

ISOJ 2022: Day 1

Factchecking en español: Latin America, Spain and a new initiative for the United States' Spanish-speaking communities

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 - [Clara Jimenez Cruz](#), cofounder and CEO, **Maldita.es** (Spain)
 - [Natalia Guerrero](#), managing editor, **Factchequeado**
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Bill Adair Let me just introduce everybody very quickly. We'll start on the far left, Clara Jimenez Cruz, who is co-founder and CEO of Maldita.es from Spain. Laura Zommer, founder of Chequeado in Argentina. Natalia Guerrero, the managing editor of Factchequeado, which is what we're going to talk about a lot today. And Tamoa Calzadilla, who is the director of El Detector at Univision. So thrilled to be here with this group. So this is a really important effort that we're going to be talking about today, about emphasizing fact checking in the Latino communities in the United States. And we have some really great efforts to tell you about. So we're going to start with Tamoa. So, Tamoa, can you talk a little bit about what differentiates El Detector, and what you're doing at Univision?

Tamoa Calzadilla Hello, good afternoon. Thank you, Bill. Thank you for having me. Detector is the fact checking platform of Univision News, the largest Spanish network in the U.S.. El Detector was born in 2016, as the first Spanish-language fact checking created in the U.S.. We are focused on serving the Hispanic community by debunking news and disinformation targeted at the Latino population. And with differentiates El Detector? We collect mis- and disinformation using creative formats and using colorful writings, videos, illustrations, and animations. We are constantly monitoring our own social media platforms. Univision has many social media platforms because each TV show has a Facebook page, for example. And we check every day what's going on there. What is the conversation, the discussion? And also, we distribute our content in different ways in TV shows, in social media, and now in WhatsApp. We just launched our tip line on WhatsApp a few days ago, and that tip line is to attend directly to the users and receive petitions to fact-check. And we work hard, however, it is not enough because the problem with mis- and disinformation among Latinos is huge. And that is why we are open to allies like this with Factchequeado.

I bring today an example, exactly, like this. And this video is manipulated and addressed to people that don't speak English, because it is President Biden in a press conference saying something English, but with subtitles in Spanish saying something different than he actually said. For example, he was saying something about American intelligence and Russia, and someone wrote, "We are going to attack Russia." Plus someone made a text card with the title "the start of the third World War." It's a perfect example of the work we do and the challenges we face. It was vital. And so welcome, Factchequeado, to joining forces. We are so excited about this partnership because building El Detector, I realized there is a lack of Spanish-language fact checkers in the U.S. and that we need to train fact checkers in Spanish in the United States. And it's not just languages. They need to know

the reality of Hispanics. And then we created a training program, and the first cohort started this spring with students of the bilingual journalism program at the Newmark J-School of CUNY. And we are so excited about that.

Bill Adair All right. Well, that's a great introduction to get to Natalia, and Lau, and Clara and talk about what you're doing. So, Lau, why don't we start with you? Talk a little bit about what you've done. Because what's really interesting here is we have the two premiere Spanish-language fact checkers from around the world, you've decided to get together and to come here to the United States in this election year, and help out, and help fact check in the Spanish-speaking community. What made you decide to do that? Tell us a little bit about what you're doing.

Laura Zommer Yeah. Thank you. Thank you, Tamoia. Thank you, Bill. It's incredible to have you presenting in us today. In an old, perhaps more traditional mindset of media, Maldita and Chequeado are competitors. We are, as you said, the Spanish-language fact checking organizations perhaps most renown. We are both characterized by innovation, by experimental formats, and community engagement, civic technology development. We are both lead by women, but according to our own definition of journalism and perhaps our own vision of the world, we realized we have complementary strengths that can help us to broaden our impact and to be closer to our own mission, which is to counter disinformation, to serve our communities, and to increase the quality of life. Without a doubt, the type of journalism that inspires me the most is collaborative. I can't think of a journalist today without that idea. And after years of talking with Clara from outside the U.S. about the needs of Latinos and the Spanish-speaking community in U.S., Maldita and Chequeado joined forces to launch Factchequeado today. That is an initiative to create a community, and that's important for us. We want to build a community to fight, again, disinformation in Spanish in the U.S.

