To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Jeremy Brent Hughes entitled “Hablamos Español: Insights from Three Web Designers Who Design a Bilingual or Multilingual Websites that Target Hispanic Audiences.” I have examined the final electronic copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science, with a major in Communication and Information.

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(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)
Hablamos Español:
Insights from Three Web Designers Who Design a Bilingual or Multilingual Websites that Target Hispanic Audiences

A Thesis
Presented for the
Masters of Communication Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Jeremy Brent Hughes
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine particular aspects three web designers use, with regard to layout and content, to effectively create a bilingual or multilingual website that targets Hispanics. In addition, it examines the processes that are used in creating a Spanish-language website. In-depth interviews were conducted with three web designers from top 25 Hispanic-targeted websites, as determined by Hispanic Online. Results indicate a six-step process that web designers should follow when creating a bilingual or multilingual website. Implications for web designers of organizations thinking about creating a bilingual or multilingual website are cited and recommendations for future studies are discussed.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review of the Literature</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition of Hispanic</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing to Hispanics</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation Theory</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multicultural &amp; Bilingual Websites</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Method/Sample</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selection and Sampling of Participants</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Procedures</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profile of Participants</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process for Creating a Bilingual or Multilingual Website</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future Research</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website Designer Recruitment Email</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualifying Questions</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informed Consent Statement</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Core Questions</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Six-Step Process Model</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vita</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Hispanics recently surpassed African Americans as the largest minority group in the United States. The U.S. Hispanic population has increased more than 7 percent -- from 6 percent of the U.S. population in 1980 to 13.3 percent of the population in 2002. Today, the number of Hispanics in the United States totals nearly 37 million. The Hispanic market, as a whole, has grown in importance, reflecting the segment’s rising numbers, economic status and buying power (Herbig & Yelkur, 1997). In addition, research suggests that Hispanics, in general, have a favorable attitude toward advertising (Deshpande, Hoyer & Donthu, 1986) and that Hispanic-targeted advertising has a significant and positive impact on sales (Torres & Gelb, 2002). It comes as no surprise that advertisement spending on Hispanic consumers has increased steadily over recent years (Fullerton & Kendrick, 2000). In 2001, advertisers spend $2.7 billion to reach Hispanic consumers. By 2005, that number nearly doubled to close to $4.9 billion (Magazine Publishers of America, 2007).

However, organizations are faced with a dilemma in terms of how “Hispanic” their advertising content should be. For instance, they struggle with the issue of whether the copy of an advertisement should be written in Spanish, in English, or both. In addition, organizations are faced with the dilemma of creating an English-language website, a Spanish-language website, or a bilingual website. Aside from the obvious criterion that the target audience should be proficient in the chosen language, it then becomes a question of preference. In other words, does a bilingual Hispanic consumer prefer to view an advertisement or website in English, Spanish, or is there no such preference? The literature suggests that there are two opposing schools of thought that Hughes
shape the Hispanic consumer’s preference: the goal to fit into the “mainstream” and the
goal to reaffirm one’s ethnic identity (Fullerton & Kendrick, 2000). This may explain
why some researchers have found a preference for English language in advertisements
among Hispanic subjects (e.g., Palmeri & Levine, 1991), while others have found a
preference for Spanish language in advertisements (e.g., Koslow, Shamdasani &
Touchstone, 1994; Roslow & Nicholls, 1996), while others have found no preference
between the two (e.g., Faber & O’Guinn, 1991). These findings highlight the fact that the
Hispanic market, despite sharing a common language, is not homogeneous. However, the
research does suggest that highly acculturated Hispanics prefer more standardized (i.e.,
English language) advertising campaigns, whereas less acculturated Hispanics prefer
more customized (i.e., Spanish language) advertising messages (Ueltschy & Krampf,
1997). In all, there is a general consensus among academic and practitioner literature that
the choice of language is an important consideration when determining the most effective
way to advertise to the Hispanic market.
**REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

The Hispanic market in the United States has been studied from a variety of perspectives, including consumer behavior and the influence of ethnicity. Studies have focused on Hispanics as a holistic population segment as well as sub-segmenting Hispanics versus non-Hispanics. A consistent theme throughout much of the research is the role of language and the need for accommodation among Hispanic advertising. This study will examine how organizations use content and design elements to effectively target Hispanics online and to what level web designers use accommodation to integrate the Hispanic culture among their websites.

**Definition of Hispanic**

The term “Hispanic” is derived from the English translation of Hispano, a Spanish word in use since the Middle Ages. “Hispano” is derived from the Roman word for the Iberian Peninsula – “Hispania” (Marin & Marin, 1991). From this perspective, Hispanic, as a term, refers to individuals who trace their origins to any of the Spanish-speaking nations of the world, since inhabitants of the Iberian Peninsula settled in those nations. Fullerton and Kendrick (2000) noted that the term “Hispanic” refers to U.S. residents whose ethnicity is traced to either Spain or one of the Spanish-speaking countries throughout Latin America.

