

Spanish Materials?

Some Considerations

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In any group discussion of "Spanish Materials" it is not uncommon for each participant to possess a different perception of what "materials in Spanish" are and when they should be prepared. Usually the medium that first comes to the mind of each participant is the one with which he or she is most familiar. Typically, after arguments for and against each medium have been advanced, a consensus regarding which is best is not reached, and the many factors discussed are left in disarray. Subsequently, when the topic — Spanish materials — arises again the many factors previously discussed may have been forgotten or are still in a state of disorder. Thus, it is difficult to analyze the issue which caused the topic to surface and to arrive at some conclusion for action.

The purpose of this treatise is not to furnish a solution, plan, or formula that can be applied easily to every situation where reaching the Spanish-speaking people is the objective. The purpose is to address some factors that merit consideration, if the intent of communications is to affect the behavior of the Spanish-speaking people. I will attempt to present these factors in a methodological fashion so that we may examine the issue from an ordered perspective. I hope this will assist you in developing genuine efforts to communicate with the Spanish-speaking people in each of your states.

Communication is difficult to discuss without a theoretical foundation. Communications models abound, from Aristotle's early three-ingredient model including a speaker, speech, and audience to David K. Berlo's four-ingredient model including a source, message, channel, and receiver.¹ Every communication situation differs from every other one. However, one can attempt to isolate key ingredients that all may have in common. Even though any forced order to the communication process might possibly result in distorted perspective — because it is a fluid, dynamic process — I feel it is safe to assume that to effect communication a model must undergird it. Therefore, the model I submit, which I think we can all agree on, is but a scheme from which one can examine more closely the key ingredients. As principal ingredients, it has a sender, a message, a medium, and a receiver. I encourage you to involve yourself in this scheme. Clearly, this simplistic scheme does not list all the possible ingredients. We would not have time to examine them all, if we listed them; but with involvement in the process some insight of the various ingredients and the dynamic of the process will be gained. Also, perhaps by approaching it methodologically, recall of the key factors at a later date will be possible.

Receiver

As with any other attempt at effective communication, the receiver — the Spanish-speaking audience, in this case — is the most important ingredient in the communication process. As such, it will be addressed first. After all, it is the receiver's behavior we want to affect; we want the receiver to do something, to know something or accept something — something pertinent to his interests.

To do this, an image of the intended recipient is paramount. More often than not the question that arises when the Spanish-speaking people are discussed is: How many are there? Obviously total numbers as well as demographic variables such as sex, age, income, years of school completed, and, of course, language are useful for planning purposes, but there are general descriptions that treat people from a non-communicative distance. These are descriptors of a population, not of persons whom we are trying to touch, and affect. My reaction to the question is, how many of **what** and what is your **message**? Exactly with whom are you concerned and what do you want known, accepted, or done?

If an answer is given, then it is time to proceed, because now **people** whose behavior we want to modify have been identified. It is now time to become involved as Berlo suggests by projecting oneself into the internal state of the audience group — to analyze their communication skills, attitudes, knowledge level, and relative position within the social system.²

If the language understood is found to be a limiting factor to communicating with the Spanish-speaking people in your state, do not expect a miracle with a "translated" publication, or any other translated medium. Unless

you have a delivery system to complement the medium you have elected, then you have wasted your time and money. On the other hand, it may be found that language is not a limiting factor.

If this is the case, and your intent is to cause behavioral changes, examine the existent delivery system. You should remember that in intercultural communications, language is but one of ten primary message systems. Edward T. Hall, in the *Silent Language* states that "although language is one of the dominant threads in all cultures it is involved in but one of ten separate kinds of human activity, interaction." The other nine are: (1) association, (2) subsistence, (3) bisexuality, (4) territoriality, (5) temporality, (6) learning, (7) play, (8) defense, and (9) exploitation.³

Another point on language, many specialists argue that in *their* audiences there are no Spanish-speaking persons and those present can communicate well in English. This may be true, especially where the participants may be the more affluent or entirely composed of agents, as with most specialists in home-economics. However, in the audiences the agents are expected to reach there may be persons whose only language is Spanish. What, then, are the specialists doing to assist the agents in communicating with the Spanish-speaking people?

