

---

---

.....

# *Cultus*

THE JOURNAL OF INTERCULTURAL  
MEDIATION AND COMMUNICATION

---

TOURISM ACROSS CULTURES  
Accessibility in Tourist Communication  
2016, Issue 9, Volume 2

ICONESOFT EDIZIONI - GRUPPO RADIVO HOLDING  
BOLOGNA - ITALY

Registrazione al Tribunale di Terni  
n. 11 del 24.09.2007

Direttore Responsabile Agostino Quero  
Editore Iconesoft Edizioni – Radivo Holding  
Anno 2016

ISSN 2035-3111 (e) ISSN 2035-2948  
Policy: double-blind peer review

© *Iconesoft Edizioni – Radivo Holding srl*  
*via Giuseppe Antonio Landi 13 – 40132 Bologna*

---

# CULTUS

*the Journal of Intercultural Mediation and Communication*

## The Intercultural Question and the Interpreting Professions

2016, Issue 9, Volume 2

*Editors*

*David Katan*  
*University of Salento*

*Cinzia Spinzi*  
*University of Palermo*

ICONESOFT EDIZIONI – RADIVO HOLDING  
BOLOGNA

## CULTUS

*the Journal of Intercultural Mediation and Communication*

### **Editorial Board**

Michael Agar

*Ethknoworks LLC and University of Maryland, College Park, USA*

Milton Bennet

*Intercultural Development Research Institute, Italy*

Patrick Boylan

*SIETAR-Italy and past Professor at Roma Tre University, Rome*

Ida Castiglioni

*University of Milan (Bicocca), Intercultural Development Research Institute*

Andrew Chesterman

*University of Helsinki, Finland*

Delia Chiaro

*University of Bologna (SSLMIT), Forlì, Italy*

Madeleine Cincotta

*University of Wollongong, Australia*

Nigel Ewington

*WorldWork Ltd, Cambridge, England*

Floriana Di Gesù

*University of Palermo*



---

Peter Franklin

*HTWG Konstanz University of Applied Sciences, dialogin-The Delta  
Intercultural Academy*

Maria Grazia Guido

*University of Salento, Italy*

Xiaoping Jiang

*University of Guangzhou, China*

Tony Liddicoat

*University of Warwick*

Elena Manca

*Università of Salento*

Raffaella Merlini

*University of Macerata, Italy*

Robert O'Dowd

*University of León, Spain.*

Anthony Pym

*Intercultural Studies Group, Universidad Rovira I Virgili, Tarragona, Spain*

Federica Scarpa

*SSLMIT University of Trieste, Italy*

Christopher Taylor

*University of Trieste, Italy*

David Trickey

*TCO s.r.l., International Diversity Management, Bologna, Italy*

Margherita Ulrych

*University of Milan, Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Italy*

---

**Table of Contents**

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Introduction<br><i>David Katan</i>  | 8   |
| Tourism Across Languages and Cultures:<br>Accessibility Through Translation<br><i>Mirella Agorni</i>                                      | 13  |
| Translating nature tourism<br>and the pitfalls in promoting ‘paradise’ in Malay<br><i>Mohamed Zain Sulaiman</i>                           | 28  |
| Translating tourism promotional texts:<br>translation quality and its relationship to the commissioning process<br><i>Novriyanto Napu</i> | 47  |
| Translating for Outsider Tourists: Cultural Informers Do It Better<br><i>David Katan</i>  | 63  |
| Communicating with International Visitors<br>– the Case of Museums and Galleries<br><i>Robin Cranmer</i>                                  | 91  |
| Navigation and circulation in city audio guides:<br>a comparison between Italian and English<br><i>Maria Elisa Fina</i>                   | 106 |
| Enriched Descriptive Guides:<br>a case for collaborative meaning-making in museums<br><i>Joselia Neves</i>                                | 137 |

---

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Intercultural Communication in Tourism Promotion<br><i>Nikolas Komminos</i>   | 155 |
| ‘Not up to American standards’: a corpus-based analysis of cultural<br>differences between Brazil and the USA<br>in travelers’ reviews<br><i>Sandra Navarro</i> | 173 |
| Notes on contributors   | 190 |

## Introduction

*David Katan*

Volume two is divided into three main areas: Translation, Museum and Audio Guides and Tourist Evaluation.

### *Part 1: Translation*

In part one *Mirella Agorni* focusses on the identity and epistemic knowledge that a tourist can bring to a text. She discusses the problems of translating culture-specific items, taking us through some of the more important literature on the strategies, including Aixelà, Newmark and Baker. As she notes, the domestic/foreign, self/other dichotomy will always create tension, when following the essentialist view of translation as (inter)cultural mediation. With this view the translator is faced with either losing the reader (the translation is too-unfamiliar) or risks demotivating the tourist by providing too much that is familiar. What needs to be focused on instead, she argues, is not the transfer of meaning but the negotiation of signification. Hence translation, and the teaching of translation should revolve around approximation and (re)creation. She gives examples of an MA student's creative approach in her translation of a tourist text, but accepts also that this approach clearly involves questions of risk taking – something which translators, and translation students have traditionally avoided.

*Mohamed Zain Sulaiman* shows us how worldviews central to the Anglo and Malay cultures regarding nature and 'naturescape themes' are easily lost when translating tourism promotion material, leading to a clear reduction of attractiveness of holiday destinations. Following Agorni, the main criticism of translated material is that a purely linguistic approach is almost always adopted by translators, whether in Europe or in Asia. However Sulaiman also puts the blame on the functional *skopos* approach to translation. Again, in line with Agorni, Sulaiman argues that it is creative writing and transcreation which should be the model that translators should follow when dealing with tourism promotional material. He tests

---

the tourism Australia website and its Malay version on focus groups who were able to pinpoint cultural conceptual differences regarding, for example 'beauty' and 'paradise' which were entirely lost to the translator, resulting in functionally inadequate translations. He concludes by showing how it is possible to provide much more effective alternative translations, which will meet the values of the target reader culture.

*Napu Novryanto* also focusses on Asia, and on the rise of international tourism to Indonesia, which consequently has given a kick start to the translation of tourism literature. His focus is on the quality of translation into English. He notes that the main, and well-documented, issue is that of the lack of language competence in English. What, though, has not been documented is how come this is, and continues to be, the case, particularly when a country stands to profit from new waves of international tourism. His study then was to analyse official tourism brochures in translation in terms of translation quality, and interview the professionals who were involved. He outlines the academic view which highlights a number of crucial factors and checks the actual process against the theory. For example, he investigated the translators' awareness of a 'translation purpose' and the commissioners' awareness of 'a translation brief'. In studying the commissioning process, he identifies the (many) weak points in the procedures, such as unregulated recruitment of translators and revision of the language by anyone "who happens to be in the office".

*David Katan* rounds off this section, very much in line with the previous papers suggesting that (for the moment at least) 'cultural informers do it better'. He demonstrates how the professional translators' stubborn attachment to the source text may provide linguistically acceptable texts but does little to enable the Outsider tourist to access the host destination as a cultural Insider would, especially when it comes to (using Greimas' terminology) *pouvoir-faire* texts. He argues that 'Outsiders' necessarily have a limited and distorted 'tourist gaze' so that much of the *pouvoir* content of the source text is lost. Consequently translations, instead of enabling the tourist, reduce their access to that of an onlooker with only *savoir* knowledge. He shows how unconsciously but mindfully, cultural informers (such as blog travel writers) follow an *ordo naturalis* procedure taking the Outsider reader into the Insider's world allowing the tourist to perform more like an Insider. He concludes by illustrating a taxonomy of contexting orientations (developed from E.T. Hall) arguing that, apart from the need for bi-cultural understanding, a low context communication

approach should be mindfully used by translators to produce texts that might actually be useful.

### *Part 2: Museum and Audio Guides*

*Robin Cranmer* opens this section by asking what communication approach(es) can best improve the International Visitor experience, taking museums and art galleries as a case in point; and much of his material comes from a project involving London museums and his University. He widens the possibilities discussed in the translation section to include a number of other possibilities. He begins by arguing the need ‘to decentre’, away from the source text and culture, to reduce ‘domestic bias’, so that the script writer can focus more on the needs of the International Visitor reading the text. Apart from gaps in knowledge and problems of ‘non equivalence’, discussed by Agorni, Cranmer adds those of different cultural narratives and representations, as well as format and visual expectations. As he points out there is no ‘one’ correct strategy to be followed, and hence when it comes to creating the new text, often “a strange hybrid” of the domestic and the foreign both in terms of language and in cultural appropriacy will result. Cost is a major issue here, requiring a ‘one size fits all’ translated or ‘international’ text. He then discusses other ‘less common strategies’, and indeed suggests a form of cultural informer approach which may indeed also be the most cost-effective.

*Maria Elisa Fina* devotes her paper to a study of what, in theory, should be Insider cultural informer guides *par excellence*, and reports on her analysis of 50 city guides taken from Italy, the US and the UK. She uses Neves’s guidelines for audio guides as a benchmark for her investigation of some of the features of the audio guide genre in terms of accessibility. In particular, she focusses on the features regarding navigation and circulation /way-finding. Her investigation of the features shows that the genre itself is extremely variegated. At the same time there are a number of features which are generally or always present in the Anglo corpora and either less present or entirely absent in the Italian corpus, such as maps, introductions, instructions and, in particular, safety advice. She refers to Katan’s contexting taxonomy to suggest that the reasons may be framed within the low context communication ‘explicitness’ orientation, a feature of Anglo-American transactional communication. She also notes that the Anglo guides tend to ‘guide’ rather than ‘describe’. As such the Anglo guides comply more with Neves’s guidelines than the Italian, which again

suggests that a low context communication orientation is the most appropriate when translating for accessibility.

*Joselia Nieves*, herself, ends this section with an innovative development of the audio guide, and describes a project involving a museum's attempt to improve "meaning-making", through 'enriched descriptive' audio guides (EDGs). She begins with the same problem outlined by Cranmer, how to make the cultural heritage on display accessible to a growing range of (Outsider) visitors. She focusses on the specialists who write the guides often creating opaque rather than accessible texts, and suggests that rather they should be written instead 'to appeal' and 'to guide'. Her solution is to employ multimedia and multisensory materials to enrich the audio guide, and she describes a project to create an EDG in Arabic and in English at the Arabic Museum of Modern Art (Mathaf). She outlines the "textual structure" of the guide, which may be seen as a development of Katan's *ordo naturalis* procedure. The 'enrichment' process involved the addition of multisensory features such as soundscaping (also discussed in Fina). The script was tested for clarity, inaccuracy and inconsistency and the changes are documented in the paper. She concludes suggesting that a tested user-centred product "might not equally satisfy everybody" but may well get close.

### *Part 3: Tourist Evaluation*

In this final part we have two papers, both of which set out to analyse opinion of American tourists staying at Brazilian hotels (Navarro) and of culturally diverse 'gastronauts' in Northern Italy (Komninos). While Navarro clearly points to culture-bound orientations as providing the key to differences in tourist opinion, Komninos demonstrates that culture is not necessarily a key indicator of tourist reaction.

*Sandra Navarro* analysed 10,000 hotel reviews written in Brazilian-Portuguese and American English using *Wordsmith*, which allowed her to compare both American and Brazilian traveller reviews of both their own (Insider) country and (as Outsiders) abroad. She begins outlining Hall's Iceberg Theory and focusses on cultural orientations which filter the perceptions of the Other in predictable ways (at the group level). Her search for key words and clusters shows how much Americans stress objective 'standards' whether it was the room or the breakfast, and openly criticized 'Brazilians' and Brazilian ways. The Brazilian reviews of American hotels did not focus on standards but did notice what they saw

as American lack of personal rapport, even suggesting that American staff 'hate' Brazilians. Navarro neatly explains these key differences in terms of culture-bound 'thinking', American universalism compared to Brazilian particularism and to the American orientation to 'action' (also discussed in Katan) compared to the Brazilian orientation to being. She concludes by linking the study of cultural orientations to Translation studies suggesting that a pragmatic understanding of cultural differences can only deepen our understanding of equivalence.

*Nikolas Komninos* reports on a questionnaire survey and series of interviews given to a group of 50 'gastronauts', culinary tourists, from 8 different countries. They were asked to evaluate a series of items concerning their holiday in Northern Italy, from the advertising and transport, to the communication and eye-contact, and from the appearance of the local people to the organization of the urban spaces. The overall satisfaction reduced in line with geographical proximity. So the Swiss and the Slovenians gave the lowest satisfaction while the American and the Japanese gave the highest. Komninos also notes that overall satisfaction was high when tourists evaluated the host-culture's *non*-culinary features, and that there was much observation but surprisingly little comment. On the other hand, all participants, regardless of culture, demonstrated lower satisfaction and much more critical comment to questions related to global tourism needs, such as access to efficient transport, accommodation and clear communication. Finally, with regard to culinary tourism satisfaction, feedback was the most animated, critical and intense (though not extremely low). As a result of these differences, Komninos suggests that 'sub-group cultural values', such as food, provides as strong a framework for identity, values and beliefs as any national cultural orientation.



## Tourism Across Languages and Cultures: Accessibility Through Translation

*Mirella Agorni*

### *Abstract*

*The language of tourism has been defined as a specialised kind of discourse, and this is especially clear in the context of cross-cultural communication. This article will investigate the ways in which translators need to mediate tourist texts in order to achieve successful communication. The main challenge is represented by the so-called cultural specific elements, that is the cultural traits which characterise destinations from a specific historical, geographic, and social point of view.*

*The purpose of tourism is to negotiate the encounter with the Other, and in doing so identities have to be mediated and often re-fashioned. Experts in the field of tourism set themselves the task of translating the foreign into discourse, so as to produce a sense of otherness that can be recognized as different from the familiar. But the only way to make “difference” recognizable to a home/target culture is to exploit domestic material and techniques to build the foreign into discourse. Hence, those traits of tourist destinations potentially perceived as excessively “exotic” are often rewritten or mediated, so as to create familiar and agreeable images for a readership that is made up of tourists.*

*The object of this article is to analyse what happens when tourism-fashioned identities are transported across linguistic and cultural borders. I shall work on tourist discourse in a perspective of translation intended as a cross-cultural practice, highlighting degrees of mediation of linguistic and textual features, and culture-specific elements.*

### **1. The Language of Tourism**

The language of tourism as a specialized type of discourse has been analysed from a number of linguistic and socio-cultural perspectives,

especially in Italy, where works by a large number of scholars have been produced in the last decade or so (e.g. Agorni 2012a, Calvi 2000, Cappelli 2006, Castello 2002, Denti 2012, Francesconi 2014, Fodde 2012, Gotti 2006, Maci 2013, Manca 2004, Nigro 2006). This type of discourse is characterised by an extreme variety in terms of fields of professional application, ranging from tourist and information agencies, tour operators, accommodation providers, to restaurants, and not to mention the publishing sector, which produces guidebooks and specialised literature (cfr. Agorni, 2012c: 3-4).

In order to account for such a distinctive variety, Calvi (2000: 17) has identified two essential components of this discourse variety: firstly a heterogeneous thematic component, corresponding to the numerous domains constituting the field of tourism (such as geography, economics, marketing, history, psychology, etc.), and, secondly, a communicative component strictly related to the context of situation. The latter is produced by means of a limited range of textual macro-functions, usually of an informative or persuasive nature, or a mixture of both. However, given the fact that the thematic components of this type of discourse are extremely diverse, scholars generally agree that the specificity of the language of tourism is to be found at communicative level, and can be visualized in terms of specific communicative strategies, condensed into three principal practices (Agorni, 2012 a: 11-12):

1. Strategies meant to produce functional texts by addressing the specific needs and expectations of their receivers (for example, involvement strategies, use of persuasive techniques, strategies of reader inclusion, etc.).
2. Selection of specific genres (such as the guidebook, brochure or flier), characterised by the appearance of a strong persuasive function in a text type which is predominantly informative or descriptive.
3. A strong presence of culture-specific elements, which metonymically represent foreign destinations.

As a consequence, tourist communication has developed a language capable of coping with the needs of the diverse components/constituents of this field. But this raises a fundamental question: who should the thematic components of tourism discourse be made accessible to? The most obvious answer is “tourists”.

Definitions of the tourist identity are plentiful both in social and

---

cultural analyses of tourist phenomena. Tourism represents a prominent community of practice, yet the large dimension and extreme variety characterising this field risk undermining a coherent definition of its specificity. Tourist phenomena take shape in a specific but rather heterogeneous community of practice, a large and inclusive cluster, comprising both professionals in the tourist industry and ordinary tourists.

Yet, the real problem is not identifying tourists in terms of the activity they all practice, that is tourism, but rather establishing their specialised or “epistemic” knowledge. The concept of identity which will be employed in this paper is to be understood as social and situational, made up of the limited number of subject positions available in specific communicative situations (cfr. Agorni, 2012b: 6). Speakers adopt such positions on the basis of their familiarity, or “knowledge”, of specific situations. In fact, the concept of “knowledge” has been used to lay the foundations for specific-domain communities, as Riley has demonstrated by developing the notion of *epistemic communities*, that is, knowledge-based social groups (2002: 57, author’s emphasis). Riley points out that specialised knowledge is normally derived from everyday knowledge, given that there is no difference between the two categories from a cognitive point of view. However, if there is no difference in kind, there is a difference in terms of degree, because members of a specialised community will display a more extensive knowledge of their objects of expertise than the general public.

This does not seem to apply to the field of tourism, though, as it is difficult to speak about tourists having a more extensive knowledge of their domain of expertise than ordinary people. It goes without saying that it is difficult to determine the degree of knowledge and expertise necessary for any person to be classified as a tourist, as virtually anybody can be defined as such at any stage of life, regardless of their social or economic situation, or degree of literacy and knowledge.

## 2. The Accessibility of CSIs

Yet, the concept of “knowledge” and the difficulty relating it to the tourist’s experience is strictly linked to the notion at the basis of this paper, that is accessibility. This notion cuts across a multitude of different aspects in the field of tourism and raises the question of what is to be made accessible when we talk about tourist experiences across languages and cultures. The latter elements, i.e. languages and cultures, are central

ingredients of the tourist experience, and the complex ways in which they are combined and shaped into characteristic traits of specific cultures lie at the core of research in Translation Studies. A number of approaches have been developed to address this subject, from sophisticated theories like Venuti's minoritizing translation (1998), to the more practical approaches to be used in everyday translation teaching, focusing on the so-called "cultural words" (Newmark 1988), "cultural-specific concepts or items" (Baker 1992, Franco-Aixelà 1996), "realia" (Florin 1993), "culturemes" (Nord 1997; Katan 2009), "culture-bumps" (Leppihalme 1997), and "extralinguistic cultural references" (Pedersen 2011).

Culture-specific items, or CSIs, have been defined by Franco Aixelà as "those textually actualised items whose functions and connotations in a source text involve a translation problem in their transference to a target text, whenever this problem is a product of the non-existence of the referred item or of its different intertextual status in the cultural system of the readers of the target text." (1996: 58). This definition is particularly interesting as it takes into account not only the CSIs themselves, but also the function they play as specific target language (henceforward TL) textual components, and the way in which they may be perceived and accessed by TL readers. In fact, translation scholars have debated the topics related to the translation of CSIs for years, devising a variety of different strategies.

One of the most prescriptive and yet comprehensive approaches was developed by Newmark, who describes twelve different "translation procedures" to deal with cultural words, namely (1988: 103):

1. Transference
2. Cultural equivalent
3. Neutralisation (i.e. functional or descriptive equivalent)
4. Literal translation
5. Label
6. Naturalisation
7. Componential analysis
8. Deletion
9. Couplet
10. Accepted standard translation
11. Paraphrase, gloss, notes, etc.
12. Classifier

Another extremely popular approach, particularly useful in translators' training, is that of Baker (1992), who distinguishes eight different approaches to the translation of culture-specific concepts:

1. Translation by a more general word
2. Translation by a more neutral/less expressive word
3. Cultural substitution
4. Use of a loan word or loan word plus explanation
5. Paraphrase using related words
6. Paraphrase using unrelated words
7. Omission
8. Illustration

Harvey (2000) offers four major strategies for dealing with culture-bound terms, and they are:

1. Functional equivalence
2. Formal equivalence (i.e., word for word translation)
3. Transcription or borrowing (that is, reproducing or transliterating the original) – to be used alone or followed by an explanation
4. Descriptive translation by means of generic terms

Franco Aixelà's strategies, or techniques, are organized in a sequence, going from a lesser to a greater degree of intercultural manipulation, and further distinguished into two major groups, defined as conservative or substitutive:

1. conservation techniques: repetition, orthographic adaptation, linguistic (non-cultural) translation, extratextual and intratextual gloss
2. substitution techniques: synonymy, limited universalisation, absolute universalisation, naturalisation, deletion and autonomous creation

Such detailed lists and classifications do not only demonstrate the complexity of the approaches to be employed for translating CSIs, but also the fact that, as Franco Aixelà has made clear, they can be arranged on a scale whose extremities seem to be represented by Venuti's well-known domesticating and foreignizing poles (Venuti 1995). As Ramière has put it, "The model is therefore clearly based on a polarisation with each translation procedure tending towards one pole or the other, thus

---

presenting Self and Other as mutually exclusive” (2006: 156). Although she was not specifically addressing the issue of cultural transfer in relation to tourism discourse, this comment appears to be extremely appropriate to describe the approaches to translating CSIs in the field of tourism.

The Self vs. Other dichotomy plays a fundamental role also in Dann’s (1996) seminal work on the language of tourism, especially when he delineates a series of polarisations, such as familiar vs. new, tourist vs. native, or the way in which an imaginary past is contrasted with a monotonous present. Yet, he makes clear that these extremes do not eliminate each other: rather, they seem to create a tension which can neither be resolved in favour of open, foreignizing strategies of translation, nor by using domesticating ones. In the first case, translators would run the risk of losing the tourist, who may feel unable to decode cultural difference and finally decide not to cooperate from a communicative point of view – and eventually reject the tourist offer. In the second case, however, domesticating strategies reduce cultural difference, by substituting it with familiar images. The risk is that of exchanging the new for the familiar, and of offering experiences that undermine the recreational drive, which is crucial for the tourist experience. Faced with unexciting tourist proposals, tourists may decide to stay at home.

The task of the translator, therefore, is that of finding a balance between the need to provide both accessible and appealing contents; as a consequence, a variety of strategies will have to be used, in order to discerningly enhance or reduce cultural difference, according to specific situations (Agorni 2012b: 6). Scholars such as Kelly (1997, 2000) have argued that tourism text translators must help readers contextualise information which may be implicit in the original source text (henceforward ST), but incomprehensible for the TL readers. On the other hand, however, translators should control their interpretive interventions so as not to provide an excessive amount of information, which could be too heavy to be processed by target readers. To quote Kelly herself, readers need “information to be dosed [...] to prevent an overload which could lead to a breakdown in communication” (1997:35).

### **3. Tourism Discourse Translation as Cultural Mediation**

Translator mediation can be visualized as a fine line, a way in between

---

clear-cut dichotomies. As has been argued elsewhere (Agorni 2012b, and 2012c) “tourism discourse” is itself a form of “cultural mediation”, because it “translates” cultural values by promoting the identity of specific destinations, together with their communities. Yet, this seems to complicate the question posed in the first section of this paper, i.e. what has to be made accessible across languages and cultures? Arguably, a provisional answer to this question could be cultural difference, a type of difference which is always inscribed within tourism discourse itself. The problem is that there seems to be no straight answer to the question about accessibility across languages and cultures. In fact, the question implies some kind of material transfer of meaning in an essentialist sense, as if it could exist before and outside language. In such a perspective, translation can only be envisaged as a successful meaning retrieval between languages.

However, I believe that this is a limited view of the kind of mediation that is particularly evident in the translation of tourism discourse. In fact, this type of translation exposes the irreducible nature of cultural difference, which nevertheless does not imply its untranslatability. It is rather the other way round: cultural difference lies at the core of the very act of translation, as it enables meaning to spread and circulate.

In order to confine my context of application to the practice of translating tourism discourse, I will not appeal to any complex deconstructionist theory, but I will rather refer to one of the most widely known linguistic theories, that of Jakobson. Importantly, he put translation at the centre of any act of signification when he wrote that “the meaning of any linguistic sign is its translation into some further, alternative sign” (1971: 261). Jakobson appears to go beyond the perspective of a material, essentialist transfer of meaning as if languages were some sort of symmetrical systems because he gives centrality to the very act of dissemination of meaning, which is the distinctive trait of translation. In his view, translation is a dynamic process that makes meaning circulate - beyond linguistic, social and cultural borders. Bakhtin seems to reinforce Jakobson’s argument when he writes: “the word [...] always wants to be *heard*, always seeks responsive understanding, and does not stop at *immediate* understanding but presses on further and further (indefinitely)” (2006: 127, author’s emphasis). Here the “word” stands for a metonymic representation of the act of translation itself, with its emphasis on circulation and transmission as meaning-creating processes. In this perspective translation does not merely have a reproductive function, but it is rather placed at the core of meaning-making strategies.

---

This theoretical approach appears to be particularly fruitful for the mediation of tourism discourse, as the impossibility to achieve a perfect transfer of sense, or equivalence - especially apparent in the translation of CSIs - paradoxically gives rise to those cultural dynamics promoting the circulation of meaning. Mimetic strategies of literal reproduction do not work in this type of translation, because languages and cultures are not symmetrical systems, and this is the reason why techniques such as transcriptions and borrowings that are not complemented with either explanatory information or smooth adaptations to the TL system, work only to a limited extent in the translation of tourist texts. My point here is that making cultural notions accessible to a foreign audience does not mean simply “transferring” them, but rather, “mediating” them through an approximate process of negotiation of meaning. This process is productive, that is meaning-creative, precisely because it is approximate: it opens up new possibilities of signification and cross-cultural meaning-making. It is ironically a lack of correspondence that keeps the process of signification alive, and this is particularly clear in any form of cultural translation.

Accessibility can be interpreted and explained as a communicative process in which culturally-loaded meanings are perpetually exchanged and circulated. This could in fact be the best answer to the central question of this paper, i.e. what has to be made accessible across languages and cultures. Transmission here is not meant to be seen as an end in itself, but, rather, as a dynamic process of meaning-creation.

#### **4. Accessibility and Mediation in the Field of Tourism: From Theory to Practice**

In this section the notion of translation as a meaning-making process will be applied to the practice of translating tourism discourse. I would like to present an extract taken from a translation by an Italian Masters in Translation student. I will analyse an extract taken from an article published in the British magazine *Condè Nast Traveller* (December 2009), under the title “Munching in Munich” (see also Agorni 2011: 447-450). The magazine is generally known to be one of the most popular periodicals for luxury travel, its readers belonging to the upper-scale of the tourist industry. The topic of the article is a contrast between traditional food and new, experimental cuisine in Munich. The most interesting



aspect of this article, however, is given by the fact that there are two different cultural perspectives simultaneously at work, providing two types of mediation: the first is that of the ST author, who is a British journalist describing his experience with German food and tradition for a British/international audience, whilst the second, obviously, belongs to the Italian translator, whose task is made more complex by her being aware of the earlier mediation of the ST.

This type of translation necessarily requires a high degree of cultural awareness. The student selected the article herself and seemed to be aware of the complexity of her task, the first instance being the title: “Munching in Munich”, which becomes “Monac....quolina in bocca”, literally a play on words exploiting the sounds of the Italian name for Munich, e.g. *Monaco* and the word *acquolina*, an expression for mouth-watering. The promotional component of the travel article genre is fundamental and this is the reason at the basis of the widespread use of humour and wordplay, strategies that are not so common in other tourism sub-genres. In the case of the title, the translator has substituted the alliterative sequence of the ST with a pun, achieving a double effect: it introduces the subject of the article, that is cuisine, and it also produces a humorous surprise for the reader.

I shall only examine the two short extracts reproduced below. Before going ahead with the analysis, it is necessary to point out that, although the text has been mediated at different linguistic and cultural levels, I shall concentrate only on the semantic aspects of this translation here.

#### ST

The dumplings in Bavaria are bigger than anywhere else in Germany. In the Rhineland the *Semmelknodeln* (made with stale morning rolls) are the size of billiard balls. The ones in Zum Franziskaner in Munich, by contrast, are so large you could play petanque with them. Zum Franziskaner is one of the city’s better traditional places to eat in. Hop wreaths and horse furniture adorn the walls, and the staff wears dirndls and collarless white smocks.

#### TT

I canederli bavaresi sono i più grandi di tutta la Germania: talmente grandi che, se i *Semmelknodeln* della Renania, preparati tritando le *Semmel*, tipiche pagnottelle bianche, hanno le dimensioni di una palla da biliardo, con quelli del Zum Franziskaner di Monaco si può giocare a bocce. Il Zum

---

Franziskaner è uno dei migliori ristoranti di cucina tipica di tutta la città: il locale è arredato con ghirlande di lippolo e mobili in stile equestre, e i camerieri indossano abiti tradizionali: *Dirndl* per le Kellnerine, camiciotti bianchi senza colletto per i loro colleghi uomini.

The subject of the ST article is food and cuisine, a challenging topic for translators because of the fundamental diversity existing among national culinary traditions. Yet this theme is used very often to produce an exotic flavour in tourist texts, as Dann has demonstrated in the section dedicated to “gastrolingo”: a specific micro-linguistic variety used in the tourism field to describe culinary traditions (1996: 235). As pointed out elsewhere (Agorni 2011: 449), two insights are particularly useful in Dann’s analysis: the tendency to use foreign words when speaking about food following the “linguaging” communicative strategy, and his interpretation of the emphasis on genuine food as a distinctive trait of the search for authenticity, which characterises the tourist drive.

There are two examples of “linguaging” strategy in the extract analysed. In the first case, the Italian translation student highlights the meaning of *Semmelknodeln* by repeating and glossing the first component of the compound, the word *Semmel*. The result is an explicitation of the ST expression, which is rendered as “tipiche pagnottelle bianche”, traditional small white loaves. In the second instance of “linguaging”, however, the degree of mediation is even higher. The translator deliberately intervenes to draw attention to the waiters’ traditional costumes. Whereas the ST lays no emphasis on this element (except for the insertion of the word “dirndls”, inflected for the plural, but left unexplained), the Italian translator explains that *Dirndl* are traditional costumes, and highlights the word in italics adopting the German spelling. Moreover, she adds an extra exotic flavour by inserting a new German loan word, that is “Kellnerine”, an invented word, made up of the German *Kellner*, “waiter”, inflected for the feminine plural form in Italian, *-ine*. This word is deemed to be sufficiently clear within its context for an Italian readership, but is made even more accessible by means of a comparison in the following clause, where the description of the other traditional costumes (“camiciotti bianchi senza colletto”, i.e. white shirts with no collar) is explicitly referred to “male waiters” (“i loro colleghi uomini”, that is their male colleagues).

In this example the translator addresses her readers as if they were rather sophisticated and happy to be confronted by cultural difference. This strategy can either be the result of a carefully-planned approach to

---

the translation of CSIs, or the final outcome of a series of creative but accidental interventions. In either case, it appears to be successful.

However, my point is not to say that the use of words such as “Kellnerine” validates my views on the translation of tourism discourse as an activity going beyond a simple process of cross-cultural transfer, in the direction of meaning-making. Instead, this example has been used because it provides a very good example of the sort of results that students may achieve if they are taught to be creative when translating cultural difference.

## **5. Conclusion: Managing the Risks of Accessibility**

Many translation scholars agree on the necessity of adopting a target or naturalizing approach in the translation of tourist texts (e.g. Newmark 1988, Hatim 2001, Kelly 1997). Corpora analyses of translations of tourism discourse have amply demonstrated that a general tendency towards a more or less radical domestication of CSIs is normally adopted by translators working in this field (Nigro, 2006, Pierini, 2007, Cappelli 2008, Gandin 2015). It is the language of tourism itself that appears to require such a domesticating approach, by promising tourists a “home away from home”, as Dann has aptly put it (1996). Speaking about such specific genres as guidebooks and travel articles, Cappelli has recently argued: “These genres are meant to bridge two cultures and to lead tourists and readers in their discovery of the host country while, at the same time, “protecting” them by making the unknown familiar and desirable. In addition, they help them better understand the host culture by reducing the cultural gap” (2013: 369).

While I believe that bridging, or rather recreating cultures and their intrinsic differences is a fundamental task for the translator of tourism discourse, I wonder whether translation teachers should not also teach students to be creative, and prepare them to take some risks. The risk I am referring to here is that of producing translations that highlight cultural difference, or at least play with it, rather than downplaying it by exploiting domestic, familiar images.

Translators normally tend to avoid communicative risks (cfr. Katan 2016). Pym offers a very convincing explanation for the reasons that lead translators in general to adopt a target approach: “translators are basically nurturers, helpers, assistants, self-sacrificing mediators who tend to work

in situations where receivers need added cognitive assistance (i.e. easier texts).” (2008:323). The result is what Venuti (1995) has called a “fluent” practice of translation, and this is paramount in the translation of tourism discourse.

However, this does not have to be a strategy to be applied to all situations. According to Pym, for example, if translators were rewarded for taking risks (financially, symbolically or socially), they would be likely to do that. As he puts it himself (p. 325):

If we are translating for advertising purposes, for example, then the insipid language of standardized translations may be unrewarded or even penalized, and gains will be found by taking the risks of invention or, in some circumstances, extreme interference from the foreign.

Hence, as Katan has aptly put it, translation students should “move away from the search for text-bound formal equivalence and learn to take risks” (Katan, 2009, 282), finding out ways to manage them, so as to translate cultural difference in the best possible way, by opting, whenever possible, for strategies enhancing and promoting the circulation of meaning. Mediated, but still distinctively different, cultural identity is what has to be made accessible across languages and cultures.

## 6. References

- Agorni, M. 2011. “Degrees of Mediation in the Translation of Tourist Texts”. In *Minding the Gap: Studies in Linguistic and Cultural Exchange*, edited by C. Rundle, R. Baccolini, D. Chiaro & S.P. Whitsitt, vol. 2. Bologna: Bononia University Press, 437-456..
- Agorni, M. 2012a. ed. *Prospettive linguistiche e traduttologiche negli studi sul turismo*. Milano: FrancoAngeli.
- Agorni, M. 2012b. *Tourism communication: the translator's responsibility in the translation of cultural difference*, “PASOS” 10 (4): 5-11.
- Agorni, M. 2012c. *Questions of Mediation in the Translation of Tourist Texts*, “Altre Modernità”, 0: 1-11, available at <http://riviste.unimi.it/index.php/AMonline/article/view/1963/2213>.
- Baker, M. 1992. *In Other Words. A Coursebook on Translation*. London & New York: Routledge.
- Bakhtin, M. [1986], 2006. “The Problem of the Text in Linguistics,

- Philology, and the Human Sciences: An Experiment in Philosophical Analysis”. In *Speech Genres & Other Late Essays*, ed. by C. Emerson & M. Holquist, Austin: University of Texas Press, 103-31.
- Calvi, M.V. 2000. *Il linguaggio spagnolo del turismo*. Viareggio-Lucca: Baroni.
- Cappelli, G. 2006. *Sun, Sea, Sex and the Unspoilt Countryside. How the English Language Makes Tourists out of Readers*. Pari (GR): Pari Publishing.
- Cappelli, G. 2008. “The Translation of Tourism-Related Websites and Localization: Problems and Perspectives”. In Baicchi, A. (ed.) *Voices on Translation, RILCA Rassegna Italiana di Linguistica Applicata*, Roma: Bulzoni Editore, 97-115.
- Cappelli, G. 2013. “Travelling Words: Linguaging in English Tourism Discourse”, in *Travels and Translations*, ed. by A. Yarrington, S. Villani and J. Kelly. Amsterdam, New York: Rodopi, 353-374
- Castello, E. 2002. *Tourist-Information Texts. A Corpus-based Study of Four Related Genres*. Padova: Unipress.
- Dann, G.M.S. 1996. *The Language of Tourism. A Sociolinguistic Perspective*. Wallingford: CAB International Publishing.
- Denti, O. 2012. *Cross-cultural Representations in Tourism Discourse: the Case of the Island of Sardinia*. Cagliari: AIPSA Edizioni.
- Florin, S. 1993. “Realia in translation.” In *Translation as Social Action. Russian and Bulgarian Perspectives*, ed. by P. Zlateva. London: Routledge, 122–128.
- Francesconi, S. 2014. *Reading Tourism Texts: a Multimodal Analysis*. Bristol: Channel View Publications.
- Franco, Aixelá J. 1996. “Culture-Specific Items in Translation”, in *Translation, Power, Subversion*, ed. by R. Álvarez and C.Á. Vidal. Clevedon & Philadelphia: Multilingual Matters.
- Fodde, L. and G. Van Den Abeele. 2012. “Tourists and Tourism in Language and Linguistics”. *Textus* (1) 2012: 7-18.
- Gandin, S. 2015. “Translating the Representation of the Tourist Landscape: A Corpus-Based Study (I-TourEC)”. *Procedia: Social and Behavioral Sciences* 95: 325-335.
- Gotti, M. 2006. “The Language of Tourism as Specialized Discourse”. In O. Palusci and S. Francesconi (eds.), *Translating Tourism: Linguistic/Cultural Representations*, Trento: Università degli Studi di Trento Editrice, 15-34.
- Hatim, B. 2001. *Teaching and Researching Translation*. Edinburgh: Pearson Education.

- 
- Harvey, M. 2000. "A Beginner's Course in Legal Translation: the Case of Culture-bound Terms," *ASTTI/ETI*: 357-369.
- Jakobson, R. [1959], 1971. "On Linguistics Aspects of Translation". In *Word and Language*, vol. 2 of *Selected Writings*. The Hague: Mouton, 260-6.
- Katan, D. 2009a. "Translation as Intercultural Communication". In Munday, J. (ed.), *The Routledge Companion to Translation Studies*. Oxford: Routledge, 74-92.
- Katan, D. 2009 b. "Translator Training and Intercultural Competence". In Cavagnoli, S. E., Di Giovanni and R. Merlini (eds.), *La ricerca nella comunicazione interlinguistica. Modelli teorici e metodologici*. Milano: Franco Angeli, 282-301.
- Katan, D. 2016. "Translation at the Cross-Roads: Time for the Transcreational Turn?". *Perspectives: Studies in Translatology* 24 (3): 365-381.
- Kelly, D. 1997. "The Translation of Texts from the Tourist Sector: Textual Conventions, Cultural Distance, and Other Constraints". *Trans* 2: 33-42.
- Kelly, D. 2000. "Text Selection for Developing Translator Competence: Why Texts from the Tourist Sector Constitute Suitable Material". In Schaffner, C. and B. Adab (eds.), *Developing Translation Competence*. Amsterdam & Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 157-67.
- Leppihalme, R. 1997. *Culture Bumps. An Empirical Approach to the Translation of Allusions*. Clevedon Philadelphia: Multilingual Matters.
- Maci, S. M. 2013. *Tourism Discourse: Professional, Promotional and Digital Voices*. Genova: ECIG.
- Manca, E. 2004. *Translation by Collocation: the Language of Tourism in English and Italian*. Birmingham: TWC.
- Newmark, P. 1988. *A Textbook of Translation*. New York: Prentice Hall.
- Nigro, M. G. 2006. *Il linguaggio specialistico del turismo: Aspetti storici, teorici, traduttivi*. Roma: Aracne.
- Nord, C. 1997. *Translating as a Purposeful Activity: Functionalist Approaches Explained*. Manchester: St. Jerome Publishing.
- Pierini, P. 2007. "Quality in Web Translation: An Investigation into UK and Italian Tourism Web Sites", *JoSTrans, The Journal of Specialised Translation*, 8, 85-103, available at [http://www.jostrans.org/issue08/art\\_pierini.pdf](http://www.jostrans.org/issue08/art_pierini.pdf)
- Pym, A. 2008. "On Toury's Laws on How Translators Translate". In Pym, A., Shlesinger, M. and M. Simeoni (eds.), *Beyond Descriptive Translation*

- 
- Studies: Investigations in homage to Gideon Toury*, ed. by Amsterdam & Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 311-328.
- Ramière, N. 2006. "Reaching a Foreign Audience: Cultural Transfers in Audiovisual Translation". *JoSTrans, The Journal of Specialised Translation*. 6, 152-166, available at [http://www.jostrans.org/issue06/art\\_ramiere.php](http://www.jostrans.org/issue06/art_ramiere.php)
- Riley, P. 2002. "Epistemic Communities: The Social Knowledge System, Discourse and Identity". In Cortese, G. and P. Riley (eds.), *Domain-specific English*. Bern: Peter Lang, 41-64.
- Venuti, L. 1995. *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation*. London & New York: Routledge.
- Venuti, L. 1998. *The Scandals of Translation: Towards an Ethics of Difference*. London & New York: Routledge.