However, Hispanic as a definition is not as well-defined. Shorris (1992) noted that when used to define the culture, the definition of Hispanic varies by region and politics:

Geographically, Hispanic is preferred in the Southeast and much of Texas. New Yorkers use both Hispanic and Latino. Chicago, where no nationality has attained a majority, prefers Latino. In California, the word Hispanic has been barred from the Los Angeles Times, in keeping with the strong feelings of people in that community. Some people in New Mexico prefer Hispano. Politically, Hispanic
belongs to the right and some of the center, while *Latino* belongs to the left and the center (pp.xvi-xvii).

Given Shorris’ discussion of the definition of Hispanic, one can see how the meaning can be symbolic of one’s ethnic identity, culture of origin, or political persuasion. However, since the 1980s, Hispanic groups have more largely been defined by various indicators such as Spanish surname (Mirowsky & Ross, 1980), paternal ancestry (Alba & Moore, 1982), and Spanish spoken as the native tongue (Massey & Mullan, 1984). There exists an underlying assumption that, aside from sharing a common language, Hispanics also share similar cultural values and customs such as the importance of the family, fatalism, collectivism, spiritualism and respect (Falicov, 2001; Marin & Marin, 1991).

Although the Spanish language is commonly thought to be a unifying factor, the Hispanic audience is by no means a homogeneous market. Hispanics speak varying dialects and share distinct subcultural values and characteristics according to their heritage -- with Cubans, Puerto Ricans and Mexican-Americans representing the main three Hispanic subgroups (U.S Census Bureau, 2004).

**Marketing to Hispanics**

Multiculturalism is redefining what it means to be American today. With the changing appearance of the U.S. population comes new definitions of the U.S. consumer and new dilemmas for marketers who are trying to reach their consumers’ customs and language may differ from what is commonly know as "general market." Culturally relevant marketing plans have become increasingly critical as the U.S. population becomes more diverse and the buying power of U.S. Hispanics continues to become more significant.
Advertising research that examined U.S. Hispanics audiences began in the late 1970s and mid 1980s (Hirschman, 1983). Researchers were interested in how ethnicity and ethnic identity affect a variety of different aspects of consumer behavior (Delener & Neelankavil, 1990; Deshpande, et al., 1986; Faber & O'Guinn, 1987; Faber & O'Guinn, 1991; Hirschman, 1983; Koslow, et al., 1994). In the early years of Hispanic research, it was believed that one’s ethnicity alone would have some influence on consumer behavior. In short, it was proposed that there would be differences in behavior with regard to one’s ethnic group. This was not challenged until around 1985 when Deshpande, et al. (1986) extended the concept of ethnicity by considering the extent to which one identifies with one’s ethnic group. Their research added a new dimension to understanding the relationship between ethnic identity and advertising communications.

One of the new dimensions encompasses marketing messages to Hispanics. This focus includes *media usage* (Delener & Neelankavil, 1990; Deshpande, et al., 1986; O’Guinn, Faber & Meyer, 1985; O’Guinn & Meyer, 1984; Valdes, 1992), *information processing* and *advertising effects* (Dolinsky & Feinberg, 1986; Koslow, Shamdasani & Touchstone, 1994).

**Hispanics - One Market or Many?**

The biggest mistake an organization can make is to view the U.S. Hispanic market as homogeneous. As noted earlier, "Hispanic" refers to an origin or ethnicity, not a race. As such, there is no one all-encompassing "Hispanic market." Inside each market are sub-segments broken down by dissent, dialect and values. So, the question becomes, what, if anything, unifies Hispanics? For the most part, it is the language. Spanish stands as a symbol of difference among U.S. Hispanics; wherever they are from and regardless
of their history, Spanish language is a key to their individual and collective pasts (Borthayre, 2004).

¿Habla usted español?

Language is one of the most obvious examples of cultural identity. Spanish is likely to remain the language of preference among U.S. Hispanics. When asked about advertising effectiveness, a recent Nielsen poll noted that 38% of Hispanics found English language advertisements less effective than Spanish advertisements with regards to recall and 70% less effective than Spanish advertisements with regards to persuasion. Many younger and acculturated Hispanics mix languages to form "Spanglish," in which they speak English peppered with Spanish words. But when it comes to selling, it was reported that 56% of Latino adults respond best to advertising when it is presented in Spanish (Sonderup, 2007).

Translation vs. Transcreation

Borthayre (2004) noted that direct translations and usage of general market strategies do not seem to address the emotional and culturally relevant elements of Hispanics. She notes that some positive results will be there, but not with the sales volume, strength and recall that a truly culturally-attuned marketing and advertising effort can attain.

Sonderup (2007) later noted that marketers cannot simply transfer directly to the U.S. Hispanic market the conceptualizations or marketing strategies that work best among general market. Many factors – such as historical, contextual, cultural, demographic, financial -- place Hispanic consumers in a different category. Brand
awareness and usage levels are often dramatically unlike general market patterns and different product attributes are deemed important by Hispanic consumers.

