Jornades de Foment de la Investigació

COMPARING THE USE OF VALEN-CIAN, CASTILIAN AND ENGLISH IN PUBLIC UNIVERSI-TIES' WEB PAGES OF THE VALENCIAN COMMUNITY.

Autors

Elina VILAR.

ABSTRACT

In recent times the internet and World Wide Web have inspired a great deal of interest among researchers. Both Web Page design and its study are gaining popularity day after day. We find quite common features among pages concerning the same topic. However when dealing with bilingual or multilingual web pages, translations should be very carefully carried out in order to remain faithful to the original.

This study is based on the analysis of three public universities of the Valencian Community concerning the use of the two official languages, Castilian and Catalan, and also the English language. Our findings show that more attention should be paid to the translation of these pages and the updating of the information in all three.

1. INTRODUCTION: STUDYING UNIVERSITIES' WEB PAGES.

The internet is defined in Gauntlett's article (2000: 4) as a global network of interconnected computers, he also states that the World Wide Web is a user-friendly interface on to the internet. The World Wide Web was developed by Tim Berners-Lee in 1990-91, his idea was to create a set of agreed protocols and standards so that documents could be stored on Web servers anywhere in the world, but could be brought up on a computer screen by anyone who wanted them using an address. He thought of the use of hyperlinks, one of the most important part of Web pages. However, if we expect to find a relevant page by using a link and we go into a page that does not have the information the hyperlink announced, excitement turns usually into frustration. This situation takes place, for example, when we find a very interesting page and we are redirected to another which has nothing or very little to do with the information we expected. Another similar case occurs when finding the information in a language we don't understand and we would like to be able to get it in another language, then we find the link of that other language but unfortunately either the link takes you back to the page you were just reading, or the new page found, contains different information from the one which was the source of the problem. As Michael Goldhaber (1997) points out, the main goal of a Web page is to get *attention* from the users, however if things like the above mentioned ones take place, the interest of the people on that page decreases. This is the basis of this research, focusing our attention on Web pages of Public Universities of the Valencian Community. If we want to display all the information from our Universities' Web pages to a global audience, we will have to think first on the features and needs of that global audience.

We should bear in mind that not all the people searching the Web Pages share the same language or culture. To think about the audience is very important, and relating this to our topic, it is a sort of discrimination, to offer all the information in one language and just some of it in the other language. As David Silver states (2000: 27) much more work is needed in the field of online marginality, general topics such as race, sexuality, ethnicity, etc., should be further developed on the Web. Furthermore, if we look into Web Pages, we have to think of them as simultaneously computer code, cultural representations, material objects for consumption and the outcome of skilled labour as pointed out by Nina Wakeford (2000: 34). It is for this reason that many factors should be taken into account when studying Web Pages.

In this study, we are going to analyse a very concrete group of Web Pages: Public Universities' sites of Valencian speaking regions. They are grouped in this paper in accordance to the community they belong to. The main focus of this paper concerns the study of the different languages used in these universities' web pages. We are facing a period of time in which more and more exchange students are coming to study to our universities, in order to learn the language and culture of the region they are interested in. For example, at Universitat Jaume I, at least sixty exchange students come to an elementary Spanish course which is held in September and a similar amount of students come the next month to start their studies at this university. Exactly the same happens at the beginning of the second semester. During each semester both intermediate and advanced Spanish courses are offered. Many exchange students enrol on them and they have some sessions of Valencian as well. This way they are introduced to the language and the culture of the region in which they are carrying out their studies. Some of these students don't like the idea of facing the difficulties of learning a new language while they are establishing a hold on the Castilian Language. However, once they start studying it, they are very pleased to see that with only a little effort they can learn two languages and use them both.

There is, of course, a problem with this optimistic view, when students from all around the world try to find information about our university or other universities from the Valencian Communities, they sometimes don't understand the information, or it is too hard for them and they just abandon the search. Usually the information is only available in Valencian and when they go to the Spanish site, they find information about Spanish courses, which might not be what they want. English sites are usually worse. In order to understand this better, we will show what happens when we enter the web pages of the following public universities:

- **Valencian Community**: Universitat Jaume I, Universitat de València and Universidad d'Alacant.

2. WEB PAGE ANALYSIS.

We analysed three public universities from the Valencian Community, which is considered bilingual. These universities' web pages show differences in the information to be found depending on the language we are working in. The information found in the Castilian and the Valencian web pages is, most of the time, quite similar. The problem arises when we try to enter the English web sites, which are the universities' tool to lure students and personnel from all around the world. Maybe it is not necessary to translate all the updated contents, only the information they might need.