## Translating nature tourism and the pitfalls in promoting 'paradise' in Malay

*Mohamed Zain Sulaiman*

### *Abstract*

*Nature tourism is one of the most rapidly growing segment in the tourism industry and, therefore, one of the most important categories marketed and promoted globally. Nevertheless, promoting nature tourism across languages and cultures might not be as straightforward as it may seem. Due to different worldviews and cultural values, nature is conceptualised differently by different societies. These differing conceptualisations have significant implications for cross-cultural tourism promotion and therefore for the translation of tourism promotional materials. Adopting the principles of functionalist theories of translation and the notion of cultural conceptualisation, the paper explores the challenges involved in translating English tourism promotional materials into Malay and investigates the extent to which nature-scape themes employed to lure Anglophone tourists are compatible with the Malay culture. Three types of textual analysis are carried out: source text analysis, target text analysis, and parallel text analysis. The textual analyses are then complemented by findings derived from focus groups. The findings of the study reveal that in the Anglo culture, nature-scapes are conceptualised within the secular framework of an earthly paradise, while in the Malay culture, it is conceptualised within the framework of divinity. Furthermore, the study also shows that while original, non-translated tourism promotional materials, in both English and Malay, capitalise on their respective audience's conceptualisation of nature tourism, translated tourism promotional materials in Malay might tend to overlook this important aspect leading to potential failure.*

### **1. Introduction**

Due to the tremendous demands for different travel and holiday



---

experiences, the tourism industry today has thrived, producing a huge range of tourism products with different labels for different settings and environments such as adventure tourism, cultural tourism, medical tourism, nature tourism and urban tourism. Of all the many labels, nature tourism—which focuses on natural environment experiences such as visiting the coastline, islands, countryside, and national parks—has become one of the most rapidly growing segment in the tourism industry, with a rate of growth that is three times faster than the industry as a whole (Nelson, 2012: 164). Rapid urbanisation has motivated people to travel as tourists in search of natural landscapes and environments. A growing number of tourists throughout the world are beginning to cultivate an interest in seeing, experiencing and being inspired by natural areas. As a result, nature tourism has become one of the most marketed types of tourism and one of the most important categories showcased in tourism promotional materials (TPMs).

Promoting nature tourism requires TPM copywriters to create, through their text production, desirable and appealing mental images in an attempt to persuade readers to become tourists. Nevertheless, it must be acknowledged that different societies have different values, worldviews and cultural backgrounds. What might be appealing in one culture might not be appealing in another culture. Therefore, in order to promote tourism in general, and nature tourism in particular, it has always been the task of TPM copywriters to consider the cultural context as well as the audience profile, so as to insure maximum impact in culturally different settings.

While, the various cross-cultural aspects of tourism promotion are increasingly being given due attention in a monolingual context, the same could not be said about tourism promotion in a multilingual context, that is, in the case of translated TPMs (Parks, 2014: 1-5; Snell-Hornby, 1999: 95; Sulaiman, 2016: 54-65). Translated TPMs have frequently been criticised in Translation Studies. In fact, a survey carried out by Sumberg (2004:344) suggests that there is agreement among key translation scholars at British universities that the translation standard of not only TPMs but promotional brochures in general, regardless of language pair, is “deplorable throughout the world”.

The main criticism levelled by scholars is that these translations are not adequate from the point of view of the function that they should fulfil. The reasons behind the inadequacy of TPM translations are discussed by Sumberg (2004: 343-350), who suggests that the poor standard of

---

translated TPMs is attributed to the translation approach adopted. According to her, translators tend to adopt a linguistic approach (which focuses on the linguistic features of the source text) rather than a functional one (which focuses on the function and purpose of the translation).

The ineffectiveness of the linguistic approach can be explained by the fact that in the field of advertising, the concept of ‘purpose’, or what is also termed as *skopos* by the functional school of translation, is central (Vermeer, 2000: 221). In the field of tourism advertising, the ultimate purpose is to turn a potential tourist into an actual tourist. Therefore, what becomes more important than fidelity to the linguistic features of the source text is the requirement that the target text must function optimally in the target culture to achieve the intended purpose. In order to fulfil such a requirement, it is crucial to understand the process which created TPMs in the first place: copywriting. The importance of fully understanding this process has been explicitly acknowledged in Translation Studies. Munday (2004: 201), for example, stresses that the translator, “in addition to working competently between two languages, should be a good copy-writer”. Woodward-Smith (2009: 122) talks about copywriters and translators as having similar roles such as “deciding what kind of information to include in their messages to ensure maximum impact in culturally different settings”. Seguinot (1994: 56) reiterates that translating advertising texts requires an understanding of advertising techniques. Furthermore, Torresi (2010: 8) asserts that creativity (which is central to copywriting) is a quality often required of a promotional translator. This combination of translation and creative writing has commonly been referred to in recent years as *transcreation* (Katan, 2016). An important quality of this category is the ability to adapt an advertising or promotional text creatively and tailor it in such a way so as to achieve the intended functions and effects of persuading the target audience.

The need for transcreation is very much rooted in cultural differences and the difficulties these can create. An important cultural aspect which must be dealt with adequately is the notion of cultural conceptualisation (Sharifian, 2011). People from different cultures conceptualise the world differently based on their values, worldview and beliefs. For example, Anglo-Australians might conceptualise the dog as ‘man’s best friend’, while in the Malay culture the dog is generally conceptualised as despicable, weak and evil (Imran Ho-Abdullah, 2011: 138). Since different cultures have different values and conceptualisations, different persuasion

---

themes and strategies are required to influence the performance and reception of the target text.

Although a number of studies have analysed translated TPMs and highlighted some of the differences between texts written in different languages, a more in-depth research which links the failure of translated TPMs to cultural differences particularly those related to cultural conceptualisation is lacking. Furthermore, while most of the studies conducted focus on the translation of tourism in general, this paper focuses on a particular sub-genre, namely nature tourism.

By adopting the principles of functionalist theories of translation and the notion of cultural conceptualisation, this study investigates how nature tourism is promoted in an English TPM to lure Anglophone readers and how it is translated into Malay to potentially woo Malay tourists. The aim of the paper is ultimately to investigate whether the translations are functionally adequate, and to explore the translational challenges and potential strategies and solutions.

## 2. Corpus and methodology

The corpus selected for this study is Tourism Australia's flagship website [www.australia.com](http://www.australia.com). Tourism Australia is the Australian federal government agency responsible of promoting Australia as a tourist destination to the world. The 360-page website has 17 language variants with the English version being the primary platform (Tourism Australia, 2013).<sup>1</sup> This study focuses on both the English version of the website (hereafter termed 'ST'), which is targeted at Anglophone audiences, and its Malay version (hereafter termed 'TT'), which is targeted at potential Malay tourists. For the purpose of this paper, representative excerpts from the analysed corpus have been selected for discussion and illustration.

Emphasising the notion of cultural conceptualisation within the framework of the functional approach to translation, an in-depth translation-oriented analysis was carried out on the ST to investigate how nature is represented and how culturally-designed themes and perspectives are used to lure the English reader. The ST analysis is followed by an

---

<sup>1</sup>Retrieved between 28 March 2011 and 31 March 2013. In 2015, Tourism Australia relaunched [www.australia.com](http://www.australia.com) as part of a major digital transformation programme. However, the new website reduced the number of language variants to 11 languages only. The Malay version was one of the language variants excluded in the new website.

analysis of the TT in terms of its functionality in the target-cultural situation. In this regard, the way the culturally-designed themes and perspectives of the ST were translated into Malay was examined. The effectiveness of the TT in creating an appealing image for potential Malay tourists was tested on five focus groups each comprising eight native Malay speakers (mostly were tourists in Australia). The focus groups were shown the TT and their responses were examined so as to deduce the effects of the TT on them. The causes of such effects were then examined within a socio-cultural framework with an emphasis on cultural values and beliefs (Wurzinger, 2012). The central objective of the focus group method in this study is to complement, support and validate the findings and assumptions which I have derived based on the textual analyses and to uncover additional valuable cultural insights.

The ST and TT analyses were followed by a parallel text (PT) analysis (Schaffner, 1998). In this study, PTs refer to authentic non-translated Malay texts promoting nature tourism. Analysing the textual practices of the PTs and comparing them with the ST and TT is instrumental in determining the differences that exist in how nature tourism is represented for the ST audience and how it is represented for and perceived by the TT audience.

Based on the findings derived from the ST, TT and PT analyses, I conclude by proposing potential strategies for the production of functionally adequate translations, which take into consideration the cultural conceptualisation of the target culture. These translations have the potential to create the intended effects on the reader.

### **3. Source text analysis**

The Australian naturescape throughout the ST is represented with the symbolic qualities of paradise. In the Western imagery, paradise is represented as an ideal garden, with bountiful environments and landscapes of incredible beauty on the one hand, and life full of leisure with unlimited wish fulfilment on the other. This Western concept of paradise may be traced back as far as the Golden Age of Greek mythology and to the Hebraic conception of the Garden of Eden. In the beginning, paradise was simply a myth which later became a religious belief and a theological doctrine in Judaism and Christianity. In its religious context, paradise was seen as man's origin and ultimate destination. Towards the

end of the Middle Ages, the concept of paradise ceased to be merely a fantasy of the past or a passive waiting for the paradise of the next world (Manuel & Manuel, 1972: 113). The European Age of Discovery witnessed the beginning of the quest for an earthly paradise. Westerners came to believe that earthly paradisiac sites can be found and enjoyed, such as Hawaii (Costa, 1998: 317-318). The quest for the earthly paradise marked a shift from the religious concept of paradise towards a more secular one (Ejiri, 1996, pp. 7-8).

In Australia, as well as in many other societies, the term paradise is one of the most well-known concepts used to promote natural sites (Waade, 2010: 15). Tasmania for example was dubbed as ‘The Last Paradise’ in one of its international tourism campaign in 2008. Apollo Bay in the Australian state of Victoria is dubbed ‘Paradise by the Sea’ (Figure 1).



Figure 1: The sign as you enter the coastal town of Apollo Bay.  
Source: My private photo collection.

Paradisiac discourse is considered a key feature of Australian TPMs in general (Waite, 1997). Sections of the ST promoting naturescapes display strong traits of this with direct references to paradise being made (Example 1).

---

Example 1<sup>2</sup>

---

Pedal to **Paradise** in the Blue Mountains  
Visit **paradise** in the Whitsundays, Queensland  
Relax in the natural **paradise** of Noosa

---

The notion of ‘paradise on earth’ is also signified in the ST by a number of verbal themes commonly employed by paradisiac discourses to evoke imagination and stir desire in the reader. One of these themes is: authentic beauty. The image of the Australian naturescape is presented as being synonymous with beauty. This rhetorical image, almost a commonplace, is constructed through verbal texts using keywords which signal pristine beauty such as ‘spellbinding’, ‘enticing’, ‘glorious’, ‘stunning’, ‘magical’, ‘wonderful’, ‘breathtaking’, ‘perfect’ and ‘spectacular’ (Example 2). Such a notion of beauty is deeply grounded in the notion of authenticity in Tourism Studies which emphasises that the main motivation for tourism is the quest for authenticity (MacCannell, 1973). This notion asserts that due to the alienation, destruction, superficiality and inauthenticity experienced by the modern world, people are motivated to travel as tourists to a more authentic reality: the authentic regions of times from the past, pre-modern places in pristine, natural landscapes; and the real lives and local cultures of others. It is also claimed that as long as there is perceived inauthenticity, such as the ‘plastic world’ of the consumer, the notion of authenticity will remain valuable in tourism promotion (Taylor, 2001: 10).

Example 2

---

Wherever you find them, our white, sandy beaches are just as you imagine - **uncrowded, unspoilt** and utterly **enticing**.  
You can enjoy **pristine** beaches all to yourself on the **stunning** Freycinet Peninsula.  
Margaret River is a place where **breathtaking scenery** and good living meld into one.

---

The texts imply that such beauty stems from the fact that the naturescapes of Australia are authentically natural: their beauty lies in their

---

<sup>2</sup> All emphasises in the examples taken from the ST, TT and PTs are mine.

authenticity. The authenticity dimension of nature in the ST is created through the use of keywords such as ‘uncrowded’, ‘unspoilt’, ‘pristine’, ‘natural’, ‘native’, ‘ancient’, ‘primitive’, ‘historic’, ‘treasures’, ‘wild’ and ‘wildlife’. The combination of these two categories of highly charged keywords creates euphoric and magical effects whereby a natural space is transformed into an earthly paradise. The creation of this image fulfils the tourist need to escape present reality by reverting to a more authentic past: Garden of Eden. This contemporary view of natural spaces as pristine beauty can be linked to the Western romantic traditions of invoking nature and challenging industrialism (Holden, 2015: 26-56).

#### 4. Target text analysis

The English keyword ‘paradise’ used to refer to naturescapes in the ST is reproduced literally in the TT using the Malay word for paradise, *syurga* (Example 3).

Example 3

| Source Text (ST)                                     | Target Text (TT)                                   | Back-Translation (BT)                                |
|--|--|--|
| Pedal to <b>paradise</b> in the Blue Mountains       | Mengayuh menuju ke <b>syurga</b> di Blue Mountains | Pedal heading towards paradise in the Blue Mountains |
| Visit <b>paradise</b> in the Whitsundays, Queensland | Kunjungi <b>syurga</b> di Whitsundays, Queensland  | Visit paradise in the Whitsundays, Queensland        |
| Relax in the natural <b>paradise</b> of Noosa        | Bersantai di <b>syurga</b> alam semulajadi Noosa   | Relax in the natural paradise of Noosa               |

Despite the translator’s decision to reuse the concept of paradise in the TT, it is crucial to note that the concept of paradise may differ from one culture to another. A case study investigating the paradisiac discourse of Tourism Tasmania’s campaign in 2008 ‘The Last Paradise’ revealed that the difference in how paradise is conceptualised in Western and Chinese cultures is believed to have caused disenchantment among tourists of Chinese origin who visited Tasmania (Chiu, 2009: 16). Similarly, the way Malays perceive the concept of paradise is different from how the concept of paradise is used in contemporary Western societies. The Malay concept of paradise is essentially the notion put forward by the teachings of Islam:

the abode of the righteous in the Hereafter. Although, the concept of paradise in Islam is similar, to a certain extent, to that of Christianity in the sense that it is located in the Hereafter, my focus is however not to distinguish the Malay Islamic view of paradise from its Western Christian counterpart, but rather from the current Western secular notion of the earthly paradise. To the Malays, 'paradise' is strictly a matter of the Hereafter and the quest for an earthly paradise, which exists in modern Western society, does not exist in the Malay culture.

What would be regarded as paradisiac from a Western point of view would be seen in the Malay culture as signs of *keagungan Ilahi* (God's might and glory) which in turn is expected to strengthen one's belief in God and the existence of an afterlife paradise. Examples from the TT containing the word *syurga* (paradise) were tested on the focus groups. All the focus groups were unanimous in their views that the use of the word *syurga* was 'unnatural', 'awkward', and 'unappealing' due to the religious conceptualisation of the word *syurga*. The following quotations are some examples of the responses of the participants of the focus groups:<sup>3</sup>

Pedalling to *Syurga* just doesn't make sense. *Syurga* is unimaginable and exists only in the Hereafter.

I don't really like it. For us, *Syurga* is something so exalted. Using the word *Syurga* here is just too much. This is so exaggerated.

The headline just doesn't sound Malay. It sounds awkward.

This headline is not appealing. It doesn't sound natural. *Syurga* is inappropriate here.

*Syurga* is more appropriate for religious context. *Syurga* is a place in the Hereafter where Muslims are rewarded for their good deeds. It should not be used here.

The responses make it clear that the use of the notion of paradise to entice a Malay audience does not function the way it may function with an Anglophone audience.

The Malay culture has much in common with the Anglophone culture in viewing naturescapes as places of pristine beauty. Both cultures regard

---

<sup>3</sup> All quotations from the focus groups have been translated from Malay into English. All translations are mine.



nature as a source of flawless beauty deeply rooted in the notion of authenticity. However, it appears that the notion of authenticity here is interpreted and conceptualised differently. While the Anglophone perspective of the authenticity of nature projects an image of paradise or Garden of Eden, the Malay perspective regards the beauty of naturescapes as authentic in terms of creation. Naturescapes are authentic masterpieces designed by their creator, and their divine beauty is a sign to the greatness of their creator (Nor Atiah, Noor Fazamimah, Sumarni, Mohd Yazid, & Nangkula, 2015: 140).

In the Malay mind, beauty (*keindahan*), firstly, is related to ‘divine power and to God’s infinite riches (*kekayaan*)’ (Lim, 2003:74). Secondly, *keindahan* has a wider meaning—it carries connotations of wonder, astonishment and admiration. Thirdly, the beautiful object engenders an overwhelming feeling of awe and reverence of God’s might in His creations. This is why the beauty of nature is often, as we will see in the following lines, described as *menakjubkan* (astonishing). While no reference is made in the ST to any divine power in line with the secular concept of nature, the Malay concept of nature can be found in the TT with explicit reference added by the translator to God as the creator of nature (Example 4).

#### Example 4

| Source Text (ST)   | Target Text (TT)  | Back-Translation (BT)  |
|--|---|--|
| Don’t miss the World Heritage-listed Great Barrier Reef, <b>a living masterpiece</b> so big it can be seen from space. | Jangan ketinggalan untuk mengunjungi Terumbu Sawar Besar yang tersenarai sebagai Warisan Dunia, <b>ciptaan agung Tuhan</b> yang cukup besar hingga ia boleh dilihat dari angkasa lepas. | Don’t miss visiting the Great Barrier Reef, which is listed as a World Heritage, <b>one of God’s great creations</b> which is so big that it can be seen from space. |

Although the ST describes Australia’s Great Barrier Reef as ‘a living masterpiece’ without any mention of a divine power behind its creation, the TT introduces the Malay concept of nature authenticity which views the immaculate beauty of this ‘living masterpiece’ as nothing but a great creation and sign of the Creator, God himself. Hence, the Anglophone concept of nature is replaced by the Malay concept of nature. This example perfectly illustrates an instance where the TT (or rather the

translator) deliberately diverges from the ST in order to address cultural conceptual differences and to adhere to the conventions of Malay nature writing and meet the expectations of the target reader.

There are also other instances throughout the TT in which the Malay view of the authentic beauty of nature is reflected, but not as a result of deliberate acts of divergence on the part of the translator, but rather due to inherent semantic and pragmatic properties of the target language lexicons such as the Malay verb *(me)nikmati* (enjoy) and *menakjubkan* (astonishing) (See Example 5 below).

Example 5

| Source Text (ST)  | Target Text (TT)  | Back-Translation (BT)  |
|---|---|--|
| Soak up beauty in Wineglass Bay, Tasmania<br>Wherever you find them, our white, sandy beaches are just as you imagine - uncrowded, unspoilt and utterly <b>enticing</b> . | Nikmati keindahan di Wineglass Bay, Tasmania<br>Di mana sahaja anda menemui tempat-tempat ini, pantai berpasir putih bersih kami benar-benar seperti yang anda bayangkan - lengang, masih tidak terusik dan amat <b>menakjubkan</b> . | Enjoy beauty in Wineglass Bay, Tasmania<br>Wherever you find these places, our white, sandy beaches are just as you imagine - uncrowded, unspoilt and utterly <b>astonishing</b> . |

The root word of *(me)nikmati* (enjoy), that is, *nikmat* is originally a loanword from the Arabic word *ni'mah* (نعمة) which means 'God's blessings'. Thus the verb *(me)nikmati* used in Example 5 indirectly means to enjoy God's blessings which have been bestowed upon you. It is interesting to see how beauty in the ST is coupled with the verb 'soak up' which carries connotations of indulgence while *keindahan* (beauty) in the TT is coupled with the verb *nikmati* which carries connotations of divinity. Along the same line, the word *menakjubkan* (astonishing) used also implies divine power. *Menakjubkan* is derived from the Arabic *ajaba* (عجب) which means wonder. The word *menakjubkan*, which describes the beauty of a natural site, implies a feeling of awe, wonder and reverence to God's creation. It is also interesting again to note the shift from an indulgence-related keyword (enticing) to a divine-related keyword (*menakjubkan*). Incorporating the Malay conceptualisation of authentic beautiful natural sites, particularly within the creator-creation framework would indeed create a greater connection between the Malay audience and the

naturescapes being promoted.

## 5. Parallel text analysis

Unlike in Anglophone societies where the term ‘paradise’ is widely used to describe and even name natural sites; in the Malay society, the word *syurga* (paradise) is not used to describe or name natural sites. None of the pristine beaches and idyllic islands of the Malaysian East Coast and East Malaysia, or any other natural sites for that matter, is given the Malay title *syurga*. By the same token, authentic Malay texts promoting natural sites rarely employ the secular notion of ‘paradise on earth’ to promote nature tourism. The paradisiac discourse does not seem to be a strategy commonly adopted in Malay TPMs. The different cultural-linguistic positions towards the use of paradisiac discourse are clearly demonstrated by *Tourism Malaysia’s* television commercials (TVCs) promoting Malaysia in English and Malay.

Although *Tourism Malaysia’s* English TVCs often employ a paradisiac discourse to promote Malaysia to Anglophones, this strategy is not adopted in its Malay TVCs. One of *Tourism Malaysia’s* most popular TVC titled ‘Malaysia, Your Enchanting Gateway’ (Zalina Azman & Ramli MS, 2009), for example, demonstrates strong features of a paradisiac discourse. Malaysia is described in the lyrics as ‘the Asian true paradise’ and its natural environment as ‘a paradise beyond compare’. This feature is however absent in *Tourism Malaysia’s* Malay TVCs.

Although employing a paradisiac discourse is not a common strategy in Malay TPMs, the word *syurga* is commonly used, not in reference to the secular notion of ‘paradise on earth’ but strictly as a metaphor which depicts a place or condition that fulfils one’s desires or aspirations (Example 6).

### Example 6

---

Sabah melangkah maju setapak lagi ke hadapan apabila memiliki sebuah **syurga membeli-belah** bertaraf dunia. (Jamdi Nasir, 2008)  
 [Sabah has moved forward yet another step as it now has a **shopping paradise** of world standard.]

Sipadan **syurga penyelam** (Siti Nor Azizah Talata, 2006)  
 [Sipadan, the **diver’s paradise**]

---

This metaphorical sense is explicitly reflected by qualifiers which limit the lexical meaning of the word *syurga*. In Example 6, the qualifiers *membeli-belah* (shopping) and *penyelam* (diver's) restrict any reference to the secular notion of paradise. While the word *syurga* is often coupled with a qualifier, they are remote instances in the PTs where *syurga* is used on its own without a qualifier but with inverted commas instead to signal that the word is not used in its current commonly accepted sense such as in Example 7. Nevertheless, although in Example 7 '*syurga*' is used with inverted commas and not a qualifier, it is still clear from the entire text that it is not used in reference to the secular notion of paradise on earth but to a 'diver's paradise'.

Example 7

---

**'Syurga'** Pulau Tenggol

Bagaimanapun, ia tidak menghalangnya daripada dianggap sebagai '**syurga**' lebih-lebih lagi di kalangan penggemar aktiviti menyelam skuba. (W Ramli W Muhamad)

[The Pulau Tenggol **'Paradise'**

However, it does not prevent it from being regarded as a **'paradise'** particularly among those who love scuba diving.]

---

While the PT analysis has shown that the secular notion of paradise is not a common feature of Malay TPMs, it has also shown that the notion of *keagungan Ilahi* (God's might and glory in His creation) plays a prominent role in the discourse. The following representative excerpts taken from a Malay article promoting the East Coast of West Malaysia as a tourist destination illustrate how the notion of *keagungan Ilahi* is employed to persuade potential Malay tourists.

Example 8

---

Sama ada pesisiran pantai atau pun gugusan pulau-pulaunya, **pantai timur diberkati dengan jajaran pantai yang amat indah**. Pasir halus memutih pantai, angin sepoi-sepoi bahasa, air laut jernih berkaca, semoga keindahan

---

alam ini dapat terus kekal untuk dinikmati generasi-generasi anak cucu kita. **Suasana tenang dan mendamaikan ciptaan Tuhan ini sesungguhnya memberikan ketenangan yang hakiki kepada pengunjung.**

(W Shahara A Ghazali, 2009)

[Be it beaches or islands, the east coast is **blessed with very beautiful coastlines**. White soft beach sand, breeze, crystal-clear sea water, may the beauty of this world remain to be enjoyed by the generation of our grandchildren. **Truly, this peaceful and tranquil atmosphere created by God gives true peace to visitors.**

---

#### Example 9

---

Iniilah **keindahan ciptaan tuhan** yang anda dapat saksikan selepas waktu Subuh di kawasan Kampung Semban, di negeri Sarawak. (Libur, 2012)

[This is **the beauty of god's creation** which you can witness after Subuh (dawn) in the Kampung Semban area in the state of Sarawak.]

---

In Example 8 and Example 9 above, the beauty of nature is associated with God's might and glory. In Example 8, the East Coast of Malaysia is described as *diberkati dengan jajaran pantai yang amat indah* (blessed with a very beautiful coastline), indirectly referring to the *berkat* (blessing) of God. The beach is further described as *ciptaan Tuhan* (the creation of God), hence explicitly referring to the concept of divine authenticity. Similarly, in Example 9, the beauty of nature is also described explicitly as God's creation.

The PT analysis above is consistent with the motivation of nature tourism among Malay tourists as revealed by the focus groups. The focus groups stressed that one of the pull factors that motivate them to travel to Australia is to visit "Australia's much-talked about natural wonders" and experience the beauty of God's creation. Some of the focus group quotations linking nature tourism to divine beauty and glory are as follows:

It is about self-satisfaction. We will be able to see what God has created. They are all beautiful... In Australia we will be able to experience other aspects of

nature not available in Malaysia. So, we will be able to experience the diversity of nature created by God for us.

I went to Great Ocean Road and I was just mesmerised by the beauty of nature created by God. If given the opportunity, I would want to go there again... I was mesmerised by God’s might and glory.

Being Muslims, we would normally relate the beauty of God’s creation to his might and glory... Being there (at beautiful natural sites) physically gives us greater connection with the Creator.

The finding above, which clearly supports the strategy used by the translator in Example 4, is a manifestation of the religious dimension of the Malay culture. This creation-creator theme is used to evoke emotion in the Malay reader.

### 6. Functionally adequate translation

From the above analysis, it is evident that the paradisiac theme employed by the tourism industry to woo and lure Anglophone tourists is not necessarily compatible with the Malay culture. Themes used to create an appealing image of natural sites in the Anglophone culture might not create the same appealing image in the Malay culture due to different cultural values and therefore different conceptualisation of nature. Due to such differences, translating English TPMs promoting nature into Malay would require a de-emphasising of the secular concept of earthly paradise in the Malay translation. One method could be by substituting the explicit references to paradise with other euphoric keywords (Example 10).

Example 10

| Source Text (ST)                                  | Functionally Adequate Translation                                | Back-Translation (BT)   |
|---|--|---|
| 1. Relax in the natural <b>paradise</b> of Noosa  | Bersantai di alam semulajadi Noosa yang <b>menakjubkan</b>       | Relax in the <b>astonishing</b> natural world of Noosa              |
| 2. Pedal to <b>paradise</b> in the Blue Mountains | Hayati <b>keindahan alam</b> dengan berbasikal di Blue Mountains | Experience the <b>beauty of nature</b> by cycling at Blue Mountains |

In excerpt 1 of Example 10, the word ‘paradise’ is substituted by the word *menakjubkan* (astonishing) which implies a feeling of awe, wonder and reverence to the might of the creator of nature. In other words, there is a shift from secularism to divinity. The word *menakjubkan* can also be replaced by other euphoric keywords such as *memukau* (captivating) and *mengasyikkan* (mesmerising) which would equally create an image of enchanting naturescapes. In excerpt 2, ‘paradise’ is reduced to *keindahan alam* (beauty of nature). When the focus groups were asked to compare the translations in Example 10 and the original Malay translations (Example 3), all focus groups indicated that they preferred the translations in Example 10 compared to the original Malay translations. Incorporating an explicit creator-creation framework as illustrated in Example 4 could also be considered as a possible solution.

## 7. Conclusion

Nature is an important element in tourism promotion. However, promoting natural beauty to entice higher numbers of tourists to visit a country depends on how nature itself is conceptualised by the target audience. The differing conceptualisations of naturescapes across cultures have significant implications for cross-cultural tourism promotion and therefore for the translation of TPMs. This study has revealed how nature is conceptualised differently in the Anglo and Malay cultures. The findings of the study reveal that in the Anglo culture, naturescapes are conceptualised within the secular framework of an earthly paradise, while in the Malay culture, it is conceptualised within the framework of divinity.

Furthermore, the study also shows that while original, non-translated TPMs, in both English and Malay, capitalise on their respective audience’s conceptualisation of nature tourism to create an appealing destination image, translated TPMs in Malay might tend to overlook this important aspect leading to potential failure. Thus, in order to promote nature tourism across cultures using translation as a mediating platform, the TT audience’s conceptualisation of nature must be taken into consideration.

On a final note, due to time and space limitations, this paper focused on nature tourism only and on one theme: paradise. Future research could potentially investigate other themes of nature tourism such as ‘everlasting sunshine’ (heliocentrism) and ‘fun’ (hedonism), as well as other categories of tourism such as urban tourism, cultural tourism and medical tourism.

---

**References**

- Chiu, C. 2009. "What's in the Name "Tasmania"? A Discourse Analysis of Tasmania as a Paradise for Tourists of Chinese Origin". *The International Journal of Language Society and Culture*, 28, 16-24.
- Costa, J. A. 1998. "Paradisal Discourse: A Critical Analysis of Marketing and Consuming Hawaii". *Consumption Markets & Culture*, 1(4), 303-346.
- Ejiri, M. 1996. *The Development of Waikiki, 1900-1949: The Formative Period of an American Resort Paradise*. (PhD), Honolulu: University of Hawaii.
- Holden, A., 2015. *Environment and Tourism* (3rd ed.). London: Routledge.
- Imran Ho-Abdullah. 2011. "Analisis Kognitif Semantik Peribahasa Melayu Bersumberkan Anjing (Canis Familiaris)". *GEMA Online™ Journal of Language Studies*, 11(1), 125-141.
- Jamdi Nasir, 2008, 9 June 2008. Syurga Membeli-belah, *Utusan Online*. Retrieved from [http://utusan.com.my/utusan/info.asp?y=2008&dt=0609&pub=Utusan\\_Malaysia&sec=Sabah\\_%26\\_Sarawak&pg=wb\\_01.htm](http://utusan.com.my/utusan/info.asp?y=2008&dt=0609&pub=Utusan_Malaysia&sec=Sabah_%26_Sarawak&pg=wb_01.htm)
- Katan, D. 2016. "Translation at the Cross-roads: Time for the Transcreational Turn?" *Perspectives: Studies in Translatology*, 24(3), 365-381.
- Libur, 2012. "Keindahan Kabus Pagi". *Libur*, 7(108), 97.
- Lim, K. H. 2003. *Budi as the Malay Mind: A Philosophical Study of Malay Ways of Reasoning and Emotion in Peribahasa*. (PhD) Hamburg: University of Hamburg.
- MacCannell, D. 1973. "Staged Authenticity: Arrangements of Social Space in Tourist Settings". *American Journal of Sociology*, 79(3), 589-603.
- Manuel, F. E., & Manuel, F. P. 1972. "Sketch for a Natural History of Paradise". *Daedalus*, 101(1), 83-128.
- Munday, J. 2004. "Advertising: Some Challenges to Translation". *The Translator*, 10(2), 199-219.
- Nelson, V. 2012. "Diversified Nature Tourism on St. Vincent". In P. Sloan, C. Simons-Kaufmann & W. Legrand (eds.), *Sustainable Hospitality and Tourism as Motors for Development*, London: Routledge, 163-176.
- Nor Atiah, I., Noor Fazamimah, A., Sumarni, I., Mohd Yazid, M. Y., & Nangkula, U. 2015. "Understanding Characteristics of the Malay Cultural Landscape through Pantun, Woodcarving and Old Literature". *Advances in Environmental Biology*, 9(24), 137-141.
- Parks, T. 2014. *Translating Style: A Literary Approach to Translation - A Translation Approach to Literature* (2nd ed.). London: Routledge.
- Schaffner, C. 1998. "Parallel Texts in Translation". In L. Bowker, M.



- Cronin, D. Kenny & J. Pearson (eds.), *Unity in Diversity?: Current Trends in Translation Studies*. Manchester: St. Jerome, 83-90.
- Seguinot, C. 1994. "Translating and Advertising: Going Global". *Current Issues in Language and Society*, 1(3), 247-265.
- Sharifian, F. 2011. *Cultural Conceptualisations and Language: Theoretical Framework and Applications*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Siti Nor Azizah Talata, 2006, 4 February 2006, Sipadan Syurga Penyelam, *Berita Harian*. Retrieved from <http://greenportal.usm.my/article.php?aid=434>
- Snell-Hornby, M. 1999. "The Ultimate Comfort: Word, Text and the Translation of Tourist Brochures". In G. Anderman & M. Rogers (Eds.), *Word, Text, Translation: Liber Amicorum for Peter Newmark* Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 95-105.
- Sulaiman, M. Z. 2016. "The Misunderstood Concept of Translation in Tourism Promotion". *The International Journal for Translation & Interpreting Research*, 8(1), 53-68.
- Sumberg, C. 2004. "Brand Leadership at Stake: Selling France to British Tourists". *The Translator*, 10(2), 329-353.
- Taylor, J. P. 2001. "Authenticity and Sincerity in Tourism". *Annals of Tourism Research*, 28(1), 7-26.
- Torresi, I. 2010. *Translating Promotional and Advertising Texts*. Manchester: St. Jerome.
- Tourism Australia. 2013. Australia Presents a New Face to the World. Retrieved 25 April 2013, from [http://www.tourism.australia.com/en-au/news/6609\\_6756.aspx](http://www.tourism.australia.com/en-au/news/6609_6756.aspx)
- Vermeer, H. 2000. "Skopos and Commission in Translational Action" (A. Chesterman, Trans.). In L. Venuti (Ed.), *The Translation Studies Reader* (pp. 221-232). London: Routledge.
- W Ramli W Muhamad. (20 April 2010). 'Syurga' Pulau Tenggol, *Utusan Online*. Retrieved from [http://www.utusan.com.my/utusan/info.asp?y=2010&dt=0420&pub=Utusan\\_Malaysia&sec=Timur&pg=wt\\_03.htm](http://www.utusan.com.my/utusan/info.asp?y=2010&dt=0420&pub=Utusan_Malaysia&sec=Timur&pg=wt_03.htm)
- W Shahara A Ghazali. 2009, 27 June 2009. Pantai Tunjuk Laut Selamat Sepanjang Tahun, *Utusan Online*. Retrieved from [http://www.utusan.com.my/utusan/info.asp?y=2009&dt=0627&pub=Utusan\\_Malaysia&sec=Pelancongan&pg=pl\\_01.htm](http://www.utusan.com.my/utusan/info.asp?y=2009&dt=0627&pub=Utusan_Malaysia&sec=Pelancongan&pg=pl_01.htm)
- Waade, A. M. 2010. "Imagine Paradise in Ads: Imagination and Visual Matrices in Tourism and Consumer Culture". *Nordicom Review*, 31(1), 15-33.

- Waite, G. 1997. "Selling Paradise and Adventure: Representations of Landscape in Tourist Advertising of Australia". *Australian Geographical Studies*, 35(1), 47-60.
- Woodward-Smith, E., & Eynullaeva, E. 2009. "A Cross-Cultural Study of the Translation and Adaptation of Advertisements for Beauty Products". *Perspectives: Studies in Translatology*, 17(2), 121-136.
- Wurzinger, C. 2012. "Cultural Values: Why They Matter in Translation". In I. Herrero & T. Klaiman (Eds.), *Versatility in Translation Studies: Selected Papers of the CETRA Research Seminar in Translation Studies 2011*. [www.arts.kuleuven.be/cetra/papers](http://www.arts.kuleuven.be/cetra/papers) (retrieved on 10 October 2016).
- Zalina Azman, & Ramli MS. 2009. "Malaysia Your Enchanting Gateway." Kuala Lumpur: Tourism Malaysia.

## **Translating tourism promotional texts: translation quality and its relationship to the commissioning process**

*Novriyanto Napu*

### *Abstract*

*Poor translation quality has often been associated with the translators' low level of proficiency in either the source or the target language. In addition, the translator's poor awareness and understanding of the purpose of the translation has also played a role. This may be the case when the translation commissioners fail to define and specify the purpose of the translation in the translation brief, which may influence the way the translator determines the strategies for translating the texts. The studies on the role of the translation commissioning process in translation have, however, remained limited. The aim of this paper is to examine the translation quality of tourism texts and the extent to which the translation commissioning process influences quality, with particular reference to the Indonesian context. Two sets of data have been used in this study; a corpus of six bilingual (Indonesian-English) tourism brochures officially produced by the Tourism Board of Gorontalo, Indonesia, and interviews with the tourism professionals involved in the commissioning process. The paper argues that an inadequate commissioning process has a significant impact on the quality of translation.*

### **1. Introduction: context of the study**

As in many other countries, the tourism industry in Indonesia has played an important role in contributing to the development of the country's economy. The Indonesian Ministry of Tourism (2011) states that the tourism sector has become one of the fastest growing industries. According to data from the Ministry of Tourism (2011), in 2009 the

tourism sector became the third largest sector of the economy after mining, oil and gas.

In developing promotional strategies, the Indonesian tourism industry has been working together with international media to promote and showcase the image of Indonesian tourism sites using the slogan "Wonderful Indonesia". Another strategy to boost tourism has been to offer visa-free travel to tourists coming from a number of countries. In 2015, more than 110 countries were given visa-free travel to Indonesia for tourism and business purposes, and this number was expected to increase to 174 countries in 2016 (Kertopati 2015). Given the emphasis that the government in Indonesia has been placing on tourism and the investment being made, it is essential to consider the quality of the promotional products that are being developed alongside such strategies.

Gorontalo province, established in 2001, is located in the northern part of Sulawesi Island. As a relatively new autonomous province in Eastern Indonesia, Gorontalo could be considered as a newcomer in the tourism industry. Since the establishment of a Tourism Board in 2003, the provincial government has been trying to promote and develop local tourism. Compared to other areas in Indonesia, Gorontalo has not yet attracted a large number of tourists. This may be due to a combination of its geographical position in the northern part of Sulawesi Island and the lack of institutional attention to the tourism industry in the past. However, the local government has recently started to focus on developing the industry.

One strategy that the Tourism Board of Gorontalo has used in promoting the industry has been to produce promotional materials, such as brochures and tourism videos containing clips of tourist attractions in Gorontalo. These brochures are written initially in Indonesian and are then translated into English with a view to reaching international markets.

Although translation is very common in the tourism industry, translations of tourism texts have generally been criticised because of their poor quality. This aspect, commented on extensively in Translation Studies research (e.g. Kelly 1998; Milton & Garbi 2000; Ko 2010; Ma & Song's 2011; Muñoz 2012; Sulaiman 2013), inevitably weakens the ability of tourism texts to achieve their purpose of enticing and attracting readers. Given that problems with the quality of tourist translations have been commonly reported in many parts of the world and given the importance of translation in the Gorontalo Tourism Board's communication with international audiences, it is timely to consider the quality of the

---

translations being produced. This paper therefore sets out to examine the quality of the translations used to promote tourism in Gorontalo, Indonesia.