**Communication Channels for U.S. Hispanics**

Research shows that while Hispanics consume every type of media, they do seem to have a special attraction to television, radio and Internet. Two of the earliest studies (O’Guinn, Faber and Meyer, 1985; O’Guinn and Meyer, 1984), focus on Hispanic media usage, concentrated on radio and television usage based on language. These studies, however, did not compare Hispanics to other groups. The studies only compared Hispanics, as a whole, based on language: Spanish versus English. O’Guinn and Meyer (1984) conducted the earliest study of Hispanic radio usage. The primary purpose of the study was not to discern media usage but to segment the Hispanic market based on language of the medium. From their findings, they concluded that the use of Spanish language radio each weekday was high for Hispanics between the ages of 18 and 34 years old and even higher for Hispanics aged 35 years old and 50+. They also noted that Hispanics between the ages of 12 and 17 used Spanish language radio even less and preferred contemporary American music. The researchers found that Hispanics who prefer Spanish language radio are generally older, more likely to be married, less educated, and more likely to speak Spanish at home. On the contrary, Hispanics who prefer English language radio are generally younger, better educated, and less likely to be married.

The second pinnacle study conducted by O’Guinn, Faber and Meyer (1985) examined the differences between Mexican-Americans who prefer Spanish language television to those who prefer English language television. They found that Mexican-Hughes
Americans who preferred Spanish language television could be differentiated from those who preferred English language television based on their level of acculturation, although the study did not specifically measure the participants’ level of acculturation. It appears that Hispanics in this study who preferred Spanish language media were more Spanish-language dominant, less educated, and came from lower socioeconomic levels. Conversely, Hispanics who preferred English language television were less Spanish-language dominant, more educated, and had higher incomes.

Delener and Neelankavil (1990) conducted a more thorough analysis of the different types of media used by U.S. Hispanics and Asians. Their study encompassed magazines, newspapers, radio, and television. They concluded that Hispanics use multiple media. They also concluded that the most dominant media for reaching Hispanics are radio and television, whereas magazines and newspaper are less important.

A Jupiter Research (2007) survey noted that 32 percent of Hispanic online users reported that they visit websites about movies at least once a month — which is 10 percent higher than that of non-Hispanic online users. At the same time, more than one-fourth of Hispanics visited online music websites, compared with one-fifth of non-Hispanics online who did.

Accommodation Theory

U.S. Hispanics tend to "adopt and adapt" to customs and habits in the United States without shedding traditions and value systems. Along that line, marketers, and those trying to tap into the Hispanic segment, cannot simply transfer existing concepts and marketing strategies that work with more traditional, general market consumers. Some Hispanics are acculturating to prevalent U.S. culture. However, they are not, and
probably never will, fully acculturate to American cultures. Instead, advertisers should *accommodate* their Hispanic audiences by incorporating Hispanic culture and language into their marketing strategies. However, for strategies to be effective, advertisers must show a general interest in the Hispanic culture and not use it as an empty gesture to sell products (Sonderup, 2007).

Earlier research in accommodation theory focused primarily on language choice and usage in speech interaction between the speaker and the audience of different ethnic backgrounds. Giles, Taylor and Bourhis (1973) first predicted that “the greater the amount of effort in accommodation [meaning choice of language] that a bilingual speaker of one group was perceived to put into this message, the more favorable he would be perceived by listeners from another ethnic group, and also the more effort they in turn would put into accommodating back to” the speaker. Holland and Gentry (1997) introduced the concept of “intercultural accommodation” when evaluating the impact of cultural symbols (i.e., language, music, art, attire, spokesperson of a similar ethnic background) on advertising effectiveness. They noted that when a spokesperson’s ethnicity was similar to that of the audience, the audience seemed to identify with the spokesperson and view the message more favorably.

Additionally, accommodation theory can provide useful insight about how consumers in a minority subculture perceive an advertiser and respond to the message. Lipski (1985) used accommodation theory to examine advertisements in radio and television. He noted that when advertisers accommodated a specific ethnicity by using their native language, the consumer view the advertiser more favorably and had a higher recall of the message. Recent research has extended accommodation theory to all areas.
of mass communication (Giles et al., 1991). Koslow, Shamdasani and Touchstone (1994) noted that in order for advertisers to accommodate Hispanics, Hispanics must perceive the use of Spanish in the advertisement as the advertiser’s way of respecting the culture and reducing the linguistic dissimilarities. In addition, Koslow et al. noted that by increasing the amount of Spanish language in an advertisement, the more favorable the response to the advertisement would be. For example, if an advertiser creates an advertisement completely in Spanish, according to Koslow et al., Hispanic audiences will feel as though the advertiser is making an effort to accommodate their needs and will respond more favorably to the advertisement. However, Faber and O'Guinn (1991) found that when most Hispanics were exposed to both English and Spanish language versions of an advertisement, there was no direct impact on attitude toward either the commercial or the brand.