Following what has been stated by law concerning administrative documents and applying it to these Web Pages, we should be able to find the same information in the Valencian pages as in the Castilian ones. Moreover, it would be interesting to find the same information also translated into English in order to reach a larger audience. Here there are some examples of how to present the administrative documents in these Valencian speaking regions:

ESTATUT D'AUTONOMIA DE L'UJI,

Article 7
La llengua oficial de la Universitat Jaume I és la llengua pròpia, tot respectant els drets lingüístics que es deriven de l'Estatut d'Autonomia de la Comunitat Valenciana.

LLEI 4/1983, DE 23 DE NOVEMBRE, D'ÚS I ENSENYAMENT DEL VALENCIÀ.

PREÀMBUL

VIII

Al Títol Tercer es reconeix el dret que tots els ciutadans tenen de ser informats pels mitjans de comunicació social, tant en valencià com en castellà i a utilitzar indistintament ambdues llengües quan hagen d'usar-los, i s'atribueix al Consell la promoció i la utilització del valencià en aquests mitjans, vetlant per una adequada presència del valencià en aquells dependents de la Generalitat.

Article 30

4. Els impresos, formularis I models officials que hagen d'utilitzar els poders públics a la Comunitat Valenciana hauran de redactar-se de forma bilingüe.

LEY ORGÁNICA 5/1982, DE 1 DE JULIO, DE ESTATUTO DE AUTONOMÍA DE LA COMUNIDAD VALENCIANA DOGV núm. 74, de 15 de julio.

Cinco

La ley establecerá los criterios de la aplicación del lenguaje propio en la Administración y en la educación, valenciano en la Comunidad Valenciana, Catalán en Cataluña, etc.

LLEI 30/1992, DE RÈGIM JURÍDIC DE LES ADMINISTRACIONS PUBLIQUES I DEL PROCEDIMENT ADMINISTRATIU COMÚ, REGULADA POSTERIORMENT, EN L'ÀMBIT DE L'ADMINITRACIÓ GENERAL DE L'ESTAT, PEL REIAL DECRET 1465/1999, DE 17 DE SETEMBRE.

CAPÍTULO III

Utilización de lenguas cooficiales
Artículo 5. Utilización de lenguas cooficiales en material impreso y modelos normalizados.

1. Los impresos normalizados que se pongan a disposición de los ciudadanos en las dependencias situadas en el ámbito territorial de una Comunidad Autónoma con lengua cooficial serán bilingües en castellano y en la lengua cooficial, de acuerdo con los siguientes criterios:
a) Los impresos deberán expresar todos sus contenidos y epígrafes en las dos lenguas por líneas o por bloques de texto diferenciados, dejando espacios únicos para su cumplimentación por el ciudadano en la lengua por la que haya optado.
b) En aquellos impresos para los que, por razón de su extensión o complejidad, así se determine, se pondrán a disposición de los ciudadanos dos modelos alternativos redactados uno de ellos en castellano y el otro en la lengua cooficial. En tal caso, en ambos modelos, figurará destacada la advertencia de que existen impresos redactados en la otra lengua a disposición del ciudadano.

It is very interesting to give the necessary importance to our language and culture in the Valencian Community. However, we should always think about the people who are going to use our services, Web Pages in this case. Most of the time, the users will not only be exchange students, but people interested in our university. It is stated by law, that all the official documents of the Valencian Community should be written both in Catalan and in Castilian, why shouldn't we do the same in the Universities' web pages? In our opinion they could be written in the two co official languages and in English in order to reach a larger amount of people from all over the world. It wouldn't be necessary to translate all the everyday updated information; the basic structure, organization, etc., of the university would be enough.

In the field of information technology, all language communities should be entitled to have at their disposal equipment adapted to their linguistic system and tools and products in their language, so as to derive full advantage from the potential offered by such technologies for self-expression, education, communication, publication, translation, information processing and the dissemination of culture in general. Furthermore, they should offer the information in all the necessary languages in order to reach the greatest amount of users.

Hereunder we find an analysis of the three pages before mentioned:

- **UNIVERSITAT JAUME I**, has its main page in Valencian with all the information written in this language. However, if we want to see the same information written in Spanish there is much less of it. Once the Spanish Web Page is entered it can be read on the top that it is a shortened version of the already existing Valencian page. Bearing in mind that Valencian is the official language of the university, this is quite comprehensible, but analysing the number of exchange students which come from other countries to this university and seeing that this number is increasing year after year, we consider that the creation of a new Spanish web site for these students to visit, should be taken into consideration. The same happens if we visit the English site, little information is found there, of course most of the necessary information for the new exchange students is found in English. However, in our opinion there is still much more information which could be translated. The following topics are the ones found in the English Page:

· What is the Universitat Jaume I ?
· Getting to Universitat Jaume I
· Universitat Jaume I institutional leaflet
· Information for incoming students
· Studies at Jaume I University (Spanish version)
· ECTS (European Credit Transfer System) information package
· Spanish courses for foreign students/Cursos de Español para Extranjeros

Analysing the pages found in the two first links, which are the ones that present the university, we find many mistakes in the translations. The treatment of the English language is very poor, it seems like the page has been translated by a machine and that no human revision has been done afterwards. For example, we find literal translations such as:

La Universitat Jaume I is translated as *The Univesitat Jaume I* using the article in English as in Spanish and it shouldn't be so, English doesn't need this article.