## **2. Previous studies of tourist translation**

Studies of tourist translation have explored the issue of translation quality in many different aspects. A number of studies report on findings regarding linguistic problems, including grammatical problems (e.g. Milton & Garbi 2000; Ma & Song's 2011; Muñoz 2012; Liu & Wen 2014), semantic problems (Valdeon 2009; He & Tao 2010; Wang 2011; Ma & Song 2011; Guo 2012; Liu & Wen 2014), stylistic (Wang 2011; Sulaiman 2013) and spelling problems (e.g. Ko 2010, 2012; Wang 2011; Liu and Wen 2014). These studies argue that these kinds of problems can be attributed to the limited English competence of the translators.

Apart from problems relating to linguistic features, other studies have also explored the translation of cultural features in tourism texts. The most common problems here include a number of mistranslations of cultural items, such as the translation of proper nouns, names of historical places and events as shown in studies of corpora of Chinese-English tourist translations (Ma & Song 2011; Wang 2011; Bin 2013) and in studies of Spanish-English translations (Valdeon 2009; Merkaĵ 2013). This suggests that cultural problems in translation may be associated with the translator's focus on the linguistic aspects of the text, with less awareness on the cultural meanings in the translation process.

A small number of studies have considered readers' responses in evaluating the quality of translations of tourism texts (Nobs-Federer 2006; Sulaiman 2013, 2014). Sulaiman (2013, 2014) for instance, considers how translations into Malay of Australian promotional materials about the Gold Coast appeal to target audience readers. The overall responses to the texts from the Malay speakers revealed that the Malay translations were unappealing, awkward and hard to understand because the stylistic features of the target text had been transferred literally from the source text.

Other studies have examined the features of source language texts to see how they relate to the quality of target texts (Valdeon 2009; Sulaiman 2013). These studies conclude that often the problems in the target language may result from badly written source texts.

---

## 2.1 Studies of tourist translation in Indonesia

There have been few studies of tourist translation in Indonesia and there are only a small number of published studies focusing on the translation of tourism texts from Indonesian into English (Permadi & Prayogo 2012; Hartati 2013; Puspitasari et al. 2013). These studies, mostly analysing linguistic issues, have looked at translation problems by examining and comparing source and target language corpora. They have highlighted problems involving grammatical errors (Permadi & Prayogo 2012; Hartati 2013; Puspitasari et al. 2013), such as the omission of definite and indefinite articles, the omission of plural marking on nouns, and on verbs in the third singular person. They have also identified spelling and punctuation errors (Permadi & Prayogo 2012; Hartati 2013), which shows evidence of a lack of attention to the editing and revision process. The translation errors identified in these studies appear to be low level linguistic errors and this is similar to the findings of other studies outside Indonesia (e.g. Milton & Garbi 2000; Ma & Song's 2011; Muñoz 2012; Liu & Wen 2014). Though interesting and revealing, the Indonesian studies have not considered why such problems appear. They have mostly attributed these problems to the use of a literal approach to translation but have not considered other factors that may be relevant, such as the impact of the commissioning process on the translation quality. This aspect has received scant attention in scholarly work.

## 3. Method

The aim of the study upon which this paper is based was to investigate the quality of tourist translations from Indonesian into English and to consider the potential influence of the associated commissioning process. It was designed and carried out through a qualitative case study examining the quality of translated tourism texts produced by the provincial Tourism Board of Gorontalo in Indonesia.

### 3.1 The data

In the original study a set of official publications of tourism brochures was used as the corpus for the analysis. Six tourism brochures were examined. Each brochure was written in Indonesian with a parallel English

translation. The analysis focussed on the nature of the English translation errors as the basis of understanding the quality of the translations.

An interview was carried out with the tourism professionals at the Gorontalo Tourism Board. The aim of examining the translation commissioning process was to examine how those involved understood and carried out the process and how this impacted on the quality of translation. A total of six professionals were interviewed. A semi-structured interview was used. The interview was carried out through a set of predetermined open-ended questions, which were supplemented with more questions as the interviews were held with the participants.

The questions revolved around four main issues relating to the commissioning process. The first question focused on how the participants understood the purpose of translation. As Vermeer (1989) and Nord (1997; 2014) have argued the purpose is fundamental to translation quality. Consequently, it is important to understand the purpose as the starting point for the commissioning process. The second question was about the process used to select translators to find out what procedures and criteria were used in selecting translators. The third question focused on how the participants communicated the purpose and other aspects of the translation task to the translators. Functionalist translation theory claims that the translation brief is an important element in the translation process, and thus this question looked at how the Tourism Board provides information and instructions to translators. The last question focused on how the participants carried out quality assurance. As outlined earlier, the literature on tourist translation in Indonesia has shown that there are problems with texts translated from Indonesian into a foreign language. Scholars such as Chesterman (1997) and Adab (2005) have argued that in contexts where translation into the second language is the norm, quality assurance should be even more important.

#### **4. Translation quality**

This section will analyse the translation quality of the set of tourism texts comprising the data. The translation problems examined here belong to two main categories, i.e. linguistic problems and cultural problems. The analysis will give but a selection of prototypical examples that are evident in the entire corpus.

## 4.1 Linguistic problems

### 4.1.1 Syntactic errors

The syntactic problems analysed relate to problems with grammatical structures. There are many instances of syntactic problems identified in the text.

#### *Omission of grammatical items*

- 1) Omission of 'to be' as an auxiliary verb or copula  
"This island (is) located in North Gorontalo regency" (*pulau ini terletak di Kabupaten Gorontalo Utara*).
- 2) Omission of articles  
"Otanaha fortress was built in 1525 by (the) Portugesse [sic]" (*Benteng Otanaha dibangun sekitar tahun 1525 oleh Portugis*).

#### *Word form problems*

- 1) Omission of possession marker  
"...when Gorontalo became transit harbour of Ternate kingdom and Goa kingdom (s) marine force" (*pada saat itu Gorontalo menjadi pelabuhan transit angkutan laut kerajaan Ternate dan Goa*).
- 2) Omission of plural marker  
"They said that many sea creatures in this area cannot be found in other sea(s)" (*mereka mengatakan bahwa banyak jenis binatang laut di daerah ini tidak dapat ditemukan di laut lainnya*).

#### *Syntactic problems*

"The uniqueness of this village (is) since the settlements that are above the sea with a population 1.710 people with livelihoods as fishermen".

(*Keunikan dari perkampungan ini karena letak pemukimannya yang berada diatas air laut, dengan jumlah penduduk 1.710 jiwa yang bermata pencaharian sebagai nelayan*).

In this example, apart from the missing verb 'to be', the English looks unnatural as the result of a literal (word for word) translation of the source language text. The words in this sentence have the same order as the sentence in the source text: *keunikan* (uniqueness) *dari* (of) *perkampungan ini* (this village) *karena* (since) *pemukimannya* (the settlements) *yang berada* (that



are) *diatas* (above) *air laut* (laut).

#### 4.1.2 Semantic problems

Semantic problems are concerned with word meaning and may involve problems with lexical choices and the translation of idiomatic expressions. A good example of this problem can be seen below:

“Otanaha fortress was built in 1525 by Portuguesse. In 1623 it was found by Naha from Tuwawa kingdom (Suwawa) and named as the founder, Ota: fortress, Naha: benteng” [sic].

*(Otanaha dibangun sekitar tahun 1525 oleh Portugis. Pada tahun 1623 benteng ini ditemukan oleh naha dari kerajaan Tuwawa (Suwawa) dan diberi nama Otanaha yang berasal dari namanya; Ota:benteng, Naha).*

The word ‘founder’ is problematic because the idea in this passage is that Naha is the ‘finder’ of the fortress not the person who originally built it (founder). This seems to be due to a confusion of two related English words with different meanings, that is ‘finder’ and ‘founder’, and may result from the influence of the earlier use of the verb ‘found’. This problem may also result from issues with spelling given the similarities of the two words.

The discussion above has shown that there are a number of translation problems in the texts. Most of the linguistic problems identified have also been found in other studies of tourist translations (e.g. Ma & Song 2011; Muñoz 2012; Permadi & Prayogo 2012; Hartati 2013; Puspitasari, et.al 2013; Liu & Wen 2014). These problems are likely to be the result of the translator’s limited English language abilities. Problems in the translations also seem to be caused by a literal (word for word) translation strategy that has been used throughout the text and this suggests the translator’s lack of translation competence (Kelly 1998; Muñoz 2012).

#### 4.1.3 Cultural reference problems

Cultural reference problems are related to the ways that culture-related items in the source text are adapted or mediated in the target text to enable comprehension for the target text readers. An example of cultural reference issues found in the texts is the following:

---

“There are rare animals such as Babi Rusa and Anoa”  
(*Terdapat binatang langka seperti Babi Rusa dan Anoa*).

The words *babi rusa* and *anoa* do not have translation equivalents in English. The translator has therefore left these words untranslated but this does not communicate information about the referents to a target text reader, for whom these animal names will not be familiar. However, some mediational work in this context, such as adding extra information to these animal names, which Liddicoat (2015) has called ‘expansion’, could have overcome the issue and enabled comprehension by the target language audience: for example adding a description of the animal as in *babi rusa* (a type of wild pig) and *anoa* (a small water buffalo). This strategy would support the target readers who do not share the same knowledge of the context as that of the source language readers. The addition of information helps to achieve the text’s purpose by clarifying the meaning of implicit source text information (Liddicoat 2015). This kind of translator intervention is useful to create a fuller comprehension of the text for the target audience. Such additions mean that the translator functions as a mediator (Katan 2009; Liddicoat 2015), that is as somebody who facilitates communication and understanding between one group and another with respect to language and culture.

The translation problems provide evidence of the use of a literal translation approach and a lack of mediational work in the texts, and this indicates that the translator had limited translation competence or lacked familiarity with translation practices. Kelly (1998) and Muñoz (2012) have also argued that problems in tourist translation reflect translators’ lack of translation competence. This suggests that there are problems with the selection of translators in the commissioning process, which will be discussed further in the next section.

## 5. The commissioning process

The aim of examining the translation commissioning process was to examine how those involved in the commissioning process understood and carried out the process and how this impacted on the quality of translation. This involved a visit to the Tourism Board in Gorontalo, Indonesia to collect information through interviews about the process of commissioning translations from a group of tourism professionals.

This section will provide a discussion of the research findings that

---

explore how the commissioning process of translation influences the level of translation quality. A selection of extracts with detailed commentary is provided to consider this aspect of translation quality.

### 5.1 The purpose of translation

This section outlines how tourism staff members understand and articulate the purpose that underpins the translation work commissioned by the Tourism Board in Gorontalo. The following is an extract from the interview carried out with one of the tourism professionals.

*“Sasarannya untuk peningkatan kunjungan wisman. Mereka butuh informasi dalam Bahasa Inggris. Bahasa Inggris adalah bahasa internasional jadi semua bisa membaca dan memahami”.*

(The aim [of the translation] is to increase foreign visitors' visits. They need tourism information written in English. English is an international language and so all people can read and understand it).

This quote shows that the participant understood the purpose of the translation to be tourism promotion that will increase the number of visitors coming to Gorontalo from outside Indonesia. This shows that the translated brochures were designed specifically for international tourism promotion.

The quote also shows that the target audience has been understood in a general sense as people who come from any foreign country regardless of their linguistic and cultural background. This understanding of the audience is linked to how the participant understood the international role of English and its diffusion in the world, assuming that if the information is available in English, it will meet the needs of any audience. This shows that English is perceived as a lingua franca, a 'vehicular language' (Stewart 2013), for all visitors regardless of linguistic or cultural background.

The purpose of the translation can only be specified once the target readers have been identified and defined (Nord 1997, 2014). Instead, the very general framing of the target audience shows that the process has not been mindful (Katan 2014) in that the translators have not taken an account of the readers and have focused only on the text.

---

## 5.2 Selection of translators

This section examines the nature of the selection process for translators and the criteria that the Tourism Board employs when selecting translators for their texts. The following extract represents the perspective of one staff member, who also happens to be one of the translators chosen for the translation work.

*“Karena kebetulan mereka tau saya lulusan dari sastra Inggris walaupun tidak semua lulusan sastra Inggris itu jago Bahasa Inggris karena kita tidak belajar Bahasa Inggris di jurusan itu. Cuma mau gak mau karena mungkin kita sudah terbiasa mendengar, berbicara dan berdiskusi dalam Bahasa Inggris, mungkin karena itu mereka memilih saya”.*

(It was because they know that I am an English literature graduate although not all graduates of English literature are good at English because we did not learn English language in that major. But, perhaps we are used to listening, speaking and conversing in English, which may be the reason they chose me to be the translator.)

This staff member reveals that she was appointed as one of the translators on the basis of her degree in English literature. The assumption is that, if a person has studied English literature, she must be familiar with the English language and so must be able to translate. In other words, having translation competence is seen as being the same as having a degree related to the target language or having a familiarity with the target language. This shows that the commissioner’s understanding of translation competence is based only on the idea of being able to speak the target language.

The discussion above reveals that there is no specialised procedure for selecting a translator. The process does not check whether the translator can deliver the quality translation service they need. There is a lack of understanding that a competent translator should have not only target language ability or qualifications but also other capabilities such as textual, subject, cultural and transfer competence (Neubert 2000).

## 5.3 Translation brief

The translation brief consists of the instructions or specifications given by

a client to the translator to carry out a translation work (Vermeer 1989; Palumbo 2009). Nord (1997, 2014) argues that the translation brief specifies the kind of translation needed by the client to suit the target audience. The following extract is from the staff member who was once appointed as the in-house translator describing the nature of the translation brief in the commissioning process:

*“Sebenarnya tidak pernah ada. Sejaub ini tidak ada panduan saat kita melakukan terjemahan. Cuma yang pasti kepala seksi memberi perintah tugas tersebut harus mengandung unsur-unsur promosi”.*

([As for translation guidelines] actually there have never been any. So far, there have never been guidelines when we are doing the translation. The head of the [tourism promotion] section gives an instruction that [the translation task] must contain promotional elements).

This staff member/translator reveals that she has never been given any guidelines except that the translation brief should contain promotional content. There appear not to be any details regarding the translation brief, such as the purpose of the translation, its intended text functions, recipients or text meaning (Vermeer 1989; Nord 1997, 2014).

So, it can be said that there was no actual translation brief designed and provided to the translator. Without having a formal commissioning process it is hard for the Tourism Board to check whether the translation has met the aims and purpose of the translation as given in the translation brief.

#### 5.4 Translation quality assurance

This section explores the nature of the quality assurance process and how the Tourism Board checks the quality upon receiving the translation from their translators before proceeding to publication. The following extracts are from two staff members providing information about how the process of quality assurance was carried out.

##### Extract 1

*“Gabung dengan pimpinan. Ada juga teman atau tamu yang kebetulan bisa Bahasa Inggris maka kita minta bantuan untuk dibaca dan dikoreksi. Siapa saja yang bisa berbahasa Inggris saling membantu”.*

---

(We work with the Head of the Tourism Board. There are also friends or guests who happen to be able to speak English and are asked to read and review the translation. Anyone who is able to speak English helps in correcting the translation).

The extract above shows that the way the quality assurance process is done may involve random checking of the texts by people from outside the Tourism Board who are considered to be competent: *'teman atau tamu'* (friends or guests). The translation is reviewed and checked randomly and voluntarily by anyone with English language skills who happens to be in the office. This further suggests that the quality check is an informal ad hoc process using whatever expertise in English language which happens to be available at the time. This quote also suggests that the ability to check a translation is understood only in terms of competence in the target language.

#### Extract 2

*“Setelah diterjemahkan dari Bahasa Indonesianya, saya minta persetujuan kepala seksi dan kepala Dinas. Kadang mungkin ada beberapa kata yang kepala Dinas rasa kurang cocok, misalnya penggunaan kata – kata tertentu yang mungkin tidak sesuai menurut pimpinan”.*

(After the texts are translated from the Indonesian, I seek approval from the Head of Section and the Head of the Tourism Board. At times, there are some words that the Head feels are not suitable, such as some word choices).

This quote, from another staff member, shows that the quality check is considered as being primarily an approval process involving those with higher positions in the Tourism Board. Although it is stated that the head of department may review the texts, again it is only minor language aspects that are reviewed, such as lexical choices. The quality checking process involves an administrative process in which the translation draft must be approved by two heads of the section and of the Tourism Board before publication. This quality check is carried out by second language speakers who may have a lower level of English than the translators themselves. In this process, a number of minor corrections may be made in terms of language. This indicates that the process of quality assurance is more an

administrative process rather than a quality checking process.

There seems to be confusion between quality checking and the overall approval process, with those in authority seeing these as the same thing. The Head of the Tourism Board does the approval process, and it is also assumed that s/he had the responsibility to perform a quality check. This sort of quality check contrasts with the recommendation that the involvement of native speakers of English is needed to check if the language is natural-sounding and to guarantee the quality of the translation prior to publication (Chesterman 1997; Adab 2005).

## **6. Conclusion**

Looking at the quality of the translations, there are a number of findings from the analysis of the commissioning process that are related to the reasons for the poor quality of the translation. The lack of understanding of the purpose of the translations appears to have significantly influenced the understandings of other processes in commissioning the translations. The lack of clarity about the purpose has impacted on the translation brief. The translator worked without sufficient guidelines about what was needed from the translation, which affected decisions regarding translation strategies. There is also a limited understanding of translation competence, which influenced the way translator was selected. Translation competence was understood as having the ability to speak the target language. So, instead of selecting people who were qualified as translators, the selection process has chosen people who had qualifications in English.

In addition, the quality assurance process was not rigorous and the translations were not carefully checked. The process of quality assurance was conflated with the final approval process by the Head of the Board, and the translation checks were done in-house by anyone who was considered able to speak English.

In conclusion, the findings of the study suggest that in understanding the quality of translation in the tourism domain it is not enough to simply examine the errors in the texts which show translators' ability in translation, as has been the case in a large number of studies. This present study suggests that it is important to focus on the entire translation process including significantly the commissioning process as this is crucial to the issue of translation quality, especially in the context of a developing tourism industry.

---

### Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Prof. Tony Liddicoat, Dr Michelle Kohler and the anonymous reviewers for their insightful comments and suggestions.

### References

- Adab, B. 2005. "Translating into a second language: Can we, should we?", G. Anderman/M. Rogers, (eds.), *In and out of English: For better, for worse*, Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 227-241.
- Bin, A. 2013. "Soil restaurant? An investigation into the English translation of travel signs in China", *Journal of China Tourism Research*.
- Chesterman, A. 1997. *Memes of Translation The spread of ideas in translation theory*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company,
- Guo, M. 2012. "Analysis on the English-translation Errors of Public Signs", *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, vol. 2, no. 6, 1214-1219.
- Hartati, E. 2013. "Translation Analysis in Bilingual Tourism Brochure: Translating Indonesian to English", *English Language Teaching, Literature, and Translation*, 380.
- He, J. & Tao, Y. 2010. "Study of the Translation Errors in the Light of the Skopostheorie: Samples from the Websites of Some Tourist Attractions in China", *Babel: Revue Internationale de la Traduction/International Journal of Translation*, vol. 56, no. 1, 35-46.
- Katan, D. 2009. "Translation as intercultural communication", *The Routledge companion to translation studies*, London: Routledge, 74-92.
- Katan, D. 2014. "Intercultural communication, mindful translation and squeezing 'culture' onto the screen", *Interlinguistica. Studi contrastivi tra lingue e culture*, 55-76.
- Kelly, D.A. 1998. "The translation of texts from the tourist sector: textual conventions, cultural distance and other constraints", *TRANS: revista de traductología*, no. 2, 33-42.
- Kementerian Pariwisata Indonesia, 2011. *Dampak Event Parwisata*, Indonesian Government, viewed 18 March 2016, <http://www.kemenpar.go.id/asp/detil.asp?c=22&id=1037>
- Kertopati, L., 2015. "Total 174 negara bebas visa kunjungan ke Indonesia", CNN Indonesia, 21 November, viewed 18 March 2016, <http://www.cnnindonesia.com/gaya-hidup/20151221171051-269-99671/total-174-negara-bebas-visa-kunjungan-ke-indonesia/>



- Ko, L. 2010. "Chinese-English translation of public signs for tourism", *The Journal of Specialised Translation*, vol. 13.
- 2012. "Information loss and change of appellative effect in Chinese-English public sign translation", *Babel*, vol. 58, no. 3, 309-326.
- Liddicoat, A.J. 2015. "Intercultural mediation, intercultural communication and translation", *Perspectives*, 1-10.
- Liu, J. & Wen, M. 2014, "On Translation Quality of Mongolian Intangible Cultural Heritages: The Mausoleum of Genghis Khan as a Case Study", *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, vol. 4, no. 12, 2541-2548.
- Ma, Y. & Song, N. 2011. "The Skopos Theory and Tourist Material Translation: With an Analysis of Mt. Lushan Translation", *Cross-Cultural Communication*, vol. 7, no. 1, 53-61.
- Merkaj, L. 2013. "Tourist communication: a specialized discourse with difficulties in translation", *European Scientific Journal*, vol. 9, no. 10.
- Milton, J. & Garbi A. 2000. "Error types in the computer-aided translation of tourism texts", *Database and Expert Systems Applications, 2000. Proceedings of the 11<sup>th</sup> International Workshop on Database and Expert Systems Applications*, Washington DC, 138-142.
- Muñoz, D. 2012. "Characterization of tourist translation: problems, difficulties", *Revista de Linguística y Lenguas Aplicadas (RLLA)*, vol. 7, 103-114.
- Neubert, A. 2000. "Competence in language, in languages, and in translation", *Benjamins Translation Library*, vol. 38, 3-18.
- Nobs, M.L. 2006. *La traducción de folletos turísticos: ¿Qué calidad demandan los turistas?*. Granada: Comares.
- Nord, C. 1997. "Defining translation functions. The translation brief as a guideline for the trainee translation", *Ilha do Desterro A Journal of English Language, Literatures in English and Cultural Studies*, no. 33, 039-054.
- Nord, C. 2014. *Translating as a purposeful activity: Functionalist approaches explained*. UK: Routledge.
- Palumbo, G. 2009. *Key terms in translation studies*, London, New York: Continuum.
- Permadi, M.B. & Prayogo, J.A. 2012. "Grammatical accuracy in the promotion media of tourism in Batu-East Java". (Bachelor's thesis, State University of Malang, Faculty of Arts).
- Puspitasari, W & Refnaldi, HA. 2013, "Translation techniques and translation accuracy of english translated text of tourism brochure in tanah datar regency", *E-Journal English, Language and Literature*, vol. 2, 1.

- Stewart, D. 2013, 'From Pro Loco to Pro Globo: Translating into English for an International Readership', *The Interpreter and Translator Trainer*, vol. 7, no. 2, 217-234.
- Sulaiman, MZ. 2014, 'Translating the Style of Tourism Promotional Discourse: A Cross Cultural Journey into Stylescapes', *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, vol. 118, 503-510.
- Sulaiman, MZ 2013, 'Translating tourism: a cultural journey across conceptual spaces'. (Doctoral dissertation, Monash University. Faculty of Arts. Languages, Cultures and Linguistics).
- Valdeon, RA 2009, 'Translating informative and persuasive texts', *Perspectives: Studies in Translatology*, vol. 17, no. 2, 77-81.
- Vermeer, HJ 1989, "Skopos and commission in translational action", in Venuti, L. (eds.), *Translation studies reader*, London: Routledge.
- Wang, B. 2011. "Translating Publicity Texts in the Light of Skopos Theory: Problems and Suggestions", *Translation Quarterly*, no. 59.

## Translating for Outsider Tourists: Cultural Informers Do It Better

David Katan

### *Abstract*

*This paper focusses on tourist information texts and their main skopos, which is to enable the tourist through the text to change status from Outsider towards that of Insider. Outsiders will have a much more limited, and often distorted view of an Insider's model of the world, due to both incompetence in language and cultural-ways. In theory, a translation automatically enables the Outsider reader to become more of an Insider. However, it will be argued here that the translator unwittingly, or mindlessly, loses much of the original writer's aim through fidelity. The ideas of mindful and mindless are useful in that they convey the idea of the translator who is or is not "sensitive to context and perspective" (Langer 2008). Examples of 'mindless' tourist translations will be compared with texts written by natural 'cultural informers', who mindfully enable Outsider tourists to become more insider.*

*Apart from proposing a general discourse ordo naturalis model of how cultural informers approach the task of mediating Insider and Outsider worlds, a detailed taxonomy of high and low context communication styles is discussed from the point of view of contexting and low context communication as ways of enabling Outsiders into the Insider world.*

### **1. Introduction**

In this paper I wish to focus on Insider and Outsider worlds, particularly those involving the tourist gaze (Urry and Larsen 2011), and how understanding of 'the other' is always mediated through cultural filters (Katan 2009a). In the process I will be comparing interlingual translation of tourist informational material with intralingual. My main argument will be that the professional translator unwittingly, or mindlessly, loses much of the original writer's aim and efficacy through fidelity, and that cultural 'insiders' and informers do it better.

---

The ideas of mindful and mindless (see Katan 2015) are useful in that they convey the idea of the translator who is or is not “sensitive to context and perspective” (Langer 2008). A mindful translator will not take fidelity to the text (whether source or target) as paramount, but rather will account for and mediate the impact of cultural distance (Katan 2013: 84), and hence will be involved in both translation and new text creation, or rather transcreation (Katan, 2016). On the other hand, a mindless translator is one who accounts for the text, oblivious to author intention, stance or to reader need or reception. As Langer (2008, n.p.) explains, we are acting mindlessly when “our behaviour is rule and routine governed. Essentially we freeze our understanding and become oblivious to subtle changes that would have led us to act differently”.

As I will argue, the essentially-rule-bound translators should learn from the natural-translator cultural informers, and consider much more the relationships between the worlds of the original text author and reader, and those between the translation and its new reader. To do so, the translator should be proficient in identifying the two contexts of culture, and the relative gaps. The next section introduces two models useful for analyzing these different cultural worlds: ‘Universal Filters’ and ‘Logical Levels’.

### 1.1 The Filters and Logical Levels model of the Tourist Gaze

The tourist gaze, like any other gaze, tends to be fixed. It is an Outsider’s gaze, and has been likened to a model of reality (Francesconi 2007: 47; Katan 2012). Mental models of reality were first discussed within cognitive psychology, while their implications for discourse processing are discussed in van Dijk (e.g. 2006), and have been well developed in Neurolinguistic programming (NLP) (e.g. O’Connor 2001). While van Dijk discusses the mental models in ideological terms, NLP aims to identify the gaps between individual modelling of the world and reality regardless of power asymmetries.

I have developed the NLP construct to help identify the more or less static modelling that cultural groups tend to share about their own and other worlds. There are three basic Universal Filters at work in modelling: deletion, distortion and generalisation. Van Dijk (1995: 385) adopts exactly the same tripartite system of “mapping rules”, changing only ‘distortion’ into ‘construction’. The first, ‘deletion’, is a simple non-perception of the Other. The second filter is ‘distortion’, which acts to fit what is perceived

into the perceiver's world, relating (and hence distorting it) to other more familiar experience. The third filter is 'generalisation', which tends to gloss over or completely ignore individual contexts and forms the basis of stereotyping. The final evaluation of what is perceived, distorted and generalised can rarely be truly objective, as the values that are used to judge will necessarily come from our own personal or culture-bound view of what is normal or right.

Below is an example home page of "Essence of Italy", designed to attract the reader not only to Italy but to the writer, Carolyn Masone who created the site to make herself more well-known and respected as a travel expert and photographer.<sup>1</sup> We will use this page simply to illustrate how the Universal Filters operate in practice.

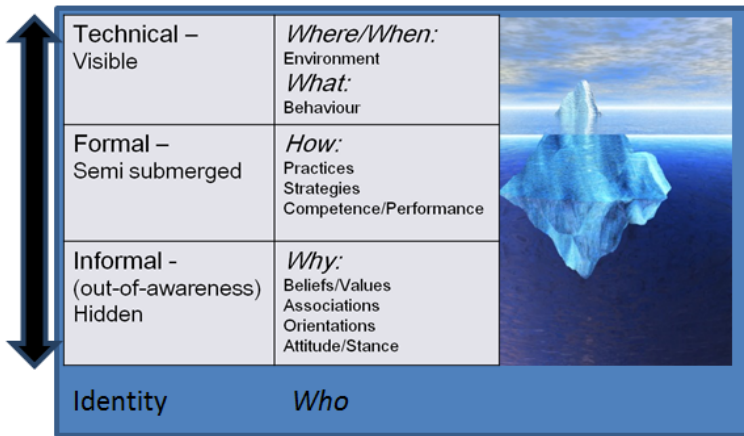
The lexeme “essence” gives the idea of an objective distilling of what is Italy, written by one who has been there, and who is mediating for those who, we may imagine, are interested in going. A distillation necessarily must delete much of what is Italy. This particular gaze is fixed in a past time, and focusses (distorts) on the sound of the mandolin heard in particular (tourist frequented) locations. The mandolin is, of course, played for the benefit of tourists. From these snatches of a contrived

<sup>1</sup> <http://essenceofitalyofficialblog.blogspot.it/2008/03/mandolin-serenade-of-italy.html>.  
(last accessed 17/12/2016)

reality, Carolyn (the blogger/podcaster) is able to generalise, and wonder if anything else could be more Italian.

It takes very little to transform these few words into a complete model of reality. The model adopted here comes from a fusion of E.T. Hall’s Triad of Culture (1959: 87) and the model of Logical Levels used in NLP (see Katan 2004, 2009a). Using this Logical Levels model of reality helps to understand not only what the gaze focusses on, but how and why an individual’s model of the world interprets the others’ reality the way it does.

E.T. Hall's Triad of culture, or Iceberg model, has 3 levels of visibility: Technical, which represents the visible (the NLP level of Environment and Behaviour), the semi-submerged Formal (the NLP strategy level), and the third fully hidden Informal (or out-of-awareness) level of values and beliefs. Taking the three levels together gives us a snapshot of “Who” (the NLP level of Identity) or what culture’s model of the world is doing the gazing:



What the Levels require is internal congruence and external fit with actual actions and reactions in the real world. If the model is able to satisfy both requirements then we can say that it will be useful in orienting our understanding of the writer’s world and that of their ideal reader.

However, it should also be made clear that recent NLP literature has questioned both the ‘logic’ and the hierarchy in the levels (e.g. O’Connor 2001: 28). Van Dijk (2006: 118) also suggests that the models are not necessarily “consistent” nor “logical”, but are organized in a hierarchical

and “socio-psychological” way with clear links between micro and higher level macro structures. I prefer to retain the ‘logic’, while underlining the fact that it is not an objective logic, but a subjective congruence which works for that individual or culture. Indeed, one culture’s patently normal way of doing things often appears to be totally illogical seen from another *weltanschauung*. This, indeed, explains how cultures (or in Van Dijk’s work, ideologies) clash.

In this particular case, at the ‘Technical’ tip of the iceberg, ‘Environment’ is Carolyn’s view of Venice and Naples today. The ‘Behaviour’ she notices (having deleted/ignored all other possible activities) is: hearing the mandolin being played; closing eyes; floating on a gondola, and walking down narrow streets.

This much is visible. What is less visible (at the Formal level) is the set of practices, the style, the associated norms and the type of performance that these behaviours ‘logically’ relate to. They will answer the question ‘how?’ Carolyn, at the meta-level of ‘Identity’ is a tourist, so logically the Behaviour of hearing, floating and walking will be carried out in particular ways, e.g. with attention, and with pauses for comments, photographs and souvenir buying.

In terms of Performance, there will be moments when the Outsider will be more competent than the local. For example, Outsiders will often have a developed shared understanding of what is worthy of their gaze, and will know how to photograph the sights and what souvenirs to look out for. In the main this is due to the ‘sight sacralisation’ (MacCannell 1976: 43–45) phenomenon of tourism. Tourists, like pilgrims, will be searching for *the* site, famed for its enriching qualities, and will want to physically touch whatever it is that is enshrined at the site and bring home evidence of having made the trip in person (and a blog page is part of that process).

As to communication style itself, Carolyn’s text is verbal (rather than nominal), where even the passivity (“closing eyes”, “floating”) contains dynamic verbs, requiring a subject and predicate. As has been observed elsewhere, web pages promoting destinations communicate according to significantly different culture-bound patterns. Manca (2016: 96-103), for example, notes that verbs of action are a distinguishing feature of Australian (and to a lesser extent British) promotion, whereas in the Italian tourism promotion pages she analysed “Action is never overtly prompted”.

---

These communication patterns are motivated by orientations, which form the third, most hidden level of the Iceberg. We will discuss orientations, further, but for the moment will point to what Brake *et al* (1995) call an ‘Action’ or a ‘Doing’ orientation rather than a ‘Being’ orientation, which would privilege agentless and stative verbs. Other drives or motivating factors are beliefs and values, all of which operate at the hidden ‘Informal’ level. This Informal, out of awareness, level represents the motivation behind the performance visible in these particular actions. This is where the distortion filter comes into play. All models of reality have to prioritize what is worth focusing on, give prominence to, and what to leave out or generalize. The key drive in tourism is difference, the extra-ordinary. As Urry (Urry and Larson 2011: 4) points out, the tourist gaze “is directed to features of landscape and townscape which separate them off from everyday experience.”

Carolyn (an American photographer with Italian descent, and clearly passionate about the mandolin) is attracted to the non-everyday sound of the mandolin because it triggers the Italy of her grandparents’ time, and consequently more core values such as nostalgia, simplicity, tradition, authenticity and so on. Italy, for Carolyn, represents an escape from everyday experience, which of course is necessarily an Outsider’s view. The Insider/Outsider is a fluid concept. Here I will suggest that the Insider can make manifest and share a gaze with other local inhabitants either because s/he is local or has become sufficiently acculturated to the local use of language and cultural ways. Instead, where the language competence or model of the world is distant enough to distort or lose the local understanding, then that person is an Outsider.

We may presume that Carolyn’s escape from everyday experience will be that of a tourist, which implies a short term visit to a location not fully ‘known’, often referred to in the literature as “the honeymoon period” or “denial” (e.g. Bennett 1993), due to the tourist’s “unconsciousness of incompetence”. As the destination (and its people) becomes more fully known, so the tourist becomes more of an Insider, and will approach more advanced stages in the cultural adjustment process (see Katan 2012).

## 1.2 Insiders and Outsiders

The original text writer will be mediating for a reader sharing the same culture, but who is not as familiar with the immediate context as the writer. We may call such a person a non-local insider reader (IR). As



Dillon (1992: 39-40) tells us, Insiders:

have large funds of special information about other relevant claims, received opinion, and previous positions of the writer, in addition, they have an interest in the matter under discussion: they themselves have positions against which they test the argument [...] they are in a position to evaluate what is said in terms of what is alluded to, obliquely touched on, or even unsaid.

IRs are in a position to evaluate the text because they share a similar world view and have “privileged access” (Merton 1972: 17). Merton’s use of ‘privileged’ comes from Cultural Studies and has a clear ideological basis, but what is interesting from an intercultural point of view, is that while the Insider will have deleted and generalised much less, for example, of ‘the essence of Italy’, there will also be a significant Insiders’ distortion of reality. Morton (1972: 17) quotes research which demonstrates that Insiders, for example, tend towards an “aggrandizement” of their own reality, and in fact suggests that judgements “are best trusted when [the judges] assess groups other than their own; that is, when members of groups judge as Outsiders rather than Insiders” (*ibid.*: 18).

There are two areas that a mindful translator should be aware of. First, the new target reader from a different lingua-culture will necessarily be an outsider reader (OR), without those large funds of special information or attitudes that form the logical levels of the Insider's world. Second, the original text will rarely have been written to be translated or to be read by an Outsider. Hence the importance of privileged access, Insider subjective judgement and stance, which we will discuss later.

In the first case, the mindful translator will be gauging the gaps between what is shared or understood by taking a meta, mediating position, which in NLP is known as the third perceptual position (Katan 2002: 183-184; 2009a: 89). The task, as Spencer-Oatey and Franklin (2009: 3) put it, is to judge when the “cultural distance between the participants [is] significant enough to have an effect on the interaction/communication”. This will then need to be mediated if communication is to be successful. E. T. Hall (1983: 61) calls this form of mediation ‘contexting’: “the matter of contexting requires a decision concerning how much information the other person can be expected to possess on a given subject. All cultures arrange their members and relationships along the context scale”. Importantly, moving from Insider

---

to Outsider status means that “as context is lost, information must be added if meaning is to remain constant” (*ibid.*).

### 1.3 Text Function

Hall’s idea of Contexting needs further specification with regard to ORs, as the mindful translator will realize that translation alone will not allow the reader anything like the privileged access of the IR. If we take the example below (illustrated in Katan 2012) of a brochure (with its mindless translation) informing readers about “Caffè a Trieste”, we can see that it is clearly designed to help the non-local IR to both understand and perform, through exploring the Triestine coffee bars and drinking coffee the Triestine way:

A ciascuno il suo caffè

“Un cappuccino decaffeinato lungo in bicchiere con poca schiuma. Il bicchiere freddo”. In un caffè triestino può anche capitare di sentire questo [...] Un caffè è un caffè, ma se volete assimilarvi allo spirito del luogo chiedete un nero. Che vuol dire proprio quello che si immagina: un caffè senza aggiunte né interpolazioni.

To each his own coffee [official translation]

In a Triestine caffè, one can hear orders like this: “Give me a long decaffeinated cappuccino in a cold glass without little foam [...]”. Yes, coffee is still coffee, but if you wish to enter into the local spirit, then it is best to ask for a ‘nero’. Which means exactly what one would expect: a black coffee with nothing added and no variations.

Greimas (as cited in Katan 2012: 89) distinguishes three functions, which provide a useful framework for the analysis of tourist texts. There is the promotional (*vouloir*), informative (*savoir*) and the performative (*pouvoir faire*). The division is not so different to other tripartite text-type classifications (c.f. Morini 2013: 12), except for Greimas’ useful focus on the *pouvoir*, which is the primary function of the brochure above. The non-local Italian IR as the actant is enabled through reading the text, and becomes a ‘capable subject’, a *sujet puissant*. The *pouvoir* is strictly related to *faire*, the actual ‘doing’, now signifying that the reader can carry out, do and perform, as a result of the reading.

---

## 2. Translators or Cultural informers

The original (Italian) writer, writing for non-local IRs has taken on the task of cultural informer, “someone on the inside who can help you” (Holliday *et al.* 2010: 297), and has ‘contexted’ her reader. This means that the writer gave her reader exactly the information necessary to then go to a Triestine coffee bar and order the coffee. The IR writer presumed, correctly, that her non-local IR not only knows how to speak Italian but is also competent in performing the complex set of lingua-cultural practices involved in ordering coffee at an Italian *bar*.

Clearly, though, the translation was mindless. The translator did not consider the cultural distance and nor did s/he context the OR. Consequently the translator reduced the original *pouvoir faire* guide into a Wikipedia-style background information *savoir* guide, leaving the OR to gaze on another's cultural practice, without the ability to perform. Not only, if the OR actually tried to “enter into the local spirit” and order a “nero” using the English pronunciation, [ni:rəʊ], the hapless Outsider would be understood to be asking for a person named ‘Niro’, rather than for the drink, which is pronounced [ˈnɛrɔ].

Translation is still a marginal activity in the world of tourist guiding, which may well be one reason why it is still stubbornly mindless. Until very recently, tourist guides were either human or written *in loco* (rather than translated). In both cases, the guides were cultural interpreters acting on behalf of their IR client. Today, armies of volunteer cultural advisors, informers or interpreters are writing blog pages to help their compatriots visiting an area for the first time (Katan, 2016), much like the pre-translation tourist guides. These informers, unlike Carolyn (who was also more interested in promotion than information), are usually at an advanced stage of cultural adjustment. And, crucially these informers are not translators, but natural mediators, explaining the unfamiliar in terms of the familiar, following an *ordo naturalis*. Let us look at one example, related to the above translation. If we google “How to drink coffee in Italy” there are over 40.000 hits (as of December 2016). Below is a short extract from one example, entitled “How to Drink Coffee Like an Italian”.<sup>2</sup> What we immediately notice is that the piece is ‘mindful’, and in particular is written specifically for Outsiders (emphasis in the original):

---

<sup>2</sup> [www.walksofitaly.com/blog/how-todrink-coffee-in-italy](http://www.walksofitaly.com/blog/how-todrink-coffee-in-italy). Accessed August 3 2013.