**Multicultural & Bilingual Websites**

Despite the world’s cultural and linguistic diversity, the Internet has historically been dominated by English speaking countries, both in terms of users and content providers (Arnold, 1998). While most organizations have recognized the necessity to adapt the print and broadcasting media to the specific preferences of a target culture (e.g., de Mooij, 2005), this is not yet common practice among most websites. English is still the dominant language of many websites. However, as of June 30, 2007, 68 percent of Internet users speak another language other than English (Internet World Stats). It is important to note that 9 percent of all the Internet users in the world speak Spanish and that the number of Spanish-speaking Internet users has grown 311 percent since 2000 (Internet World Stats, 2007).
Although there are a plethora of guidelines for website design and some specifically for the design of multi-language websites, very little has been written specifically on the design of bilingual websites (Chu, 1999; Voge, 1998). Bilingual users may wish to view information on a website in their second language if it is not available in their first language, or they may wish to read certain types of information in their second language. Bilingual users may wish to alternate between languages during their use of a website. Therefore, it is inappropriate to adopt a simple multi-language website design where language versions exist largely independently of each other. Among bilingual websites, it is necessary to provide rich interconnectivity between the language versions, allowing the users to select the language that best suits their needs at that time and to easily move between languages when desired (Voge, 1998).

The purpose of this study is to examine particular aspects web designers use, with regard to layout and content, to effectively target Hispanics. The following research question will be addressed in this study: What is the process that web designers (and their organization) undergo when creating a Spanish-language website?
METHOD

Research Method

This study employed in-depth interviews to examine and compare the aspects web designers consider when creating bilingual or multilingual websites. This method of collecting data was chosen because it allowed the participants to explain their opinions in more detail and to allow for more in-depth discussion to examine themes that develop. In-depth interviews were conducted following the long interview model outlined by McCracken (1988), which comprises a four-step method of inquiry. In the first step, the interviewer gained an awareness of the relevant literature. The second step was primarily introspective and was designed to offer insight to the interviewer’s own relevant experiences. The third step was the interview itself, during which the participants were given the opportunity to offer responses to questions about their profession and their respective websites. The fourth step involved analyzing the interview data. The goal of final step was to search for consistencies and/or contradictions in an effort to uncover general themes. McCracken recommended that the participants should be strangers to the interviewers, and that for most research, eight participants are sufficient to obtain information about to the participants' cultural world. However, for this study, themes were fairly evident by the third interview. Therefore, three interviews were sufficient to examine the developing themes. The long interview method acknowledges that participant observation is not always possible; this approach allows the researcher access to participants' personal experiences without having to violate their privacy. During the course of the interviews, participants were asked to describe the process that they (and their organization) underwent when creating a Spanish-language website. This method
was chosen because it allowed the participants to describe the actual process and they would be better able to recall their own experiences and respond with stronger reflections.

Selection and Sampling of Participants

The sampling frame consisted of web designers from the top twenty-five U.S. Hispanic-targeted advertiser’s websites -- as determined by *Hispanic Online* (2007). The researcher chose to target these websites as opposed to employing a random sampling procedure for two main reasons. First, not all websites offer a bilingual or multilingual website. By choosing a select group of websites, all websites examined are at least bilingual. Second, since this study’s goal was to examine websites that were bilingual or multilingual and specifically target U.S. Hispanics, a random sample of a bilingual or multilingual websites might have yielded languages that are not applicable to this study. In addition, web designers were chosen to be interviewed because of their expertise in creating and designing web pages.

Administrative Procedures

Each webmaster was contacted via email (see Appendix 1) using the “webmaster” link located on each website. Each webmaster was asked if he/she would participate in the study. Once the web designers agreed to participate, they were contacted via phone and asked a series of qualifying questions (see Appendix 2) to see if they were directly involved in the creation and design process of the website. The designers who qualified were asked to sign an informed consent form (see Appendix 3) prior to the interview taking place. After the consent forms were signed and received by the principal investigator, interview schedules were set up.
Prior to the interviews, a pre-test interview was administered to a web designer who was not participating in this study. The web designer worked for an advertising agency that created numerous Spanish-language websites. The initial interview was conducted to help establish some baseline questions.

Although personal interviews would have been preferred, due to the location of each web designer, telephone interviews were used instead to discuss the websites. Interviews were conducted on August 14, 2007, August 30, 2007 and September 18, 2007. During the interview, each web designer was asked a series of general questions (see Appendix 4) about the design process and the process leading to the creation of the website. Each web designer was allowed to answer each question and then to explain his/her answer. Many of the responses allowed for more questions and required further explanation. On average, the interviews lasted for 60 minutes. This length of time allowed each participant to amply cover the topic and to go through each website in detail. All interviews were recorded and then fully transcribed for analysis. In analyzing these transcripts, a series of themes and common experiences were found.
RESULTS

Profile of Participants

A total of 25 webmasters were contacted. Four responded that they would be willing to participate; two responded that they would not be willing to participate and 19 did not respond. Of those four who said they were willing to participate, three qualified to participate in this study. Two of the web designers were Hispanic and the third was Caucasian. One of the Hispanic web designers was born in Mexico and moved to the United States after graduating from college. The other Hispanic web designer was born and raised in the United States. The organization websites analyzed included a leading home-improvement store, a leading soft drink manufacturer and a leading fast-food restaurant chain. Due to confidentiality, the names of the web designers and their organizations are withheld. The web designer for the home-improvement website had been designing websites for 12 years. The web designer for the soft drink website had been designing websites for six years but had been a graphic designer for 24 years. The web designer for the fast food restaurant had been designing websites for four years.

