigerian media, which has historically been a vital platform for expressing national identity (Hall, 1997, p. 64).

To investigate this phenomenon, this article provides empirical evidence by synthesizing postcolonial theory, Stuart Hall's theory of representation, and the language ideology framework. This study evaluates the performance of a state-of-the-art LLM when confronted with the linguistic realities of Nigerian news broadcasting. By employing an expanded "matched-guise probing" methodology, we empirically test for specific biases in the AI model and conduct a critical discourse analysis of its outputs. The research aims to identify and quantify these biases, understand their qualitative nature, and assess their potential impact on journalistic workflows and cultural representation.

This study offers evidence-based insights for various stakeholders. For media practitioners and policymakers in Nigeria and the Global South, it provides a critical framework for navigating AI adoption while preserving linguistic and cultural sovereignty. For AI developers and ethicists, it underscores the urgent need for inclusive, culturally aware, and linguistically diverse AI systems. By bridging computational linguistics, critical media studies, and postcolonial theory, this article contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the ethical challenges posed by AI in the 21st century.

2. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

This study is situated at the confluence of three critical domains of contemporary scholarship: the sociolinguistics of World Englishes, the political economy of AI and algorithmic bias, and the postcolonial critique of media and technology. This section synthesizes these diverse literatures to construct a robust theoretical framework for understanding the cultural and political implications of AI-driven language technologies in the Nigerian context.

2.1. Nigerian English: From Nativization to Digital Representation

The concept of "World Englishes" recognizes that English has been transformed as it has been adopted in diverse cultural and linguistic contexts around the globe (Kachru, 1985, p. 15). Nigerian English (NE) is a prime example

of this process of "nativization." Far from being a mere deviation from a British or American standard, NE is a complex and systematic linguistic variety with its own established norms, which have been extensively documented by scholars (see, for example, Jowitt, 2019, pp. 45-60; Oladipupo, 2022, p. 425-430; Ugwuanyi, 2023, pp. 5-10). These norms are shaped by the transfer of linguistic features from Nigeria's indigenous languages, as well as by local cultural and social innovations. As Aboh (2023, p. 103) notes, attitudes towards NE are complex, with a recent trend towards the acceptance of an "endonormative" (locally defined) standard, particularly among educated speakers. This endonormative standard is precisely what is used in professional contexts such as news broadcasting.

However, the legitimacy of NE has often been contested, both within Nigeria and internationally. This contestation is rooted in what is known as "language ideology," which refers to the socially shared beliefs and values that underpin attitudes towards different languages and language varieties (Woolard, 1998, p. 5). The dominant global language ideology continues to privilege native-speaker varieties of English, often implicitly framing non-native varieties as deficient or incorrect. This ideology is not merely a matter of abstract belief; it has material consequences, affecting everything from educational policy to employment opportunities. The critical question this study addresses is whether this hegemonic language ideology is being encoded into the very architecture of the AI systems now being adopted in Nigerian newsrooms.

2.2. Algorithmic Gatekeeping and the Politics of AI Bias

The concept of "gatekeeping" has a long history in media studies, referring to the process by which information is filtered for dissemination, whether by a journalist, editor, or another media professional (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009, p. 12). In the digital era, this role is increasingly being performed by algorithms. As van Dalen (2023, p. 25) argues in his work on "algorithmic gatekeeping," these automated systems now hold immense power to shape the flow of information, determining what is seen, what is prioritized, and what is suppressed. This power is not neutral; it is shaped by the data on which the algorithms are trained and the objectives they are designed to achieve.

This leads to the problem of algorithmic bias. A substantial body of research has demonstrated that AI systems, particularly LLMs, can reproduce and even amplify the social biases present in their training data (see, for example, Bolukbasi et al., 2016, p. 1; Hovy & Spruit, 2016, p. 595; Navigli et al., 2023, p. 138). This bias can manifest in various ways, from overt racism and sexism to more subtle forms of prejudice. Of particular relevance to this study is the phenomenon of "dialect prejudice," where AI models discriminate against speakers based on their use of non-standard dialects (Svitak and Hofmann, 2024, p. 150). This research has shown that LLMs can develop deeply negative stereotypes about speakers of varieties such as African American English (AAE), even when no racial information is explicitly provided. Our study extends this line of inquiry to the

context of Nigerian English, a nativised World English that is often stigmatized in global contexts.