The answer may be in the development of educational materials by the specialists for the agents to use in educating the clientele. Such media as handouts, lesson guides, and production guidelines may be just what the agents need but do not have the time nor the expertise to develop. In many cases if these were in the Spanish language it would be just what the agents would need to encourage one more person to seek additional assistance at a later date. Often, even though our ability to speak English may be limited, the fact that something was provided in Spanish is enough encouragement for us to seek additional help.

Nonetheless, in addition to general knowledge of the various demographic variables, a deeper insight into how the intended recipient views the world is essential. Remember that the message must be a part of the world the audience sees. This can only be attained by interaction and empathy with us. I encourage you to spend some time interacting with the specific receiver group you intend to touch. We are more than demographic variables.

Sender

The Cooperative Extension Service from each of your states, is the sender. It is not the specialist who proposes the message, nor the agent who delivers it, nor the communicator who processes it. It is the organization through the specialist, agent, and communicator. This idea often is not accepted because each person wants recognition for delivery. However, as we communicate with the Spanish-speaking people it is imperative that the organization be perceived as the sender — the originator of the message

. . . the one who is saying, "We know you are there, and we have something for you."

There is a reason for this. Agents and specialists are not rewarded for empathizing with the Spanish-speaking people. Consequently, they tend to move out of these "special" efforts to participate in what I term "the mainstream of extension work." Thus, if the clientele perceives them to be the senders and they leave, then the clientele may not know that the same information is still available from the Cooperative Extension Service. The objective is to communicate meaningful and relevant information continuously. In doing so we create an awareness of Extension and eventually perhaps all "special" programs can be eliminated. In the meantime, it is a process of educating an audience that heretofore has been reached only in limited numbers.

Message

According to Berlo three factors need to be taken into account in any message — content, code and treatment. When the intended audience is Spanish-speaking people, the most important is the **content**; that is, the subject-matter in the message deserves special attention. Paulo Freire, the Brazilian adult educator, advances that Extension epitomizes the cultural invasion where what is brought reflects the bringers' world and that a person cannot be affected if the meaning of the contents are not known to her or him, or when the contents contradict his or her way of life.⁴

The efforts of the 1890 Cooperative Extension programs show clearly that traditional Extension technology originally prepared for the larger agricultural producers and more affluent homemakers can be transferred to small farmers and low-income homemakers. This has been possible mainly because of a readjustment of the subject-matter specialist's perspective to align more closely with the world of the intended audiences and the abilities of paraprofessionals to carry the technology to the people. The paraprofessionals, called "program aides," are indigenous personnel who relate well to the people from their communities. Intuitively, they are able to communicate with the intended audience. They have learned that the response desired must be rewarding to the participant otherwise it will not be learned. Also, they have demonstrated in dealing with the Spanish-speaking that if effort is put out, materials do not have to be translated — although most agree that materials in Spanish are an asset.

The same can be done in other program areas using agents who are properly trained and supported. If the language is a problem, then develop the necessary materials in Spanish. A quick examination of your state's areas of specializations may reveal quickly that subject matter already exists that can be adapted easily for special audiences regardless of their principal language. The objective, of course, is to execute a deliberate effort to affect a specific group of people in a particular way — with subject matter that is both beneficial and understandable.

Medium

It should be evident by now that the media I envision for communicating with Spanish-speaking people go beyond public media, although these have a place in the overall scheme. Mainly, however, for causing behavioral changes the emphasis is on educational media developed by the specialists and used by the agents. Rather than elaborate on each medium, permit me to list them. I think we are all familiar with them so discussion is not necessary. You will notice that the list does include public media because they are part of the overall. However, in using public media, one must discriminate between promotional and educational information. The list covers all media that are practical. I do not advocate using all for each effort. The objective in listing is to let you see that you do have various alternatives and you should select the best one for each situation.

- I. News Releases
 - A. Camera-ready
 - B. Fill-in for agents
- II. Newsletters from agents
- III. Radio
 - A. Tapes for agents
 - B. Tapes for stations
 - C. Scripts for agents
 - D. Scripts for stations
- IV. Television
 - A. News films
 - B. News releases with appropriate visuals
- V. 16 mm Educational Films
- VI. Publications
 - A. Bulletins
 - B. Fact sheets
 - C. Production guides
- VIII. Slide-tape presentations
- VIII. 3/4-inch video-tapes

GATEKEEPERS

Now, let us assume that you as a communicator are interested in reaching the Spanish-speaking people. Let us assume also that you feel there is subject matter that would be beneficial to this audience. What, then, are some obstacles that can possibly prevent your delivering this information? From where can you expect opposition? Perhaps you have already encountered these. Nevertheless the following is a list of potential barriers.