Process for Creating a Bilingual or Multilingual Website

When analyzing each of the interviews, themes began to develop on how organizations create a website targeting Hispanics. From these interviews, a six-step process emerged. The six steps that developed were (1) defining the target audience, (2) creating a bilingual or multilingual website, (3) assessing the target audience’s culture, (4) translating the English-language website into Spanish, (5) designing the website, and (6) testing the website among the target audience. Although the designers may have used
difference methods during each step, the process seemed to be uniform across all three web designers.

*Defining the Target Audience*

Defining the audience is the first key step in the website planning process. A clearly defined purpose or goal of the website as well as an understanding of what visitors want to do/feel when they come to a website will help to identify the target audience. Upon considering who is most likely to use the content, a list is developed and includes characteristics such as, audience characteristics, information preferences, computer specifications, and web experience. Taking into account these characteristics of the audience will allow an effective website to be created that will deliver the desired content to the target audience. As one web designer noted, “When we decide on a target market, we are looking for specific things that can bind the group.”

In addition, when creating a bilingual or multilingual website, designers must also consider the various sub-cultures within the desired target audience. In this study, organizations had to decide whether to target the Hispanic market as a whole or to try and target each individual sub-culture. One designer mentioned the fact that Puerto Ricans do not like to be referred to as “Mexican” and are offended when targeted as such. With all of these sub-cultures, designers must find a way to reach the audience as a whole, while still appealing to their individual cultures. One web designer noted that it was like “trying to find a needle in a stack of needles with a needle.”

*Creating a Bilingual or Multilingual*

Once an organization has defined its target audience, the web designers must then decide whether to create a bilingual website or a multilingual website. The criterion for
this decision is based on two things – what language or languages do their target audiences speak and what is the purpose of the website? Although the criteria for making the decision were similar among web designers, the reasons for making the decisions were very different. These reasons were the only responses that did not share a common theme among the web designers.

The home-improvement company chose to create a bilingual site because its Hispanic target audience was Mexicans living in the United States. The web designer jokingly noted, “You can drive by any [Company Name] in Southern California and see 20-30 Mexicans standing out front.” In a more serious tone, he revealed that this is who the home-improvement company wanted to target because of the increasing Hispanic population in the United States. He pointed to trends that show Hispanics becoming the largest minority group in the United States within the next ten years and the growing influence in regards to purchasing power. He also added that the company wanted to establish brand loyalty with these consumers. To do this, they needed a website that reflected the Mexican culture and a website created in their language.

Then, the target audience for the home-improvement company changed as the company expanded into Mexico. They were now targeting Mexicans in their native country. The home-improvement company decided to take the content from its bilingual site and change the layout and images to target Mexico. Since, both sites use the same translation and language; they still considered the website to be bilingual website. The web designer noted: “We had two different target markets with a similar language and we needed to reach them both. The easiest and least expensive way was to use the same content, just change the look and feel of the site.” The web designer also alluded that the Hughes
organization may be looking to develop more Spanish-language websites for other Latin America countries. However, at that time, the web designer would look at going to a multilingual style website.

The web designer for the fast food company noted that the decision to create a bilingual site was more out of perception rather than to reach their target audience. Although the fast food company was interested in reaching the Hispanic market, it did so because it fit the brand of the organization. The web designer noted:

Because our food is associated with Mexicans and Hispanics, people expect us to have a site in Spanish. It makes sense to have a Spanish-language site, but it is really not our target audience.

The soft drink company was the only one of the three companies interviewed that chose to create a multilingual website. The main reason he chose this style of website was because of the purpose of the website. Because the organization is a global brand, it needed to reach a much larger, more diverse audience. The soft drink company not only created sites for Hispanics living in the United States, but websites for Asians, Africans, Europeans and others from Latin America. The web designer noted: “We are in almost every country in the world and they all don’t speak English.”

Assessing the Target Audience’s Culture

Once the type of website was decided upon, the web designers looked at the culture of their target audience. All of the participants noted that it was important to understand the target audience’s culture before they began designing the website. This involved not only studying what the audience liked, but their heritage and that of their native country. This seemed to be a central theme for all three of the designers. Each

Hughes 18
said they felt the need to accommodate their Hispanic culture in an attempt to connect with their audience.

One part of the Hispanic culture that all participants noted was that Hispanics are very family-oriented and enjoy spending time together. The web designer for the home-improvement company, who is Hispanic, noted: “That is what Latinos do on a Saturday night. We get together to unwind and enjoy each other’s company.”