Italian coffee *isn't* like coffee in the United States or anywhere else. Even the names don't mean what you might expect [...]

Step 1:

So you enter a bar. The first thing you need to do is find the “cassa” (the register). ...

Un Caffè = Espresso (Short black) [...]

Step 2:

Take your receipt and make your way to the “banco” (the bench). Find a spot. Be Italian in nature and squeeze your way in. [...]

Step 6:

Drink your coffee – don't sip it! It should be drunk in no more than 3 swigs. That's right.

What we can see is a ‘natural’ set of moves in the text, which begin with an explicit cultural recontextualisation or reframing (Katan 2004: 145-148; 2009a: 85), and prepares the reader for difference. In a sense this can be related to the fundamental premise of “the intercultural communication approach”, which is that “cultures are different in their languages, behaviour patterns, and values” (Bennett 1998: 3). This may well seem blatantly obvious, but the tendency is, as Bennett explains, for Outsiders to use their own monocultural experience of what is acceptable, normal or right, to manage the perceived difference.

We can see exactly the same sets of issues and cultural informer solutions in the following informative texts regarding train information (entitled “Train travel”), designed to enable the traveller to use the trains. First, the mindless translation:

Per i treni del trasporto regionale:

il biglietto deve essere opportunamente convalidato prima della partenza del treno per evitare di essere regolarizzati dal personale di bordo, con conseguente addebito di sanzioni pecuniarie.

For regional travel trains:

The ticket must be appropriately validated before the train depart so that it does not need to be adjusted by train staff, thus incurring the

---

relative fine.<sup>3</sup>

Apart from the questionable translation quality we have a more serious issue. The OR reader can understand at the Technical level *what* must be done, and will understand at the Informal level *why* this must be done, but is at a loss at the Formal level of practices, i.e. the OR does not know *how* to validate the ticket. The *pouvoir faire* brochure has now become a much less useful *savoir* text.

Again, the OR is more likely to find a cultural informer able to deliver what she is looking for. Below is an example from an Arts association explaining to American attendees about travelling in Italy:

**Travel tips** [...] There is a lot to know about taking trains in Italy. It can be baffling. You really have to put aside what you are accustomed to in North America [...]

VALIDATE (STAMP) YOUR TICKET!! There are little yellow machines for this on the walls in the station. One end of the ticket usually has a triangle and the word "CONVALIDA" written on it. Stick this end of the ticket into the machine and wait till you hear it stamp ... if it is working. As with many things in Italy, sometimes you have to fiddle with it a bit. "Fuori servizio" means "out of service" [...].<sup>4</sup>

As with the previous cultural informer, the text begins with a mindful and explicit reframing of the Environment ("This is Italy, and it is different"). The informer then continues by focussing on both the Technical and the Formal levels. The OR now knows, at the level of Environment, where the tickets are to be stamped, together with the Technical explanation of the Insiders' fairly hidden practices, allowing the traveller to imitate the practice.

### 3. The Logical Levels of translating for outsiders

It is the cultural informer's job, first and foremost to clarify and make explicit the Technical level of the Insider's cultural world; to render visible

---

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.trenitalia.com/cms-file/allegati/trenitalia/area\\_clienti/Brochure\\_Regolamento\\_Europeo\\_EN.pdf](http://www.trenitalia.com/cms-file/allegati/trenitalia/area_clienti/Brochure_Regolamento_Europeo_EN.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> [www.labellavitaarts.com/traveltips/trainsa.html](http://www.labellavitaarts.com/traveltips/trainsa.html). Accessed 27/04/2014

---

the Formal practices and ways, and to employ the OR's Informal-level preferred communication orientation. This will enable the OR to access the text and be in a *pouvoir faire* position, but clearly not with the same privileged access as an IR. This, Outsider, lack of understanding of the Other's Informal level will do little to reduce ethnocentric thinking and reactions. Indeed, to begin with strengthening of stereotyping is likely to increase (Katan 2004: 212-213; 2015: 62). So, ideally, an informer would also intervene with regard to the out-of-awareness values and beliefs that (logically and positively) drive the Insider's world. Intervention at this level would help to explain why the other culture tends to act in that particular (and usually strange) way. That said, intervention at the Technical and Formal levels, along with attention to the communication orientation is enough for short tourist stays.

### 3.1 *Technical level*

The Technical, in this case, relates to isolating or targeting the key terms and then translating the language necessary to enable the tourist to do whatever it is that the text was originally designed to do. We might call what is needed, 'targetted translation', whereby the foreign OR is enabled linguistically to the same level as the non-local IR. For the Italian coffee information, the cultural informer has targetted the following terms: "'cassa' (the register)"; "Un Caffè = Espresso (Short black)"; "the 'banco' (the bench)"; while for the train information we have: "the word 'convalida' written on it" and "'Fuori servizio' means 'out of service'".

In the coffee text, "the bench" is not a great translation. "Counter" would have been more appropriate, but the informer's mindful thinking in both texts is clear: "what terms will my reader need so that they will be in a *pouvoir faire* state regarding the purpose of this text?" Notice, in fact, that "un caffè" (sic) has been given a translation couplet, both the translation and a gloss, due to the fact that 'caffè' and its correct dictionary translation (espresso) might be misinterpreted. The default Anglo-American way to drink coffee, whether espresso or not, is still often with milk. The photograph below from the home page of an Australian "Stazione caffè" (<http://www.stazioneespresso.com>) gives lie to the confusion. The text reads "espresso" while the photograph is clearly of a coffee with milk. The cultural informer realized that the "short black", and hence 'no milk', needed to be made explicit.

---

ESPRESSO COFFEE

---



### 3.2 *The Formal level*

The targetted translation at the technical level is also strictly related to “what it is that is going on” (Goffman 1974: 8) at the Formal level.

Where the Insider Formal level is different enough to create a cultural situation, the cultural informer attentive to the changed context and perspective makes Technical what is Formal for the IR. Hence the itemization of ordering the coffee into 6 technically clear ‘action chain’ (Hall 1976/1989: 141) steps.

Finally, at this Formal level, the cultural informer has intervened regarding culture-bound appropriacy and social mores. In the first case, giving advice on the Italian style of queuing improves the OR’s ability to get served, while the useful advice about how to drink the coffee (quickly) implicitly reduces the problem of the OR blocking the counter for other customers, and will help in allowing the OR to at least behave “like an Italian”.

In terms of communication style, both cultural informers have followed the same discourse pattern in their contexting of ORs, which we can list as follows:

1. Explicit recontextualisation
2. Targetted translations
3. Action chain procedure spelt out
4. Specific cultural advice on practice

---

We should also notice the ‘natural’ use of bullet-point style itemisation, the use of different fonts, and in general an eye to a readerly (rather than writerly) style. These are classic signs of a Low Context Communication (LCC) (see Appendix) style, where accessibility and communicative effectiveness is the main aim.

This focus on accessibility can be witnessed in all Anglo guides to good writing (Katan 2004: 268-273). An example, specifically concerning tourism interpretative panels<sup>5</sup> takes ease of access as the central message: “The panel must look attractive and be accessible at a glance. Many people will decide in seconds whether they will read it. These few seconds are vital: provoke and stimulate their interest, and you’ve got them!” The well known adage “keep it short and simple” (Kiss) rather than keeping it long and complete (Kilc) (Katan, *ibid*) is clear throughout the booklet. Not only the Anglo community, but all Outsider cultures (see D’Egidio, 2009) need a Kissy LCC approach to fully understand the message.

### 3.3 *Informal culture*

At the 3rd level we have cultural orientations, stance, values and beliefs. Cultural orientations are “a shared metaprogram: culture’s tendency towards a particular way of perceiving” (Katan 2004: 230). They bind the writer to the reader through a presumed shared set of presuppositions which orient a culture’s general response to what Florence Kluckhohn (in Kluckhohn, Strodbeck 1961: 341) calls “common human problems”. There are a number of possible orientations, and there is no agreed number (see Katan 2004: 232-233). Kluckhohn herself defined 5, one of which was man’s relationship to nature. For each orientation she hypothesizes three possible responses concerning the appropriate relationship between humankind and nature, which I have summarized below:

Dominant: We believe we can control the environment, and “conquer the mountain” (and believe in the “think positive”, “Yes we can ...”).

Subordinate: We believe that life is much more complicated. The “daunting mountain overshadows any simple ascent, and other, more supernatural, forces may well prevent us from acting on the environment (“se dio vuole”; “inshallah”).

---

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.pathsforall.org.uk/component/option,com\\_docman/Itemid,69/gid,150/task,doc\\_download/](http://www.pathsforall.org.uk/component/option,com_docman/Itemid,69/gid,150/task,doc_download/)



Harmony: We believe that instead of conquering the mountain or being submitted to it, that there is a symbiosis, and that we are part of the environment, so that over a period of time “man befriends mountain”. Westerners who promote sustainable tourism and are concerned about the carbon footprint will share elements of this orientation.

As can be seen each of the man-nature orientations distorts the reality and hence the language used to discuss it. The most important cultural orientation though is the communication orientation, which, as already mentioned above, has two manifestations, KISS and KILC.

### 3.3.1 *Scripta\Verba orientations*

I would like to suggest that the underlying motivations for the HCC/LCC orientations lie with a culture’s orientation to written communication itself, through the popular Latin saying used in Italian “*Verba volant, scripta manent*” (spoken words fly away, written words remain). Both *verba* and *scripta* are intrinsically useful, and both make sense in particular situations (e.g. *verba* for the negotiation and *scripta* for the contract). It is suggested (e.g. Katan 2004) that the Italian lingua-culture is intrinsically more attracted to the flexibility and humanity of *verba*, and is wary of the issues of *scripta manent*. Following the same line of reasoning, written Italian, such as administrative writing, tends towards a *verba* orientation where possible with, for example, the use of “*di norma*” [meaning ‘normally’ and suggesting “but not always”] which builds in flexibility to satisfy the non-*di norma* or particular situations. Anglo cultures, on the other hand, intrinsically would prefer *scripta* where a rule is a rule with no flexibility. Equally logically, the *verba* such as in a ‘gentleman’s agreement’ is often accepted in the courts as legally binding. Clearly these are massive generalisations and certainly do not account for individual orientations; that would be an ‘ecological fallacy’ (Katan 2009b: 14-15). However, an increasing amount of corpus-based research points to this general collective trend (Musacchio 1995; Cucchi 2010; Katan 2006; Spinzi, 2010, 2011; Manca 2011, 2012, 2016; D’Egidio 2009; Fina 2011).

What is particularly interesting in terms of IR/OR and *pouvoir faire* is that the *verba volant* (HCC) orientation, being synchronous and originally face-to-face, begins with the presumption of interlocutor Insider status. The *scripta* orientation, on the other hand, is necessarily more explicit and hence primed for an interlocutor with an Outsider status.

3.3.2 *Orientation to written communication*

How then does a *verba* oriented culture respond to the requirement to write (a tourist guide, an interpretative panel)? If we take the HCC orientation, then we are likely to find lengthy (KILCy) contextual explanations (see appendix) which will attempt to include as much as possible in the text. An LCC guide on how to organize interpretative panels begins as follows,<sup>6</sup> exactly in line with the general pattern of Anglo written style guides (Katan 2004: 268-273):

**Keep it simple**

The best panels are often the simplest.

A single panel should communicate one or two main messages. Panels that try to do too much will be ignored.

As a guide, you should aim for a maximum of 200 words per panel, and a simple and attractive design.

As we can see, a KISS, keeping it simple, approach shows a preference for white space on the panel or page, the KILCier cultures will logically tend to abhor leaving space unfilled. Hence, we may hypothesise a high white space quotient (WSQ) for Anglo texts and a low WSQ for Italian. Below is an example from an accompanying description to an assortment of utensils found in an archeological dig (Acaya museum, Lecce). There is great attention to detail, and this attention to detail necessitates understanding at expert level:

[...] a knife tine similar to the 'Baierdorf' type, a pair of pins with spherical 'Franzine' type heads and a lenticular steatite red seal.

This mindless translation has not taken into consideration that the ideal reader is not an expert in 'knife tines' (the entire length of metal of which part is blade and part within the handle) and will not be able to distinguish a 'Baierdorf' from the one on display. The same goes for the 'Franzine' heads and so on. The original IR must be presumed to at least appreciate

---

<sup>6</sup> [www.pathsforall.org.uk/component/option,com.../task,doc\\_download/](http://www.pathsforall.org.uk/component/option,com.../task,doc_download/)

the writer's level of expertise, though she would also (one suspects) appreciate a more OR friendly text.

A *verba* orientation also tends to fill the text with words to recreate a relationship, especially when combined with a greater harmony orientation to nature. The following mindless translation of information on an interpretative panel at the entrance to a National Forest Park (Nan Wang Lake) in Southern China presents a good example of the *verba*, low WSQ, features in a written text:

The beauty of Nan Wang Lake, lies in the beauty of its water. Its dark green, boundless, and mist-covered water is 75 square kilometers. And its water quality is so refresh and pure that it can be scooped up with both hands and be drink directly. The beauty of Nan Wang Lake, lies in the beauty of its isles. 81 isles in Nan Wan Lake. The beauty of Nan Wang Lake, lies in the beauty of its fishes. Fishes here are delicate, tasty, and with a high content of DHA, which makes them a well-known brand in and out of Henan province. The beauty of Nan Wang Lake, lies in the beauty of its tea. XinYang MaoJian tea is a renowned tea brand. WuYuan mountain of Nan Wan Lake is the genuine producing area of XinYang MaoJian tea.

The text was originally written to be read by a *verba* IR, who would appreciate the poetic, lyrical atmosphere. There is a sense of balance and harmony, a clear indicator of the Chinese cultural focus regarding the relationship between humankind and nature. Note the use of key rhetorical strategies such as repetition of the leitmotif: “The beauty of ....., lies in the beauty of .....,”, which is repeated four times. Colourful visual and kinesthetic adjectives abound, evoking more of a *vouloir* than a *savoir* text for an Anglo reader. Yet, there are also facts. However, as before, specialist Insider knowledge is required to interpret the information. For example, “The high content of DHA” is left unexplained. It is, in fact, a fish oil. But what makes the inclusion of this fact salient for the Insider is that this omega-3 oil is highly sought after in China (and by health conscious westerners) for its health-giving properties.<sup>7</sup> The OR can now begin to understand – the bad translation notwithstanding – why DHA should be “a well-known brand in and out of Henan province”.

---

<sup>7</sup> According to the Chinese “Global Times”, “Fish oil is one of the most popular diet supplements in China”. (<http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/565585.shtml> ). See also, for example, <http://www.globefish.org/fishmeal-and-fish-oil-june-2014.html>

---

### 3.3.3 *Stance*

We have already hinted that an Insider's world is not an objective one, and that Insiders tend to aggrandise their own reality. This, is a part of “stance” (e.g. Ochs 1990). According to Conrad and Biber (2001: 57) “Stance is similar to appraisal and can be defined as ‘the expression of personal feelings and assessments’”. The interest here is how stance creates a sense of inclusive “us-ness” for Insiders and acts as an invitation to share the writer’s own particular subjective model of reality.

A quick look back at the cultural informer texts above reveals a form of collusion between the informer and her reader. There is a form of “Do it this way, trust me”. Trust is a key element, for a reader is unlikely to follow the advice or recommendations if the writer does not appear, in some way, to gaze at the other from the outsider’s point of view:

Be Italian in nature and squeeze your way in. [...] Drink your coffee – don’t sip it! It should be drunk in no more than 3 swigs. That’s right.

([www.walksofitaly.com/blog/how-todrink-coffee-in-italy](http://www.walksofitaly.com/blog/how-todrink-coffee-in-italy))

As with many things in Italy, sometimes you have to fiddle with it a bit. ([www.labellavitaarts.com/traveltips/trainsa.html](http://www.labellavitaarts.com/traveltips/trainsa.html).)

In what Ochs (1996: 410) calls “Affective stance” there is a clear “mood, attitude, feeling, and disposition” (positive in the first example and negative in the second) as well as clearly visible “degrees of emotional intensity”.

The mindful translator will be aware that any text which is not purely transactional will have a stance, which is directed to the ideal IR – and equally, *not* to the eavesdropper or to the OR.

Examples of stance in tourism are perhaps surprisingly frequent. In China, for example, there is a pattern of anti-Anglo-French and Japanese commentary to be found, both written and spoken, in tourist locations throughout the country relating to the invasions in 1860 and in the 1930s. For example on an interpretative panel in the Summer Palace in Beijing, the interpretative panel next to the “Marble Boat”, partially destroyed by the Anglo-French forces 1930s, and completely rebuilt in 1893, does not focus on the boat as it stands today, but contains a black and white photograph of the boat before its reconstruction with a text pertaining to

---

the photograph:

Marble Boat, its Chinese style structure has nothing left, which silently accused Anglo-French forces of their guilty (sic). Empress Dowager Cixi had it restored with a European style.

The original text was clearly written for Insiders, and was not written to be translated into English. A more Anglo stance regarding the boat and Empress Cixi, can be seen, for example, from the following *Rough Guide to China* (Leffman *et al.* 2011: 119):

[Cixi] rebuilt the palaces in 1888 and determinedly restored them after foreign troops had ransacked them. Her ultimate flight of fancy was the construction of a magnificent marble boat from the very funds intended for the Chinese navy [to protect China from invasion from Japan].

Understandably, the Chinese text takes up a patriotic position, while (perhaps less understandably) the *Rough Guide* deletes mention of the Anglo-French, generalising to “foreign”. At the same time, the guide makes much of the Empress Cixi’s “infamous” and “profligate” nature (*ibid.*).

According to Huang and Santos (2002: 21), the Washington D.C website “is designed and depicted in certain ways so as to arouse patriotic emotions”. The authors’ examples show a similar pattern to the Chinese. There is, once again, a photograph from a century ago. It is of Capitol Hill in flames, and contains the following text: “This is how the Capitol appeared in 1814 [...] when British troops burned the capitol and other public buildings in Washington”. Huang and Santos (*ibid.*) state that “the violent action is mentioned repeatedly [and] serves to arouse patriotic emotions by describing the hardship of war and inducing negative feelings towards the British”. Once again, what is important is that the text is written primarily for Insider consumption.

The panel below provides an interesting case of where the writer, apparently aware of the possible negative feelings that might be aroused, has couched the potentially marked terms in inverted commas. The panel describing the Australian flag is in the Melbourne Shrine of Remembrance, which commemorates the Australian and New Zealand soldiers who signed up voluntarily to fight alongside the British in Europe

during the First World War. The writer put the following words into inverted commas: “colonial” “defaced”<sup>8</sup> and “possession”. We may hypothesise that this was done because of the author’s awareness of potential insider-reader reaction. At worst, the IR might regard this attention to be odd, and unnecessarily politically correct.<sup>9</sup> However, my own initial OR reaction was that the writer herself was drawing attention to Australia as being represented as *no more than* a colonial possession, and, as such, ‘defaced’ (in the sense of ‘defiled’) the Union Flag of Great Britain. The writer’s distancing, and attempt to avoid stance, produced a communication void, allowing the OR to fill according to their Outsider understanding of an Australian stance towards the Colonial Period.



### 3.3.4 *Values and beliefs*

Values are what motivate stance, performance and the visible behaviour in a particular environment. So values provide the yardsticks with which we

<sup>8</sup>In the field of vexillology (the study of flags) ‘defaced’ is the technical term for “the addition of any authorised (or apparently authorized) emblem, badge, shield, charge or device to a flag” (<https://flagspot.net/flags/vxt-dv-d.html#deface>).

We can presume that the non-specialist IR would, only be aware of the common usage of ‘deface’, which carries negative connotations.

<sup>9</sup> I am indebted to Rita Wilson (Monash University, Melbourne) and Tony Liddicoat (University of South Australia, Adelaide/Warwick University) for their enlightening comments regarding this panel.

can evaluate what we read. So, for example, an Italian, when reading about the Triestine way of ordering coffee would sense the strong Triestine sense of local identity. This value is clearly not manifest to ORs in the translation.

A cultural informer would have begun with an explicit recontextualisation, which would need to be even more specific than the “How to drink coffee like an Italian” blog. So, along with “Italian coffee *isn't* like coffee in the United States or anywhere else” the informer would need to add, “and Trieste is not Italy when it comes to drinking coffee. Just remember, “Triestines do it differently””.

If we look more closely at the cultural informer coffee article, we noticed that though the Environment has been recontextualised along with the Behaviour and Strategies (“squeezing” and “swigging”), what has not contextualised is *why* “squeezing” and “swigging” the coffee might be positively evaluated. It would appear that this is something that the cultural informer him or herself has problems mediating.

Bennett (1993: 45), in his cultural adjustment model, notes that understanding and mediating behavioural differences between cultures is one of the first stages in an individual’s path towards full integration with another culture. Respecting the values that guide those differences, on the other hand, requires “a major conceptual shift from reliance on absolute, dualistic principles of some sort – to an acknowledgement of non-absolute relativity”.

Clearly, within the confines of a translation (or even a transcreation) it will not usually be possible to change a lifetime of inculcated belief about what is morally, ethically or socially right or wrong. And even if a cultural informer has made the conceptual shift, there is the problem of attempting to explain in a few words how apparently illogical or rude behaviour perceived by Outsiders might actually be positively evaluated by the Insiders.

What a translator acting as a cultural informer *can* do is reduce the strengthening of stereotypes (Katan 2015: 66-70). If we return for a moment to the original English translation of the *Caffè a Trieste*, which begins with “Give me a cappuccino”, as things stand the OR is left with the impressions that Italians are rude. This normal, and positively intentioned, Italian practice when translated faithfully appears to perform as an English imperative (Katan 2015: 62), which would jar against Anglo politeness norms and beliefs. A mindful translator would either limit or delete any reference to *how* the request was carried out by, for example,

hiding it in an indirect statement (see Katan 2002, 2009a, “to reduce any defensive reaction” (Katan, 2015: 66).

### 4. Conclusion

I have argued here that a translator can transform a mindless translation into a mindful one by integrating the mindful strategies used by cultural informers.

This will only be successful, though, if the translator is able to access both IR and OR cultural realities. This means taking a third perceptual position and being able to imagine how the two cultures’ Universal Filters (Deletion, Distortion and Generalisation) and resulting models of the world are likely to interact. How far removed will the new OR be from the ideal model IR?

The Logical Levels model described earlier can provide an extremely useful checklist of possible areas of cultural distance which might create ORs problems. These levels may be used consciously as a checklist, especially for those translating into their B language, until they become instinctive:

ENVIRONMENT: How much do I need to recontextualise or make the context explicit?

BEHAVIOUR: How much of the behaviour will have meaning for the OR? Could the behavior be misinterpreted? And how much of the language and culture-bound references will need to be explained for the OR to understand the meaning?

PRACTICES: To what extent can they become manifest for the OR, and to what extent will not knowing the practices, the action chains, etc. impede the *pouvoir faire* aims?

COMPETENCES: How much extra information (useful hints, tips etc.) needs to be added to allow the OR to perform appropriately?

COMMUNICATION STYLE: How much should the discourse style, register, and overall layout be changed to allow the OR ease of access?

BELIEFS/VALUES: Is there a significant and relevant difference in the hierarchy or cluster of values which will compromise OR appreciation or respect? To what extent can the focus on these be reduced, contextualised or explained?

ORIENTATIONS: How will the difference in cultural orientations affect the general reading of the text? And in particular how much *more*



should the text be LCC *scripta* oriented to ensure OR access?

STANCE: the stance should at least be neutralized if not localized to ensure the OR's trust and readiness to act according to the text advice or recommendations.

Second, through an albeit brief look at cultural informer texts, we can immediately notice what appears to be an *ordo naturalis* that informers employ when they write for fellow ORs, which we can list as follows:

1. Explicit recontextualisation
2. Targetted translations
3. Action chain procedure spelt out
4. Specific cultural advice on practice

More research clearly needs to be done to distill successful cultural informer translation strategies for each lingua-cultural gaze. The results of this work will further help in making mindless translations of tourist guides and interpretative panels a thing of the past, and will help actually producing translators, who, in the words of the International Federation of Translators (FIT 2012), are involved in “intercultural translation” and “bridging communication divides”.

## References

- Bennett, M.J. 1993. “Towards ethnorelativism: a developmental model of intercultural sensitivity”. In Paige M. R. (ed.), *Education for the Intercultural Experience*, Yarmouth, Maine: Intercultural Press, 22-73.
- Bennett, M.J. 1998. “Intercultural communication: a current perspective”. In Bennett M. J. (ed.), *Basic Concepts of Intercultural Communication: Selected Readings*, Yarmouth, Maine: Intercultural Press, 1-34.
- Brake, Terence, Danielle Medina-Walker & Thomas Walker (1995) *Doing Business Internationally: The Guide to Cross-Cultural Success*, Burr Ridge, IL: Irwin.
- Conrad S., and Biber, D. 2001. “Adverbial marking of stance in speech and writing”. In Hunston S., Thompson G. (eds.), *Evaluation in Text: Authorial Stance and the Construction of Discourse*, New York, Oxford: University Press, 56–73.
- Cucchi, C. 2010. “Hofstede’s cultural dimensions: Italian national identity in ELF usage”, *Cultus*, 3, 137-158.

- 
- D'Egidio, A., 2009. "Eyeing Puglia. Comparing the tourist gaze in English, Italian and German travel articles", *Rivista Internazionale di Tecnica della Traduzione*, 11, 201-212.
- Dillon, G., 1992. "Insider reading and linguistic form: contextual knowledge and the reading of linguistic discourse". In Toolan M. (ed.), *Language Text and Context*, London/New York, Routledge, 39-52.
- Fina, M. E. 2011. "What a TripAdvisor corpus can tell us about culture", *Cultus*, 4, 59-80.
- FIT, 2012. The International Federation of Translators, [www.fit-ift.org/?p=362](http://www.fit-ift.org/?p=362) (last visited 2.06. 2014).
- Francesconi, S., 2007. *English for Tourist Promotion: Italy in British Tourism Texts*, Milan, Hoepli.
- Goffman, E., 1974. *Frame Analysis*. New York: Harper and Row.
- Hall, E.T. 1959, *The Silent Language*. New York: Doubleday.
- Hall, E.T. (1976/1989), *Beyond Culture*. New York: Doubleday.
- Hall, E. T. (1983), *The Dance of Life*, New York, Doubleday.
- Huang, W.J., Santos C.A. 2002. "Tourism and national identity in the United states". In Frew E., L. White (eds.) *Tourism and National Identity: an International Prospective*, London: Routledge, 13-25.
- Holliday, A., Hyde M., Kullman J. 2004. *Intercultural Communication: an Advanced Resource Book*. London: Routledge.
- Katan, D., 2002, "Mediating the point of refraction and playing with the perlocutionary effect: a translator's choice?". In Herbrechter. S. (ed.), *Critical Studies: Vol 20, Cultural Studies, Interdisciplinarity and Translation*, Amsterdam/New York: Ridolphi, 177-195.
- Katan, D., 2004. *Translating Cultures: An Introduction for Translators, Interpreters and Mediators*. Manchester: St. Jerome.
- Katan, D., 2006. "It's a question of life or death: cultural differences in advertising private pensions". In Vasta N. (ed.) *Forms of Promotion. Texts, Contexts and Cultures. Forms of Promotion: Texts, Contexts, and Cultures* (ed.), Bologna: Pàtron Editore, 55-80.
- Katan, D., 2009a. "Translation as intercultural communication". In Munday, J. (ed.), *The Routledge Companion to Translation Studies*, Oxford: Routledge, 74-92.
- Katan, D., 2009b. "On Hofstede", *Cultus* 2, 13-19.
- Katan, D., 2012 "Translating the tourist gaze: from heritage and 'culture' to actual encounter", *Pasos: Special Issue Language and Culture in Tourism Communication*, 10(4), 83-95  
[www.pasosonline.org/Publicados/10412special/PS0412\\_09.pdf](http://www.pasosonline.org/Publicados/10412special/PS0412_09.pdf) (last

- visited 03-06-2014).
- Katan, D., 2013. "Cultural mediation". In Gambier Y, Van Doorslaer D. (eds.), *The Handbook of Translation Studies*, 4, Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 84–91.
- Katan, D., 2015. "Intercultural communication, mindful translation and squeezing 'culture' onto the screen. In Garzelli, B. and M. Baldo (eds.), *Subtitling and Intercultural Communication. European Languages and Beyond*, Pisa: Edizioni ETS, 55-76.
- Katan, D., 2016. "Translation at the cross-roads: 'Time for the transcreational turn?'", *Perspectives*, 24:3, 365-381, DOI: 10.1080/0907676X.2015.1016049
- Kluckhoh, F., Strodtbeck, F., 1961. *Variations in Value Orientations*. Evanston (IL): Row, Peterson.
- Langer, E., 2008. *Mindfulness and Mindlessness*, ([http://secondjourney.org/newsltr/Archives/LangerE\\_08Sum.htm](http://secondjourney.org/newsltr/Archives/LangerE_08Sum.htm), last visited 17/12/2016).
- Leffman, D., Lewis S., Zatzko M. 2011. *Rough Guide to China*, London: Rough Guides.
- MacCannell, D. 1976. *The Tourist: a New Theory of the Leisure Class*, Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Manca, E. 2016. *Persuasion in Tourism Discourse*. Newcastle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars.
- Manca, E. 2012. *Translating the language of tourism across cultures: from functionally complete units of meaning to cultural equivalence*, *TEXTUS*, 1, 51-67.
- Manca, E. 2011 "Corpus Linguistics and Cultural Studies: a combined approach in the translation process", in M. Bondi, S. Cacchiani and G. Palumbo (eds), *Corpus Linguistics and Language Variation*, Special Issue of *RILCA (Rassegna Italiana di Linguistica Applicata)*, 1-2, 263-285.
- Merton, R.K. 1972. "Insiders and Outsiders: a chapter in the sociology of knowledge", *American Journal of Sociology*, 78(1), 9-47.
- Morini, M. 2013. *The Pragmatic Translator: An Integral Theory of Translation*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Musacchio, M. T. 1995. *La traduzione della lingua dell'economia dall'inglese in italiano*. Trieste: Lint.
- Ochs, E. 1990. "Cultural universals in the acquisition of language", *Papers and Reports on Child Language Development*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 29, 1–19.
- Ochs, E. 1996. "Linguistic resources for socializing humanity". In

- 
- Gumperz J., Levinson S. (eds.), *Rethinking Linguistic Relativity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 407–437.
- O'Connor, J. 2001. *NLP Workbook*. London: HarperCollins.
- Soriano, G. I. 2009. "Direction of mobility and its implications for the U-curve theory", *Cultus* 2, 79-96.
- Spencer-Oatey, H., Franklin P. 2009. *Intercultural Interaction: A Multidisciplinary Approach to Intercultural Communication*, Basingstoke: Palgrave-Macmillan.
- Spinzi, C. 2010. "How this holiday makes a difference: the language of environment and the environment of nature in a cross-cultural study of ecotourism", *Quaderni del CeSLiC, Occasional papers*, Bologna, Centro di Studi Linguistico-Culturali (CeSLiC).
- Spinzi, C. 2011. "Corpus linguistics and intercultural communicative approach: a synergy", *Cultus*, 4, 9-20.
- Urry, J., Larsen J. 2011 [Urry 2002]. *The Tourist Gaze 3.0*, 3rd edition, London: Sage.
- Van Dijk, T. A. 1995. "On macrostructures, mental models, and other inventions: 'A brief personal history of the Kintsch-van Dijk theory'". In Weaver C. III, Mannes S., Fletcher C. R. (eds.), *Discourse Comprehension. Essays in Honor of Walter Kintsch*, Hillsdale (NJ), Erlbaum, 383-410.
- Van Dijk, T.A. 2006. "Ideology and discourse analysis", *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 11(2), 115-140.

Appendix

**COMMUNICATION PREFERENCES.** *Depending always on:*

**Environment:** Situational factors, such as:

- Email or face2face;
- Public or private communication
- Appropriate genre or ‘house’ styles
- Age, gender, individual communication preferences
- AND ...
- Transactional or interactional communication

**PREFERRED COMMUNICATION ENTRY MODE** (*"Given the choice"*)

|                            |   |   |
|----------------------------|---|---|
| <b>Identity:</b>           | e.g. Italian<br>Be  | e.g. British<br>Do  |
| <b>Beliefs:</b>            | Life is complex<br>(WYSI <i>not</i> WYG)  | Life can be simple<br>(WYSIWYG)                                 |
| <b>Orientation:</b>        | Particularism (flexibility)<br><b>HCC</b>   | Universalism (stability)<br><b>LCC</b>                          |
| <b>Preferred strategy:</b> | <i>Verba</i> ; non-verbal communication in context<br>.....because of the danger of:<br><i>scripta manent</i> | <i>Scripta</i> communication in the text<br><i>verba volant</i> |

**SCRIPTA MODE:** *Within scripta mode, what is the preferred communication style?*

|                     |   |   |
|---------------------|---|---|
| <b>Identity:</b>    | e.g. Italian  | e.g. Anglo  |
| <b>Orientation:</b> | <b>KILC</b><br>Self expression<br>Writerly<br>Contextual details<br>Abstraction<br>The relationship | <b>KISS</b><br>Other oriented<br>Readerly<br>On topic<br>Concrete<br>The skopos /The task |

**Practice**

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>KILC:</b> keep it long and complete  | <b>KISS:</b> keep it short and simple  |
| High information load<br>Completeness/Complexity<br>The Detail<br>Writer friendly (e2e)/Power distance<br>(expert) Opinion<br>Formal<br>Inductive | Low information load<br>Clarity<br>Synthetic/ The Gist<br>Reader friendly (p2p)/ Equality<br>Identifiable Facts (FYI)<br>Informal<br>Deductive (empirical)<br>Relevant facts in text |

## CULTUS

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>Context explained in text<br/>         Indirect /Circular (background)<br/>         The author<br/>         Rhetorical skills/rich style<br/>         Authority through Status (Who we are)<br/>         Professional = Serious<br/>         Low WSQ: essay style<br/>         Information is reserved (sign of power)</p> | <p>Direct /Linear (cause-effect, main points)<br/>         Reader/skopos<br/>         Simplicity<br/>         Authority through Achievement (What we have done)<br/>         Professional = Clear<br/>         High WSQ: Bullet points, paragraphs, subtitles<br/>         Information is to be exchanged (sign of openness)</p> |
|---|--|

### ***Behaviour:*** Text indicators

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Long sentences</li> <li>• Coordinating conjunctions/hypertaxis</li> <li>• Formal register</li> <li>• Passive/Impersonal</li> <li>• Nominal style</li> <li>• 3rd person singular/1st person plural</li> <li>• Exclusive 'we'</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Short sentences</li> <li>• Full stops, parataxis</li> <li>• Informal register</li> <li>• Active/Personal</li> <li>• Verbal style</li> <li>• 1st person singular</li> <li>• Inclusive 'we'</li> </ul> |
|---|---|

## Communicating with International Visitors – the Case of Museums and Galleries

*Robin Cranmer*

### *Abstract*

*This article will explore how museums and galleries can most appropriately communicate with international visitors. It will do this by drawing attention to important factors to be considered by museums and galleries as they decide on communication strategies aimed at international visitors. First to be discussed amongst these factors will be the impact of cultural background on the needs of international visitors, a discussion drawing on prior research from a range of disciplines like Translation Studies, Applied Linguistics and Social Psychology, but also from the findings of a knowledge-transfer project involving museums, galleries and academic linguists. Other factors will, though, also be considered including very practical ones like cost. The advantages and disadvantages of specific communication strategies will then be considered – strategies like the provision of translations with or without localisation and the use of texts specifically produced for international visitors and often provided in a lingua franca. The article concludes with reflections on what may need to happen in the future if the appropriateness of the communication strategies employed by museums and galleries or similar organisations directed at their international visitors is to progress.*

### **1. Introduction**

A common trend in the focus and discourse of museums and galleries in various countries is to try to better understand their visitors and what they need if they are to get the most out of their visits. This comes through in the use of phrases like ‘the visitor experience’ and being ‘visitor focused’ and is reflected in the growing prominence of disciplines like Visitor Studies. At the same time, international visitors have come to represent a

vast, diverse category whose needs demand to be better understood and where possible satisfied. One way in which museums and galleries try to do this is, of course, by communicating with them in ways which facilitate access and this requires them to have some form of, albeit implicit, communication strategy.

The first concern of this article is to articulate important factors museums and galleries need to consider when deciding on their communication strategy for international visitors by drawing on a wealth of research across a range of disciplines, as well as a relevant knowledge-transfer project. Its second is to evaluate current or potential communication strategies bearing in mind factors which a close examination of the needs/preferences of international visitors has identified as important. We will start by focusing on the key factor of cultural background whose potential impact on international visitors and their communication needs is considerable.

## **2. The cultural diversity of international visitors**

Very obviously, diverse media or genres are used for communication with visitors - websites, apps, podcasts, audio-guides, leaflets, maps, books, captions etc. – yet cultural background can potentially affect the reactions of international visitors whatever medium is used. This does not, of course, imply adoption of an essentialist position, but it does involve acknowledging that different cultural groupings can have different norms of behaviour and that members can at least *tend* to have different expectations. The range of areas in which we may be partially shaped by norms which are dominant in the different cultural groupings we each of us inhabit is limitless. I will highlight just a few of the areas in which international visitors may consequently have diverse needs, a diversity which may well differentiate them from domestic visitors. In drawing attention to some illustrative areas I will follow a broad categorisation of content and form.

### 2.1 Cultural diversity of expectations – content

One obvious area where variance across cultures could easily be expected to generate different reactions to the content of communication concerns what is common cultural knowledge – knowledge of, for example, history



or religion. Differences in this area could easily mean that the required level of contextualisation of a display would need to vary. Similarly, categorisations of historical periods can vary across languages and cultures as can the level of familiarity with artistic movements – both of these potential areas of difference are often reflected in lexis generating forms of ‘non-equivalence’ much discussed within Translation Studies (cf. Leppihalme, 1997).

Another very familiar area of potential differences rooted in cultural background, closely analysed within Cultural Studies, concern ‘representations’, narratives or interpretations (cf. Barker, 2000). Perspectives on colonialism, on historical conflicts, on gender issues, may again vary hugely as a function of cultural background and may generate different reactions to the content of communication.

A final, again familiar, example of how the cultural background of international visitors can impact on their reactions to content concerns values or priorities. These differences have been studied by many researchers often having their starting point within Social Psychology or International Management. The extent to which, for example, it is important in a culture to have tangible evidence of having visited a prestigious foreign gallery may vary as a function of the degree of collective or individual focus dominant in that culture, a form of cultural variation carefully explored in Hofstede’s work (cf. Hofstede, 1993).

## 2.2 Cultural diversity of expectations – form

Let us turn now to issues of ‘form’ – that is, to ways in which the cultural backgrounds of international visitors can influence what they perceive as ‘normal’ regarding the form in which communication takes place. This is an area in which the distinction between the ‘cultural’ and the ‘linguistic’ becomes blurred, but I will divide issues of form into three broad categories – format, text structure and ‘visual resonance’.

Format first - it is much more common and more acceptable in certain languages, with particular genres or media, to use bullet points (cf. Katan 2012:90) Equally, common uses of particular fonts, line spacing or indicators of new paragraphs can also vary. And, similarly, there can be cultural variation in norms of the layout of webpages.