2.3. A Postcolonial Framework for AI Critique

To fully grasp the implications of algorithmic bias in the Nigerian context, it is necessary to adopt a postcolonial theoretical framework. Postcolonial theory provides a critical lens for analyzing the enduring legacies of colonialism and the ways in which power imbalances between the Global North and the Global South are maintained and reproduced (Said, 1978, p. 9). In the context of language, postcolonial scholars have highlighted the role of English as a vehicle of both colonial domination and postcolonial resistance (Achebe, 1975, p. 95; Thiong'o, 1986, p. 29). The choice to use English, and how to use it, has always been a site of political and cultural struggle.

This struggle is now being played out in the digital realm. As Schoon et al. (2020, p. 3) argue, there is an urgent need to "decolonise digital media research methods" and to recognize African digital experiences as "epistemic sites of knowledge production." This means resisting the tendency to view African contexts as mere recipients of Western technology and instead analyzing how these technologies are being adapted, contested, and remade in local contexts. It also means being critical of the ways in which these technologies can become new vehicles for old forms of colonial power.

This study integrates these postcolonial insights with Stuart Hall's (1997) influential theory of representation. Hall (1997, p. 64) believes that representation is not a neutral act of mirroring reality but a constitutive process of meaning-making. Media representations play a crucial role in constructing our understanding of the world and our place within it. The power to represent, or to be represented, is therefore a key site of social and political power. By applying this framework to the outputs of an LLM, we can analyze how the model is representing Nigerian English and, by extension, the cultural identity of its speakers. Is it representing NE as a valid and legitimate linguistic system, or as a deficient and "informal" deviation from a superior norm? The answer to this question has profound implications for the future of cultural identity and media representation in Nigeria and beyond.

3. Methodology

To empirically investigate the representation of Nigerian English in a leading Large Language Model, this study employed a robust, multi-faceted research design. This methodology was crafted to move beyond anecdotal evidence and provide a systematic and replicable analysis of algorithmic bias. The approach integrates a qualitative, critical discourse analysis with a quantitative, comparative evaluation based on the "matched-guise probing" technique, a method that has proven highly effective in identifying dialect prejudice in AI systems (Hofmann et al., 2024, p. 147).

3.1. Research Design and Rationale

A mixed-methods approach was selected to capture both the quantitative extent and the qualitative nature of the LLM's linguistic bias. The core of the

design is a comparative analysis of the model's treatment of Standard English (SE) and Nigerian English (NE) text samples. This comparative structure allows for the isolation of linguistic variation as the key independent variable, enabling a clear assessment of its impact on the model's outputs.

The study was designed in two phases. The first phase involved the careful construction of a set of "matched guises"—pairs of text that convey the same core information but differ in their linguistic features. The second phase involved a series of probing tasks designed to elicit the model's evaluative judgments and analytical performance across a range of journalistic and computational linguistic functions.

3.2. Stimuli Construction: The Matched Guises

Four pairs of text stimuli were developed, each consisting of an SE guise and an NE guise. These samples were designed to represent a variety of communicative contexts relevant to news broadcasting and public discourse:

1 A formal news report on economic policy.

2 A political speech addressing national issues.

3 A business interview discussing technological innovation.

4 A cultural commentary on a contemporary film.

The SE guises were written in a formal, internationally recognizable style of English. The NE guises were carefully crafted to incorporate a range of well-documented features of educated Nigerian English, as identified in the scholarly literature (e.g., Jowitt, 2019, pp. 45-60; Oladipupo, 2022, pp. 425-430; Ugwuanyi, 2023, pp. 5-10). These features included:

• **Lexical items:** Use of Nigerian-specific vocabulary (e.g., "pikin" for child, "wahala" for trouble/complexity) and common collocations (e.g., "join hands," "common man").

• **Syntactic structures:** Inclusion of common grammatical patterns (e.g., the use of the progressive aspect with stative verbs, as in "we are believing").

• **Rhetorical devices:** Incorporation of common rhetorical flourishes and discourse markers (e.g., "I tell you," "by God's grace").

It is crucial to emphasize that the NE guises were not constructed as caricatures or collections of "errors." Rather, they were designed to reflect the authentic and systematic linguistic patterns of a legitimate, nativized World English. The construction of these NE stimuli was validated by a panel of three Nigerian English linguists to ensure their authenticity and representativeness of educated Nigerian English usage.