Another key element that the participants noted about Hispanic culture was the use of colors. One designer, who was Hispanic, noted that the use of colors is a way to express moods. Hispanics like bold colors and will often paint rooms in different colors to express their mood.

A final common element that the designers noted was fútbol, or soccer as we refer to it in the United States. Fútbol is a very important to Hispanics and can be compared to baseball in America. The web designer for the soft drink company noted:

This was a key element that we chose to focus on. It is the most popular sport in the world, outside of the U.S., and the passion for the game, the players and the teams is so great in other countries. We knew that fútbol was a great way to connect with all of our audiences and with doing a multilingual website; you need to find that one thread that can link everything together.

*Translating the English-language Website into Spanish*

Once a designer understands the audience’s culture, they can create the content to get the organization’s message to the audience. All three of the organizations used in this study had an existing English-language website and wanted to use a similar message on its Spanish-language websites. To do this, they need to translate the website into Spanish. However, simply translating it from English to Spanish may not make the message clear and in some instances, it may not translate correctly. All three web designers agreed that
translation was the most important part of designing a bilingual or multilingual website.

One phrase or word may mean one thing in one language, but it may mean something completely different in another language. For example, the web designer for the soft drink website noted:

We were translating the phrase “I am hot” into French. The intended meaning was referring to a person being hot and in need of a [product]. So, we looked it up and used the direct translation of “Je Suis Chaud.” We later found out that phrase actually translated to “I am horny.” We should have used the translation should “J'ai Chaud,” which mean “I have heat.”

In addition, the web designer for the home-improvement company noted:

The translation was very important to us because we give ‘how-to’ instruction on our website and, in construction, being off 1/8th of an inch can cost hundreds of dollars to fix.

In addition to making sure the translation is correct, a web designer must also take into consideration the dialect of the target audience. For example, Mexico’s official language is Spanish. However, when an individual goes there and tries to speak “textbook” Spanish, most Mexican will either giggle or not understand what they are saying. Even in the United States, Hispanics will combine both English and Spanish in what has been dubbed “Spanglish” in attempt to acculturate themselves, yet keep true to their own culture.

Considering regional dialect is especially important when you are creating a multilingual website. The web designer for the soft drink company noted:

We deal with so many countries in Latin America, we can’t just blanket translate the site into Spanish. It’s a misconception that everyone in Latin America/Caribbean speaks Spanish. Brazil for example speaks Portuguese. Some Caribbean countries speak French, while others speak Dutch. Granted, most countries do speak Spanish, but it is not the same Spanish they speak in Spain. Which brings me to my second reason. Even though a country may speak
Spanish, they have their own variation or dialect, which to effectively reach the audience, you must consider.

It is impossible for a web designer to translate the site into all the languages or dialects presented in their target audience. This is where it becomes very important to understand the culture of the audience. The web designer must find a balance as to how to translate the text and which dialects to use to best reach his/her target audience.

Designing the Website

Once the content has been translated, it is time to design the website. Designing a website is like putting a jigsaw puzzle together. The web designers take the content and all of the design elements and begin to lay out the web pages. The content is matched with images to tell the whole story of the organization. Menu items and hyperlinks are laid out to make it easy to navigate the website. Colors and design elements are chosen, and the site begins to take shape.

During this step, the study revealed that there are three elements that are common among designing bilingual websites – colors, layout style and images as hyperlinks. Colors are very important in the design of a website targeting Hispanics. The web designer for the home-improvement company was concerned that since his organization was recognized by a specific color, would Hispanics be able to associate with that color. The web designer noted:

Our color is big in our brand recognition, but all the data we were getting back was showing that [color] was not particularly attractive to Hispanics. We didn’t want to break with our brand, so we decided to limit it to the header area and links, but we stayed with tans and browns and used more colors in the images that we chose.
In addition, the style in which the page is laid out is also very important. The participants noted that when designing websites for American audiences, the layout tends to be very linear with all the elements lining up in sequential order. However, the designers noted that Hispanics seem to prefer websites that are more flowing and open. The designers note that they all used more curves in their design elements to get away from the “block-style” design of the organization’s English-language website. As one designer noted, “We were actually able to ‘think outside the box’ and open up the web page more.”

Another common element in the design process is using images as hyperlinks instead of text, thereby eliminating the possibility of mistranslation or the link not being found. As the web designer for the home-improvement company noted:

The expression ‘a picture says more than 1000 words’ was something we took to heart. It was much easier to see an image of a man remodeling a bathroom rather than trying to find a text link titled ‘baño modella nuevo.’ It also made translating easier. Had we done a literal translation of bathroom remodeling, ‘el cuarto de baño que modella de nuevo,’ it would have been way too big for a menu item and could be confusing to someone.

The web designer for the soft drink company made a similar statement about the use of images on hyperlinks. He said:

We found that we made an immediate connection to the users when we placed images of fútbol players on a link to a section of our website. The users were able to see their favorite players, click the image and get sound bites, videos or statistics about that player or his team. If we had just created a link titled “Estadística” and placed it in the same locations we have the images, no one would have found it or they would not have paid any attention to it. Hispanics are very visual people and as a designer, it works to our advantage.