Turning to text structure, features - identified in Translation Studies and Contrastive Linguistics - can have currency in one language but not in another. In certain languages, for example, depending on genre and

---

medium, greater or lesser emphasis can be put on sequencing of content, on making explicit the logical relations between what is said and on overall cohesion. Equally, in different languages there can be different norms concerning the size of blocks of information or ‘sense units’. (cf. Hatim, 1997) Again, conventions on sentence and paragraph length can be language or culture specific, as can conventions on paragraph structure. Finally, certain types of text in one language may have a stronger tendency to offer explanation via the choice of a representative example rather than explanations via the use of generalisations (Lustig and Koester 2003:242). The final examples of variety of form we will consider are ‘visual’. The frequency, location, size and content of images can, within the same genre and medium, vary across languages and cultures. In some languages or cultures it might be common to begin a text with an image accompanying a title. In others images might come later, or the balance of written text to image or blank space might vary. Colours too can, of course, vary immensely in what they evoke culturally.

Research, therefore, in many disciplines suggests that we should expect to find that international visitors will often, as a result of the different cultural worlds they inhabit, have different expectations in relation to both the content and the form of communication.

### 2.3 Confirmation of cultural diversity from a knowledge-transfer project

Of direct relevance to the communication strategies of museums and galleries was a government-funded knowledge-transfer project starting in 2007 in which leading London museums and galleries worked with linguists from London’s University of Westminster aiming to improve their communication with international visitors. The project, described by Robertson (2009), can be summarised as follows. Staff in the Visitor Services sections of six museums and galleries were paired with linguists each with a different specialism – Chinese, Russian, Arabic, Spanish, German or French. The medium primarily studied were paper leaflets available in foreign languages. The linguists worked with native speaker focus groups to examine the appropriateness, in terms of ‘readership expectations’, of what was provided. The focus groups were further tasked with assisting the linguist in reworking the texts to render them more appropriate to their needs. The revised texts were piloted on groups of international visitors and in each case were consistently perceived by visitors to constitute improvements on the original translated texts.

---

Of significance here is the fact that many of the specific areas to which focus groups drew attention corresponded to the kinds of areas which prior research in relevant disciplines would have predicted. To take content, the Chinese focus group didn't find the balance of content in the translated version appropriate - for them, it over-emphasised contextualising the collections at the expense of providing fuller information on merchandising. And to take form, the Spanish focus group expressed concern about the place of images within the leaflet, feeling overall that it contained too much text and too few images and feeling also that the use of generalised descriptions of collections as opposed to collections being introduced via key artefacts was inappropriate.

### **3. Further factors affecting choice of communication strategy**

The factors I will now outline are not intended to be comprehensive, but they fall into two general categories – linguistic and practical.

#### **3.1 Linguistic factors – density of text and choice of language**

An issue commonly affecting international visitors, and, therefore, a further factor to consider, is the quantity and density of content with which they are presented whatever the medium. International visitors tend to have far more challenges when trying to engage with a museum or gallery than domestic ones. Processing a lot of culture-specific content is, for example, particularly challenging when, for example, texts are giving background information on domestic cultural artefacts. In addition to the obvious linguistic or cultural challenges, international visitors may also be trying to cope with the countless forms of disorientation that foreign travel can involve varying from food and climate to public transport. Amongst the consequences this can have, commonly acknowledged in both the theory and practice of foreign language teaching, is that the quantity and density of information they may be comfortable with tends to be less than for a domestic visitor (cf. Bailey, 2011). Another broadly 'linguistic' factor concerns the language preferences of international visitors – clearly a museum or gallery is more likely to meet these preferences if they provide a range of linguistically viable options, whether those preferences are based on linguistic competence, aspiration or both.

#### **3.2 Practical constraints on practitioners**

One can add to linguistic factors others deriving from the internal concerns of museums and galleries, some of which were regularly raised by visitor services staff involved in the project described above. The first factor amongst these were budgetary constraints, although mention was also often made both of the desire to maintain ultimate editorial control over communication strategy and to maintain a degree of unity of style in communication with all visitors. Clearly, this last concern is potentially at odds with what effective and appropriate linguistically accommodated text might involve.

### **4. Choosing a communication strategy**

In what follows I want briefly to evaluate a number of possible strategies for communicating with international visitors in relation to the more important factors identified in preceding sections. Obviously, there is no single ‘correct’ strategy, but I will try to clarify how such factors should influence decision-making. I will start by examining two common communication strategies before turning to two less widely practised.

#### 4.1 Common strategy 1 – translation

A common strategy is to initially produce material for websites, audio-guides, leaflets etc. aimed at domestic visitors, and then to translate them into foreign languages. The translators may in some cases ‘adapt’ certain features of the domestic text – they may, for instance, decide not to preserve certain features of the formatting of the domestic text. Equally, where, for example, a lexical item in the domestic text refers to a period of history which doesn’t readily correspond to periods of history commonly referred to in the target language, the translator may opt to deal with this challenge of ‘non-equivalence’ by extending the translated text so as to include explanation of the period. However, even with such minor adaptations, the translated text is likely to remain culturally ‘hybrid’ – that is, it will be likely to contain aspects of both form and content which may be common in the domestic language but which are not so in the target language. To take form first, the domestic text, if it is written, may well involve a balance of text and image unusual in the target language. And to consider content, aspects of displays needing little or no contextualisation for most domestic visitors may need a great deal for many users of a

translation. So domestic texts translated into one of the common first languages of international visitors are, in the eyes of the reader, often a strange hybrid of the linguistically and culturally familiar and the very unfamiliar – familiar overall linguistically, but often not corresponding to what is culturally appropriate or what is needed by its target audience. And clearly museums and galleries need, before opting for this strategy, to consider if this really fits with their declared aims of being visitor-centred and of meeting the needs of *all* their visitors.

Let us just consider briefly two other factors in relation to translation as a strategy. Text density immediately becomes an issue since the quantity of information in the translated text will be such as tends to suit a domestic visitor rather than an international one. Where the factor of cost is concerned, though, whilst culturally adapted translations will tend to prove more expensive than more conventional ones, translation has the advantage of not being especially expensive.

#### 4.2 Common strategy 2 – single ‘international’ texts

A second widely employed strategy is to produce not only a text for domestic visitors but also a separate text consciously aimed at an international audience. Whilst this text may in some sense be ‘derived’ from the domestic text, it is not translated from it, and it tries to take into account the specific needs of international visitors. This ‘international’ text will normally be written in-house often in the domestic language, and will then be translated into one or more foreign languages depending on the communication strategy of the institution concerned.

It is difficult to make valid comments of a summary nature on the strengths and weaknesses of this strategy as there are so many forms the strategy can take and equally because international visitors are so varied. But I will nonetheless offer some generalised comments. Starting again with cultural background let us look at content first. In a text of this kind it is possible to provide background information to displays specifically aimed at the levels of knowledge non-domestic visitors may well have and to be conscious that cultural allusions comprehensible to a domestic audience may be better omitted or explained for an international one.

Equally, where an interpretation, narrative or representation is current in the discourse of the dominant domestic language it can be omitted so as to create an internationally focused text which is less liable to cause offence. Alternatively, a more balanced or neutral perspective could be

---

added. Gallery information, for example, in a 2016 exhibition on the WW1 naval battle of Jutland, at the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich, London, gave the background context to various displays by juxtaposing British and German press cuttings relating to the events in question, rather than by purely presenting potentially biased British interpretations of the conflict. Texts aimed at international audiences could in similar ways try to limit domestic bias thereby reducing the risk of alienating those audiences. Issues of form, though, remain potentially problematic. The base text, whatever language it is produced in, should not be problematic since it should, where form is concerned, incorporate features of form current in the relevant language – as such it should be linguistically and culturally coherent. But if it is then translated into a variety of languages it is likely, even with some cultural adaptation of form, to once again become hybrid in its translated versions for reasons previously discussed.

If we now turn to considering what were earlier termed ‘further factors’, the quantity of information included can easily be reduced from that offered to domestic visitors as is already quite common practice. From a museum or gallery angle as well, such international texts tend to be relatively inexpensive to produce even if there are translation costs. And, being produced in-house, editorial control is preserved. If there is an overall weakness, however, in this strategy it is inevitably that it is a ‘one size fits all’ strategy – that is, it may offer something more appropriate to international visitors given their cultural backgrounds than a text translated from the domestic one, but it will meet no group of visitors’ needs very precisely.

#### 4.3 Less common strategy 1 – culturally ‘customised’ texts

This strategy was adopted in the project described above and involved producing foreign language texts entirely rewritten in form and content for the linguistic and cultural needs of international visitors. Evaluation of this strategy in relation to certain factors is scarcely necessary. Form and content can naturally be expected to meet the broad linguistic and cultural expectations of the target groups since this is precisely what they are written to do. In terms of text density this strategy is positive too as the quantity of information will be tailored to audience needs. And, again, it increases language choice even if not all international visitors, if they have aspirations to be competent in foreign languages (such as English), will actually want to fall back on material in their first language.

It is also crucially important, though, to consider factors often cited in the course of the knowledge-transfer project by practitioners working in the Visitor Services sections of museums and galleries and who were directly involved in commissioning texts in accordance with their chosen communication strategy. The first, crucially, is cost. The cost of such culturally customised foreign language texts is likely to be extremely high. This is because an almost entirely new text has to be produced, a text which may require background research. There is also an issue of editorial control since a lot of power is handed over to whoever is producing the newly written, culturally customised, foreign language text. Whilst this strategy has much to recommend it, several years after the end of the knowledge-transfer project described above, which explicitly followed this strategy of commissioning culturally customised foreign language texts, no obvious trace of this strategy remains visible in the current practice of the participating museums and galleries.

As no formal follow-up research was carried out to see why this strategy was abandoned, it is not clear what exactly may explain this lack of sustainability, although cost and a lack of continuity of staffing look likely to have played a role. But the very fact that the strategy was not sustained suggests that there is a call for a more careful evaluation of its validity, not just in terms of its meeting its audiences' needs, but also in terms of how deliverable it is in practice for museums and galleries.

#### 4.4 Less common strategy 2 – accessible domestic language texts

A second less common strategy consists not in multiplying the languages in which texts are available, or their cultural form and content, but in facilitating access to, and increasing the appropriateness of, texts in the domestically dominant language or in some other form of dominant language – e.g. a *lingua franca*. There have for some time been attempts both in research and practice to produce texts in dominant languages which are less elitist, less marginalising and more inclusive of the wide sectors of the potential domestic audience to museums and galleries (cf. Coxall, 1997). Less attention appears to have been paid, however, to the inclusion in dominant language texts of *international visitors* who may have some mastery of the languages in question coupled with an aspiration to be able to function using them. Or, to link into another strand of thought and research, it is worth considering what 'linguistic accommodation', in the context of texts of this kind, might involve (Giles et al 1991).

What might this strategy imply in practice? Linguistically, at a lexical level, it might involve checking the level of difficulty of vocabulary and, at the syntactic level, checking how demanding the constructions used were, or even just sentence and paragraph length. Where ‘form’ is concerned, adaptation for the needs of non-native speakers can be very straightforward. The balance of text, blank space and image can be adjusted, information can be ‘chunked’ and so on, and all of this in a way implying limited compromise of the needs of native speakers. Where content is concerned what might tend to be obvious to domestic visitors might simply require a little more unpacking for international visitors. Finally, a text aiming to meet as far as possible the needs both of domestic and international audiences might simply need to be slightly shorter than one purely aimed at domestic visitors.

How might such inclusive dominant language texts then fare when evaluated in relation to some of the factors identified earlier? Are such texts, for example, just condemned to fail their international readers because a single dominant domestic language text, however constructed, can never in principle minister to the highly diverse cultural preferences of form and content of its international audience? In many ways issues of form demand little discussion. In reading a text in a foreign language, in this context often out of choice, there is usually no expectation on the part of an international visitor that the form will correspond to what is usual in their first language – this is just part of the challenge of engaging with a foreign language. Where content is concerned, the extent to which dominant language texts designed to be inclusive for international visitors will work for their international audience will depend on the degree of compromise between their serving the needs of domestic and international visitors. But their content will most likely be more appropriate either than texts aimed purely at domestic visitors or texts translated from them.

Whether or not international visitors will find a domestic language text of this kind too dense in content will depend on the balance of priority given in producing it to the needs of the domestic and international parts of its intended audience. Again, though, the text density will be more appropriate for international visitors than either a non-inclusive domestic language text or a translation of it. Finally, as far as cost is concerned, there is no reason why this strategy should prove expensive as there are no translations or culturally customised texts to commission. But what is demanded in producing the text is a high level of linguistic and intercultural awareness – its production requires a refined capacity to



‘decentre’ (cf. Byram, 1997), to see things through the eyes of someone from outside the dominant language and cultural grouping and to adapt communication accordingly. But provided practitioners can access the skill set required there is much to recommend this form of strategy.

To sum up this section (see also table 1 below) – there are a range of communication strategies museums and galleries can adopt for communication with international visitors, four of which have been considered above, and these strategies can, of course, within a single institution be combined where resources permit. As we have also seen, however, all such strategies have their advantages and disadvantages. Museums and galleries, quite apart from their individual sense of purpose, function in extremely varied contexts and there is no right or wrong strategy for them to communicate with their international visitors – what makes good sense in Canada may make far less in Slovakia.

| Strategies                         | Correspondence to the culturally familiar?   | Appropriate quantity of information?  | Cost?   | Comments   |
|------------------------------------|--|---|---|--|
| Translation                        | Limited although cultural adaptation can help  | Probably overloaded   | Reasonable  | Entirely viable but imperfect                                    |
| Single international alttext       | Difference of need from domestic visitors recognised but international visitors seen as single group | Should fit overall although needs of different groups of international visitors vary            | Base text inexpensive. Translated versions will add to cost | Diversity of need recognised, but only those of two large groups |
| Culturally customised texts        | Very close   | Very close  | Very expensive  | More admirable than viable                                       |
| Accessible domestic language texts | Limited, but international visitors can feel welcomed into foreign culture                           | Reasonable - text should be a compromise between what suits domestic and international visitors | Cheap provided skills exist in-house                        | In line with general moves towards accessibility                 |

**Table 1:** Evaluation of strategies for communicating with international visitors

---

## 5. Research and practice

What then might need to be done to allow museums and galleries to refine their decision-making when choosing a strategy for communicating with international visitors? Research, naturally, has the potential to inform decision-making and could focus on a vast range of relevant areas. Just one amongst them would involve trying to assess the measurable effects on visitor responses of different communication strategies using the sort of well-established observation-based, empirical methodologies commonly found in articles in international journals such as *Visitor Studies*. This would, however, be far from yielding some easy mechanism allowing comparisons of effectiveness, since any communication strategy for a mass audience involves subjective choices to privilege the communication needs of certain sections of that audience over others.

Other relevant forms of research are already being carried out, focussing on the intercultural skills needed by translators (cf. Koskinnen, 2015) and the pedagogy of their development within translator training programmes (cf. Cranmer, 2015). The importance many working both at the theoretical end of Translation Studies and on the pedagogy of translation are coming to attach to this area is more generally attested to in the existence both of conferences and volumes of international journals dedicated to the topic –special volumes, for example of *The Interpreter and Translator Trainer* (Volume 10, 2016 – Number 3), *Perspectives: Studies in Translatology* (Volume 24, 2016 – Issue 3) and *Cultus* (Volume 7, 2014) are all dedicated to themes of this kind. Equally, the European Commission has supported this strand of translator training by funding initiatives like the PICT project ([www.pictlp.eu](http://www.pictlp.eu)) designed to help teachers of Translation to improve the intercultural competence of their students. Such developments should leave translators better placed to show an awareness in their practice of the common influence of cultural background on international visitors and their possible reactions to texts. They should also leave them better placed to explain to those commissioning texts the rationale behind certain decisions they have taken in producing/customising texts.

Where museums and galleries are concerned, if they are to commit to putting the visitor at the centre of what they do, and if they are to do justice to the fact that those visitors are often increasingly international, they will need to show an increasing awareness of the intercultural complexities such communication involves. How, then, is this intercultural

---

awareness to be developed? It is important to be clear here what kind of question this is – it is *not* a question about intercultural aspects of translation technique, of linguistic or format choices. It is a question about organisational change and that is an area theorised in rather different disciplines, such as Management Studies, and not those primarily considered in this article. Progress will come, in my view, as much by looking for successful precedents in relation to other areas of organisational change as it will by the further refinement of translator training.

## 6. Conclusion

The idea that there is no single ‘appropriate’ strategy for museums and galleries to pursue when communicating with their international visitors, but that there are instead a range of factors they need to consider in their own contexts when deciding on such a strategy, has run through this whole article. What, then, in brief might be the future of the strategies considered and how far can they realistically square the increasingly international nature of visitors with the desire to be visitor-focused and to recognise diversity?

Translation will, almost certainly, continue to play a major role though hopefully in ways which increasingly will come to incorporate forms of cultural adaptation. But no-one should be fooled that culturally adapted translations fully speak to the needs of international visitors. If they are translated from texts aimed at domestic visitors no amount of cultural adaptation will entirely remove elements that address the needs of domestic visitors more than those of international ones. Culturally customised texts, of the kind produced by the knowledge-transfer project, do not have this problem, but it is not easy to see many museums and galleries being willing to commit to the cost or process implications of this strategy. Refusal, in some contexts, to meet the needs directly of non-dominant social groups on grounds of cost would be illegal as might be the case with those having physical disabilities. But even if failure to fully include international visitors rarely risks being illegal, the failure to do so should sit uncomfortably with the claim on the part of any museum gallery to be either ‘visitor-focused’ or to ‘acknowledge diversity’.

Texts written specifically for an international audience, considered as a ‘single’ audience will also, most likely, continue to have currency, and do

---

partly show visitor focus and acknowledgement of diversity, though they inevitably have the shortcoming of putting all international visitors in the ‘same basket’. What, though, finally, of texts in the domestically dominant language(s)? One way to include ‘outsiders’, in many contexts, is to make the dominant norms easier to learn or to cope with. And with texts of this kind one can do this by adjustment of lexis, by limiting complexity of syntax, by incorporating information in ‘chunked’ sections, by limiting the amount of content as well as by using multimodality, all of which is already in some contexts being done in order to increase access to a wider range of domestic visitors. There is no reason why this should not be done to increase access for international visitors, or more generally, for visitors who do not have a native grasp of the relevant domestically-focused text.

One might argue, with some justification, that this strategy makes best sense only where the domestically dominant language is widely spoken as a foreign language, as with English. But that might be to forget that immigration is a feature of almost all societies and that even meeting the needs of *domestic* visitors includes addressing the needs of those whose first language is not the locally dominant language.

In conclusion, there undoubtedly are ways to improve communication with international visitors which are focused on their needs and which acknowledge diversity. But serious commitment is needed for the process to be successful and careful thought needs to be given by practitioners in choosing an appropriate strategy.

## References

- Bailey, S. 2011. *Academic Writing – A Handbook for International Students*. Abingdon: Routledge,
- Barker, C. 2000. *Cultural Studies*. London: Sage,
- Byram, M. 1997. *Teaching and Assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters,
- Coxall, H. 1997. “Speaking Other Voices”. In E. Hooper-Greenhill (Ed.), *Cultural Diversity*, Leicester: Leicester University Press,
- Cranmer, R. 2015. “Introducing Intercultural Communication into the Teaching of Translation”. *Russian Journal of Linguistics*, 19 (4), 155-174.
- Giles, Howard, Coupland, Justine and Coupland, Nikolas (eds.) 1991. *Contexts of Accommodation: Developments in Applied Sociolinguistics*. Cambridge: CUP

- 
- Hatim, B. 1997. *Communication Across Cultures – Translation Theory and Contrastive Text Linguistics*. Exeter: University of Exeter Press
- Hofstede, G. 1991. *Cultures and Organisations: Software of the Mind*. London: McGraw-Hill,
- Katan, David 2012 “Translating the tourist gaze: from heritage and ‘culture’ to actual encounter”, *Pasos* 10 (4), 83-95.
- Koskinen, K. 2015. “Training Translators for a Super-diverse World. Translators’ Intercultural Competence and Translation as Affective Work”. *Russian Journal of Linguistics*, 19 (4), 175-184.
- Leppihalme, R. 1997. *Culture Bumps*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters
- Lustig, Myron W. and Koestler, Jolene 2003. *Intercultural Competence*. Boston: Pearson
- Robertson, P. 2009. “What Can We See? London’s Museums and Galleries and the International Visitor Experience.” *Liaison Magazine*, 2, 22-27

## Navigation and circulation in city audio guides: a comparison between Italian and English

*Maria Elisa Fina*

### *Abstract*

*The aim of this paper is to analyse Italian, British and American city audio guides from a contrastive perspective, in order to identify possible differences in the way(s) audio guides are structured in Italian and in English and, hence, to shed light on issues concerning the creation of English versions of Italian audio guides.*

*The study takes as a starting point the set of guidelines provided by Neves (2015) to create accessible descriptive guides, and focuses on the aspects related to navigation and circulation. A corpus of fifty professional city audio guides is qualitatively investigated in order to determine the presence and distribution of features related to navigation and circulation, and to identify relevant strategies adopted in the audio guides to favour circulation and navigation. Differences between audio guides in Italian and in English are identified and discussed, and the findings are then compared to Neves's guidelines. Finally, on the basis of the results, translation issues are addressed by providing a list of aspects that could be taken into account when producing English versions of Italian audio guides.*

### **1. Introduction**

Along with significantly transforming communication in the tourism domain, new technologies have also contributed to the reshaping of tourist genres by producing interactive, multimodal texts for tourism promotion.

Within this category of multimodal genres, we find audio guides, which can be classified into two macro-categories: city audio guides and museum audio guides, the previous dealing with a variety of sites (castles, palaces,

monuments, open spaces), the latter dealing specifically with artworks such as paintings, sculptures, and similar.

Audio guides have started to raise academic interest only around the 2000s, with studies focusing mainly on techniques for improving usability (Petrelli *et al.* 2001; Luyten and Coninx 2004; Alfaro *et al.* 2005) and accessibility for users with disabilities (Knapp *et al.* 2004; Landau *et al.* 2005; Ghiani *et al.* 2008; Ruiz *et al.* 2011, Neves 2015). As far as the translation of audio guides is concerned, there seems to be a gap in academic research, except for a study by Tempel and ten Thije (2010), who investigated appreciation of cultural and linguistic adjustments in multilingual museum audio tours by international visitors.

To the best of my knowledge, this study represents the first attempt to contrastively analyse audio guides in Italian and in English for translation purposes. As a part of a wider research on audio guides in all their features (Fina 2016), in this study we will focus on specific aspects, which are presented and developed in the following paragraphs.

## 2. ‘Guiding’ in audio guides: preliminary observations

The audio guide as a tourist genre is presumably designed for particularly independent travelers wishing to sightsee at their own pace and according to their own preferences, without the constraints involved in human-guided tours.

In terms of Dann’s classification of tourist genres according to the stage of trip at which they are used (1996), the audio guide should be designed to be used on-trip, while sightseeing. In terms of communicative function, audio guides cannot be considered promotional texts designed to attract potential visitors. Instead, audio guides are expected to perform mainly an informative function, that is to describe the historical, cultural and artistic significance of the sites, and to *guide* the visitor while sightseeing.

In this study the concept of *guiding* is not limited to ‘guiding knowledge acquisition’ by highlighting the most interesting historical/cultural/artistic aspects of the sites (in the same way as printed tourist guidebooks do), but is also intended in terms of what in tour guiding has been defined as the “instrumental role of the guide” (Cohen, 1985: 17), i.e. facilitating way-finding, navigation and physical access to sites.

The aim of this paper is to investigate the extent to which aspects related to circulation/way-finding and navigation occur in city audio guides in Italian and in English, and the way they are dealt with, in order to highlight possible differences between the audio guides in Italian and those in English.

### **3. Reference model: guidelines for accessible audio guides**

The investigation of circulation/way-finding and navigation in city audio guides draws on studies by Neves, who carried out extensive research on accessible tourism for the blind, with particular reference to multi-sensory communication in museums and best practices in accessible tourism in various countries.

She has defined a series of guidelines for creating descriptive guides (2015) as a result of a three-year EU-funded project<sup>1</sup> (ADLAB), which involved analysing texts in order to identify best practices, testing such practices in audio description on blind and sight-impaired subjects, and drafting strategic guidelines for use by professionals, service providers, teachers and students. The research focused not only on the audio description of films, but also on other forms of audio description, including descriptive audio guides.

The set of guidelines for producing audio guides are categorised by Neves according to the object of description, i.e. descriptive guides of open spaces, architecture, exhibitions, artefacts, paintings, photographs, ‘how-to...’). Neves also provides a specific section dedicated to ‘circulation’, which includes guidelines for way-finding and navigation. These can be summarised as follows (adapted from Neves 2015)<sup>2</sup>:

#### Way-finding

- Position the person in relation to the surroundings and in terms of the direction to be taken and give clear distinctive landmarks to identify their position;
- Keep directions to the minimum;
- Provide clear “locators” where people will need to change direction (“turn left or right” might not be enough);

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.adlabproject.eu/>

<sup>2</sup> The guidelines can be retrieved from

<http://www.adlabproject.eu/Docs/adlab%20book/index.html> (last accessed November 2016).



- 
- Offer elements for reinforcement/conferral of position (e.g. “on your left you will find a big door”)

#### Navigation

- Present the equipment in general terms;
- Describe the layout of the keyboard;
- Identify the keys: number pad, back and forward, rewind, jump and select;
- Explain how to select and activate content, how to pause, repeat and change volume;
- Explain how the map/visit plan and the audio guide work together;
- Explain how the information is organised (sequential, stops, layers, ...);
- State the expected time span for the guided visit.

In short, according to these guidelines, instructing the visitor on how to use the audio device as well as locating and directing the visitor in relation to the immediate surroundings may play a key role for increasing accessibility in audio guides and allowing people with disabilities to fully enjoy the audio experience in the same way as non-disabled people do.

Considering that the guidelines provided by Neves are based on tests conducted on users<sup>3</sup>, the study presented in this paper is based on the assumption that the presence of the features listed in the guidelines may improve the visiting experience offered by the audio guide. It is important to specify that although the ADLAB project addresses in particular sensorially disabled people, the set of guidelines is meant to benefit also non-disabled people, as clearly stated in the ‘aims and objectives’ section of the dedicated website<sup>4</sup>. Hence, an audio guide designed to be accessible for impaired users is very likely to be accessible for *any* user. Thus, we are moving from a concept of ‘accessibility’ intended as “to enable persons with disabilities to live independently and participate fully in all aspects of life”<sup>5</sup> to a more comprehensive meaning, by which what is ‘accessible’ is easy to find, get and use, and also easy to understand and enjoy<sup>6</sup>.

---

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.adlabproject.eu/?page\\_id=47](http://www.adlabproject.eu/?page_id=47)

<sup>4</sup> The project aims were to: “[...] define a set of international standards and reliable guidelines for the industry and for all users”. See [http://www.adlabproject.eu/?page\\_id=44](http://www.adlabproject.eu/?page_id=44) (last accessed November 2016).

<sup>5</sup> Definition from the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (UNCRPD), (Article 9 – Accessibility). Available at: <http://www.un.org/disabilities/convention/conventionfull.shtml> (last accessed February 2016).

<sup>6</sup> See definition of ‘accessible’ in the Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners.

<http://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/accessible> (last accessed

The assumption at the basis of this study is that information for self-orienting, navigation, and experience optimisation may play a key role in increasing the accessibility of city audio guides. In the following paragraph, we will illustrate the data and methodology used for the analysis, and we will also contextualise Neves's guidelines on navigation and circulation/way-finding in the specific genre of city audio guides.

#### 4. Data and method

The investigation involves a corpus of fifty professional city audio guides, made up of 17 Italian audio guides, 17 British audio guides, and 16 American audio guides<sup>7</sup>. From now on, these three groups will be referred to as 'Italian Corpus', 'British Corpus' and 'American Corpus'.

In order to investigate the aspects related to circulation/way-finding and navigation, the guidelines provided by Neves were re-framed in the specific context of the city audio guide.

Starting from circulation/way-finding, considering that the tours contained in the audio guides do not cover a single site but a series of sites within a more or less extensive area of the city, we will consider the presence of directions to the various stops of the audio guide as the primary aspect related to circulation/way-finding. We will also see whether "locators" and/or "elements for reinforcement/conferral of position" are provided to facilitate self-orienting.

The guideline "Keep directions to the minimum", instead, will be disregarded, as in city audio guides the length of directions will depend on the distance between the two stops involved. Furthermore, as the guidelines also refer to maps/visit plans (section "Navigation"), we will also investigate the presence and types of accompanying maps of the tour and their correlations with navigation and way-finding.

As for navigation, considering that the audio guides selected for the analysis are in mp3 format and can be run on smartphones or other devices that the user is supposed to fully master, the guidelines about presenting the equipment and explaining how to use it may not be relevant to city audio guides. However, since audio guides may also include over 20 audio tracks, it could be interesting to check whether instructions on how

---

November 2015)

<sup>7</sup> See *References* for the list of the corresponding websites.

---

the audio tracks are organised and related to the map, or indications on when to stop and resume the audio, are provided.

To sum up, the features that will be investigated in city audio guides are: 1) the presence of accompanying maps, 2) directions to the various stops of the tour, 3) instructions, and any other useful information favouring safe and smooth sightseeing.

Each feature is first quantified in all three corpora in terms of number of audio guides in which they occur; then, differences between the three groups are identified; finally, the findings are compared to the guidelines proposed by Neves.

What we are interested in is not only quantifying the presence of these features in the three groups of audio guides, but also identifying particular strategies adopted in the audio guides to facilitate circulation/way-finding and navigation, as well as discussing the possible effects that they might have on the visitor's experience. Thus, strategies that are particularly relevant to optimising circulation and navigation will be taken into consideration for the final purpose of this study, regardless of their frequency patterns.

## 5. Maps

The presence of an accompanying map of the tour can be considered a useful item allowing independent visitors, who prefer sightseeing on their own, to easily orient themselves within that specific trail, without having to locate their position on big city maps or activate GPS and maps on their mobile phones, especially if these devices are used to play the audio tracks. It should also be remarked that international visitors are unlikely to activate GPS while sightseeing because, depending on mobile network carriers, this service could be very expensive unless an international roaming package has been activated in advance.

Table 1 lists the types of map found in the corpus and their distribution across the three groups of audio guides:

| Type of map        | ITA | UK | USA |
|--------------------|-----|----|-----|
| screen only map    | 1   | 1  | //  |
| link to Google map | 3   | 1  | //  |
| printable map      | 6   | 11 | 14  |
| no map             | 7   | 4  | 2   |

Table 1 – Types and occurrences of maps in each corpus

We immediately notice that the Italian Corpus is also the one displaying the highest number of audio guides with no related map. The most common option in all three groups is the printable map, but this feature is definitely more prominent in audio guides in English, as in the British and the American corpora it occurs in more than half of the audio guides. In a few audio guides, a link to a Google map is provided. Due to space constraints, we will not go through the features of the various types of maps, and we will just discuss a few aspects of them.

The choice of directing users to a Google map may be due to an intention to make the audio guide experience highly customisable. Indeed, particularly independent users will appreciate the possibility to customise the map provided by the audio guide according to personal preferences by using Google features in all their potential. In addition to the trail to follow, they may also display other interesting items not included in the audio guide, such as restaurants, off-the-trail sites and similar.

Worth noticing in this regard are the Google maps provided in the audio guides of *Milano* and *Modena*, in which the link directs users to a generic Google map, which they can customise according to a list of options, as shown in Figure 1:



Figure 1 – Google map of *Milano*

---

By ticking the *Itinerari*' box, numbered stops and a marked trail appear. The landmarks of this trail, though, do not correspond to the audio tracks provided in the downloaded folder. Interestingly, the user may also choose to display events, other cultural and artistic sites, accommodation, etc. The *'stampa risultati'* button (see item in the green circle) allows users to print the customised map and take it with them while sightseeing and listening to the audio guide. Hence, the map in this case does not seem to have been designed to uniquely match the tour offered by the audio guide, but rather to serve as a 'companion' for the user throughout his/her stay in the destination.

In the customisable map of *Modena*, instead, there is no 'print' button, and neither numbered stops nor a marked trail are displayed. Thus, the map is not intended to match the tour, as it is completely unrelated to the audio tracks provided in the downloaded folder.

As far as printable maps are concerned, most maps in all three corpora include numbered and/or titled stops. In most American maps – as opposed to very few occurrences in the Italian and the British corpora – the stops on the map are related to a separate list of numbered or titled stops, which provides the visitor with an overview of the stops included in the tour and helps him/her to keep track of the tour progress.

The presence of a marked trail linking the various stops to each other seems to be more frequent in audio guides in English, with this feature occurring in more than half of the audio guides in both the British and the American corpora. In those not featuring the marked trail, the fact that stops are numbered helps visitors understand where to go first. The presence of a marked trail does not necessarily make the map more intelligible, though. In the maps of *Lexington* and *Little Rock Arkansas*, indeed, even though a marked trail is displayed, the absence of numbered stops makes it difficult to understand where to go first, as shown in Figure 2:

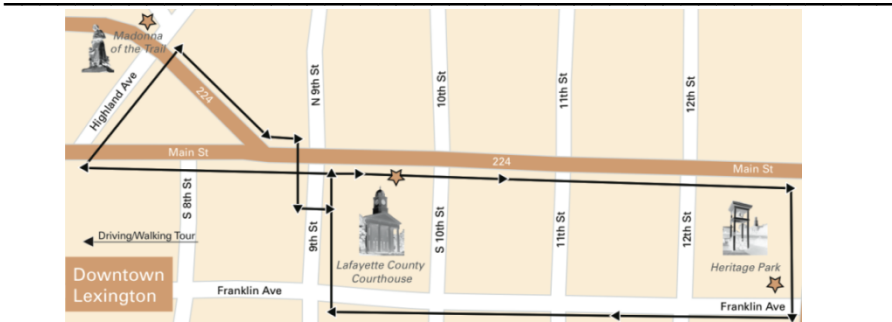


Figure 2 – Printable map of *Lexington*

This means that the visitor will necessarily have to listen to the first track to understand where the tour starts from. Smaller groups of maps also contain features such as thumbnails of the sites to be visited and practical information (opening hours, distance segment, indication of the North point), but these features do not mark a clear difference between the three groups of audio guides and, more specifically, between Italian and English. Particularly interesting is the map reported in Figure 3:



Figure 3 – Printable map of *Edinburgh New Town* printable map

The pictures are lettered and related to a list of items displaying the names of the sites. Additional pictures of notable historical characters are also displayed, along with the names of the characters they depict. Thus, the map not only offers previews of the sites to be visited, but also of the historical contents of the audio guide. This map is also interesting for the fact that optional audio chapters are marked in red.

The map of *London by Rick Steves* displays a note on street width, tube stations and viewpoints as indicated in the legend reported in Figure 4 (see circled items):

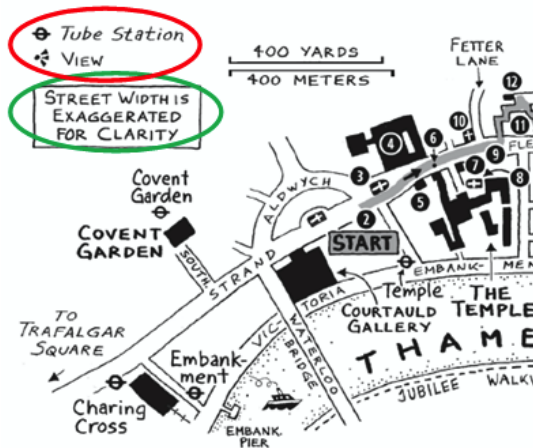
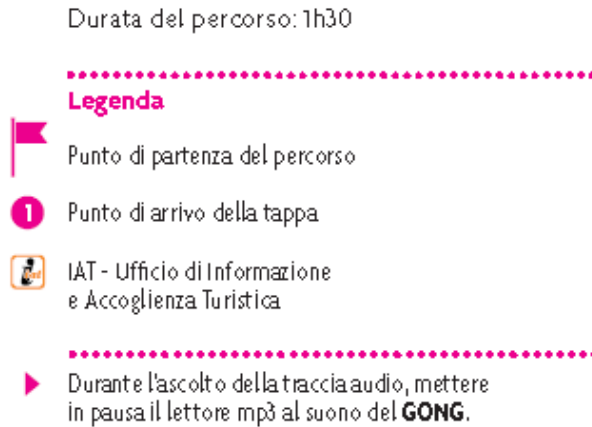


Figure 4 – Printable map of *London by Rick Steves*

As far as the Italian Corpus is concerned, only the *Bologna* map indicates the start and end points and the duration of the tour, and also provides instructions on how to use the audio guide, as reported in Figure 5:



**Figure 5 – Printable map of *Bologna***

Interestingly, the lines on bottom of the picture instruct the visitor to pause the player when they hear a GONG sound, which signals the end of descriptive sections and occurs immediately after directions. Thus, it also indicates when the visitor has to move on to the next stop. We will now investigate the presence of circulation/way-finding- and navigation-related contents in the scripts of the audio guides.

## 6. Circulation/way-finding and navigation in the scripts

Following the contextualisation of Neves's guidelines developed in paragraph 4, the content types related to circulation/way-finding and navigation identified in the audio guides are 'instructions', 'safety advice' and 'directions'.

These were identified in the introductory sections of the audio guides and in the body of the scripts, and will be analysed separately.

### 6.1 Instructions

The content type 'instructions' in the audio guides includes information on how to use the audio guide, how the audio tracks are organised and related to the map, or when to stop or resume the audio. Instructions were found both in the introductory sections and the body of the scripts, and their presence in the three corpora is summarised in Table 2. As far as



introductory sections are concerned, these occur in most of the audio guides, and basically contain generic information on the tour, such as the area or the sites that will be explored, usually accompanied by welcome addresses and, especially in the Italian audio guides, background information on the history of the city. Obviously, the presence of instructions in the introductions refers only to the number of audio guides actually featuring an introductory section, and not to the whole corpus:

|   | ITA  | UK   | USA  |
|---|------|------|------|
| Instructions in the introductions       | 0/12 | 6/16 | 7/13 |
| Instructions in the body of the scripts | 6/17 | 9/17 | 8/16 |

**Table 2 – Occurrence of instructions in the three corpora<sup>8</sup>**

A complete absence of instructions can be noticed in the Italian introductions, whereas in the British and the American corpora, instructions are always present. A few examples are provided below:

- (1) Each audio point, marked on the accompanying map, corresponds to the track number, so you should start track 2 when you reach audio point 2, and so on. (Cambridge, track 01, min. 00:22)
- (2) When you hear this sound [*sound signal*], it signals the end of the current track, before we move on through the tour. When you hear this sound [*sound signal*], please pause the CD<sup>9</sup> – it gives time to allow you to reach the next location before providing you with more information. (London East End, track 01, min. 02:18)
- (3) As you'll have seen, the walk is made up of number tracks, or chapters like in a book, making it really easy to stop and start this walk whenever you want. Each chapter starts with directions and then tells you about the sites and the chapter numbers correspond to the numbers on your map. If you don't have access to a printer for the map, don't worry, the walk can still be done without one, just make sure you hear the directions. If you miss them, jump back to the start of the chapter to hear them again. The chapters will

<sup>8</sup> A few introductions also contain practical information such as tour duration, start and end points and length of the tour.