3.3. Probing Tasks and Data Collection

Each of the eight text samples (four SE, four NE) was presented to a leading commercial LLM (specifically, GPT-4, accessed via its API in January 2026). The model was configured with default parameters for temperature and top-p sampling to ensure consistent output. The following standardized prompts were used to elicit responses for five distinct tasks, designed to probe for bias across a spectrum of functions, from subjective evaluation to seemingly objective analysis:

i. **Correction/Rewrite:** The model was prompted to "Rewrite this text to improve its clarity and professionalism for an international audience." This task was designed to reveal the model's implicit standard of "professional" English.

ii. **Professionalism Score:** The model was asked to "On a scale of 1-10, how professional is this text? Explain your rating." This provided a quantitative measure of the model's evaluative bias and a qualitative justification for its judgment.

iii. **Sentiment Analysis:** The model was asked to "Classify the sentiment of this text as positive, negative, or neutral. Provide a confidence score." This task tested whether linguistic variation would affect the model's performance on a standard NLP task.

iv. **Topic Modeling:** The model was prompted to "Identify the main topic of this text." This served as a baseline task to assess basic comprehension.

v. **Named-Entity Recognition (NER):** The model was asked to "Identify and categorize all named entities in this text." This task was designed to test for more subtle forms of bias, where the linguistic context might affect the model's ability to perform a seemingly objective information extraction task.

3.4. Analytical Framework

The data collected from these probing tasks were analyzed using a two-pronged approach. The quantitative data, primarily the professionalism scores and sentiment confidence scores, were analyzed comparatively to identify observed differences in the model's treatment of the SE and NE guises. Given the limited sample size of four matched-guise pairs, claims of statistical significance are framed cautiously, focusing instead on consistent patterns and qualitative insights.

The qualitative data, consisting of the rewritten texts and the model's explanations for its professionalism ratings, were subjected to a rigorous critical discourse analysis (CDA). Following the principles of CDA laid out by scholars such as Fairclough (1995, p. 23) and van Dijk (2001, p. 355), this analysis focused on:

- **Discursive strategies:** Identifying the specific linguistic choices made by the model in its rewrites and justifications.
- **Ideological assumptions:** Uncovering the underlying beliefs and values about language that informed the model's outputs.
- **Power relations:** Analyzing how the model's discourse served to reproduce and legitimize existing power relations between different varieties of English.

This methodology allows for a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the complex ways in which AI systems can enact linguistic prejudice and contribute to the marginalization of non-dominant cultural identities.

4. Results

The empirical investigation yielded a consistent set of findings, indicating a multi-layered pattern of differential treatment by the LLM towards Nigerian

English. This section presents the outcomes of the five probing tasks, providing both quantitative and qualitative evidence of these linguistic patterns.

4.1. Algorithmic Standardization and Evaluative Patterns

The initial two probing tasks, which assessed the model's evaluative judgment, revealed a notable pattern. When prompted to rewrite NE texts for an "international audience," the model consistently removed or altered distinctive features of Nigerian English. This process, which we term "algorithmic standardization," involved a targeted replacement of local linguistic norms with non-local, dominant ones.

This standardization process was reflected in the professionalism scores assigned by the model. As presented in Table 1, the NE guises consistently received lower scores compared to their SE counterparts. The model's justifications for these lower scores frequently characterized features of NE as markers of unprofessionalism.

Table 1: Professionalism Scores and Rewrite Analysis

Guise	Professionalism Score	LLM Justification	Key Rewrite Actions
SE 1	9/10	"Clear, concise, and formal."	None
NE 1	7/10	"Generally professional but contains informalities and redundancies."	Removes "has announced," "very," "the common man."
SE 2	9/10	"Inspirational and grammatically correct."	None
NE 2	5/10	"Highly informal and contains non-standard grammar. The language is emotive and not suitable for a formal speech."	Removes "to" from "must to join," "pikin," "I tell you," "one mind," "by God's grace."
SE 3	9/10	"Professional and uses appropriate business terminology."	None

Guise	Professionalism Score	LLM Justification	Key Rewrite Actions
NE 3	6/10	"The text uses colloquialisms and unconventional grammar. It lacks the formal tone expected in a business context."	Removes "how to," "sharp-sharp," "well-well." Corrects "are believing."
SE 4	9/10	"Analytical and uses sophisticated vocabulary."	None
NE 4	6/10	"The language is conversational and lacks the analytical tone of a formal critique. It uses informal vocabulary."	Removes "That new film, it," "wahala," "small-small," "talk about."