In addition to design elements, a web designer must also take into consideration the amount of knowledge the user has about the Internet and the hardware the user is
using to connect to the Internet, which included connection speeds. The study revealed that a website needs to load quickly and be very easy to navigate because, according to the participants, most Hispanics do not have access to high-speed internet access nor are they very “web-savvy.” In fact, just getting to the bilingual website can be problematic. As with most bilingual sites, either when search for or typing in the URL directly, the website a users goes to first is the English-language website. The Hispanic user needs to quickly be able to find a hyperlink that gives them the option to go to a Spanish-language version of the website. The participants were all in agreement that one of the most important things is getting the user to the Spanish-language web pages from the English-language main page. All three websites used in this interview had clearly marked and, in some cases, high visible hyperlinks from the English-language main page to the Spanish-language site. Then, once on the Spanish-language website, the navigation needs to be clear and the pages need to load quickly. A balance needed to be reached on the number of images on page and the load time for each page. As one designer noted, “We could have added a few more bells and whistles, but we need the pages to load in less than 10 seconds for users on a 56.6 dial-up modem.”

Testing the Website

Once a website has been designed, organizations test the websites to see if the web designers reached their target audience. A group of people from the target market are allowed to look at the site before the website is released to see if the content is understandable, the website is easy to navigate and does it accommodate their culture correctly. This step in the process is one that allows the web designers the most feedback, but it also causes some anxiety. One designer noted:

Hughes
That is the most nerve racking part of the process. You have spent the past six months of your life designing this site and it can all change with one focus group not liking one color. We were lucky in that only a few images and headings needed to be changed. The positive is that this is where you know if you were right-on with the translation. Nothing is more frustrating than watching the focus group look at a webpage and not understand what you are trying to say.

As with anything involving larger groups of people, web designers understand that not everyone in the target audience is going to like the site or find it useful. However, the goal is for the audience to be able to understand the message and feel positive about that website. Once this has been achieved, than the organization is able to launch the website.
CONCLUSION

So, how does an organization create the “perfect” bilingual or multilingual website? Unfortunately, there is no definitive answer. However, this study reveals a six-step process (see Figure 1) used by three web designers who have created bilingual and multilingual websites for organizations that target Hispanic audiences. Although the process does follow each step, the model shows that it is not a linear path. The study revealed that once the web designers got to the “designing a website” and “translating the English-Language website into Spanish” steps, the process becomes very fluid and the process would go back and forth between these steps.

In looking at the process, the study revealed three common themes that will help other web designers, and their organizations, create a bilingual or multilingual websites. First and foremost, an organization must understand who it is trying to target. This will allow the designer to decide on the style, bilingual or multilingual, of website to create. In addition, the web designers can begin to assess the culture of the target audience. This confirms what Deshpande, et al. (1986) noted when targeting different ethnicities.

Second, the results show that web designers must translate the English-language site using a more conversational translation from English to Spanish. In confirming what Borthayre (2004) and Sonderup (2007) noted, using direct translations does not connect with the Hispanic audience. The Hispanic audience must feel as though the website is speaking to them using words and phrase that are familiar to them.

Finally, a bilingual or multilingual website must accommodate the culture of the target audience. As Koslow et al. (1994) noted, by accommodating the Hispanic culture, Hispanics are going to feel more positive about the organization because they believe the
organization respects them and their culture. The study reveals that web designers can accomplish this by using colors, images and design styles that connect with the Hispanic audience.

In the end, if an organization follows these steps in creating a bilingual or multilingual website, then everyone will be on the “same page.”
LIMITATIONS

The data collected was based on the comments and opinions of three web designers. Their comments were analyzed for patterns. However, additional patterns or more detailed information about designing a bilingual or multilingual websites targeting Hispanic audiences might have been uncovered had more interview been conducted with other web designers.
**FUTURE RESEARCH**

This study represents the first phase of a much broader study to examine how to effectively advertise to U.S. Hispanics via the Internet. Future studies will expand the scope of this project and will look at how *Hispanic audiences* view Spanish-language websites. In addition, future studies will examine if the message that the companies are trying to get across to Hispanics through their websites are actually getting through and being understood by those consumers.

Another area of future research would be to do a more in-depth examination of some of the characteristics of the Hispanic sub-cultures. Due to the diversity of the Hispanic culture and all of its sub-cultures, future research may examine how these cultures interact with each other. In addition, it may examine how to effectively target more than one sub-culture by using a single bilingual or multilingual website.

Finally, this study can also be used to examine the process or processes that other cultures use for creating a bilingual or multilingual website.


Valenzuela, N. (1973). *Media Habits and Attitudes: Surveys in Austin and San Antonio* Austin: Center for Communications Research, the University of Texas at Austin.

