

THINGS SCIENCE WRITERS SHOULD KNOW About Communicating to Latinx Audiences in the United States

~ From Communicating Ciencia I | ScienceWriters2016 ~

1. **Communities are not faceless crowds.** The communities we cover — like our readers — are not homogenous. They have real faces. (*Aleszu Bajak*)
2. **Don't just parachute in.** Telling a good story means you have to talk to people! There's value in poundin' the streets — get down to the local level and establish relationships. (*Aleszu Bajak*)
3. **Science may be your reader's Third Language.** If English is your Second Language, you now have yet another language to learn — the language of science. So break down jargon, and more importantly, create a “comfort zone” for learning and understanding a concept. (*Robin Gose EdD*)
4. **Embrace awkwardness.** You don't have to be part of a culture to understand it, or be embraced by it. Use your vulnerability and curiosity as a conduit, and ask sources to guide you into their culture. (*Aleszu Bajak*)

~ Claudia Pineda Tibbs | @LaEcoLatina ~

1. **Activate connections.** Identify your audience's personal context — cultural, geographical, etc. Give them ways to be engaged beyond classroom walls and their community — use technology meaningfully (e.g. social media), or identify their preferred mode of idea sharing (e.g. word of mouth)
2. **Break down industry vocabulary.** Communicating in simple ways is key in any language.
3. **Partner with a Museum or Informal Science Center.** Your skills as a science writer can complement that of public education specialists at your local science center, and vice versa. Learn from those who have been trained in outreach and education to understand best practices for inclusivity and bridging cultural contexts.

~ José G. González | @JoseBilingue ~

1. **Science has its own culture.** Recognize the inherent limitations and structure of academia and the scientific community as a culture — e.g. jargon, scholarly prestige, foundation in Anglo-American world-views — and bridge that with the audience and culture you are communicating to.
2. **Demographics are not reversing!** Embrace the ongoing shift in cultural diversity in the United States. Learn the contexts and nuances that make each culture and subculture unique.
3. **Take a cultural lens to science.** Examining scientists in the context of their culture can add value to how we understand science — e.g. Who does science? How does a scientist's cultural experience shape their approach?

~ Jenny F. de la Hoz, PhD | @Fabiola_Science ~

1. **Expect “hybridity” and “transculturation”.** Youth are increasingly pushing beyond singular labels to express their complex identities, reclaiming and remixing elements of their cultural heritage (e.g. Colombian), U.S. context (e.g. Columbia Heights), and individual intersection (e.g. queer). Reggaeton is one example in music.
2. **Resist individualism.** It's okay if you don't have personal experience with diverse cultures, but do your part and find a bicultural partner to collaborate with. Sharing bylines and learning together will push your potential and broaden your experience — and improve the reach and depth of your story or project.
3. **Use graphics to cross language barriers.** Using photos, infographics, and other visuals can be helpful, especially when communicating to an audience with many different language fluency levels.

~ LEARNING ACTIVITY ~

Communicating Ciencia II: Engaging the Changing Faces and Voices of Mass Media

BRIEF: We have been assigned to produce a longform digital package about the impacts of plastic pollution on rural communities. Our publication serves a U.S. media market that is 50% Hispanic/Latinx in demographics, spanning 2nd generation residents to recent immigrants. Agriculture is the primary employment sector, followed by service jobs and the local Amazon warehouse. Families shop in big-box stores and go swimming in local streams. Illegal dumping and trash burns are a problem. A research university in the region studies these impacts, and a community-based nonprofit hosts local outreach events on pollution issues.

~ ASSIGNMENT#1 | Planning a Story ~

Draft a reporting plan for this project by listing what angles, voices, and issues your team might pursue, and what pitfalls to avoid.

Questions to Consider:

- Which perspectives and voices should be covered in the story?
 - Who do you think should be interviewed, in order for you to craft an inclusive view of these community impacts?
 - What hurdles might you face in securing interviews, visits, and visuals to produce our narratives?
 - How might we make our story resonate with both Latinx and non-Latinx readers?
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~ ASSIGNMENT#2 | Editing a Story~

Read the following passage and analyze for inclusivity and cultural competency, as well as for readership engagement with regards to our regional demographics.

When Central Valley College environmental researcher Stephen Strange arrived in Stanislaus County, he saw a community in need. Trash littered local streams where immigrant children swam. Illegal trash burns and dumping dotted this rural landscape of predominantly farm laborers from Mexico, Guatemala, and El Salvador. But Strange found a ray of hope when he met Angelica Colon, a Hispanic graduate student who rose above her humble roots and walked into his lab one day.

Colon grew up in Stanislaus County, and became interested in studying plastics pollution after volunteering with a local environmental nonprofit while in high school. In the course of her internship translating health outreach messages for non-English speakers, she realized that plastic waste had infiltrated all aspects of life in her community: microplastics could be found in the makeup she used and in the fish she ate, while chemicals leached from the water bottles and frying pans her family used.

Questions to Consider:

- Are there elements in this copy that are patronizing or condescending?
 - Are there elements that make the topic relatable to our readership?
 - How might this narrative be improved?
 - How might this reporting in general be improved?
 - What other instructions would you send back to the reporter who wrote this?
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