And perhaps a lot of people here ask why we are doing this. And it's not just that we want to have a new chance to have fun or to work. It is because for a long time we see that content that perhaps is created here arrive to our own regions, or countries. And also we know that content from our countries arrived here. And we all know that disinformation knows no borders, and many times it's created, especially for export. And then there's also another reality, which is one of the reasons why we are here, is that mis- and disinformation in languages other than English do not received the same attention by big tech and do not received the same attention by a lot of governments around the world. And then as perhaps they are not looking there, we are coming here. For years, we noticed also that the approach taken by American fact-checkers is not enough to serve Latin American communities. It is not just one Latino community in this vast country. There are lot of different languages and cultures. Natalia is going to talk more about that and about our allies. Then developing innovative formats and also being where the people are, and listening to them, and producing content to answer the question this community have is key for us. It is also important to be on the channels and the media where they receive information and where they communicate with each other. WhatsApp, for example. Clara is going to tell you more about that. That's why we planned to launch Factchequeado.

Bill Adair Clara, why don't you tell us a little bit more about how you've been building the community? Because this is not just the three of you, but you have gotten PolitiFact involved, and many others, and in my home state Enlace Latino. And so talk about that a little bit and how you've gotten everyone together.

Clara Jimenez Cruz So one of the things that we've realized throughout these years is that Maldita and Chequeado have been making mistakes and getting to know better how to get to the Spanish-speaking communities around the world. And in that journey, we've discovered that our communities might not need us talking about the hyper-informed communities, like in the upper conversation there, but more on the lower conversation. Our idea is that through those allies that we're making throughout the country, and you've mentioned some of them, the fact checkers from the IFCN, PolitiFact, Media Wise, FactCheck.org, Univision, T Verifica, but also with other smaller media, and Natalia will tell you about those in a minute, we want to listen to what Latino communities around the U.S. need and then build from that. And we're going to do that through a WhatsApp chat bot that we've created. That is where we know that Latinos are. And you were asking me before, what's this idea of using WhatsApp? Because I use WhatsApp to talk to basically European friends, and that's it. Well, the thing is that what we've seen and what happens in general in the Global South is that people use WhatsApp for many more things than just communicating with friends and family. They use WhatsApp to consume news, to share information, in the same way they gather the information when they sit at the bar and talk to people. They do not necessarily watch the news at the end of the day, but they gather the news and they consume news in a different way. So our idea is, let's see if what that we have applied in Spanish-speaking countries around the world can also serve Latino communities in the U.S. because they're most probably talking to their families back home and gathering information from those personal conversations, the Facebook groups that Tamoia was talking to you about, but also bigger groups on WhatsApp as we've seen in Brazil. Let's get to WhatsApp and listen to them. We're going to be able to give those people fact-checked information, and in return, we're going to get to know which are the viral contents that are going around on those WhatsApp conversations. And we're also going to be able to build a database so that researchers can actually better understand how disinformation in Spanish goes around. How are we going to do this? With our allies. And I think Natalia can speak more about that.

Bill Adair That's great. Yeah. And before we get to this, I just want to emphasize, this is really new for the United States. I mean, there have been some established ways that the U.S. fact checkers have been producing fact checking and getting suggestions. But this is really something new.

Laura Zommer And what we bring to the table is that we already have alliances with media that are really big, but also with one or two journalists working together. And I think what we did in Argentina with Reverso during the presidential election when 120 media, the most important but also newsrooms on the borders with two journalists, and if you develop a workflow that can benefit all of the people working, then you'll get much more impact. And what we want to do with Factchequeado is to create a space to pay more attention to disinformation in Spanish and to know more, as Clara said, about how these narratives moves to create a strategy to follow it in a more efficient way.

Bill Adair Natalia, why don't you talk a little bit more specifically about how this is all going to work, all the other different ways you're going to publish, because it's not just going to be on WhatsApp.

Natalia Guerrero Thank you, Bill. No, we're a collaboration, which is a word that everybody mentions here and also in different talks. So we are based on collaboration, and we are partnering with other media, Spanish- and English-language media, and also fact checking organizations to promote the circulation of verified information. But also, because we know these organizations, your organization, basically, are listening to their

communities, to their audiences, and we want to take advantage of that exchange that they already have to understand what is relevant to people. I'm Colombian. I've been living here for 12 year, and I'm part of that community, too. We are part of them. Tamoia also lives here. So it is what is important for me, maybe it's not as relevant to another person in other parts of the country. So we want to listen to each community knowing that Hispanic and Latinos in the U.S. is not a monolith. Now, you may know that, of course, but not everybody. We are diverse in many different ways. We are multigenerational. Some of us speak only Spanish. Some are bilingual because they are like three or four generations already. Some of the communities speak indigenous languages as well. And we have different backgrounds, economic, demographics, education. And we have a lot of different interests. So we want to listen to these communities and to identify what is relevant and put our small newsroom around those topics and produce verified content using what is circulating there and verify the information that is going around using WhatsApp and using the editorial active exchange with our alliance to allow us to do that.