<sup>9</sup> The speaker refers to a CD probably because the audio guide was first produced in a CD format and then made available on the Internet in the downloadable mp3 format, but without updating the script.

automatically run on, but you can always pause your player whenever you want. [...] Make a note on what chapter you were on when you stopped – some mp3 players reset when they're turned off. (London by StrollOn, track 01, min. 00:23)

In excerpt (1), instructions are focused on how the audio tracks relate to the stops in the printable map, thus indicating to the visitor how to continuously keep track of the visit progress. This also relates to how audio tracks are announced by the speakers. Indeed, in almost half of the audio guides in English, the stop number is also referred to by the speaker at the beginning of each audio track, so as to make sure that the visitor is listening to the correct audio track:

- (4) You should now be at audio point 3, on King's Parade in front of St Catharine's College. (Cambridge, track 03)
- (5) Stop three – Sheffield City Hall (Sheffield, track 03)
- (6) Stop two – Union Station (Denver, track 02)

In excerpt (2), instead, the visitor is instructed on how to interpret the two different sound signals in relation to circulation, whereas in excerpt (3) the visitor is provided with an overview of the structure of the audio guide and the way audio tracks are organised, along with specific tips to optimise navigation (“Make a note on what chapter you were on when you stopped – some mp3 players reset when they're turned off”). Interestingly, the speaker also reassures the visitor about the possibility of smoothly taking the tour without a map thanks to the directions provided for each stop. In the American Corpus, instructions are very similar to those found in the British Corpus. The most complete instructions are reported below:

- (7) You probably saw that the guide comes in a series of segments, one for each stop on the tour. Each one of these is a single track on your player. The segment numbers are announced for each segment. They are also shown on your map. Now, our segment numbers might not translate exactly to the track numbers on your player. To avoid potential confusion, we announce the segment number for each segment. Right now, you are listening to the Intro segment. The first part of the actual tour will be segment 1. One more thing. At the end of each segment, we'll tell you that it's the end, so you'll know to pause your player until you reach the next stop. (Philadelphia by AudioSteps, track 01, min. 00:11)

Here, the minute description of how the audio tracks are organised is probably due to fact that the tour includes 49 ‘segments’. Thus, in order to avoid confusion, the speaker clearly explains how the audio tracks are announced and how they work together with the map. Finally, in *Washington National Mall* we also find a detailed explanation for self-orienting when driving:

- (8) Driving in the nation’s capital can be a different story. [...] First, all the lettered streets run east and west. *A* Street is closest to the Mall, and the streets follow the alphabet as you drive away from the Mall. The numbered streets run North and South, with 1<sup>st</sup> Street running alongside the Capitol and going up as you move away from it. Last, the streets named for states run in angles to the numbered and lettered streets and often fit into traffic circles. (Washington National Mall, track 01, min. 01:00)

This type of information will certainly be appreciated by international visitors, and it is useful not only for circulation during the tour itself but also during the holiday experience in general.

Differently from introductions, in which instructions occur only in audio guides in English, in the body of the scripts instructions were found in all three corpora, although only in the British and the American corpora do they characterise at least half of the audio guides. Instructions in the body of the script are often provided to indicate when to play the next track and when to pause or resume the audio. Here are a few examples:

- (9) Per riprendere la visita e la mia narrazione ti basterà poi ascoltare la traccia numero 2. A più tardi. (Ferrara, track 1, min. 10:56)  
[To resume the tour and narration you will just need to play track 2.]
- (10) Tornando su via IV novembre, dopo pochi passi sulla destra vedrete il Tempio Malatestiano. Quando sarete arrivati al tempio, ascoltate il file numero 6. (Rimini, track 05, min. 04:48)  
[Retracing *via IV Novembre*, after a few steps, you will see on your right the *Tempio Malatestiano*. When you are there, play track 6.]
- (11) Cross carefully over the roundabout and head down to your right and make your way to the railings overlooking Victoria Street below. Pause the audio now and, when you are ready, play track 2. (Edinburgh Royal Mile, track 01, min. 06:10)
- (12) Climb the steps immediately to your left, turn left again at the top, and then you’ll see the curved part of the sundial. Now press ‘pause’,

- and press 'play' when you get to the sundial. (London by StrollOn, chapter 2, min. 00:28)
- (13) You're coming up on the intersection, you're going to pause the tour here and cross over Walker. Walk straight ahead for one block and then cross Rusk. Listen to the next track on the other side of Rusk. Press 'pause' now. (Downtown Houston, track 02, min. 04:07)
- (14) If you've exited at the Smithsonian Station and are on the Mall, keep your player running. If not, pause your player until you exit the metro station and are standing on the Mall. Restart your player after you've exited the metro. (Washington National Mall, stop 00, min. 01:55)

Although this feature occurs in an equal number of British and American audio guides, it is actually more frequent in the British Corpus, since in four American audio guides instructions occur only once or twice throughout the whole tour, while in the British audio guides (and also in the Italian ones) they occur in each audio track.

The indication of when to stop and resume the audio is particularly useful when the stops of the tour are all included in one single audio track, because in this case the visitor needs to know when to pause the audio to avoid going on with narration while s/he is still walking towards the next stop:

- (15) Now follow the main road further on into the dockyard until you reach some picnic tables on your left, and then resume the audio. (Portsmouth, min. 18:04)
- (16) When you're ready to move off again, pause your machine and leave Trafalgar Square through Admiralty Arch, opposite the entrance to the Strand. (London Westminster and West End, min. 15:31)
- (17) Pause the tour until you are stopped on 13<sup>th</sup> Street. (Lexington, min. 11:18)

In two audio guides, instructions also concern the possibility of customising the audio guide, thus enabling the visitor to skip contents s/he might not be interested in:

- (18) Avanza a sinistra sotto il Voltone e sbuchi su Piazza del Nettuno di cui, se vuoi, puoi continuare ad ascoltare la storia, oppure passa alla tappa successiva. (Bologna, track 4, min. 00:01)  
[Step forward to the left under the *Voltone* and you will find yourself in *Piazza of Nettuno*. Keep playing this track if you wish to learn about

the *Piazza*; otherwise play the next track.]

- (19) If you want information about two nearby famous pubs, then please pause the recording and go to number 4 or, if you want to hear information on Lord Brougham, who was born in a house on the north side of the square and was connected with the anti-slavery movement, go to number 5. If you do not wish to hear about dear old Lord Brougham or pubs, shame on you, but skip to number 6. (Edinburgh New Town, track 03, min. 02:32)

Finally, another particular feature can be found in *London East End*, where at some relevant point the speaker illustrates the content of the following audio tracks, thus allowing the visitor to operate a selection according to his/her preferences:

- (20) The Tower of London is split into five sections on this disc. Track 15 describes the historical background of the White Tower. Track 16 covers the expansion of the buildings now known as the Tower of London. Track 17 is all about the executions at the tower. [...] (London East End, track 14, min. 01:44)

The example shows how long, elaborate content about the same site can be distributed in more audio tracks – rather than one only – according to specific criteria. In this way, the visitor is provided with a clear overview of the topic, and is facilitated in identifying what might be more interesting to him/her.

## 6.2 Safety advice

Circulation may also be favoured by safety advice. The presence and distribution of this content type in both the introductions and the body of the scripts are reported, for each corpus, in Table 3:

| Type of practical information            | ITA  | UK   | USA  |
|--|------|------|------|
| Safety advice in the introductions       | 1/12 | 8/16 | 8/13 |
| Safety advice in the body of the scripts | 0/17 | 8/17 | 6/16 |

Table 3 – Occurrence of safety advice in the three corpora

Differently from instructions, which do not occur in the Italian introductions but could be found in the body of a number of Italian scripts, safety advice seems to be an (almost) exclusive feature of audio guides in English. This content type occurs in around half of the British and the American introductions, and concerns mainly dealing with traffic in busy roads, but also avoiding other dangers:

- (21) Crossing of roads will normally be with the aid of pedestrian traffic lights, but you should always take care of passing traffic and be safety conscious when stepping off pavements. (Dublin, Viking and Medieval Dublin 1, min. 01:07)
- (22) Oh, and, please, don't forget, in Britain we drive on the left, which means that when you cross the road, traffic is usually coming from your right, but most chapters begin and end in one place anyway, so you hardly ever have to walk and listen at the same time. (London by StrollOn, track 01, min. 01:34)
- (23) Make sure to hold on to children's hands and use extra caution while in the vicinity of the 16th Street Mall. Although vehicular traffic is prohibited on the Mall, the Mall Buses move quickly and come close to sidewalks, so be aware of them at all times. All of the areas you'll visit on this tour are considered safe and are typically well populated. However, for your own safety, stay alert at all times. This walking tour is highly recommended for daylight hours. However, if you'll be walking after dark, be aware that certain points of reference and views mentioned may not be visible. If you choose to walk at night, use extra caution and bring along a friend, if possible. (Denver, Intro, min. 01:33)
- (24) Last thing: this is a busy city, so keep alert, don't turn your brain off just 'cause you've headphones on. Any time you cross the street, make sure you press 'pause' and cross carefully. Just use your head and you'll be good. Alright, got it? Easy. (Downtown Houston, track 01, min. 02:26)

Thus, we can see that smooth circulation is not intended merely as way-finding, but also involves making sure that the visitor adopts appropriate behaviour so as to avoid incurring danger. In example (22) the information on driving in Britain provides useful tips for visitors coming from countries with different driving rules. Particularly detailed and varied advice can be found in excerpt (23), whereas in excerpt (24) safety advice is not only reduced to the essential, but is also provided in a very informal style.

In the Italian Corpus, safety advice could be found only in the introduction of *Padova*:

- (25) Oltrepassa il cancello principale dei Giardini, e fai attenzione alle biciclette. (Padova, track 1-1, min. 00:48)  
[Cross the Gardens' main gate, and watch out for bicycles.]

The unusual recommendation to watch out for bikes (“*fai attenzione alle biciclette*”) may be particularly useful for visitors living in towns or cities significantly different from Padua in terms of transport habits.

As far as safety advice in the body of the scripts is concerned, recommendations are not generic as in introductory sections, but are provided in specific situations:

- (26) Might I suggest, before you do that, that you take the headphones off and watch out for cars. It's two-way traffic. (Bath, track 07, min. 00:39)  
(27) First proceed back up Bridge Street, cross Cook Street but be careful – there are no pedestrian lights here and the junction is a bit complicated. (Dublin, stop 10, min. 03:04)  
(28) Let's go there now. You'll be crossing two busy streets, so please be careful. (Chicago, track 002, min. 01:27)  
(29) As we walk, be careful up ahead, there's a driveway here. Watch out for cars coming in and out. (Downtown Houston, track 23, min. 00:22)

A stylistic difference can be noticed between excerpt (30) and the remaining excerpts: in the former, safety advice is provided as a polite request (“*Might I suggest...?*”) so as not to sound imposing, whereas in the other excerpts imperatives are used.

The presence of safety advice in audio guides in English only could be framed within intercultural studies, by referring to the distinction proposed by Hall (1990) between High Context (HC) communication and Low Context (LC) communication. This distinction is based on whether in communication the information lies more in the text (LC) or in the context (HC), with ‘text’ being the “transmitted information” and ‘context’ being “the amount of information the other person can be expected to possess on a given subject” (1983: 61). Hence, Hall distinguishes between HC cultures, which are more context-oriented (e.g. the Mediterranean culture), and LC cultures, which are more text-oriented (e.g. the Anglo-American culture).

Katan (2004) has extensively studied the differences between HC and LC cultures, and has classified the features of HC and LC communication (with particular reference to the Italian and the British cultures) in transactional communication as follows (2006: 60):

| <i>LCC</i>                             | <i>HCC</i>                              |
|--|---|
| Text (explicitness)                    | Context (implicitness)                  |
| Information (facts)                    | Communication (feelings, opinions)      |
| Low Information Load<br>(small chunks) | High Information Load<br>(large chunks) |
| KISS<br>(keep it short and simple)     | KILC<br>(keep it long and complete)     |
| Reader friendly (peer-peer)            | Writer oriented (expert- non-expert)    |
| Instrumental                           | Expressive                              |
| Linear (cause-effect, main points)     | Circular (background, details)          |
| Informal                               | Formal                                  |
| Direct                                 | Indirect                                |

More specifically, the difference in the presence of safety advice in the audio guides may be framed within ‘explicitness’ vs. ‘implicitness’. Most safety recommendations reported throughout the analysis may sound trivial, since they are part of a widely shared way of doing things when visiting a new city. The fact that they are provided by British and American producers may be an indicator of the Anglo-American culture’s tendency towards a LC orientation, according to which the information, no matter how trivial it may seem, needs to be made *explicit* in the text.

The safety of visitors is plausibly a concern also for Italian producers, but safety advice is not provided in the Italian audio guides probably due to the Italian culture’s HC orientation, according to which the recommendations provided in the British and the American audio guides are part of an *implicitly* understood way of doing things, even when visiting a new city.

In the specific case of introductions, the fact that content types related to navigation and way-finding were found in introductions in English only could be interpreted in terms of ‘linear’ vs. ‘circular’, with the introductions in English focusing more on key points relevant to the user’s experience with the audio guide, while a separate, wider analysis of



the Italian introductions<sup>10</sup> revealed that most Italian introductions tend to focus mainly on the historical background of the city described in the audio guide, and to a far greater extent than most introductions in English. Due to space constraints and the focus of this study, the complete analysis regarding this aspect of the introductions will not be reported in this paper.

### 6.3 Directions

As the term ‘audio guide’ itself suggests, audio guides are expected not only to provide historical and artistic information on the sites included in the tour, but also to *guide* the visitor in way-finding.

Directions to reach the sites are provided in most of the audio guides, as reported in Table 4:

| ITA   | UK    | USA   |
|-------|-------|-------|
| 10/17 | 14/17 | 14/17 |

**Table 4 – Occurrence of directions in each corpus (n. of audio guides)**

As can be seen, though, they tend to more frequent in the British and the American audio guides. In paragraph 5 we saw that a number of audio guides in the three corpora are not accompanied by any map. Thus, the first thing to be investigated is whether these compensate for the lack of maps with directions, as reported in Table 5:

| Audio guides with no map | Presence of directions |
|--------------------------|------------------------|
| Cagliari                 | ✓                      |
| Catania                  | ✓                      |
| Ferrara                  | ✓                      |
| Firenze                  | //                     |
| Matera                   | ✓                      |
| Savona                   | //                     |
| Taranto                  | //                     |
| London East End          | ✓                      |
| London by Tim Richards   | ✓                      |

<sup>10</sup> Carried out as part of a PhD thesis on audio guides (Fina 2016).

|                                 |   |
|---------------------------------|---|
| London Westminster and West End | ✓ |
| Greenwich Village NYC           | ✓ |
| Washington Capitol Hill         | ✓ |

**Table 5 – Directions in the audio guides with no accompanying map**

The audio guides of *Firenze*, *Savona* and *Taranto* include neither a map nor directions. Thus, they do not actually *guide* the visitor anywhere: each audio track starts directly with the description of the corresponding site, and it is entirely up to the visitor to find the way to the next stop. This type of audio guide is notably different from most of the audio guides in both Italian and in English, that are structured as real walking tours, with stops linked to each other by directions.

As for audio guides with no maps but providing directions, examples of directions are provided below:

- (30) Ora dirigetevi verso via Martini, la stradina a sinistra della Loggia Massonica, dando le spalle alla Torre. (Cagliari, track 5, min. 02:19)  
[Now move towards *via Martini*, the lane on the left of the *Loggia Massonica*, leaving the *Torre* behind.]
- (31) Quando giungerai a via Buonporto prosegui fino ad incontrare la prima trasversale a destra, che è via Granchio, la quale ti condurrà a via Carmelino. Dovrai percorrere per un breve tratto via Borgo di sotto, per poi imboccare via Praisolo, attraverso cui potrai giungere finalmente a Casa Romei, posta all'angolo tra via Praisolo e via Savonarola. (Ferrara, track 3, min. 06:29)  
[When you reach *via Buonporto*, proceed until you reach the first cross street on the right, which is *via Granchio*, which will take you to *via Carmelino*. You will need to walk a short stretch of *via Borgo di sotto*, to take then *via Praisolo*, by which you will reach *Casa Romei*, on the corner between *via Praisolo* and *via Savonarola*.]
- (32) Track 8 – The Royal Exchange.  
Walking to the Royal Exchange would take approximately 5 minutes. Continue into Mansion House Street, cross over the pedestrian crossing on your left, in front of the Northwest Bank. At the next set of lights, cross over Princes Street and continue straight ahead into Threadneedle Street. The Royal Exchange is the building behind the horse-mounted statue of the Duke of Wellington in front of you. (London East End, track 08, min. 00:07)
- (33) When you're ready, carry on walking through the square by taking the exit that's straight ahead of you as you entered. You'll immediately come to Charing Cross Road. Walk over Charing Cross

Road carefully and keep walking along the street that continues on the other side of it, Cranbourn Street. You'll pass a crossroads. Carry on straight ahead into what becomes Long Acre and soon you'll see Covent Garden Underground Station on your right hand side. When you get to the Tube station, turn right and walk down Covent Garden Piazza and the Market. So I'll just repeat, leave the square by the street straight ahead of you, keep walking in a straight line until you come to Covent Garden Tube station, then turn right, walk down to the Piazza and start your machine again. (London Westminster and West End, min. 26:42)

As can be seen, directions can be more or less detailed depending on the tour itself. In (32), the speaker also indicates the time required to reach the next stop, while in (33) the speaker repeats and summarises the directions so that the visitor does not have to go back with the audio if s/he missed part of them. Furthermore, "locators" are often provided to favour self-orienting and for reinforcing position, such as "*dando le spalle alla Torre*" in (30), "*all'angolo tra via Praisolo e via Savonarola*" in (31), "At the next set of lights" in (32), "You'll pass a crossroads" in (33).

We will continue the investigation of directions in relation to maps by checking whether the remaining audio guides with no directions do include at least a map allowing the visitor to self-orient. Table 6 also reports the type of map associated to each audio guide:

| <b>Audio guide with no directions</b> | <b>Presence of a map</b> |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Lecce                                 | screen only (app)        |
| Milano                                | Google map               |
| Modena                                | Google map               |
| Perugia                               | Google map               |
| Glasgow                               | printable map            |
| Leicester                             | Google map               |
| Manchester                            | printable map            |
| Elgin                                 | printable map            |
| Washington by Audioviator             | printable map            |

**Table 6 – Maps in the audio guides with no directions**

It is not by chance that half of the audio guides with no directions (in both languages) include a link to a Google map, which compensates for the lack of directions, allowing the visitor to customise the trail according to

personal preferences and priorities. These audio guides are not formally structured as walking tours, but the presence of the link to a Google map suggests that the visitor is offered the possibility to create his/her own tour by customising the Google map according to his/her preferences.

Another aspect of directions to be investigated in relation to maps is the reference to the cardinal points. In most cases, the audio guides referring to the cardinal points either in directions or when locating buildings are accompanied by a printable map in which the North point is indicated or the drawing of a compass is oriented on the map in reference to the visiting area. However, in a few audio guides, directions are given referring to the cardinal points even though the map of the tour is not included or, if included, it is not oriented in reference to the cardinal points. This occurs in *Greenwich* and *Lexington*:

- (34) If you turn around again and head west along Waverly Place, across 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue, you can see more survivors from that era at 19 through 26 Washington Square North. (*Greenwich* NYC, min. 07:17)
- (35) Now, head east and cross 11th Street. (*Lexington*, min. 06:31)

Since in *Greenwich* we do not find any accompanying map, and the map of *Lexington* does not include the North point indication (see Figure 2), international visitors who are not used to be directed in reference to the cardinal points in their mother tongue might have problems when moving from one stop to another. In the specific case of *Lexington*, we should also take into account the fact that in the map of the tour the stops are not numbered, and this could further complicate self-orienting. However, in excerpt (38), the indication “across 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue” helps the visitor identify the right direction.

In the *Albany* audio guide, before starting the tour, the visitor is positioned in relation to the surroundings and is given key information to self-orient during the tour. The same happens in the introduction of *Edinburgh New Town*, in which the speaker indicates the direction towards which the tour will take place:

- (36) We’re now ready to walk to our next tour location. During the tour, we’ll instruct you to head north, south, east or west. As a frame of reference, standing in front of, and facing, the Quackenbush House, the Hudson River is located straight ahead. You can’t see it from where you’re standing, but the river is not far away, situated to the east of the city’s downtown district. And because the city was built

- 
- on a hill, the river is always downhill from any point. So, let the river be your guide, much as explorers, centuries ago. (Albany, min. 07:05)
- (37) Geographically, the tour will take you along the main street of the first Georgian New Town from here in St Andrew Square to Charlotte Square, travelling from east to west following the original grand plan of the architect James Craig. (Edinburgh New Town, track 01, min. 00:40)

These excerpts are perfectly in line with Neves's guideline "Positioning the person in relation to the surroundings", and the fact that this occurs at the beginning of the tour further facilitates circulation, as it allows the visitor to self-orient since the start.

Finally, in *Little Rock Arkansas*, instead, the lack of numbered stops in the map is compensated for by clear and precise directions in which numerous "locators" are indicated:

- (38) Walk through Riverfront Park toward Markham, walking along the black fence with the wavy metal decoration, beneath the vine-covered pergola, past the bust of Count Pulaski, then pausing at the granite-paved alley behind the buildings. (Little Rock Arkansas, track 03)

Despite the fact that most of the audio guides are designed to follow a well-defined trail, in a few cases the possibility of taking detours is offered, with directions provided accordingly:

- (39) Se avete scelto l'itinerario ridotto, andate alla traccia numero 8. (Cagliari, track 4, min. 03:29)  
 [...] Se state seguendo l'itinerario nella forma ridotta, dovete percorrere via Martini, posta a sinistra rispetto alla facciata della Loggia Massonica. [...] (Cagliari, track 8, min. 00:31)  
 [If you chose the short itinerary, then go to track number 8.  
 (...) If you are following the short itinerary, you will need to walk *via Martini*, which is on the left of the *Loggia Massonica's* façade.]
- (40) At this point, there are two optional short detours you can take. To visit the Cambridge University Library, you will need to head left, cross Queen's Road and follow Burrell's Walk. After around 150 metres a turning on the left will lead you to the Library.

---

[...] The other possible detour here is to your right along Garret Hostel Lane to Garret Hostel Bridge. (Cambridge, track 08, min. 00:06)

- (41) At this point, we'd like to give you an option of completing the entire tour or continuing on with an abbreviated version. The abbreviated version would omit the Society Hill area, which consists of 8 stops and covers a very beautiful and historic upper-class neighborhood just behind us. This abbreviated version would include the final three stops on our tour, which are the Todd House, Independence Hall and the Liberty Bell Visitor Center. If you choose to only complete the last three stops, you'll need to advance your tour to stop number 25, the Todd House. [*directions*] (Philadelphia WelcomeWalks, track 16c)

When the detour implies skipping tracks, instructions for navigation between the audio tracks are provided accordingly, as in excerpts (39) and (41).

Finally, the position of the directions within the audio guide structure is also important, as it is relevant to navigation. In most audio guides the directions are either at the beginning or at the end of each track, depending on the sequence of the stops. In the former case, should the visitor decide to skip a track, s/he will only have to listen to the beginning of the following track just to catch the directions. In two cases, however, the directions are provided in separate tracks between the various stops. In this way, the visitor may skip tracks about the sites s/he does not wish to stop at and, at the same time, will easily find the directions to the desired stop. This happens in *Philadelphia by Audiosteps* and *Philadelphia Constitutional*, in which the directions are provided in separate tracks, and these audio tracks are also easily identifiable because they are named accordingly.

To sum up, while in the introductions contents related to navigation and circulation were found in audio guides in English only, as far as the body of the scripts is concerned the main difference between Italian and English is marked solely by the presence of safety advice which, differently from instructions, does not occur at all in the Italian scripts. The lack of a map of the tour is always compensated for by directions, and similarly, the lack of directions is compensated for by a map in the British and American corpora always, but only mainly so in the Italian Corpus (see Tables 5 and 6).

---

## 7. Discussion of results

The analysis of features related to navigation and circulation/way-finding in the audio guides has revealed a number of differences between audio guides in Italian and audio guides in English.

First of all, the absence of a map of the tour is more frequent in audio guides in Italian. The explanation for this can only be obtained by asking the Italian producers themselves. A possible explanation could be that the presence of a printable map is not deemed essential because it can actually be obtained in many other ways, on the Internet or directly on site.

As for ‘introductions’, it was noticed that content related to navigation and circulation characterises introductions in English only, with instructions explaining how the audio tracks relate to the map, and with safety recommendations being provided to facilitate smooth and safe sightseeing. Since the differences between audio guides in Italian and in English highlighted in the analysis concern smaller parts of the whole corpora, it is obviously impossible to generalise, but these results could be considered a starting point for further research on more data to determine whether we can speak in terms of different ways of conceiving the audio guide genre across different cultures. The differences between Italian and English start to wear thin in the body of the scripts, with instructions, directions, indication of “elements for conferral of position” and possibility of detours characterising both audio guides in Italian and in English. In both languages, directions are never limited to generic indications such as ‘turn right/left’, but always include “locators” and reference points to favour self-orienting and make sure that the visitor takes the right direction. In this regard, audio guides in Italian and in English are definitely very similar.

Finally, the analysis of the combination map/directions has shed light on two possible ways of conceiving the audio guide genre.

In paragraph 6.3 we noticed that a number of Italian audio guides are structured as independent audio tracks starting directly with the description of the corresponding sites, without a specific trail to follow, nor directions linking the various stops. These audio guides constitute a sub-type of the audio guide genre and could be more appropriately named ‘audio commentaries’, as opposed to most audio guides – especially in English – which are structured as ‘audio walking tours’. In walking tours, the visitor is directed throughout a specific trail related to an

---

accompanying map with stops corresponding to the audio tracks, and with directions provided accordingly.

It should be remarked that the structural differences characterising these two sub-genres do not mark a difference or a shift in the main function of the audio guide which, as discussed in a detailed investigation of the audio guide contents (Fina 2016), is to present the visitor with the historical, cultural and artistic features of the sites. However, audio walking tours, and especially those in English, tend to be characterised by a more practical focus, which – we may argue – also reveals an intention to *guide* the visitor in the same way as a human guide would do.<sup>11</sup> Considering that this aspect tends to characterise more prominently audio guides in English, issues arise about how to create English versions of Italian audio guides, especially when these are structured as ‘audio commentaries’. This issue will be discussed in the following paragraph. However, before drawing observations about the creation of English versions of Italian audio guides, the findings will be discussed in reference to the guidelines provided by Neves (2015).

## 8. Conclusions

The guidelines related to circulation/way-finding are more frequently satisfied by most audio guides in English, with the presence of printable maps constituting a first step towards “position[ing] the person in relation to the surroundings and in terms of the direction to be taken” (especially in maps characterised by a marked trail and features such as North indication and distance segment), but also by a number of Italian audio guides. The visitor is also directed towards the various stops, with “locators” provided when a change in direction is necessary, and “elements for reinforcement/conferral of position” are indicated.

As for navigation, instructions are not only more frequent in audio guides in English (contained in at least half of the audio guides) but are also more elaborate with respect to their Italian counterparts. Indeed, in line with Neves’s guidelines, due to the higher occurrence of accompanying maps they may also “explain how the map/visit plan and

---

<sup>11</sup> A detailed investigation of the contents of the audio guides (Fina 2016) has revealed that in audio guides in English the speaker tends to take on the role of a real guide to a greater extent than in most Italian audio guides.



the audio guide work together” and “how the information is organised” (sequences, stops, layers).

The compliance of the audio guides with Neves’s guidelines can be approximately summarised as in Table 7:

| ITA | UK  | USA |
|-----|-----|-----|
| 50% | 80% | 80% |

**Table 7 –Compliance with Neves’s guidelines**

The 30% difference between Italian and English is determined by the more frequent lack of printable maps in the Italian Corpus and the lack of contents related to navigation and circulation in the introductions.

The data presented in this study do not determine striking differences between audio guides in Italian and in English, but in line with the purpose of this paper, we will now attempt to provide suggestions for creating English versions of Italian audio guides.

It should be understood that the lack of contents related to circulation and navigation may not necessarily affect the overall appreciation of the audio guide by users. That said looking at the differences highlighted in this chapter and keeping as a reference model Neves’s guidelines, features that *could* be taken into account when producing English versions of Italian audio guides in relation to navigation and circulation are:

1. a printable map of the tour with numbered stops and a marked trail;
2. items of interest or use marked on the map;
3. practical information in a dedicated section of the map (e.g. safety advice, opening hours, contact and booking information);
4. opportunity to customise the tour, with information on the content of supplementary tracks and possibility to skip them;
5. directions in separate audio tracks;
6. positioning the visitor in relation to the surroundings, especially if directions are provided referring to the cardinal points;
7. an informative introductory section in a separate audio track, with the following elements:
  - a) information on how the audio tracks are organised and announced in reference to the printable map;
  - b) safety advice and any other useful information (e.g. driving rules, indication of the visitor’s centre, etc.);

8. directions to the next stops, to be supported by a printable map with a marked trail;
9. indication of the time needed to reach the various stops, especially if the tour covers extensive areas;
10. instructions on when to pause and resume the audio, if the audio guide covers all the stops in one single audio track.

Reception studies in the two languages involved are needed to validate these suggestions as possible guidelines for audio guide production.

## References

- Alfaro, I.; Nardon, M.; Pianesi, F.; Stock, O.; Zancanaro, M. 2005. "Using cinematic techniques on mobile devices for cultural tourism". *Information Technology & Tourism*, 7, 61–71.
- Cohen, E. 1985. "The tourist guide: The origins, structure and dynamics of a role". *Annals of Tourism Research*, 12 (1), 5–29.
- Dann, G.M.S. 1996. *The Language of Tourism. A sociolinguistic perspective*. Wallingford: CAB International.
- Fina, M. E. 2016. *On Effective Audio Guiding: A Multimodal Investigation of Italian, British and American Audio Guides*. PhD thesis deposited at University of Salento (Lecce).
- Ghiani, G.; Leporini, B.; Paternò, F. 2008. "Supporting Orientation for Blind People Using Museum Guides". In *Proceedings of ACM CHI 2008 Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*, 3417–3422.
- Knapp, R. B.; Finkelman, E.; Kee, M.; Tanaka, A. 2004. "Accessible design of a portable electronic museum guide for universal access". In S. Keates, P.J. Clarkson, P. Langdon, P. Robinson (eds.), *Designing a More Inclusive World. Proceedings of CWUAAT*. London: SpringerVerlag. Available at:  
<http://www-edc.eng.cam.ac.uk/cwuaat/04/34-pat-cmc-knapp-revision.pdf> (last accessed February 2016)
- Landau, S.; Weiner, W.; Naghshineh, K.; Giusti, Ellen. 2005. "Creating accessible science museums with user-activated environmental audio beacons (Ping!)". *Journal of the Rehabilitation Engineering and Assistive Technology Society of North America*, 133–143.
- Luyten, K. and Coninx, K. 2004. "ImogI: Take Control over a Context Aware Electronic Mobile Guide for Museums". In *Proceedings of the*

- International Conference on HCI in Mobile Guides*. Available at: [http://jozilla.net/uploads/Research/LuytenConinxHaesenVermeulenVloemans\\_mguides2004.pdf](http://jozilla.net/uploads/Research/LuytenConinxHaesenVermeulenVloemans_mguides2004.pdf) (last accessed February 2016)
- Hall, E. T. 1983. *The Dance of Life*. New York: Doubleday.
- Hall, E. T. 1990. *The Silent Language*. New York: Doubleday.
- Katan, D. 2004. *Translating Cultures*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. Manchester: St Jerome.
- Katan, D. 2006. “It’s a question of life or death. Cultural differences in advertising private pensions”. In N. Vasta (ed.), *Forms of Promotion. Texts, contexts and cultures*, Bologna: Pàtron Editore, 55–80.
- Neves, J. 2015. “Descriptive guides: Access to museums, cultural venues and heritage sites”. In A. Remael, N. Revier and G. Varcauteran (eds.), *Pictures painted in words: ADLAB Audio Description guidelines*, Trieste: Edizioni Università di Trieste, 68–71. Also available at: <http://www.adlabproject.eu/Docs/adlab%20book/index.html#descriptive-guides> (last accessed March 2016).
- Petrelli, D.; Not, E.; Zancanaro, M.; Strapparava, C.; Stock, O. 2001. “Modelling and Adapting to Context”. *The International Journal of Personal and Ubiquitous Computing*, 5, 20–24.
- Ruiz, B.; Pajares, J.L.; Utray, F.; Moreno, L. 2011. “Design for All in multimedia guides for museums”. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 27, 1408–1415.
- Tempel, M. and ten Thije, J. D. 2012. “The appreciation of cultural and linguistic adjustments in multilingual museum audio tours by international tourist”. In R. Maier and J. D. ten Thije (eds.), *Managing Cultural and Linguistic Diversity in Multiple Organisation Settings, special issue of Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 33 (7), 643–664.
- Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners* (2007)

### **Websites of the audio guides** (all last accessed February 2015)

- <http://www.cittametropolitana.bo.it/turismo/Engine/RAServePG.php>
- <http://www.cagliariturismo.it/it/area-download/audioguide>
- <http://www.listentoscily.it/audioguide>
- <http://www.ferraterraeacqua.it/it/audioguide/audioguide-di-ferrara-e-provincia>
- [www.italyguides.it](http://www.italyguides.it)
- <http://www.galatamuseodelmare.it/cms/mirador-11837.html>
- [www.happytourist.it/](http://www.happytourist.it/)
- <http://www.materacittanarrata.it/downloads.asp>
- [http://turismo.provincia.milano.it/turismo/audio\\_video/audioguide/index.html](http://turismo.provincia.milano.it/turismo/audio_video/audioguide/index.html)
- <http://www.visitmodena.it/it/audioguide>

<http://www.padovanet.it/informazione/i-padova-percorsi-turistici-audioguidati> it  
<http://www.leaudioguide.net/a-it/Perugia>  
<http://www.riminiturismo.it/audioguida>  
<http://www.savonaguide.it/home/audioguide/>  
<http://www.sirmionebs.it>  
[www.novelune.eu/audioguide/](http://www.novelune.eu/audioguide/)  
[http://www.comune.torino.it/torinoplus/Portrait\\_nuovo/itinerari/](http://www.comune.torino.it/torinoplus/Portrait_nuovo/itinerari/)  
<http://visitbath.co.uk/things-to-do/tours-and-sightseeing/mobile-app-and-audio-walking-tours>  
<http://visitbristol.co.uk/things-to-do/sightseeing-and-tours/audio-tours>  
[www.tourist-tracks.com](http://www.tourist-tracks.com)  
[www.visitdublin.com/iwalks](http://www.visitdublin.com/iwalks)  
[www.realhistorytalks.com](http://www.realhistorytalks.com)  
[edinburghtour.com/Uncle Bob](http://edinburghtour.com/Uncle Bob)  
[walkingheads.bandcamp.com](http://walkingheads.bandcamp.com)  
[leicester.audio-guide.co.uk](http://leicester.audio-guide.co.uk)  
[www.freelondontours.co.uk](http://www.freelondontours.co.uk)  
[www.strollon.co.uk](http://www.strollon.co.uk)  
<http://www.citysounds.travel/downloads/london-around-houses-parliament/>  
[www.hearmanchester.com](http://www.hearmanchester.com)  
<http://www.footnotesaudiowalks.co.uk/walks.php?/Northampton/6/>  
[www.portsmouth-guide.co.uk](http://www.portsmouth-guide.co.uk)  
<http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/archaeology/community-outreach/neoclassical>  
<http://www.abartaheritage.ie>  
[www.mp3cityguides.com](http://www.mp3cityguides.com)  
<http://www.albany.org/visitors-center/walking-tour/>  
<http://interactive.wttw.com/loop/take-loop-tour>  
<http://www.rmaguides.com>  
<http://www.audisseyguides.com/houston-downtown-2/>  
<http://www.cityofelgin.org/index.aspx?NID=1771>  
[http://www.frommers.com/rss/frommers\\_walking\\_tours.xml](http://www.frommers.com/rss/frommers_walking_tours.xml)  
<http://www.visitlexingtonmo.com/audio-tours.html>  
<http://www.littlerock.com/things-to-do/audiotour/>  
<http://www.ricksteves.com/watch-read-listen/audio/audio-tours/london>  
<http://nyharborparks.org/visit/tour-new-amsterdam-self-guided.html>  
<http://www.audiosteps.com/audioguides/products.php?cat=Philadelphia>  
<http://www.theconstitutional.com/audio-tours/audio-tours>  
[www.welcomewalksusa.com](http://www.welcomewalksusa.com)  
<http://www.learnoutloud.com/Catalog/Travel/-/Tour-of-the-National-Mall-and-Monuments-in-Washington/24833>  
<http://dcwalkabout.com/capitol-hill-tour.php>  
<http://www.audioviator.com/en/Audio-tour-Washington-D-C-National-Mall>

## Enriched Descriptive Guides: a case for collaborative meaning-making in museums

*Joselia Neves*

### *Abstract*

*By being open to the public, museums are making culture accessible to audiences that may, or may not, have the ability to engage with the exhibits given their background knowledge, their understanding of given curatorial approaches, or their social and personal profiles. In many museums around the world audio guides are used to provide information in multiple languages and styles, using different narrative approaches and, often, with specific audiences in view. Such audio guides are mainly informative, sometimes provide audio description for blind users and in the odd case bring distinguished voices – the museum director, the curator, the artist, or a celebrity – to inform the listener through a particular viewpoint. All these audio guides serve their purpose and are valuable tools that “guide” visitors in meaning-making, that is, however, rather passive.*

*This paper addresses how audio guides can benefit from and lead to enhanced museum experiences if their content and use is “enriched” in participatory ways. It takes the case of creating an enriched descriptive guide (EDG) for Features from Qatar, an artwork by the Qatari artist Jassim Zaini, to illustrate how this particular audio guide was scripted and re-scripted on the basis of knowledge gained during exploratory sessions with different stakeholders. The exercise allows us to conclude that EDGs best grow out of collaborative meaning-making and that they can stimulate engaging multisensory experiences by providing thinking prompts that fuel the senses, invite cognitive and/or physical exploration, and capture the uniqueness of the cultural context the guide relates to. It further illustrates the various steps taken towards creating a text that is simultaneously informative, expressive and operative (Reiss 1981) to arrive at a version that resonates with a wide range of users.*

## 1. Introduction

A common activity when travelling to a new country as a tourist is visiting local heritage and museums in the expectation of finding relevant information about the region or aspects considered representative of the local people's most valued assets. Tourist attractions come in the guise of natural or built heritage, theme parks, and/or museums. Among museums, one will find as many types and curatorial stances as collections, intended audiences and interpretative approaches. In all cases, visitors are led to see culture through the "eyes" of a curatorial team that, with varying degrees of audience evaluation/consultation, has selected, interpreted and decided upon a mediation strategy that will inform and, perhaps, entertain or engage the visitor.

The growing interest in cultural tourism and the realization that it can be of vital importance to the development of local communities/regions/areas has taken to investing in making cultural heritage accessible to a growing range of visitors. In many cases, culture is seen as an asset of social and economic value that can be "consumed" by growing numbers of people. This commodification of culture for easy consumption has led to the application of interpretation/communication strategies that tend to fall within established parameters in more conservative or high-culture contexts, but that can become more creative. This is particularly true in contexts where experimentation and interpretation are seen as assets, and interaction is valued as an effective educational strategy. While big established museums in capitals around the world will have long queues of people wanting to visit their permanent or temporary exhibitions, in the present global climate, smaller lesser-known museums in remote places may be struggling to subsist and to attract visitors. Many turn to inventive strategies that may differentiate them from other cultural offerings and propose experiences that will draw both on tourists and on the local communities to explore and enjoy a cultural heritage that might not be known even to the locals.

The desire to make culture 'accessible' both to visiting and local audiences has led to curatorial, interpretative, and educational strategies that will stimulate visitors with different profiles by offering them information and experiences in ways that will be adequate to their personal needs and interests. Such offers come in the guise of interpretative media – labels, text panels, audiovisual materials such as films, or interactive devices, for instance – or through live tours or educational and social

---

events.

## 2. From *audio guides* to *enriched descriptive guides*

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, audio guides gained a significant position among museum media. These technology-based forms of mediation provide people with basic or detailed aural information about spaces, exhibits and other elements of interest in a specific venue. Expanding on what Schwarzer (2001) said about museum guides, Hornecker and Bartie (2006: 4) state that:

Travel and museum guides are the most common and long-standing approach to augmenting the experience of site visits. One can argue that digital guide systems are the natural next step after guide books and audio guides on cassette. While they provide the same basic functionality, they can enhance the experience and provide more or different information. It has been found that visitors remember more from an audioguide than from reading labels and that they benefit people with disabilities.