En la actualidad imparte 26 titulaciones, sometidas a planes de evaluación continua is translated as *It presently offers 26 degrees, all subject to continuous evaluation,* where for example *presently* could have been translated by *currently* or *sometida* as *under*, which would sound more natural.

Este esfuerzo por mantenerse en la vanguardia de la innovación científica y tecnológica is translated as *The effort made in advancing scientific and technological innovation*, which is too literal.

We also find some ortographical errors in some words, as for example:

Dinamic and not *dynamic*

Secundary and not *secondary*

Northenmost and not *Northernmost*

Some words are misused, for example, the word *emprendedora* which is used for people or actions willing to do new things is translated as *entrepreneurial* which refers to trading.

We could also say that there is a grammatical mistake because they use the relative pronoun, *which* in a sentence and, *that* would suit better: *a fact **which** favours students' overall education...*

These examples show that the only pages of the Universitat Jaume I in English have not been carefully revised. There are very few and not very well done. With the Spanish sites the problem is that much less information than in the Valencian one can be found, however there are no problems with the language used in the translation. Once you enter this page, it can be read on the top that it is a reduced version of the Valencian one.

- **UNIVERSITAT DE VALÈNCIA** also starts with a Valencian Page although in this site we also found that almost everything is translated to Castilian. If one changes to the Castilian Page, just a few links are missing in Castilian and appear only in Valencian. That is, in this case we find that the Valencian and Castilian pages are very similar. However, it is the English Page that needs revision, this site has only two or three paragraphs written in English and some links, which go to the Valencian sites. The following information is everything one can find entering the English Page, there are some links which may contain interesting information for the exchange students or newcomers, but they take you to Valencian or sometimes Castilian sites:

• WWW Pages at the Universitat de València

Of course, from here you can access all the WWW pages of our university. If you are a student, you surely will be interested to visit the DISE and the Servei d'Estudiants; but there are a lot more. Refer to the WEB MAP to find them.

The Gabinet de Premsa offer the Universitat last news and the Nou Dise electrònic newspaper.

• Personal Pages

The Personal Pages are personal contributions made by some of our users, always under their own responsability, to expand the Web world.

Our Students also have personal pages.

• Finding People

There is a full list of people with e-mail address in our university, in which you can search.

Please, contact our Student's Services for any question about courses, studies, etc...

Please, contact the webmaster for any other questions about our university

The only English site to be found in the Universitat de València is the one containing the information shown above. Here we see that it does not help the foreign students or people without too much knowledge of Spanish. Furthermore, in those lines we find a sentence like: *you surely will be interested to visit*, which is not as grammatically correct as *you surely will be interested in visiting*. There is another grammatical mistake, one of the first English rules one learns, and is the verb *offer*, which is written in singular and it doesn't have the "s" for the third person singular. Another mistake is that the word *responsibility* has been misspelled, it should be *responsibility*.

Once again we see that very little care has been taken with the English site and to the language. However, the Castilian site is the same as the Catalan one and the translations are correct.

- UNIVERSIDAD DE ALICANTE, the case of this university is the same as the above, the three pages Catalan, Castilian and English contain the same information and they are introduced by the university's icon and underneath the three different icons for the languages.

Contrary to what has been found in the other two sites, there is nothing but good things to criticise about the University of Alacant sites. All of them show the same presentation and all the

languages used are faithful representations of the characteristics of the language and the culture. It is a very good example to follow.

3. DISCUSSION

After analysing the three pages we see that in the last one the three languages have a similar representation. However, the translations found in the other two pages are not the same for the different languages. These pages should be revised because it is in a way "frustrating" to find some information in a web page, see that there is an icon you can click in order to read it in your own language, and discover that you are directed to a completely new page or that the new pages contain very little information.

How could this be solved? Of course, in our opinion, the best way to solve this problem would be to contract experts in the language to translate these pages and work in a personal way giving the same meaning to the contents of the three pages. If this is not possible, because this is probably the most expensive solution, there are also some other possibilities, which are cheaper and faster but also not so comfortable for the users.

We would like to point out that there is, in our opinion, a great need to improve the contents of the English web page of the Universitat Jaume I and Universitat de València and of course, a better treatment of the English language in the already existing ones. After seeing what has been uploaded, it would be better to place links in the Valencian pages in order to go to an online translator and not to find these ones, with very little information and lots of mistakes.