Specialists — They may not think their information is relevant to this audience, or they may not want to devote time to develop messages for a specific audience, or they may not want to be associated with such an effort.

Agents — They may feel apprehensive about having to deal with a cultural group different from their own and can think of many reasons why they do not. Foremost among these is “lack of time.” Others are “they aren’t interested in this,” “they never come to my meetings, even though I invite them,” or “we don’t have any in this county.”

Administration — Even though you may have evidence that agents are indeed trying to reach the Spanish-speaking people and are in need of particular materials and there exists an interested specialist with the expertise, the administration may deny the funds necessary for processing the information. Throughout, from the time you see a need to the time the agent delivers, do not expect to change anyone’s behavior, unless there is administrative support and encouragement.

Media personnel (editors and broadcasters) — Before you produce anything for a public medium, check with that medium’s gatekeeper. If he or she does not like it, it makes no difference how beneficial it is. It is going nowhere. Involve them in the development of the information, even if you have preconceived ideas. They can be helpful if they sense you are sincere about what you are doing.

ROLE OF THE COMMUNICATOR

Unless the sender and the receiver are from similar systems, no communication can happen. This is the principal role of the communicator, that is, to serve as the encoder for the sender and decoder for the receiver. Figure 1 depicts this scheme. The communicator must relate to the experiences of both and bridge the message across. To do this is an energy demanding process. The communicator is a facilitator and motivator; the communicator interacts constantly with the intended receiver and the source of the message, the specialist. He or she must interpret the message, select the appropriate medium, process the message, and deliver it. The delivery may be to a public medium or to the agents with complementary training.

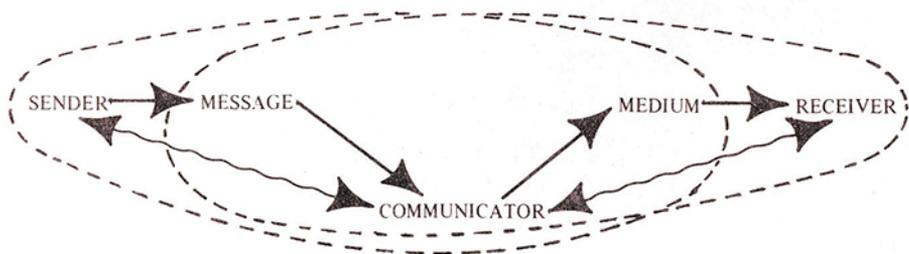


Figure 1. The communicator

Information ———
Interaction ~~~~~
Culture - - - - -

In carrying out this role, you can expect more attention to be given to any special effort to reach the Spanish-speaking people. You will be asked if it is "worth" the effort. You may be expected to know more about the results of your work. Communications evaluation and research is difficult. Remember that unless you have a complementary delivery system to carry your materials to the clientele what you do is not "worth" much.

I emphasize empathy with the clientele. To develop empathy requires an inordinate amount of time. You do not develop it simply by driving through a barrio or a poor rural area, or sipping a martini with your Spanish-speaking next door neighbor. It is something that demands a great deal of interaction — without a camera and a recorder to prove you have been there. Also remember that empathy decreases as you attempt to reach more people, if prior communication with the clientele has been minimal, and if you are insensitive to people in general.

Finally, a word of warning, it is human nature that if we see rewards for ourselves in predicting the internal state of others, we are willing to expend the energy to do this. If not, then we are unwilling to interact. Do not expect awards or accolades for your efforts. Your self-satisfaction will come from observing the receivers respond to something you had a hand in making happen.

References

1. Berlo, David K. 1961. *The Process of Communication*. Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, New York, pp. 30-29.
2. Ibid, p. 50.
3. Hall, Edward T. 1959. *The Silent Language*. Doubleday & Company, Garden City, pp. 61-81.
4. Freire, Paulo, *Education for Critical Consciousness*. Seabury Press, pp. 115-124.