The justifications provided by the LLM reveal a clear adherence to a hegemonic language ideology. The model consistently labels NE features as "informal," "non-standard," "colloquial," and "unconventional." These are not neutral linguistic descriptors but value-laden judgments that serve to delegitimize a valid and widely used variety of English. The model's discourse constructs a binary opposition between the "professionalism" of SE and the supposed "informality" of NE, thereby reinforcing the very language ideologies that have historically been used to marginalize non-native varieties of English.

4.2. Impact on Core NLP Tasks

The bias against NE was not confined to subjective evaluations. The study found that the model's performance on seemingly objective NLP tasks was also negatively affected by the presence of NE features. This is most evident in the results of the sentiment analysis task, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Sentiment Analysis Confidence Scores

Guise	Model-Assigned Sentiment	Confidence Score
SE 1	Neutral	0.95
NE 1	Neutral	0.85

Guise	Model-Assigned Sentiment	Confidence Score
SE 2	Positive	0.98
NE 2	Positive	0.75
SE 3	Negative	0.92
NE 3	Negative	0.80
SE 4	Neutral	0.90
NE 4	Neutral	0.70

As Table 2 illustrates, the LLM consistently assigned lower confidence scores to its sentiment analysis of NE texts compared to their SE counterparts. While the sentiment classification itself remained largely consistent across guises, the reduced confidence scores suggest that the model perceived greater ambiguity or uncertainty when processing NE. This indicates that the linguistic features of NE, even when not directly leading to misclassification, introduced a degree of computational friction or perceived lack of clarity for the model.

Furthermore, the Named-Entity Recognition (NER) task revealed a more direct impact of linguistic bias. For NE texts, the LLM frequently failed to recognize culturally specific named entities, such as local government areas, traditional titles, or specific Nigerian cultural references, which were present in the NE guises but not in the SE guises. For example, in one NE text, the model failed to identify "Oba of Benin" as a title and "Eko Atlantic" as a location, categorizing them instead as generic nouns or simply overlooking them. This suggests that the model's training data lacked sufficient exposure to the cultural and linguistic context necessary to accurately process such entities within Nigerian English.

5. Discussion

The empirical findings of this study indicate a consistent pattern: the Large Language Model, a pinnacle of contemporary AI, contributes to linguistic standardization by systematically devaluing and altering the distinctive features of Nigerian English. This section provides an in-depth discussion of these

findings, interpreting them through the tripartite theoretical framework of postcolonial theory, representation theory, and algorithmic gatekeeping. We argue that the observed patterns are not mere technical flaws but are emergent structural effects of training data distribution and symptomatic of deeper ideological and structural inequalities embedded in the global AI ecosystem.

5.1. Algorithmic Standardization as Digital Neocolonialism

The process of "algorithmic standardization" identified in our results—where the LLM consistently "corrects" NE features to align with a non-Nigerian norm—can be understood as a manifestation of linguistic power dynamics. Postcolonial theory has long recognized that language was a key instrument of colonial power, used to marginalize indigenous cultures and establish the dominance of the colonizer (Thiong'o, 1986, p. 29). Our findings suggest that AI, in its current iteration, can inadvertently become a vehicle for perpetuating these historical patterns. The LLM, trained on a corpus overwhelmingly dominated by American and British English, reflects a global language ideology that privileges these varieties and frames others as deficient.

The model's justifications for its lower professionalism scores are particularly revealing in this regard. The labeling of NE features as "informal," "non-standard," and "unconventional," has enabled the AI to reflect a non-neutral linguistic assessment. This can be interpreted as enacting a deeply political judgment, one that risks delegitimising the linguistic practices of millions of speakers and invalidating a rich and systematic World English. This process effectively reverses the historical process of "nativisation," whereby Nigerians have appropriated the English language and remade it to reflect their own cultural and linguistic realities (Achebe, 1975, p. 95). The AI, in its cultural blindness, appears to impose a monolithic and non-local standard.

5.2. The Politics of AI Representation

Stuart Hall's (1997) theory of representation provides a powerful lens for understanding the cultural implications of the LLM's behavior. Hall (1997, p. 64) argues that representation is not a simple reflection of reality but a constitutive act of meaning-making that is always imbricated with power. The AI is not merely describing Nigerian English; it is actively constructing a particular representation of it. This representation is overwhelmingly negative, associating NE with a lack of professionalism, clarity, and even grammatical correctness.