The essence of audio guides, as described above, remains unchanged even if technology has progressed beyond purposed hand-held devices to take the shape of any mainstream mp3 or mp4 gadgets or latest generation smartphones to which content, made available online, can be easily downloaded. Traditional audio guides, where a human voice simply provides an audio commentary of an exhibit, have given way to multimodal guides, and even to complex immersive audio experiences, as those proposed by the LISTEN project, in which visitors are exposed to audio augmented environments by wearing “motion-tracked wireless headphones displaying a location-aware, adaptive audio presentation augmenting the physical space with virtual sound-scenes” (Goßmann, 2004). However, as Mannion et al. (2016) point out:

(...) innovating within an existing product genre like audio guides is risky. It is especially hard to offer new formats that satisfy frequent users and also appeal to new and occasional users. Frequent users have strong expectations about what a guide should be and are critical of products that disrupt the familiar model.

With this in mind, audio guides have become a specific text type in themselves, building upon given norms and looking towards innovation that will not be too disruptive of given expectations. In the present as in the past, travel and museum guides will continue to “augment the experience of site visits and to provide more or different information” (*op. cit.*) and to benefit all those who use them for they have the ability to reach out to diverse audiences through carefully scripted and delivered content. Multi-lingual versions will provide for linguistic difference and diverse communicative approaches will take messages to specific users, as is the case of audio guides for children or those with audio description for people with vision impairment.

In a nutshell, truly meaningful and engaging audio guides are all about making content relevant and adequate to the needs of different users. In the context of museums, audio guides are usually scripted in house by curators and museum teams or outsourced to specialized companies who, most often, provide both the equipment and the content. In the latter case, the text itself is frequently developed in collaboration with the museum teams, for much of the information about exhibits is very specific and only obtainable through the learned input of specialists in specific fields. In either scenario, the scriptwriter’s task will mainly be to make often opaque and specific concepts and terms “accessible” to lay persons, while conveying information in the “dignified tone” that is still today expected within the context such reputable cultural bodies as museums.

In the context of Translation Studies, and within the functionalist approach to text type proposed by Reiss’ (1981/2000/2004), audio guides may well be placed within the typology of Informative Texts, which aim to communicate facts and knowledge. However, if audio guides are to be engaging, they will have elements of expressive and operative texts. Particularly in the context of art, audio guides will require some degree of creative composition and aesthetics if they are to capture the uniqueness of the piece. In a similar guise, engaging audio guides will be operative in their “appeal” to reflection, guiding the gaze or attention of the visitor to particular elements. It is normally in descriptive guides for blind people and in audio guides for children that these two functions become as important as the informative function itself for, in the first case, vision is being compensated through verbal and non-verbal auditory stimuli, and in the second, the short attention span of children is extended by the dialogic approach that operative texts take. Purists will question how much objectivity may be lost when factual information is “enriched” by



---

expressive language, suggestive sound effects and music or by the voices of the local communities or specialized commentators. The question is heightened when the audio guide is made to work together with multisensory stimuli, such as raised pictures or replicas to be touched, props, games and activities that help meaning making in cultural venues that are still often alien and unwelcoming places to many visitors. Even if, at present, there is a real effort to bring the museum “to life”, in many cases, a visit to a museum, is still a passive experience in which people are led, by the hand of a curatorial strategy, to awe at a wealth that is to be observed and preserved, rather than experienced. This may be due to a mismatch between curatorial expectations and visitors’ ability to engage, for lack of information or misconceptions about “museum manners”. Enriched descriptive guides (EDG) may well be the key to more inclusive museums. They can provide scaffolding for the integration of new information and guide holistic multisensory experiences; they may also promote personal space and creative thinking; and be used to engage local communities and foreign visitors alike, thus stimulating personal growth and social interaction.

For the benefit of clarification, the concept of “enriched descriptive guides” builds upon that of “sound painting” (Neves 2010) and of “descriptive guides” presented in the ADLAB guidelines (Neves 2014:68-71) and has developed since out of a number of research projects in Portugal, the UK and Qatar (cf. Eardley et al. 2016; Eardley et al. forthcoming). At this point in time, we understand Enriched Descriptive Guides to be (audio) guides, in which factual information has been “enriched” through the creative use of description, sound effects and music, to provide thinking prompts that fuel the senses, invite cognitive and/or physical exploration, and capture the uniqueness of the cultural context the guide relates to. Unlike sound painting and descriptive guides that are primarily directed towards blind users, EDGs take *all* users into account in the belief that this approach will make culture accessible to people of any age, cultural background and personal profile. When combined with other forms of interpretative mediation strategies – as are multimedia or multisensory materials –, EDGs will contribute towards holistic augmented experiences that trigger the imagination, stimulate the acquisition of knowledge and the desire to explore the exhibit or cultural environment through personal and social interaction. This approach to audio guides is by no means new. There will be thousands of instances of audio guides around the world that may, totally or partially, fit the

category. From rich informative and stimulating audio guides in the National Gallery (London), the Louvre (Paris), the Guggenheim (New York) or the Museum of Sydney, to those in lesser known museums, as are the MCCB in Batalha (Portugal) or the Ângulo in Pelotas (Brazil), exhibits are brought to life in ingenious “enriched” ways. In many instances visitors are even given choice among quite distinct audio guide types. If we are to take the National Gallery, as an example, visitors are offered themed audio guides (Highlights of the Collection, Kings and Queens, Science and Discovery, Fame and Celebrity, Writers); language specific versions (English, French, German, Italian, Japanese and Spanish); family audio guides “for young visitors aged 7-11 and their parents or carers”<sup>1</sup>; and online audio description and digital resources for people with a disability<sup>2</sup>. Although many of the National Gallery’s audio guides have been enriched with sound effects and music and even contain the voices of recognizable celebrities, description is still reserved for blind people and offered as a separate option and even publicised as being specific to people with special needs. The questions remain: Why wouldn’t mainstream guides take the descriptive approach that is used for blind users, thus helping sighted people direct their gaze to make sense of the exhibit? Might enriched descriptive guides be a way to make accessibility mainstream?

At the very same time in which, in Qatar, answers are being sought for the above mentioned questions, researchers in Poland (Szarowska et al. 2016) are experimenting with an app providing “one multimedia description of a work of art, in the form of a short video consisting of images of the work with audio narration in multiple language versions” (302) in the hope that, by following the principles of Universal Design, both in technology and content, they will be providing equal access to all.

While there may be guidelines available on how to script audio guides with and without description (cf. Axel et al. 1996, CDC 2011, Giansante n/d, Neves 2014, Szarowska et al. 2016), understanding how EDG may be effectively construed is still work in progress. Even if in the discussion of their work, Szarowska et al (2016, 312) lead us to what they see to be the “optimum description of a work of art”, following criteria in many ways similar to the ones used hundreds of miles away in a totally different

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.npg.org.uk/visit/audioguides.php>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.npg.org.uk/footer/accessibility.php>

---

context as is Qatar, (discussed in section 3 below), more research will be required to arrive at standards or guidelines for the description of art, given the subjective nature of such cultural realia.

The case below is a description of the phases and outcomes of an instance where an enriched descriptive guide was put together collaboratively, involving different stakeholders - curators, art historians, painter's family members, as well as the museum visitors themselves. Its outcomes, as the ones previously found in the MCCB project (Neves et al. 2012), allow one to consider that, when an audio guide is constructed collaboratively, by bringing together professionals and visitors in meaning making, to arrive at scripts that showcase local voices and in which description and information are interwoven and explored in approachable ways that stimulate various senses, a one-size-fits-all solution is achievable. With this in mind, "enrichment" comes through form, substance and through the interactions that are stimulated both in the making and in the use of these products.

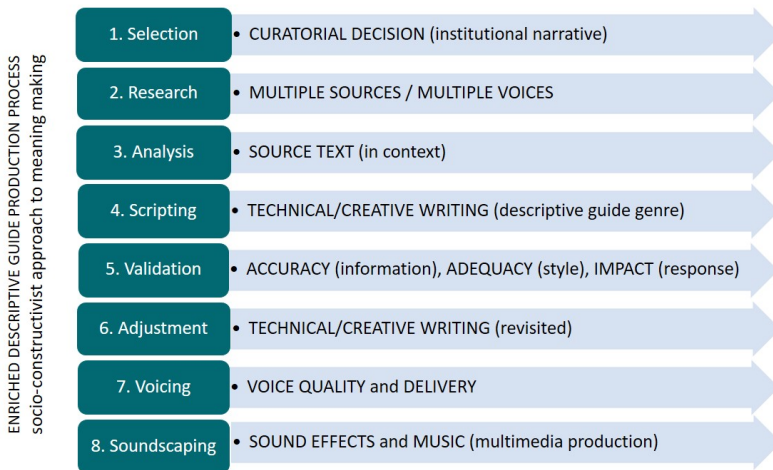
### **3. The 'Art Translates' Project and the case of *Features from Qatar***

The case to be discussed in detail below – the EDG of *Features from Qatar*, a 1973 painting by Jassim Zaini – took place in 2015, as part of the Art Translates project, carried out by students attending the MA in Audiovisual Translation (MAAT), at Hamad bin Khalifa University, in collaboration with Mathaf (the Arab Museum of Modern Art), both in Qatar. Students attending the course in AVT for Access, in the MAAT program, were invited to take part in an Action Research project in which all those involved explored how to go about creating audio guides in the Arab context. The underlying brief was that of "enriched descriptive guides" even if, at the time, the concept itself was not clear. The project's stated aim was to "(1) Create Descriptive Guides (in Arabic and English) of 10 paintings for the local blind community; (2) Make the experience multisensory by providing 2½D (raised image) tactile versions of the paintings + props; (3) Evaluate the accuracy, adequacy and impact of the description with blind and sighted visitors of all ages and using different conditions (live guided tour; simple recorded audio guide (with no sound effects); soundscaped audio guide (with music and sound effects); and video guide (with guided viewing))." The project was to be completed within one semester (roughly 4 months) and the output was to be

academic (new knowledge on how to produce audio guides), instructional (training future audiovisual translators) and practical (audio guides that can be used by regular visitors at Mathaf). Careful planning and tight project management allowed all outputs to be achieved, the first of which, partially presented in this reflection.

### 2.1 The Process

The process discussed below for *Features from Qatar* (FFQ) was replicated for all the paintings in the Art Translates project. This painting would come to be a pilot in which the processes to be used by all those working on the rest of the chosen paintings were determined. The process of creating the EDGs, captured in Fig. 1, was iterative in nature and often non-linear, for each phase (from 2-8) contributed with valuable findings that would come to make important changes to the initial script.



**Fig. 1: The process**

*Features from Qatar* was selected along with another 9 paintings in a dialogue with the Museum’s Head of Educational Services. In a guided tour given at the beginning of the project, this particular painting was highlighted as being representative of Qatari art and is a much prized exhibit at Mathaf. In this case, choice was determined by curatorial value, a situation that happens in most museum contexts.

Once chosen, *research* followed to collect as much information as

---

possible about Jassim Zaini's work and on the painting itself. No efforts were spared to identify the people portrayed, the painter's style and cultural implications of the artwork. Careful *analysis* of the artwork itself was carried out, in close collaboration with the curators and experts on Jassim Zaini's artwork. Intensive discussion and multiple visits to the gallery allowed the group to capture the detail and the feel of the work of art in the context in which it is shown to the public. This provided the team with the valuable information they needed to describe the painting for vision impaired visitors.

The task of scripting implied a balance between technical and creative writing, two antagonistic forces at play: the desire to be accurate in the terminology and information provided and simultaneously to create a text that would be engaging and easy to follow. What was considered to be a short, concise and yet engaging script was achieved after multiple attempts in which audio description techniques were merged with those used in museum writing. *Validation* and *adjustment* happened in numerous focus group sessions with museum personnel and lay persons to arrive at what was then considered to be a "final version" of the initial script (figure 3) that would later be translated from English into Modern Standard Arabic. A set of materials – audio guides in English and in Arabic; a video guide revealing parts of the painting as they were mentioned in the audio; and a touch-able replica of the painting – were created to be used in distinct testing scenarios. Throughout the various sessions, with and without the additional materials, we tested how accurate, adequate and impactful the enriched descriptive guide might be. Given the educational objectives of the project, a simple production approach was taken: the audio and video texts were uploaded and made available to users through mp4 devices and smartphones and the 2 ½ D replica of the painting was created by printing the artwork on fabric which was then padded, sewn and mounted onto a solid frame so as to highlight form and volume.

The exploratory research that followed happened in the course of open and arranged museum visits involving both blind and sighted audiences, school visits and workshops with children of different ages, and professional workshops with museum experts and scholars in audiovisual translation. By the end of the various formal and informal exercises, the initial DG script had to be touched up (figure 3) on the basis of the information collected through observation, questionnaires and formal and informal interviews.

2.2 The Structure

The exercise with *Features from Qatar* was also used to determine a textual structure (fig. 2) for the scripting of the EDGs. Given the nature of the project, a set framework to work from would become a vital element, for different people would later be scripting texts for quite different artworks. This would bring consistency and coherence to the set of stops that would come to feature in the *Art Translates* audio guide, but it also served as a first step towards mapping out the basic features of a descriptive guide for paintings.

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>IDENTIFICATION</b>                  | What? By whom? when?  |
| <b>LOCALIZATION &amp; CATCH PHRASE</b> | How is presented? What makes it interesting?  |
| <b>THEME</b>                           | What is it about?   |
| <b>DESCRIPTION</b>                     | What does it look like?<br>Depicted figures/objects<br>Positioning<br>Appearance<br>Details |
| <b>TECHNIQUE</b>                       | What technique is used?<br>Colour / light / perspective /...                                |
| <b>FOCUS</b>                           | What makes it special?  |
| <b>INTERPRETATION</b>                  | What is it? How do you interpret it?  |

**Fig. 2: Textual structure**

Each script was complemented with a simple soundscape storyboard featuring the sound effects and music to be added in specific moments. As happens with other audiovisual constructs, in this EDG sound was used to suggest geographical context (Arabic music), location (indoor/outdoor sounds), and ambience (echo), for instance. No particular pattern was established for the use of sound in this project, but the participants’ feedback revealed that sound does play an important role in EDG. Listeners acknowledged its presence and referred to it in a somewhat impressionistic manner as being “interesting” or “rich”. If we are to fully understand the intricacies of EDG, this is an area that definitely deserves further study.

## 2.3 Textual/cultural “enrichment”

As presented above, the “enrichment” of the descriptive guide may appear to happen beyond the text to be found in “extras” such as sound effects, music, props and other multisensory engagement strategies. However, important “enrichment” comes within the text itself in word choice, style, (cultural) references and personal interpellation.

One of the most interesting processes of enrichment in the case of *Features from Qatar* is related to the way the script captures (or not) “the uniqueness of the cultural context”. When evaluating “the accuracy, adequacy and impact of the description” (see above) with different audiences, a number of issues with the information provided in the initial text (version 1 in Fig. 3) came to the fore revealing how carefully audio guides need to be scripted if they are to be accessible to a significant number of listeners. Six instances in which textual/cultural enrichment derived from collaborative meaning-making are highlighted in the final version (version 2 in Fig 3) and discussed below. Each instance is revealing of how minute elements can have significant impact in the way people perceive what is being said.

| VERSION 1: Features from Qatar, by Jassim Al-Zaini, 1973   | VERSION 2: Features from Qatar, by Jassim Al-Zaini, 1973   |
|--|--|
| Features from Qatar is an oil painting, approximately one meter wide and half a meter high, made by the Qatari artist, Jassim Zaini, in 1973.  | Features from Qatar is an oil painting, approximately one meter wide and half a meter high, made by the Qatari artist, Jassim Zaini, in 1973.  |
| As it stands in this museum, it is presented within a tailor made wooden frame, with carvings on all corners, reminding us of a traditional window frame. This may create the illusion that the picture itself is a scene happening in the privacy of a Qatari home.   | As it stands in this museum, it is presented within a tailor made wooden frame, with carvings on all corners, reminding us of a traditional window frame <sup>(a)</sup> . This may lead us to believe that the picture itself is a scene happening in the privacy of a Qatari home <sup>(b)</sup> .  |
| The picture is about two young people, a man and a woman, who take up most of the canvas space.  | The picture is about two young people, a man and a woman, who take up most of the canvas space.  |
| The young man is lying across the bottom, his back is propped against a cushion on the right making his head tilt forward a little. His legs are bent, creating a triangular shape to the left as if to squeeze in within the space given.   | The young man is lying across the bottom, his back is propped against a cushion on the right making his head tilt forward a little. His legs are bent, creating a triangular shape to the left as if to squeeze in within the space given.   |
| He is wearing a <i>thaub</i> and <i>ghutra</i> in the Qatari tradition. His very thin and long body stretches across the bottom, with an equally long arm stretching along his side. He is holding prayer beads in his hand.   | He is wearing a long white <i>thaub</i> <sup>(c)</sup> (ثوب) and a <i>ghutra</i> (عقرا) on his head <sup>(d)</sup> in the Qatari tradition. His very thin and long body stretches across the bottom, with an equally long arm lining his side. He is holding prayer beads in his hand.   |
| Next to him, a young women sits, her right leg folded at the knee, head tilted to the side while she stitches on a button to the young man's <i>thaub</i> .  | Next to him, a young women sits, her right leg folded at the knee, head tilted to the side while she stitches on a button to the young man's <i>thaub</i> .  |
| The striking features in this painting are the multiple layered thick rich warm colours that come together to create contrasts of light and shade. The light shades of the man's <i>thaub</i> contrast with the dark shades of the women's reddish brown trousers and dark top and scarf with golden linings.  | The striking features in this painting are the multiple layered thick rich warm colours that come together to create contrasts of light and shade.   |
| A further interesting element is the way both faces resemble each other in youth and in expression. As they tilt, both heads come slightly together, their big brown eyes appear attentive to the girl's task of sewing a button to the garment: an actual button that the artist has attached to the canvas, making the painting all the more real. | The light shades of the man's <i>thaub</i> contrast with the dark shades of the women's long reddish brown <i>jalabiya</i> (جلابية) and a <i>bakhneg</i> (بخنق) and a scarf with golden linings <sup>(e)</sup> .<br>A further interesting element is the way both faces resemble each other in youth and in expression. As they tilt, both heads come slightly together, their big brown eyes appear attentive to the girl's task of sewing a button to the garment: an actual button that the artist has attached to the canvas, making the painting all the more real. |
| Who are these young people? What brings them together? (323 words)   | Who are these young people? What brings them together? <sup>(f)</sup> (336 words)  |

**Fig. 3: Initial and Final script**

Within the structure proposed for the Art Translates audio guides (Fig. 2), the script for *Features from Qatar* starts by responding to the questions “How is it presented?” “What makes it interesting?” in the following way:

As it stands in this museum, it is presented within a **tailor made wooden frame, with carvings on all corners, reminding us of a traditional window frame** <sup>(a)</sup>. This may lead us to believe that the picture itself is a **scene happening in the privacy of a Qatari home** <sup>(b)</sup>.

These opening statements, which are more interpretative than factual, gave rise to a number of considerations on the part of different participants, all of which of great importance in the context of EDG. It is clear that the first statement (a) is descriptive and had blind people as its primal addressees. Sighted people looked at the framed painting on the wall and quickly related what they heard to what they saw. However, both blind and sighted participants reacted to the text for lack of relational knowledge. What does a “traditional window frame” look like? Where is it traditional? In Qatar? In the Gulf? In the Arab world? And what makes it traditional? The kind of wood? The carving technique or the design? No unanimous understanding was achieved, but the statement served its purpose. It raised people’s curiosity and gave the team an important cue for the development of tactile props.

The interpretative suggestion that the painting could be “a scene happening in the privacy of a Qatari home” (b) also found reaction, particularly on the part of Qatari participants, who referred to a breach in important cultural norms pertaining to the privacy of the home. This understanding was not shared by all the participants. Most non-Arabic and even many Arabic participants actually enjoyed the suggestion and said it “brings life to the painting”, “it makes me want to look better”, “it adds to the sense of intimacy”. That which might be innate voyeuristic pleasure or a sense of trespassing will have heightened interest, thus fulfilling the operative function we think necessary for an EDG. People are invited to “do something” with what they hear: relate, question, agree or disagree, react in some way and take what they hear further. With all this in mind, the opening statement was left untouched in the final version for it is clearly marked as interpretative – “it may lead us to believe” – and subjective, and as a means to capture the listeners’ attention.

A different approach was taken by the team when lack of clarity, inaccuracy or inconsistency were at stake. This is the case of the examples (c) to (e) highlighted in the final script (Fig. 3 and Fig. 4), all of which



related to the traditional attire the depicted characters are wearing. Even if the first version had been written in collaboration with Arab speakers, details went unnoticed and were only revealed during the validation/testing process

| Issue:          | Version 1:   | Version 2:   |
|-----------------|--|--|
| Lack of clarity | He is wearing a <i>thaub</i> and <i>ghutra</i> in the Qatari tradition.  | He is wearing a long white <i>thaub</i> <sup>(c)</sup> (ثوب) and a <i>ghutra</i> (عظرة) <sup>(d)</sup> on his head in the Qatari tradition.  |
| Inaccuracy      | (...) the women's reddish brown trousers and dark top and scarf with golden linings.   | (...) the women's long reddish brown <i>jalabiya</i> (لابية), and a <i>bakhneg</i> (بخنق) a scarf with golden linings <sup>(e)</sup> .   |
| Inconsistency   | The light shades of the man's <i>thaub</i> contrast with the dark shades of the women's reddish brown trousers and dark top and scarf with golden linings. | The light shades of the man's <i>thaub</i> contrast with the dark shades of the women's reddish brown <i>jalabiya</i> (جلابية), and a <i>bakhneg</i> (بخنق) a scarf with golden linings <sup>(e)</sup> . |

**Fig. 4: Changes in content**

The *thaub* and the *ghutra* are the national attire of Qatari men and are widely used in the Gulf and also a little throughout the Arab world. The first script took it for granted that everybody listening to the audio guides at Mathaf would relate to the terms and fully understand the meaning of the Arabic words used in the English script. Questions from expats soon made the team realize that the assumption was wrong and that not everybody knew the Arabic term for the attire they so well recognized in the street. Clarification came in the new version (c) and (d), even though *thaub* could have been better explained had we opted to refer to it as a “long white robe”. We opted to leave the term *thaub* unexplained to activate the visitors’ attention in the effort to determine which piece of attire the *thaub* is. This was easily achieved through the exclusion of parts, for we say the *ghutra* is “on his head”.

The need to further clarify that the *thaub* in the painting is white, again became evident when testing the script with young sighted children. The exercise undertaken asked groups of school children (aged 9-13) to complete and colour in an outline of the painting on the basis of the description (EDG) they listened to. None of the children were given the opportunity to see the painting before or while listening to the piece. At the end of the exercise they were taken to the gallery to compare their

output with the original artwork and to discuss their take on what they heard and how they represented it on paper. One of the outcomes was telling (Fig. 5): various children had coloured in the *thaub* in brown and the *ghutra* in red.



**Fig. 4: A child's take on the description of a thaub and ghutra**

This unexpected outcome happened simply because, in winter, many men wear brown, instead of white *thaubs*; and red *ghutras* are also more common then, even if some men wear red *ghutras* all year round. The clarification might have happened by chance. Had the experiment taken place in hotter months, this detail might have gone unnoticed. Once this nuance was brought to our attention through a simple colouring in activity, we stated the colour in the final script. This is a clear example of how enrichment can take place.

A textual inconsistency, which turned out to be an inaccuracy, was drawn to our attention in the course of the sessions. Why had we chosen to use the Arabic terms for the man's attire and not for the woman's outfit? Worse still, why did the 1<sup>st</sup> version say she was wearing trousers, a

top and a scarf, when, in fact, she was wearing a dress (*jalabiya*) and a head piece (*bakhneg*), the traditional attire Qatari women wear when they are at home? No valid explanation for the oversight was found, but the correction was made and the decision taken to have real props made available for people to try on, should the EDG be to be made regularly available at the museum. Non-Arabic and blind visitors who might have never seen these particular garments would thus be given the opportunity to fully grasp the given description.

A final contribution to the *Features from Qatar* EDG came through social media as an answer to the final question “Who are these young people? What brings them together?”<sup>(4)</sup>. During a session with professionals from Qatar Museums, somebody put up a picture of the painting with the given question on Instagram. The answer came within minutes in the form of a post by a family member of the painter himself to clarify that the painting was nothing less than a self-portrait of Jassim Zaini and his sister. Again the operative function had been central to this EDG. The question had led to action, the action had led to engagement and knowledge. The team decided to leave this thinking prompt as it was in the understanding that others would find similar pleasure in unveiling something that is only suggested in the text, hinted at in the phrase “the way both faces resemble each other in youth and in expression”, a fact that cannot be missed by those who observe the painting.

### 3. Final considerations

The details presented above reinforce the value of Enriched Descriptive Guides and the vital importance of making them grow out of shared experiences that inform and allow for the validation of the product in offer.

With this exercise it becomes clear that there is enormous potential for EDGs as a specific museum text type that can contribute to visitor engagement; but, above all, that such texts are best created in dialogic collaboration, to which various stakeholders contribute with their unique experience and needs. Borrowing from the context of web design, the effort towards creating enriched descriptive guides allows one to believe that following the principles of “user experience design” (UX) or “user-centered design” (Norman 2013), in which the product is designed on the basis of the needs and wants of the users, is the best way to arrive at a

product that might not equally satisfy everybody, but that has a strong potential to create regular users, a situation museums want to stimulate. This said, the descriptive guide's "enrichment" may happen within the process of scripting and soundscaping; and beyond that, in the process of presenting, using and engaging with it.

While further experimentation is under way for a better understanding of the value of EDGs, the knowledge gathered in the Art Translates project allows us to foresee that these audio guides may come to bring audio description and tourist guides together in an effort to make culture accessible to all in engaging and enjoyable ways.

## References

- Axel, Elisabeth Salzhauer, Virginia Hooper, Teresa Kardoulis, Sarah Stephenson Keyes, and Francesca Rosenberg. 1996. "ABS Guidelines for Verbal Description". *Online Accessibility Training. Art Beyond Sight handbook*. <http://www.artbeyondsight.org/handbook/acs-guidelines.shtml>
- Eardley, Alison F., Louise Fryer, Rachel Hutchinson, Matthew Cock, Peter Ride & Joselia Neves (2016 forthcoming). Chapter 14: Enriched Audio Description: Working towards an inclusive museum experience. In Halder, Santoshi and Lori Czop Assaf (eds). *Disability and Inclusion: a Cross Cultural and Cross Disciplinary auto-ethnographic perspective traversing abilities and challenges*. Switzerland: Springer International.
- Eardley, Alison, Clara Mineiro, Josélia Neves, Peter Ride. 2016. "Redefining Access: Embracing multimodality, memorability and shared experience in Museums". *The Museum Journal*, vol. 59-3, 263-286.
- Giansante, Lou (n/d) "Writing verbal Description Audio Tours, Art beyond Sight". <http://www.artbeyondsight.org/mei/verbal-description-training/writing-verbal-description-for-audio-guides/>
- Goßmann, Joachim. 2004. "Connecting Virtual Sound and Physical Space in Audio-augmented Environments". *Proceedings of ICAD 04-Tenth Meeting of the International Conference on Auditory Display*. [https://smartech.gatech.edu/bitstream/handle/1853/50833/Gossman\\_n2004.pdf](https://smartech.gatech.edu/bitstream/handle/1853/50833/Gossman_n2004.pdf)
- Hornecker, Eva and Phil Bartie. 2006. "Technology in Tourism: Handheld Guide Systems and Museum Technologies. Technical Report TR-2006-1, Human Interface Technology Laboratory New Zealand". NZ:

- University of Canterbury.
- Mannion, S. Sabiescu, A. and Robinson, W, 2016. "Innovate or stagnate: Disrupting the conventional audio guide." *MW2016: Museums and the Web 2016*. Published April 2, 2016. <http://mw2016.museumsandtheweb.com/paper/innovate-or-stagnate-disrupting-the-conventional-audio-guide/> Consulted September 1, 2016.
- Mannion, S. Sabiescu, A. and Robinson, W. 2011. "CDC Audio Script Writing Guide. Colgate University. New York". <http://www2c.cdc.gov/podcasts/audioscriptwritingguide.pdf>
- Neves, Josélia. 2010. "Sound painting: audiodescription in another light". Conference Catalogue of the 8th International Conference & Exhibition on Language Transfer in the Audiovisual Media – *Languages & the Media*. ICWE GmbH. Berlin, 6 a 8 de Outubro 2008, 43-45.
- Neves, Josélia, Teresa Roberto & Jorge Díaz Cintas. 2012. "Inclusive communication strategies for accessible museums". University of Aveiro Research Day, 13 June 2012. Available at: [http://uaonline.ua.pt/upload/med/med\\_2375.pdf](http://uaonline.ua.pt/upload/med/med_2375.pdf)
- Neves, Josélia. 2014. Chapter 3.3.2 "Descriptive guides: Access to museums, cultural venues and heritage sites". In Remael, A, N. Reviere and G. Vercauteren (eds), *Pictures Painted in Words. ADLAB Audio Description Guidelines*. Ebook: <http://www.adlabproject.eu/Docs/adlab%20book/index.html>
- Norman, Don. 2013. *The Design of Everyday things*. Revised and expanded edition. New York: Basic books.
- Reiss, Katharina. 1981/2000/2004. "Type, kind and individuality of text: decision making in translation" in Itmar Even-Zohar / Gideon Toury (eds), *Translation Theory and Intercultural Relations*, 121-131. *Special issue of Poetics Today* 2(4). Reprinted in 2000. In *The Translation Studies Reader*, Lawrence Venuti and Mona Baker (eds), 160-171. And in 2004. In *The Translation Studies Reader*, Lawrence Venuti (ed.), 168-179. London; Routledge.
- Schwarzer, Marjorie. 2001. "Art & Gadgetry – The Future of the Museum Visit". *Museum News* 80 (4), 36-41, 68, 73.
- Szarkowska, Agnieszka, Anna Jankowska , Krzysztof Krejtz , and Jarosław Kowalski "Open Art: Designing Accessible Content in a Multimedia Guide App for Visitors with and without Sensory Impairments". In Matamala, A and P. Orero (eds), *Researching Audio Description. New Approaches*. London: Palgrave/Macmillan: 301-320.

## Intercultural Communication in Tourism Promotion

*Nikolas Komninou*

### *Abstract*

*This paper deals with intercultural communication in the tourism industry, using research carried out on five small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Northern Italy. English is generally the lingua franca for interactions between international tourists and local tourist institutions, and often also the language of promotion. However, while these tourists and institutions may communicate in the same language, they often do not share the same cultural framework of reference, which can lead to miscommunication, misinterpretation and even offence. This can be a significant hindrance when promoting local and regional tourism.*

*The aim of this study is to examine intercultural communicative competence in the context of the tourism industry. It will also examine how negotiation can be an encounter of models, culture effects goals, attitudes, perception, personal and communicative style, and nonverbal behaviour.*

### **1. Introduction.**

In recent years, intercultural communication obstacles have created a number of challenges for tourism providers, and the struggle to deliver culturally sensitive tourist experiences has become a principle concern for them (e.g. Reisinger and Turner 2013; Leclerc and Martin 2004; Jack and Phipps 2005):

All tourism employees should be exposed to a broad multicultural training for cultural sensitivity to the international tourist's needs. Such training should include familiarization by tourism providers with the tourist's native language, the cultural aspects of the meanings of interpersonal and non-verbal communication cues

---

such as symbols, signs, gestures, facial expressions, and messages contained in body language. Reisinger and Tumer (1999: 146).

Moreover, subgroup interest may well override ethnic culture. Research tools were created to probe the expectations and judgements of culinary tourists. The results were then considered and compared along the frameworks of global, national, regional and subgroup influences on tourism communication.

Service quality can be defined as the difference between expected, perceived and delivered service levels. From a customer's perspective, this is the service quality they expect compared to what they actually experience. Tourist service quality expectations partly result from their own culture and past social experiences, which leads them to interpret the factors influencing tourism destination choice and experience from a distinct perspective. One important factor worthy of attention here is the cultural subgroup.

### 1.1 Culinary Tourism as a Cultural Subgroup with Distinct Behaviour, Verbal (and Nonverbal) Communication Patterns

Dann refers to the language of food and drink related tourism as 'Gastrolingo'. It is often used by tourism providers in their brochures, on high-quality restaurant menus and in magazines dealing partly or exclusively with food (gastrologues). It is a specific register (Dann 1996: 211) characterised by the search for the authentic, the over-use of foreign words without further explanation (particularly Italian and French expressions), the quasi-cult veneration of food with inspiring expressions or hyperbole, conservatism and a stress on the 'traditional', a pseudo sense of guilt for overindulgence, and a disregard for general health and fitness (Dann 1996).

Culinary tourism is an appealing resource for many locations, especially in Italy, with its unique set of food and wine producers. Products related to specific locations are rooted in local history and culture, which gives them a uniqueness for tourists visiting those areas, and the link between these products and a specific territory are often protected by law. Food and wine are often used as a powerful tool for regional development, and to attract tourists to lesser-known locations. The charm of culinary tourism is the authenticity of the experience and the unique link with localities. For this study, it has been considered a subculture, as

a specialist tourist activity with its own language patterns. This also depends, however, on tourists' background knowledge of the activity.

According to Paolini (2000) and Thurlow and Jaworski (2010), culinary tourists should also be considered elitist. Like other elite tourists, culinary tourists are oriented:

To some ideological reality and/or its discursive representations in order to claim exclusivity and/or superiority on the grounds of knowledge, authenticity, taste, erudition, experience, insight, access to resources, wealth, group membership or any other quality which warrants the individual to take a higher moral, aesthetic, intellectual, material, etc. ground against 'the masses' or 'the people'.(Thurlow and Jaworski 2010, 190).

Paolini (2000: 79-91) identifies two main culinary tourist types: "foodtrotter" (longer periods) and "gastronaut" (shorter periods, events). Foodtrotters spend two or more days in a specific area, taking part in a variety of local activities besides the central culinary event. The gastronaut type is more focused on the culinary event itself.

In light of the fact that both distinct behaviour (Paolini 2000) and language (Dann 1996) patterns have been identified for culinary tourists, it could also be assumed that distinct non-verbal communication patterns also exist. The identification and codification of these patterns could be useful for tourism marketers dealing with culinary tourism and regional development plans with culinary tourism elements as well as the companies working directly in this sector.

## 2. Research tools

According to Bhawuk and Triandis (1996: 31), the appropriate methodology for studies of intercultural communication depends on the actual problem being investigated, the knowledge available to the researchers, and the degree to which those being studied actually accept the techniques used. When beginning a study in a culturally unknown scenario, these authors recommend emic approaches such as ethnographic techniques, systematic observations, content analysis, and thorough interviews, with the aim of gaining either an in-depth or a holistic but unique understanding of the situation.

With this in mind, research tools were created to probe the expectations



---

and judgements of culinary tourists attending culinary tourism events, and tourism service providers organising these events. These results were then compared along the frameworks of global, national/regional/local and subgroup phenomena. Interculturalists, such as Edward T. Hall and Geert Hofstede give little consideration to narrower, more specific parameters such as regional and subgroup cultural influences, which are crucial in tourism. For example, there are major differences in human behaviour between different communities in Italy: mountain communities and coastal communities; mainlanders and islanders; boarder areas and non-boarder areas. There is also a major difference in human behaviour between child, young-adult, middle-aged and elderly tourists; as there is between ski tourists and beach tourists. Therefore, promoting and providing services for a beach holiday to families in Puglia is different to a family beach holiday in Friuli Venezia Giulia. The differences are even greater if the holiday is not a family beach holiday, but a young-adult beach holiday, and even more so if the holiday is a skiing holiday in the Veneto. Regional youth skiing holiday promotion for tourists from many different countries will have more behavioural (expectation and perception) patterns that bypass ethnic or national patterns, and converge on the patterns central to skiing. This is the same for many holiday types: clubbing, sailing, yoga, cycling, surfing, culinary-tourism, specific cultural event holidays, and so on.

These theoretical cultural systems also consist of many overlapping, interrelated and dynamic sociocultural subsystems. Thus, overall generalisations and assumptions of hierarchical or other linear relationships between these subsystems and overarching macro-cultural constructs become rather tenuous. Cultural constructs, if they are to be more than static cultural stereotypes, must be continuously updated in light of social change. Therefore, even though Hall and Hofstede, for example, have been used extensively in tourism research (Mitchell and Vassos, 1997; Steenkamp et al., 1999; Chen, 2000; Crofts & Erdmann, 2000; Litvin, Crofts, & Hefner, 2004; Litvin & Kar, 2003, Funk & Bruun 2007, Reisinger & Crofts 2009; Moura, Gnoth & Deans 2014; Yacout & Hefny 2015), these approaches fail to account for differences (and values) in tourist subgroups and individuals, and for situational factors and how they change over time.

Other communication, behavioural and intercultural communication models were therefore also considered when creating the research tools for this study. The models chosen focused more on determining the

parameters of expectation and perception creation specific to the tourist experience, including: Spitzberg & Cupach, 1984; Forgas, 1983; Cronen & Shuter, 1983; Brown and Levinson 1987; Salacuse 1999; Trevisani 2005; Cheng 2012; Ting-Toomey 2012.

In intercultural exchange, Ting-Toomey (2012) states that particular attention should be paid to elements such as the tone of voice, nonverbal behaviour, linguistic codes and assumptions. Effective intercultural communication means managing cultural differences in a mindful way. 'Mindfulness' refers to a full self-consciousness in the present moment, not only at a mental level, but also at a sensitive and emotional level (Weick and Sutcliffe, 2007). It is important to not only pay attention to cultural differences without falling into stereotypes, but also to bring multiple perspectives and creative visions to solve intercultural conflicts.

The research tools consisted of two comparable questionnaires of 25 questions. One questionnaire was for tourists and the other for service providers. In this paper the results from the tourist will be dealt with. The questions were based around: expectations and perceptions of different elements along the tourist value chain, verbal and nonverbal intercultural communication issues, self-identification with culinary subgroup culture and aspects that were specific to the events attended. The participants answered on a scale 1-5 for each question (1 = Very poor, 2 = Poor, 3 = Fair, 4 = Good, 5 = Very good). In the analysis of the results 1 and 2 were considered negative; 4 and 5 were considered positive, 3 was considered neither positive nor negative. This was done to avoid factors such as a culture's or individual's propensity to use hyperbole or understatement in expression of satisfaction or dissatisfaction.

When the questionnaires had been administered, this was followed up with semi-structured interviews, one for participating tourists and one for service providers. The semi-structured interviews gave the opportunity to probe further into the results of the written questionnaires, in the specific context in which they were conducted.

The research tools were administered to five small to medium companies working in the culinary tourism sector and 50 culinary tourists. The companies either provide culinary tourists services (restaurant, wine-bar, hotel, producer) or organised the marketing or communication of tourism or culinary tourist events. The culinary tourists were attending events organised by those companies. These events were: Ein Prosit (Malborgetto); Festa del Prosciutto (Sauris); Olio Capitale (Trieste); Prosecco Doc dinner-show (Venice), Bresaola and wine tasting

---

(Medesimo); Prosciutto and wine tasting event lesson (Milan).

A total of 50 tourists were interviewed. They came from eight countries: Austria (twelve participants), Croatia (ten participants), Germany (eight participants), Japan (six participants), Slovenia (six participants), Switzerland (four participants), UK (two participants) and USA (two participants). There was a 50% male, 50% female gender distribution in the sample group. All participants were over 40 years old, employed, with incomes they defined as “over their national average” and considered themselves as having an “above-the-average interest in food” and had come specifically to participate in the event. So in Paulini’s terms, they were all “gastonauts”.

If cultures could be mapped like territories, and if ‘cultural maps’ of communities were known and recognised, then research tools would have been created incorporating this delineation. Unfortunately, although it is not wrong to say that one culture is closer to another one because it has similar values, behavioural patterns, and communication orientation, this proximity or distance cannot be measured in the same way as two physical objects - and trying to measure them may well be unhelpful. The issue here centres on identity and contextualisation. Individuals identify with many culture groups simultaneously and these culture groups influence behaviour, perception and communication with differing intensities depending on what is being done and where it is being done (contextualisation). For example, an individual could identify themselves as belonging to the following culture-groups: European, British, Scottish, Glaswegian, middleclass, self-employed, urban, black, atheist, middle-aged, heterosexual, only-child, widower, childless, diabetes-sufferer, ex-rugby-player, novice-tennis player, pro-EU, pro-Scottish independence, motor-enthusiast (petrol-head), ‘gastonaut’, and so on.