Appendix 1 – Web Designer Recruitment Email

[website] Webmaster:

I am sending you this email requesting an opportunity to talk with you, in-depth, about designing websites for Hispanics audiences. I am a graduate student at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville working on my Master’s thesis. The topic is how organizations create a website to effectively target U.S. Hispanics. I am particular interested in understand how design elements and content are used and the levels of accommodation that go into the planning.

The interview will take approximately 45-60 minutes and will be audio taped. Your name and responses will remain confidential. I will be the only person transcribing the audio tapes and once the project has been completed, the tapes will be destroyed. You will have an opportunity to withdrawal your consent prior to the interview.

If you are willing to participate, please email me back and I will send you an Informed Consent form that must be signed and mailed back to me before we can do the interview. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Thank you,

Jeremy Hughes
Graduate Student
University of Tennessee, Knoxville
Appendix 2 – Qualifying Questions

What is your current title with the organization?

What was your title with the organization when you first created the website?

Was the website the first Spanish-language website you created? If not, how many have you created?

How long have you been designing websites? Hispanic websites?

What, exactly, was your role in the design process of the website?

Are you fluent in Spanish?
Appendix 3 – Informed Consent Statement

INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT

A Study on How Organizations Create a Website to Effectively Target U.S. Hispanics

INTRODUCTION

Thank you for agree to take part in this study. The purpose of this study is to examine whether organization websites that targets U.S. Hispanics support previous research findings in terms of the choice of language, message and design of the website. In particular, the study examines how web designers use accommodation theory in creating websites targeting Hispanics. In addition, this study will look at some of the design and message elements web designers use to effectively target Hispanic viewers.

INFORMATION ABOUT PARTICIPANTS' INVOLVEMENT IN THE STUDY

You will be asked a series of basic questions about website design for U.S. Hispanic audiences where each answer may dictate further questioning. You will be allowed to go into as much detail as you would like. We will then discuss various design elements and message techniques about the Hispanic-targeted website you created. Each interview will take approximately 45-60 minutes. The interviews will be audio tape-recorded with minimal risk to the participants. Your identity will remain confidential as only the researcher and the faculty advisor will have access to the tapes. The tapes will be stored, under lock and key, in room 107V Communications Building, University of Tennessee and will be destroyed after completion of the project. Following the interview, the audio tape will be only be transcribed by the principle investigator. To maintain your confidentiality, you will only be identified as “web designer” in the transcript. There will be NO VIDEO RECORDING. Once all interviews have been completed, the transcripts from each interview will be analyzed for themes and common elements.

BENEFITS

The benefit of this study is that it will increase the knowledge and understanding of advertisers and web designer on how to create an effective website to target U.S. Hispanics.

CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, you may contact the researcher, Jeremy Hughes, at 91 Communications Bldg., Knoxville, TN 37996-0312 and (865) 974-8753. If you have questions about your rights as a participant, contact the Office of Research Compliance Officer at (865) 974-3466.
PARTICIPATION

Your participation in this study is voluntary; you may decline to participate without penalty. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at anytime without penalty and without loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed you data will be returned to you or destroyed.

CONSENT

I have read the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study.

Participant's signature ____________________________ Date __________

Investigator's signature ___________________________ Date __________
Appendix 4 – Core Questions

General Questions

1. Why did your organization decide to create a bilingual or multilingual website?
2. Who was your target audience?
3. Did you do any pilot testing of the Spanish-language website prior to launching it?
4. Did the design or layout change after the testing?
5. How do users access the Spanish-language website?
6. How do design elements differ on the Spanish-language website compared to the English-language website?
7. Who translated the English-language website into Spanish?
8. What factors were taken into consideration when designing the website? (e.g., politics, financial, education, etc.)
9. How did you accommodate Hispanic culture on your website?
10. What could you have done to accommodate more of the Hispanic culture?
11. Step me though the process you took in taking an existing English-language website and creating a bilingual or multilingual website.
12. In your opinion, has the Spanish-language website effectively reached your target audience?

Demographics

1. What is your ethnic background?
2. What is your gender?
3. How long have you been designing websites?
4. Are you fluent in Spanish?
5. How long have you worked for your organization?
Figure 1 – Six-Step Process Model

- Defining the Target Audience
- Creating a Bilingual or Multilingual Website
- Assessing the Culture
- Translating the English-Language Website into Spanish
- Designing the Website
- Testing the Website
Vita

Jeremy Hughes was born in Johnson City, TN, on October 22, 1973. He graduated from Science Hill High School in 1991. From there, he went to the University of Tennessee, Knoxville for one year before transferring to East Tennessee State University. He graduated from East Tennessee State University in 1995 with a B.S. in Engineering Technology. Jeremy then pursued a professional career as a graphic/web designer working at companies such as WTNZ Fox 43, DURO Communications and Securities Service Network.

Jeremy earned his master’s in communication at the University of Tennessee 2007, Knoxville, and went on to the doctoral program at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville starting in fall of 2008. He is currently working at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville as the web designer for the College of Arts & Sciences and all departments and schools associated with the college.