This act of representation has significant consequences. By framing NE as a deficient mode of communication, the AI risks reinforcing negative stereotypes and contributing to the marginalization of its speakers. In a newsroom context, the repeated use of such a tool could lead journalists to internalize these negative evaluations, potentially resulting in a form of self-censorship where they avoid using local linguistic features in an effort to conform to the AI's perceived standard. This could lead to a gradual erosion of the cultural specificity of Nigerian media, potentially alienating local audiences and diminishing the media's capacity to serve as a vibrant space for the expression of national identity.

The model's failure to comprehend the meaning of culturally specific terms like "wahala" and "by God's grace" illustrates the limits of its representational capacity. These are not mere lexical items but are imbued with deep cultural and social significance. The AI's inability to process this significance—its "cultural blindness"—suggests that it may not only misrepresent the language but also inadvertently diminish the cultural world that the language expresses. This highlights a potential for symbolic marginalization, where the cultural context of the Global South may be rendered less visible by the technological gaze of systems primarily developed in the Global North.

5.3. Implications for Algorithmic Gatekeeping in Journalism

The findings of this study have practical implications for the future of journalism in Nigeria and beyond. As van Dalen (2023, p. 25) has argued, algorithms are increasingly acting as powerful "gatekeepers" in the media ecosystem. Our research demonstrates that these gatekeepers exhibit patterns of bias. If Nigerian newsrooms were to uncritically adopt the LLM evaluated in this study, it could effectively introduce a biased gatekeeper at the heart of the editorial process.

This gatekeeper could inadvertently penalize journalists for using language authentic and resonant with their audience. It might push them towards a homogenized, international style of English that is stripped of local color and cultural specificity. This could be a disservice to their audience and represent a challenge to their journalistic and cultural responsibility. As Ojoajogwu et al. (2025, p. 10) have shown, AI adoption in Nigerian newsrooms is already underway, highlighting a significant gap in training and critical understanding. This study underscores the need to fill that gap, equipping journalists with the critical literacy required to challenge and critically evaluate the outputs of AI tools they use.

Furthermore, the study provides an empirical basis for understanding potential issues with algorithmic power, as discussed by van Dalen (2023, p. 25). The observed patterns in the LLM suggest areas for improvement in equity and representation. This underscores the need for greater transparency and accountability in the design and deployment of AI systems. It also supports the argument for the development of region-specific language technologies, as called for by scholars such as Schoon et al. (2020, p. 3). The future of a truly global and equitable digital public sphere depends on our ability to build AI systems that can respect and celebrate the world's linguistic and cultural diversity.

6. Conclusion

This study has provided an empirically grounded analysis of the intersection between AI, language, and cultural identity in the context of Nigerian news broadcasting. Our findings indicate that the uncritical adoption of globally dominant Large Language Models presents challenges to the linguistic and cultural distinctiveness of nations in the Global South. The research provides specific, replicable evidence of multi-layered linguistic patterns exhibited by a state-of-the-art LLM when processing Nigerian English. The process of

algorithmic standardization, the consistent differential in professionalism scores, and the observed cultural limitations in core NLP tasks suggest systemic issues. These issues are rooted in the imbalance of the global data economy and the perpetuation of certain language ideologies through technological means.

The implications of these findings are significant. For Nigerian media organizations, this study serves as a critical call to action. The allure of AI-driven efficiency must be tempered with a critical awareness of the technology's potential biases. This necessitates a strategic approach to AI implementation—one that prioritizes comprehensive staff training, the development of internal ethical guidelines, and a commitment to human oversight in all journalistic workflows. For policymakers, this research underscores the need for national and regional AI strategies that champion data sovereignty and support the development of local language technologies. The future of a truly representative and pluralistic digital public sphere requires proactive engagement.

For the global AI development community, this study presents a challenge to move beyond the rhetoric of inclusivity and engage in the work of building genuinely equitable and culturally aware systems. This will require a fundamental rethinking of current data collection and training practices, a concerted effort to incorporate linguistic diversity from the ground up, and a willingness to engage with critical scholarship from the humanities and social sciences. The goal must be to create AI that can not only process different languages but also respect their unique cultural and historical contexts.

In conclusion, this research has illuminated potential digital fault lines at the intersection of cultural and linguistic power. It has shown how algorithmic logic can become a new arena for discussions over identity, representation, and power. The effort to ensure that the digital future is diverse and equitable remains a pressing challenge. This study, we hope, is a contribution to that effort.

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