For example, links to pages of dictionaries, translators, etc. could be placed in the pages with the purpose of helping people to obtain the information in their own language, although for some reason it has not been possible to do it manually, and this automatic way has been chosen. However, we insist on the option of contracting more people to take care of the web pages' translations.

4. CONCLUSIONS

We have seen that some of the English sites and some Castilian ones need important revision. For example, in the Universitat Jaume I, the English and the Castilian sites or the English site in the Universitat de València. However, as we can see in the Universitat d'Alacant, the three pages could contain the same information. Of course, this would require more time and effort and more people working with the translations and that means more money.

Probably some of the people entering our universities' web pages do it by chance and if they don't understand what they see they just leave the page, however most of the remaining visitors enter these pages because they are interested in something from those universities and in our opinion, the more comfortable they feel with our pages, the easier would be for them to contact us.

Above, in the discussion section, we have presented some solutions that would make the work of the translation and the search easier, placing links to dictionary pages, online translators, etc. These solutions could be applied to the web pages which are still unfinished, although it has to be said that the best solution for us would be to contract language experts in order to work with those pages. There are many professionals waiting for a job and this could be it.

We think that if all this is taken into account our universities web pages will greatly improve their quality, no one will find different information according to which the language they use and they will be able to learn about everything offered in that university. Furthermore, more people will be able to work and everyone will satisfy its needs.

The updating of web pages is an uncontrollable phenomenon which should be considered when reading this paper because the research presented here took place in the winter of 2003 and some modifications may have been made to these web pages.

5. FURTHER RESEARCH

The research of these three universities has awakened our interest in the use of the official, co official or any other language in the Web Pages of public universities around the world. It is very interesting to see how some universities pay attention to the translation of the maximum amount of information to the other languages and how some others only translate pieces of content and not very carefully.

For the above mentioned reason, this study could be extended to all the bilingual communities in Spain, as for example, the Catalan, Galician or Basque communities, without forgetting the other two public universities of the Valencian Community (Universitat Politècnica de València and Universidad Miguel Hernandez de Alicante). A similar study could also be carried out with Private Universities. Moreover, it would also be interesting to see how the Castilian and English languages are used in the other web pages of Spanish Universities. Furthermore, this study could be extended to European Universities' web pages, in order to find out which languages they use in their Web Pages and if they are homogenously used.

Also interesting would be to study the use of the three languages in these areas among institutions other than the university, such as museums' Web pages, etc. In a long-term research it would be very useful to carry out an inquiry to see if more foreign people enter the translated pages and how they like to find them.

The main purpose of this study is to show the importance of languages in web pages and how everything improves in regards of so doing. If translations offered in the different web pages are well done, more people will visit that web page and more people will work on them.

REFERENCES

- GAUNTLETT, D., 2000: Web Studies: A User's Guide. In GAUNTLETT, D. (ed.) Web.studies rewiring media studies for the digital age, London: Arnold: 2-18.
- GOLDHABER, M.H., 1997: 'The attention economy and the net'. http://www.firstmonday.dk/issues/issue2_4/goldhaber
- SILVER, D., 2000: Looking Backwards, Looking Forwards: Cyberculture Studies 1990-2000. In GAUNTLETT, D. (ed.) Web.studies rewiring media studies for the digital age, London: Arnold: 19-30.

- WAKEFORD, N., 2000: New Media, New Methodologies: Studying the Web. In GAUNTLETT, D. (ed.) Web.studies rewiring media studies for the digital age, London: Arnold: 31-41.
- LEY ORGÁNICA 5/1982, DE 1 DE JULIO, DE ESTATUTO DE AUTONOMÍA DE LA COMUNIDAD VALENCIANA DOGV núm. 74, de 15 de julio.
- ESTATUT D'AUTONOMIA DE L'UJI, http://www.uji.es/serveis/slt/triam/triam2s.html
- LLEI 4/1983, DE 23 DE NOVEMBRE, D'ÚS I ENSENYAMENT DEL VALENCIÀ:

  http://ttt.upv.es/~stepv/DOCUMENTS/lleiusval.html
- LLEI 30/1992 DE 26 DE NOVEMBRE DE RÈGIM JURÍDIC DE LES ADMINISTRACIONS PÚBLIQUES I DEL PROCEDIMENT ADMINISTRATIU COMÚ, BOE núm. 311, de 28.12.92.
- REIAL DECRET 1465/1999, DE 17 SETEMBRE, BOE núm. 230, de 25 de setembre
- UNIVERSIDAD DE ALICANTE: http://www.ua.es
- UNIVERSITAT DE VALÈNCIA: http://www.uv.es
- UNIVERSITAT JAUME I: http://www.uji.es