Bill Adair Just to follow up on something you said. You talked about it not being a monolithic community, of course. How does the misinformation differ, say, in the Cuban-American community in Miami versus the Mexican-American community in Texas?

Natalia Guerrero Well, I would say that there are different political interests. I mean, there are many ways. It's a long history, but if you understand how the Cuban community was used as a political entity in the past, in the eighties, after the Mariel boat arrived, and you see the difference, you try to analyze compared to the difference in the Mexican border and the immigration flow. You will understand that there are different narratives that you can see. It is different for a specific community that is already rooted in this country for decades what they receive, and also a community that can vote, compared to undocumented immigrants who are arriving new, let's say, to be part of a different community. So I think the age of the communities, for example, is an important factor for those narratives.

Clara Jimenez Cruz I would also add to that that because most of this information that we are seeing targeting Spanish-speaking communities is hidden somehow. It's in this closed conversation apps that are encrypted and that we cannot just look up on Twitter and see what's going on. We don't really know who started it in each community. But what we have seen in Argentina, and in Spain, and in other Latin American countries, is that the people that are fabricating that disinformation put it first on WhatsApp and then let it go to the open places. And there's a lot of disinformation that we're not being able to see right now because we're not listening where they are.

Laura Zommer And it's a kind of experimentation in a closed place. And if that narrative goes well and starts to go viral on WhatsApp one or two days after we saw it in the open social networks. Then trying to approach these narratives inside WhatsApp or the closed channel, gives us a chance to be on time. We always listen that fact checkers are always after, and we take a lot of time to make our articles. I'm sure you receive that critique from a lot of colleagues. We know that making a fact check properly takes time. We want to know what to check before it arrives to the world of social media. We are not sure this is going to be exactly the same here, but we have our, as Clara said, our own failures and successes serving this community outside the U.S., and we are almost sure that some of our learnings can be useful.

Bill Adair You mentioned the research component. You're going to track this. Talk a little bit about how that's going to work.

Clara Jimenez Cruz So the thing is that with this creation of a tip line on WhatsApp enables you to gather all the disinformation that people forward you, and it enables also you to see if those are frequently forwarded contents, or contents that have only been forwarded once, to sort of measure the virality that it might be having. It's like when you do a poll. You don't ask the whole country. You ask 1,000 people. And with that 1,000 people, you're sort of able to know if something is very viral or not. If you have 1,000 people writing to your chatbot every day, and out of those 150 ask you about one topic, you can more or less think that that's a viral topic within WhatsApp communities. So from there, one of the things that we've seen in Spanish-speaking countries in general is that when researchers approach us, they're always talking about Twitter. No, we want to research on Twitter how this and that. And it's like, I don't know in Argentina, but in Spain there are 5 million people on Twitter, and 47 million people in the country. And what's more, the 5 million people are journalists, politicians and trolls, and that's it. There's not real people there. And then there's no way to do any kind of research around disinformation there. But if you do research with what has been coming through WhatsApp and through the tip lines of the different fact checkers in the country, you can get a much better sense of which type of disinformation is actually affecting those communities.

Laura Zommer And adding to that is we are repeating that there is almost no research about disinformation in Spanish. Then we want, with Factchequeado also, to give the academics input, content, to make this happen. Perhaps being here, it's easier.

Bill Adair This is very cool. All right. We need to wrap up.

Clara Jimenez Cruz I want to add something.

Bill Adair Just, if you could tell folks where they can follow this? If we can put up the last slide of the presentation. Well, there we go.

Clara Jimenez Cruz This is our website. I want to add something. We're launching today. We're very proud. Yeah. Thank you. Thank you, Austin. I don't know if this is day one or day two. But anyway, we are very proud. We have already nine allies, nine partners. And I want to mention them. So on one side, but first we have the top fact checkers in the U.S. So we have T Verifica from Telemundo, El Detector from Univision, PolitiFact. We have Media Wise, FactCheck.org. And we also have four amazing local media. Documented New York, Enlace Latino in North Carolina, Conexión Migrante, which is basically Mexico-U.S. border affected by disinformation. And also very proud, La Esquina from Kentucky, which is amazing, too. And I think we're starting very well. You are welcome to join us.

Bill Adair Great, you guys, thank you. This is a great effort. Thank this great panel.