Creating a Successful Spanish Speech System

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Visibility

Accessibility

Transfers

Problem Definition

Translation & Localization
How do callers reach the speech system?

We have a Spanish automated system?
Visibility

- Customers need to know it exists
  - Direct communication
  - Bills, back of credit cards and websites

- Some companies inform their customers...
  ...in ENGLISH or using one-time communications

- Agents need to know it exists

- Impact of English-centric Call Center metrics
  - Antagonism
  - Agents may actively discourage the use of the system
Accessibility

• Common strategies
  – Direct phone number
  – Through English system

• Avoid:
  – Language selector after long English greeting, promo or menu
  – Passive unadvertised timeout in English menu
  – Frustration $\rightarrow$ lower tolerance for automated system $\rightarrow$ lower automation
Where are callers transferred to?
Transfers

• Are Spanish-speaking callers being sent to:
  – a live English-speaking agent?
  – another English-only automated system?
  – a Spanish call center with limited hours?

• Definition of Success
  – “Did the system work?” (PM) vs. “Was I able to accomplish what I needed?” (Customer)
The Internet
What else affects automation rates?
Same Functionality, Different Problem

- Spanish-speaking callers have different needs
- Make sure you are solving the “right” problem

- Example: Bills and Marketing material
- Same menu options may not result in similar automation rates.

- If possible, make sure all communications are in the right language
- Or, at least, establish a language-specific definition of success
It’s not just about translation, but...

A single bad prompt could render a system unusable!
The Risks of “Professional” Translation

• “Please enter your savings account number”
• “Please enter your account number for discounts”

• “Welcome to ACME’s hotline”
• “Welcome to ACME’s sexy line”

• "If you live in Orange County, press one. Otherwise, press two."
• "If you live in the land of the orange fruit, the-printing-press one. Otherwise, the-printing-press two."

• “Play CD number 8”
• “Procreate with CD number 8”
Translation

What you typically get:
• Literal translation
• Biased towards one dialect
• Awkward or with double entendres

What you need for a text:
• Professional
• Context sensitive
• Accurate, not literal
• Fluent
• Consistent terminology
• Consistent style

What you also need for speech:
• A translation that can be understood “universally” by people from 33+ countries
• Terminology that has been proven to work (in usability studies and call analysis)
• Verbiage that is conducive to higher recognition accuracy
• Natural concise commands (not “translated” commands)
Localization

“Adding some local flavor” is not enough
Localization

What you typically get:
• No localization, or
• Stereotypes or oversimplifications

What you need for a text:
• Modification of text to suit the needs of Hispanics in the US
• Culturally appropriate instructions and examples

What you also need for speech:
• Culturally-effective call flow
• Localization of DTMF mappings
• Knowledge of Hispanic caller and consumer behavior specific to the tasks you are trying to automate
• US-based and Latin America-based expertise on Hispanic culture
• Correct use of brand and proper names
Creating a successful Spanish speech system comes down to:

Understanding the callers

Understanding the issues

Planning
Visibility
- Agents and customers can find out that the Spanish system exists

Accessibility
- Customers can find the system and navigate the language selector

Transfers
- Spanish callers are transferred to Spanish agents or Spanish IVRs. Or they are at least given a choice.

Problem Definition
- You understand the real problem (e.g. printed material), not just the symptoms
- The definition of success for your system is language-specific

Translation and Localization
- The design is not just a translation.
- The content is appropriate for the language and culture.
Remember

1 in 10 people living in the US speaks Spanish
Hispanic Purchasing Power = $581 billion!
Empowering Your customers and employees with speech technologies

SpeechTEKI 2006 Empower

The Voice Solutions Showcase

Thank You