Each of these culture group identities have a different impact on the individuals’ behaviour depending on the context of interaction. So being European or being a car-enthusiast (or even being British) may have little impact when participating in discussions on or voting on Scottish independence when the individual identifies with the pro-independence culture group. However, being British, Scottish and pro-independence have little impact when choosing a special-events holiday, especially if that holiday is centred around a classic car event, a racing event or car-piloting training. In these cases, identification and knowledge as a car-enthusiast would have a far greater impact on holiday choice and the framework for

reference for perception and satisfaction than many of the other culture-group belongings.

Consequently, every context stimulates the intensity of impact the relevant culture group or groups have on an individual's behaviour and perception. This contrasts with the notion that belonging to one larger or less specific culture group shapes behaviour towards and perception of a specific context. This dynamic aspect, between culture group impact on behaviour and context, renders 'cultural-mapping' unhelpful as it presupposes a static relationship and so tends to create stereotypes.

The research tools were specifically developed to identify whether belonging to a culinary tourism culture subgroup had more impact on certain aspects of the tourism culture chain than simply belonging to a national culture group, and whether there were some global tourism chain aspects that were universal to all cultures.

### 3. Analysis of Results

The first result presented here is created by the sum of all the results of the questionnaire referring to satisfaction and should be considered as feedback referring to overall satisfaction. There were 20 questions dealing with satisfaction focusing on: holiday advertising and aftersales services, destination information and booking systems, transport to destination (mode of transport, transport experience, service components), services experienced in the destination, reception, accommodation, appearance of people, appearance of structures and landscapes, architectural/urban organisation, animation and sports, cultural events and education, consumption of other services (e.g. shopping), billing, environment in private and public spaces (light, heat, sound), appropriateness of communication, eye-contact, touch, tone of voice, relevance of discourse, appropriateness of behaviour. The participants answered on a scale 1-5 for each question (1 = Very poor, 2 = Poor, 3 = Fair, 4 = Good, 5 = Very good). 1 and 2 were considered negative; 4 and 5 were considered positive, 3 was considered neither positive nor negative:

Overall satisfaction rating:

Japanese 90%

USA 73%

UK 67%

---

Austrian 51%  
Croatian 43%  
German 41%  
Slovenian 39%  
Swiss 33%

This result was compared with the items on the questionnaire that referred specifically to global, or national/regional/local or subgroup cultural values. In this way, it can be seen if there is a greater correlation between culture subgroups, global values or national/region/local.

In reference to (non-culinary) local authentic products or services such as local or regional entertainment, culture and sports, as well as the appearance of people, structures and landscapes, the tourists viewed these as culturally distant or even exotic. The tourists were more tolerant and less critical towards these experiences, with positive results of over 59% for all countries of origin. During the semi-structured interviews, it emerged that the differences of these local or national phenomena to the home situation of the tourists was often perceived as a pleasurable experience and was considered as an intrinsic part of the holiday experience. This result could well be illustrating quality judgements in relation to the tourist search for “authenticity” (Dann 1996: 211; Jack and Phipps 2013: 543; Thurlow and Jaworski 2010, 190) which is central to many holidays.

In the semi-structured interviews, the participants had much to observe but little to comment on about these factors. They made observations but were often unwilling to pass comment or opinion as to whether it was a good or bad thing. For example, when asked about the sport ‘bocce’ (a game similar to bowls) the tourists that had noticed it were able to give some description of the game, equipment and even the type of participants, but were unwilling to commit to stating if it was a good/interesting/beneficial game or not.

Other areas that fell into this category were prevailing fashion and dress-customs (the use of school uniforms for children), the organisation of the scholastic year and its influence on work and family life (with an emphasis on winter or summer holidays, half-term holidays and so on), and building design (a prevalence of certain materials, density of urbanisation, the favouring of planned apartment blocks as opposed to detached houses, shared bedrooms amongst brothers). Typical answers to

the question “Is this a good/beneficial/interesting situation” were “they must do it for some reason” or “they like it like that”, but with little or no further expansion.

This could suggest that a lack of knowledge or involvement in these issues leads to a reluctance to commit opinion. Some participants acknowledged that although they appreciated observing some of these phenomena on holiday, they would not want to reproduce them in their home environment, suggesting a temporary tolerance for that phenomena while on holiday. For items that referred to global values, such as travel experiences, ease of intermodal connectivity, punctuality of services, signposting, access to travel information and accommodation, all participants registered their least positive response. This was the aspect the tourists were most critical of. It would seem that a global travel culture exists with global values and expectations, which is shared by a large class of frequent, experienced and quality-conscious holiday-makers. Although there was consensus on punctuality, ease of intermodal connection, access to information there was a highly-varied perception regarding nonverbal and intercultural communication aspects relating to the interaction.

Disappointment was voiced by tourists regarding notions of politeness and appropriacy. Regarding travel staff and the way they dealt with travel problems, the Swiss perceived too much focus on the part of the staff with aspects that were not central to the problem; the US tourists found the degree of staff interpersonal involvement “charming” but would “not want to have it like that at home”. Perceptions of aggressiveness or indifference of personnel in transport hubs was a frequent comment. For example, in one semi-structured interview a Swiss tourist reported that when he was enquiring about a delayed train, that staff seemed uninvolved and unperturbed by the short-comings of the system they are part of. However, the same staff member was perceived as being overly involved in interpersonal aspects that were perceived by the tourist as irrelevant or inappropriate to the client-staff relationship. When the tourist ignored what he called the “inappropriate” direction of discourse, the staff member was perceived to have been angered and even becoming aggressive and unhelpful. It cannot be ascertained whether the personnel were objectively aggressive or indifferent, but the frequency of this type of comment would suggest either a cultural impact influencing communication and perception or a serious problem regarding transport personnel communication strategies.

Regarding eye contact, space and touch, the Japanese perceived that allocation of more personal space was officially assigned compared to the norm in Japan but that these larger spaces were often breached. Examples given were the frequency and duration of touch, the lack of seating allocation on public transport, space between seats for passengers and audience members and also what they saw as uncivilised attitudes to rubbish and waste disposal (which was perceived as a breach of personal space). The Japanese also perceived too much eye-contact between interlocutors, while the Croatian tourists found a lack of eye contact disturbing.

When probing about perceptions of tone of voice, Britons perceived this aspect as “musical in conversation but rude in transport service” interaction. The Austrians perceived an “inappropriateness” in the tone of voice especially when public officials were dealing with problems. The tourists’ comments on directness and indirectness of communication included:

(USA) this really depends who and where, sometimes there is a lot of chat but I cannot understand what they are saying, I think their English is OK, but where are they going, what are they getting at? I can kind of find myself confused at the end of the conversation. It can be enigmatic. Other times I have found myself truly captured and I think to myself that this is really a culture of poets and philosophers;

(Slovenian) we find the people here either do not really speak to you or with you, they often speak at you and I get the feeling they do not understand me as they do not really answer my questions, but then they also manage to do so many great things, like this event here.

When probing about access to information, comments included:

(Swiss) information is a commodity here shared in a complicated way;

(Austrian): before coming we rely on an Italian friend who helps us, she is great, after that we do not need much else but if we do, we sometimes find ourselves a bit lost. It can be similar to the street signs, not very clear but they can take you to incredible places. If you follow the wrong sign, you can find yourself nowhere;

(German) It can be difficult finding the right place to get information, but once you find it, there is a lot. Beyond the tourist things we found talking to people a great way for information but that is not very reliable.

When probing about content and organisation of communication, comments included:

(Swiss) So many eloquent words not answering my questions;

(Japanese) Italian style, very creative people;

(Slovenian) there is a big difference between what we talk about and how we talk about it, this is really one of the characteristics that makes Italians Italians. For me, it can be amusing, annoying, inspiring, confusing and just wrong. It all depends on the situation.

These global values, seem to largely follow the notions offered by Hall and Hofstede. In the semi-structured interviews the participants felt more comfortable volunteering opinion and comment. This suggests that a working knowledge leads participants to committing an opinion. Some hedging was made, such as “maybe we were unlucky...”; “it probably is not always like that..”, or “he might just have been feeling ill”. Nevertheless, more negative opinion was expressed and detailed here than in items regarding national, regional or local phenomena.

In reference to the items dealing with culinary tourism culture (satisfaction with the central event, products featured in the central event, information about products and preparation, notions of hospitality, and so on) there were high levels of critical quality judgements, although not as high as with the global values. Significantly though, with these items, the tourists volunteered the largest amount of interview feedback. It would seem that, as with the global values regarding travel and accommodation the participants felt they had the authority to comment on the organisation and quality of the culinary events with greater confidence.

The feedback was abundant, full of observation and comment, mostly positive but also some negative. These often dealt with details: colours, smells, combinations of sensory stimuli, authenticity and extent of knowledge and experience. For example, when commenting on the oil



---

tasting event and cooking school held within the Olio Capital, a German tourist reported that:

the oil tasting was well organised with a range of oils that demonstrated the vast differences it tastes (tropical, sweet, herbaceous and fragrant) and possible uses. The impact of soil-type, light exposure, humidity and variety on taste and extraction method was well explained. Even the choice of apples used to refresh the palate and negate the effect of the previous oil on the organoleptic senses was well researched. ... but I still sometimes like more than just dribble of oil on my fish, (they would kill me if they heard me) but that is just me.

As can be seen in this example, the culinary tourists were comfortable to volunteer their observations and opinions, highlighting satisfaction and dissatisfaction and openly commenting if dissatisfaction was due to their own personal tastes or due to structural flaws in the service provided. This could suggest that a greater knowledge or involvement in these issues leads to confidence to commit opinion.

When asked to compare global travel and accommodation value satisfaction with the subgroup culinary items, the participants all had a more positive perception of the subgroup event. It would seem that the events met their expectations: "The experience has been positive, we are satisfied and will return home feeling we have learned something new"; or was perceived as being 'tailored to our needs', as one participant commented. Moreover, the needs of participants with diverse culinary cultures was overwhelmingly satisfied by an event that was so characteristically different to their normality.

It would seem that although each service provider developed their own particular style, along with their own characteristic products, both the tourists and the service providers clearly recognised that there were universal standards to be satisfied and surpassed much like the global values. In the semi-structured interviews, it emerged that much more than only the characteristics of the products was a major factor in tourist satisfaction. For example, when asked to compare the experience of travel with that of the culinary event, the Swiss tourist said: "well it is incomparable, the personnel at this food event are informed, they are passionate about their product and company, and they care about it and us and our opinion and satisfaction..... There is a greater formality and seriousness in the exchange, this leads to a more professional exchange,

relationship, and result. There were not the irrelevant and out of place questions like at the train station. Although I did sometimes have problems with the accent here....”.

An Austrian tourist commented that:

the [culinary] event considers everything, location, environment, taste, smell, texture, presentation, sound, and is a success because of that, this the high point. The travel experience must simply be done with as little pain and as much comfort possible.

However, unlike the global values where there was consensus regarding some elements but highly differentiated opinion on nonverbal aspects that followed classic national cultural descriptions, here there was a sharp differentiation between national cultural descriptions and what constituted a satisfying element. It would seem that the tourists were expecting to embrace the culture of the experience offered and judge it from those parameters which, as ‘gastronauts’, they either knew, or were getting to know. In fact, one participant described the event he was attending as: “a medium of communication .....where the highest levels of the culinary development of one culture are demonstrated and explained to well-informed enthusiasts from other cultures”.

In light of this, the culinary tourist experience takes on a completely different framework of reference than those pertinent for the global values and those for national/regional or local phenomena. This subgroup of culinary tourists is closely associated with local and regional phenomena, given that all the events were associated with regional specialities: wines, hams, local cuisines. However, the tourists felt they had the knowledge and authority to comment at length on the culinary events, which had essentially become their field of expertise. This meant the different nationalities produced far more homogenous results for each event even though the events were characteristically regional.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The results suggest that subgroup cultural values are one of the most important factors - together with global cultural values - influencing tourists' perception of satisfaction. This should not be underestimated in regional development programmes that include a tourism element.

---

Although the participants in this study gave more tolerant and positive assessments of local and regional events, they gave far more feedback and with a more informed and critical opinion on culinary events. The participants had clear opinions on standards and values in this category, whereas they had less to say on other local and regional phenomena or felt unqualified to volunteer their opinions.

The results suggest that greater knowledge of a subject or cultural subgroup leads to stronger opinions. A grounded knowledge (through training and experience) on the part of the tourist service providers of the counterpart's frameworks of reference which come into play when potentially confusing or conflictual situations occur would be of significant benefit for companies and regions trying to improve this sector. Although there was a wealth of personal knowledge and experience in the companies in the study, in general they lacked a structured knowledge of nonverbal and intercultural communication strategies. Such strategies could benefit other members of a company, other tourism service providers and, consequently, regional development.

One solution could be the creation of intercultural managers for the tourism sector who could support the companies working in a specific territory. The managers would support the tourism service providers, and would train tourist staff in intercultural communication aspects specific to their cultural subgroup. For example, in the Friuli Venezia Giulia area in Northern Italy, there would be specific training for youth beach holidays (in Lignano), family skiing holidays (in Tarvisio), culinary tourism events in small villages, (e.g. Cormons or Dolegna) and so on. In this way, managers would develop specialised subgroup knowledge of the activities linked to a specific region.

The skills needed for this role would include much of the intercultural communication theory touched on here: the effective and appropriate use of language; verbal and nonverbal behaviours to manage conflict situations (e.g. issues of appropriateness when problem-solving or negotiation); mindfulness and the ability to understand other people's cognitions, emotions and cultural, linguistic and personal communication assumptions (Ting-Toomey 2012). Further areas of research for this role would also need to include managing the interface of service encounters across the cultures connected by tourism, including: the culture of tourists' home countries, the culture of the host region, tourism and subgroup cultures and the organisational cultures of tourism companies. In this way, regions would be better equipped to meet the increasingly complex needs

---

and expectations of tourists and, at the same time, do justice to the potential of their destinations.

## References

- Bhawuk, D. & Triandis, H. 1996. "The role of culture theory in the study of culture and intercultural training". In Dan Landis & Richard W. Brislin (Eds.), *Handbook of Intercultural Training* (pp.17-34). Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Bieger, T. 1997. *Management von Destinationen und Tourismusorganisationen*, Oldenbourg, Munich Vienna.
- Brown, P. and Levinson, S. 1987. *Politeness: Some universals in language usage*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Chen, G. M, Fritz, W., Graf, A., Hentze, J., Mollenberg, A., 2005. "An examination of Chen and Starosta's Model of Intercultural Sensitivity in Germany and United States". *Intercultural Communication Studies*, 14(1), 53-64.
- Cheng, W. 2012. "Speech acts, facework and politeness. Relationship-building across cultures". In J. Jackson. In J. Jackson 2012, op. cit., 148-164.
- Cronen, V. E. and Shuter, R. 1983. "Initial interactions and the formation of intercultural bonds". In W. B. Gudykunst (Ed.), *Intercultural Communication Theory*, 89-118. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Crotts, J. C. and Erdmann, R. 2000. "Does national culture influence consumers' evaluation of travel services? A test of Hofstede's model of cross-cultural differences" *Managing Service Quality: An International Journal*, Vol. 10: 6, 410 – 419.
- Cushner, K. and Brislin, R. 1997. *Improving Intercultural Interactions: Modules for Cross-Cultural Training Programs*. Sage: Newbury Park, CA.
- Dann, G. 1996. *The Language of Tourism: A Sociolinguistic Perspective*. UK: CAB International.
- Fantini, A.E. 2012. "Multiple strategies for assessing intercultural communication competence". In J. Jackson, op. cit., 390-405.
- Forgas, J.P. 1983. "The effects of prototypicality and cultural salience on perceptions of people". *Journal of Research in Personality*, 17, 153-173.
- Funk, D.C., and Bruun, T. 2007. "The role of socio-psychological and culture-education motives in marketing international sport tourism: A cross-cultural perspective". *Tourism Management*, 28, 806–819.

- Holmes, P. 2013. "Business and management education". In J. Jackson, op. cit., 464-480.
- Jack, G. and Phipps, A. 2005 *Tourism and Intercultural Exchange: Why Tourism Matters*, Clevedon: Channel View Publications.
- Jack, G. and Phipps, A. 2013. "Tourism". In J. Jackson, op. cit., 537-550.
- Jackson, J. (ed.) 2012. *The Routledge Handbook of Language and Intercultural Communication*. New York: Routledge.
- Litvin, S. W., Crotts, J. C. and Hefner, F. L. 2004. "Cross-cultural tourist behaviour: a replication and extension involving Hofstede's uncertainty avoidance dimension". *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 6: 29-37.
- Litvin, S. W., & Kar, G. H. 2003. "Individualism/collectivism as a moderating factor to the self-image congruity concept". *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 10(1), 23-32.
- Keller, P and Bieger, T. 2007. "Productivity in Tourism, Fundamentals and Concepts in Achieving Growth and Competitiveness". *International Tourism Research and Concepts* (Vol. 2). Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag.
- Kim, Y.Y. 2012. "Unum and pluribus: ideological underpinnings of interethnic communication in the United States". In L.A. Samovar, R.E. Porter and E.R. McDaniel. 2012. op. cit., 208-222.
- Kim, Y.Y. 2012. "Beyond cultural categories: communication, adaptation and transformation". In J. Jackson, op. cit., 229-243.
- Leclerc, D. and Martin, J. 2004. "Tour Guide Communication Competence - French, German and American tourist perspectives". *International Journal of International Relations*, 28: 181-200.
- Matsumoto, D. and Hwang, H.S. 2012. "Nonverbal Communication: The Messages of Emotion, Action, Space, and Silence". In J. Jackson op. cit., 130-137.
- Mitchell, V.W. and Vassos, V. 1997. "Perceived risk and risk reduction in holiday purchases: a cross-cultural and gender analysis". *Journal of Euromarketing*, Vol. 6 No. 3, 47-77.
- Moura, F. Gnoth J. and Deans K. 2014. "Localizing Cultural Values on Tourism Destination Websites: The Effects on Users' Willingness to Travel and Destination Image". *Journal of Travel Research*, July 2015 54: 528-542.
- Paolini D. 2000. *I luoghi del gusto: Cibo e territorio come risorsa di marketing*, Milano: Baldini and Castoldi.
- Porter, M. E. 1985. *Competitive Advantage: Creating and Sustaining Superior Performance*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

- 
- Reisinger Y. and Crotts J. 2009; "Applying Hofstede's National Culture Measures in Tourism Research: Illuminating Issues of Divergence and Convergence". *Journal of Travel Research* May 2010 49: 153-164.
- Reisinger, Y. and Turner, L. 1997. "Cross-cultural differences in Tourism: Indonesian Tourists in Australia". *Tourism Management*, 18(3): 139-47.
- Reisinger, Y. and Turner, L. 1999. "A cultural analysis of Japanese tourists: challenges for tourism marketers". *European Journal Marketing*, 33(11/12) 1203-27.
- Reisinger, Y. and Turner, L. 2002. "Cultural differences between Asian tourist markets and Australian hosts", *Journal of Travel Research*, 40: 295-315.
- Reisinger, Y. and Turner, L. 2003, reprint 2012. *Cross-Cultural Behaviour in Tourism, Concepts and Analysis* New York: Routledge.
- Reisinger, Y. 2013. "Reflections on globalization and cultural tourism". In Smith M. and Richards G., op. cit., 40-46.
- Salacuse, J.W. 1999. "Intercultural negotiation in international business". In *Group decision and negotiation*, 8, 217-236.
- Samovar, L.A., Porter, R.E. and McDaniel, E.R. 2010. *Communication Between Cultures*. Boston: Wadsworth.
- Samovar, L.A., Porter, R.E. and McDaniel, E.R. 2012. *Intercultural Communication: A Reader*. Australia: Wadsworth.
- Schwartz, S.H. 2004. "Mapping and interpreting cultural differences around the world". In V. Vinken, J. Soeters and P. Ester (ed.), *Comparing Cultures: Dimensions of Culture in a Comparative Perspective*, 43-73.
- Scollon, R. and Scollon, S. W. 2001. *Intercultural Communication: A Discourse Approach*. Malden: Blackwell.
- Smith, M. and Richards, G. (eds) 2013. *The Routledge Handbook of Cultural Tourism*. New York: Routledge.
- Spitzberg, B. H., & Cupach, W. R. 1984. *Interpersonal communication competence*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Steenkamp, J.-B.E.M., Hofstede, G. and Wedel, M. 1999, "A cross-national investigation into the individual and national cultural antecedents of consumer innovativeness". *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 63, April, 55-69
- Sorrels, K. 2012, "Intercultural training in the global context". In J. Jackson, op. cit., 372-389.
- Thurlow, C. and Jaworski, A. 2010. *Semiotic Landscapes*. New York: Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Thurlow, C. and Jaworski, A. 2010. "Silence is golden: The 'anti-

- 
- communicational' linguascaping of super-elite mobility". In C. Thurlow and A. Jaworski op. cit., 187-217.
- Ting Toomey, S. and Oetzel, J.G. 2001. *Managing Intercultural Conflict Effectively*. London: Sage Publications.
- Ting-Toomey, S. 2012. "Understanding intercultural conflict competence: multiple theoretical insights". In J. Jackson, op. cit., pp.279-295.
- Trevisani, D. 2005. *Negoziazione Interculturale. Comunicazione oltre le Barriere Culturali. Dalle Relazioni Interne sino alle Trattative Internazionali*. Milan: FrancoAngeli.
- Triandis, H.C. 2012. "Culture and conflict". In L.A. Samovar, R.E. Porter and E.R. McDaniel, op. cit., pp.34-45.
- Weick, K. and Sutcliffe, K. 2007. *Managing the unexpected: Resilient performance in an age of uncertainty*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass.
- Weiermair, K. 2000. "Tourists' perceptions towards and satisfaction with service quality in the cross-cultural service encounter: implications for hospitality and tourism management". *Managing Service Quality*, Vol. 10 Iss: 6, 397 - 409
- Yacout O. and Hefny, L. 2015. "Use of Hofstede's cultural dimensions, demographics, and information sources as antecedents to cognitive and affective destination image for Egypt". *Journal of Vacation Marketing* January, 21: 37-52.

**‘Not up to American standards’: a corpus-based analysis  
of cultural differences between Brazil and the USA  
in travelers’ reviews**

*Sandra Navarro*

*Abstract*

*This paper presents preliminary findings from a larger doctoral research currently undertaken at the University of São Paulo in Brazil.*

*The aim of this research is to investigate cultural differences between Brazil and the United States by means of a corpus-based analysis of TripAdvisor travelers’ reviews, framing results within the theories of cultural orientations (Hall, 1976; Walker et al., 2003; Katan, 2004).*

*This study recognizes that culture operates in both conscious and unconscious ways (Hall, [1959] 1990). Our focus will be on the level below the surface of awareness, which consists of shared values, beliefs and meanings that play a major role in people’s perceptions and worldviews. This level of culture is ultimately reflected in the language people use to describe personal experiences, opinions, needs and expectations. For this reason, travelers’ reviews may be considered not only an important tourist text type, but also a gateway to accessing people’s cultural values.*

*The study corpus contains a total of 10,000 hotel reviews equally divided into Brazilian Portuguese and American English. This data was analyzed according to the methodology proposed by Corpus Linguistics (Sinclair, 1996; Tognini-Bonelli, 2001; Manca, 2012), with the aid of software WordSmith Tools (Scott, 2007).*

*This paper discusses the analysis of the word ‘standard’, whose collocational profile in English and lack of equivalents in Portuguese could be interpreted in terms of different thinking orientations between the two cultures, evidenced by diverse ways of expressing impressions and judgments.*

“We don’t see things as they are.  
We see them as we are.”  
Anais Nin



---

## 1. Introduction

Advances in information and communication technologies have revolutionized practices in tourism. Tourists not only obtain all sorts of information to plan their journeys online, but play a more active role and create content by sharing their travel experiences in a whole array of social media.

Travelers' review websites, such as *TripAdvisor*, are a good example of this new reality. This online travelers' community gathers 20 million members from over 40 countries and receives an average of 50 million accesses per month<sup>1</sup> of people interested in reading or sharing opinions about hotel accommodations, restaurants and several other products in tourism. This type of user-generated content has become an important tourism text type, as it gives unprecedented insight into tourists' experience from their own perspective.

This paper is based on the assumption that when we give an opinion or describe a personal experience, we are also expressing our beliefs, values, needs, frustrations, expectations and perceptions; in other words, we are sharing part of our identity and worldview, which in turn reflect aspects of our culture, as Hall argues (1976: 16):

Culture is man's medium; there is not one aspect of human life that is not touched and altered by culture. This means personality, how people express themselves (including shows of emotion), the way they think, how they move, how problems are solved [...]. However, [...] it is frequently the most obvious and taken-for-granted and therefore the least studied aspects of culture that influence behavior in the deepest and most subtle ways.

Culture is a complex and diversified phenomenon that operates on different levels, both implicit and explicit, conscious and unconscious. Some authors have developed models to represent this concept, such as Hall ([1959] 1990) in his Iceberg Theory. According to this model, culture

---

<sup>1</sup> [http://TripAdvisor.co.uk/ages/about\\_us.html](http://TripAdvisor.co.uk/ages/about_us.html) Accessed in February 2016

comprises three different levels: technical, formal and informal. The technical level, or the tip of the iceberg, encompasses the more explicit manifestations of culture, such as art, music, food, architecture, institutions, and language. Right below, at the waterline, is the formal level, which includes elements that are still visible, but are less objective, such as traditions, rules, customs, procedures, etc. At the bottom of the iceberg lies the informal or out-of-awareness culture, which is linked to a world of values, ideas and meanings shared by a group (Walker *et al.* 2003, 39-40; Katan, 2004: 44-46). This is the level of value orientations and the focus of this research.

In this sense, the culture under investigation in this paper can be defined as “a shared system for interpreting reality and organizing experience” (Katan 2004: 26), which means that we are looking at culture “not visible as a product, but internal, collective and acquired rather than learned” (*ibid*). This shared system acquired naturally and unconsciously as a result of our socialization process makes up our thinking patterns or cultural frames, which influence our understanding of the world around us: “a cultural frame is the perceptual window through which an individual defines him- or herself, others and the world. The perceptions filtered through the cultural frame are highly selective because each frame contains those classifications, categories, values and expectations the culture determines to be necessary, relevant, and appropriate” (Walker *et al.*, 2003: 206).

If our culture influences the meaning we attribute to our perceptions of the world, we may reason that the language used to express our perceptions is a manifestation of our culture in all its levels. As Gladstone (1969: 114) argues: “Language and culture are inexorably intertwined. Language is at once an outcome or a result of the culture as a whole and also a vehicle by which the other facets of culture are shaped and communicated. [...] Our language reflects and reinforces our cultural patterns and value systems.”

Based on the concepts outlined above, this paper aims at investigating the language of hotel reviews written by American and Brazilian travelers so as to gain insight into their linguistic and cultural patterns, comparing the findings in terms of cultural orientations.

## 2. Cultural orientations

Cultural orientations are associated with the idea of culture as “the way a group of people solves problems and reconciles dilemmas” (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 2000: 6). Similarly, Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961: 341) define cultural orientations as “a generalized and organized principle concerning basic human problems, which pervasively and profoundly influences man’s behavior.”

The definitions above imply that there are universal issues or common human problems that every society must face, but for which each society develops its own set of solutions. Roughly these dilemmas revolve around, for instance, the relationship between people and nature, people and time, people and society, and so on. Answers to such issues reflect the culture’s values and become patterns, or orientations, which tend to “give order and direction to the ever-flowing stream of human acts and thoughts” (Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck, 1961: 341) and characterize a group of people as a culture.

Numerous researchers have proposed categories of cultural orientations (Kluckhohn (1961), Hofstede (2001), Hall (1976)). For the purposes of this research, we will focus on three orientations – *thinking* (deductive v. inductive; linear v. systemic), *individualism* (universalistic v. particularistic) and *action* (do v. be) (see Walker *et al.* (2003) and Katan (2004)). These orientations will be explained in the results section.

In order to show how cultural orientations play an important role in the way language is used and meanings are created, this paper also draws on the principles put forward by Corpus Linguistics.

## 3. Corpus Linguistics and the concept of meaning

Corpus Linguistics (CL) is a discipline that contributes to various research fields, including cultural studies. Research involving CL is concerned with the observation of natural language, or the use of language in real life (McEnery and Wilson, 2001). This is so because CL focuses on linguistic performance, on the observation of evidence attested through actual instances of language extracted from a corpus. This approach constitutes a perspective of language (Tognini-Bonelli, 2001) as a probabilistic system, in other words, even though there are a number of possible lexical choices

---

and combinations, they do not occur randomly or with the same frequency (Halliday, 1991).

This view of language as a standardized system is at the base of Sinclair's (1991, 1996) conception of meaning, developed in his *idiom principle*. According to the author, "words enter into meaningful relations with other words around them" (1996: 75), which is to say that the meaning of a word is not independent and fixed, but is dynamic and arises from its combination with other words in a given context. These word combinations do not occur randomly, but constitute single choices from semi-preconstructed phrases that are available to language users (1991: 109). Therefore, the primary unit of meaning goes beyond that of single words to encompass multiword patterns.

Tognini-Bonelli (2002) applies this notion of meaning to the study of equivalence across languages. In order to reach equivalence, the first step is to identify functionally complete units of meaning (node word and its collocates) in the source language and then the collocational pattern that conveys the same or closest meaning in the target language. Manca (2012) takes this methodology one step further and proposes the identification of cultural equivalents. This step consists of finding functionally complete units of meaning that are not only equivalent at the linguistic and pragmatic levels, but that also match in terms of underlying associations or cultural orientations.

This paper follows the same train of thought presented above and aims to be a further contribution to cross-cultural corpus-based studies in the area of tourism (Manca, 2012; Fina, 2011), extending the discussions to the Brazilian Portuguese and American English language pair. In order to do so, we have built a corpus of 176 travellers' reviews, which is detailed in section that follows.

#### **4. The study corpus**

The study corpus is made up of travelers' reviews extracted from the website *TripAdvisor* and originally written in English by American tourists and in Portuguese by Brazilian tourists. These reviews are equally divided into two categories in each language: Americans writing about hotels in the USA and hotels in Brazil, and Brazilians writing about hotels in Brazil and hotels in the USA. In numerical terms, the corpus is balanced, with 5000 reviews in each language; with 892,085 words in English and 499,094

words in Portuguese, totaling 10,000 reviews and 1,391,179 words. This information is summarized in the table below:

| ENGLISH  | PORTUGUESE  |
|--|---|
| Americans in US hotels<br>2500 reviews   478.864 words     | Brazilians in Brazil hotels<br>2500 reviews   248.740 words |
| Americans in Brazil hotels<br>2500 reviews   413.221 words | Brazilians in US hotels<br>2500 reviews   250.354 words     |
| <b>5000 REVIEWS</b><br><b>892.085 WORDS</b>                | <b>5000 REVIEWS</b><br><b>499.094 WORDS</b>                 |

**Table 1. Study corpus design.**

The corpus is further subdivided to represent the classifications offered by *TripAdvisor*, regarding the nature of the trip (here only family and business), and the degree of traveler satisfaction with the stay – excellent, very good, average, poor, terrible. The table below shows this subdivision in the subcorpora of reviews written by Americans about hotels in the USA (AmUSA) and by Brazilians about hotels in Brazil (BraBR).

| TYPE     | CLASSIFICATION | OPINIONS    | AmUSA          | BraBR          |
|----------|----------------|-------------|----------------|----------------|
| Family   | Excellent      | 250         | 30150          | 18248          |
|          | Very good      | 250         | 49886          | 20172          |
|          | Regular        | 250         | 55527          | 28595          |
|          | Poor           | 250         | 61939          | 32828          |
|          | Terrible       | 250         | 60052          | 35339          |
| Business | Excellent      | 250         | 24671          | 15767          |
|          | Very good      | 250         | 37056          | 16963          |
|          | Regular        | 250         | 52701          | 21333          |
|          | Poor           | 250         | 53800          | 29327          |
|          | Terrible       | 250         | 53082          | 30168          |
|          | <b>TOTAL</b>   | <b>2500</b> | <b>478,864</b> | <b>248,740</b> |

**Table 2. Categories within two subcorpora - AmUSA and BraBR.**

---

This study corpus was explored with the aid of lexical analysis software *WordSmith Tools*, version 5 (Scott, 2007) and its main tools: wordlists, keywords, lists of collocates, clusters and concordance lines.

These tools are part of a corpus-driven methodology (Tognini-Bonelli, 2001) divided roughly into three main steps: a) identifying main collocations from recurrent keywords in English; b) searching for equivalent collocations in Portuguese starting from *prima facie* correspondents; c) interpreting results within the theoretical frame of cultural orientations (Manca, 2012).

## 5. 'Not up to American standards'

The purpose of this study was to investigate how Americans described their stay in Brazil and how this could be related to cultural orientations. The first step was to generate a keyword list by comparing the wordlists from AmBR subcorpus (Americans' reviews about Brazilian hotels) and AmUSA subcorpus (Americans' reviews about US hotels). By doing so, we could identify the words whose frequency was significantly higher in the AmBR subcorpus as compared to the reference AmUSA subcorpus. In this keyword list, the words 'Brazil' (535 hits) and 'Brazilian' (216) were top of the list.

The main collocates for 'Brazil' (AmBR subcorpus) included: 'hotel(s)', 'trip', 'stayed', 'first', 'business', 'best', 'stay', 'good', 'traveled', '*standards*', 'visit'. For 'Brazilian', the most frequent collocates were: 'breakfast', 'hotel(s)', 'good', 'side', 'typical', '*standards*', 'coffee'. The word 'standards' stood out for having appeared on both lists and for possibly indicating the Americans' views associated with Brazil and Brazilian.

The word 'standard(s)' occurs 132 times in the AmBR subcorpus; its main collocates include: 'hotel', 'American', 'Brazilian', 'Brazil', 'stars', 'international', 'rooms', 'good', 'average', 'European', 'world'. These collocates, along with clusters such as 'not up to', 'by American standards' and 'by Brazilian standards', point to the idea that hotels and rooms are being evaluated on the basis of some specific standards, such as Brazil/Brazilian, US/American. This could be confirmed by analyzing the concordance lines for 'standards', as exemplified in Figure 2.

| N  | Concordance   | Set | Tag | Word # | t   | #  | OS | #  |
|----|---|-----|-----|--------|-----|----|----|----|
| 16 | standards. This one is a 5 star by <b>American standards</b> . One warning and it seems petty but if you                |     |     | 26,095 | 57  | 11 | 0% | 16 |
| 17 | more touristy parts of the city. Overall, <b>by American standards</b> , this would rate a 3-star hotel. Good but       |     |     | 15,804 | 999 | 5% | 16 | 16 |
| 18 | and it was great. Best part of the hotel. <b>By American Standards</b> , the rooms were small, but nice and good        |     |     | 1,410  | 76  | 9% | 16 | 16 |
| 19 | is rated 5 stars but it is really a 4 star for <b>American Standards</b> . I have been to Salvador many times and       |     |     | 12,101 | 742 | 0% | 16 | 16 |
| 20 | This is a great place if you're used to <b>high American standards</b> and can afford it. Unfortunately the location    |     |     | 7,491  | 461 | 6% | 16 | 16 |
| 21 | would be a 3-1/2 to 4 star by <b>European or American standards</b> . I found it using Trip Advisor for a convention    |     |     | 19,709 | 252 | 0% | 16 | 16 |
| 22 | were. The hotel is beautiful, totally up to <b>American standards</b> and walking distance to the beach. However        |     |     | 35,614 | 205 | 3% | 16 | 16 |
| 23 | Hotels in Brazil vary considerably in <b>cleanliness and standards</b> . After checking out several we were             |     |     | 11,013 | 676 | 0% | 16 | 16 |
| 24 | Rooms were sufficient, but not luxurious <b>by any standards</b> . Could be compared to a \$120 a night motel           |     |     | 9,276  | 547 | 0% | 16 | 16 |
| 25 | the bedding in my room is not premium <b>by any standards</b> , I did get a premium soap this one time but              |     |     | 8,897  | 512 | 7% | 16 | 16 |
| 26 | . If you are looking for <b>American basics! Standards</b> here you are not going to find it! Malisimo                  |     |     | 4,326  | 256 | 0% | 16 | 16 |
| 27 | over the years, this one is typical <b>by Brazilian beach standards</b> . The rooms are small and not particularly      |     |     | 20,762 | 236 | 0% | 16 | 16 |
| 28 | and the fit and finish of the bathroom <b>is below standards</b> . For context, it's the third hotel I've stayed        |     |     | 2,791  | 136 | 0% | 16 | 16 |
| 29 | was very good too. Price was good <b>for Brasil standards</b> . Highly recommended VGSO182 "Nice                        |     |     | 27,169 | 649 | 0% | 16 | 16 |
| 30 | tho. The breakfast buffet spread was "okay" <b>by Brazil standards</b> , nothing outstanding (scrambled eggs,           |     |     | 20,227 | 190 | 3% | 16 | 16 |
| 31 | over the five. The rooms are very good <b>by Brazil standards</b> , the Wi-Fi was fast and the restaurant has           |     |     | 20,395 | 197 | 5% | 16 | 16 |
| 32 | nice view of the city. VGBUS13 "Top notch, <b>by Brazil standards</b> " Emiliano, Fasano and Unique make up the         |     |     | 1,208  | 91  | 9% | 16 | 16 |
| 33 | what I understand, the resort was very nice <b>by Brazil standards</b> , but to me it felt a bit dated and really could |     |     | 12,521 | 780 | 8% | 16 | 16 |
| 34 | here. The breakfast is exceptionally good <b>by Brazil standards</b> . Just decent for Europeans and North              |     |     | 1,510  | 67  | 0% | 16 | 16 |
| 35 | and I shared was HUGE, and very nice <b>for Brazil standards</b> . There was a safe and a full-size fridge, as          |     |     | 17,503 | 065 | 0% | 16 | 16 |
| 36 | Very annoying. Breakfast - very frugal <b>for Brazil standards</b> . For example, there was never freshly               |     |     | 8,355  | 483 | 0% | 16 | 16 |
| 37 | the other days worked really well ( <b>above Brazilian standards</b> ). In summary, highly recommended.                 |     |     | 17,713 | 122 | 0% | 16 | 16 |
| 38 | Brazilian. The bathroom was also large <b>by Brazilian standards</b> and had plenty of hot water and great water        |     |     | 12,103 | 643 | 7% | 16 | 16 |
| 39 | speaking staff. The rooms are large <b>by Brazilian standards</b> and somewhat comfortable, but very dated.             |     |     | 12,076 | 641 | 7% | 16 | 16 |
| 40 | wife, the dancing was really good even <b>by Brazilian standards</b> . That show was worth the price.                   |     |     | 26,349 | 574 | 0% | 16 | 16 |
| 41 | service here is absolutely horrid, even <b>by Brazilian standards</b> . Gave it two opportunities to prove itself.      |     |     | 16,230 | 024 | 0% | 16 | 16 |
| 42 | bathroom, breakfast was above average <b>by brazilian standards</b> , and service was above par. Sometimes              |     |     | 6,733  | 395 | 5% | 16 | 16 |
| 43 | The lobby and bar area are quiet <b>by Brazilian standards</b> but in my book that is a definite plus. There            |     |     | 8,354  | 530 | 5% | 16 | 16 |
| 44 | the mattress a little firm but not too bad <b>for brazilian standards</b> . The breakfast was excellent. Many           |     |     | 14,553 | 903 | 0% | 16 | 16 |
| 45 | on business. VGBUS133 "Great hotel <b>for Brazilian standards</b> " The hotel has been renovated recently,              |     |     | 17,611 | 116 | 7% | 16 | 16 |
| 46 | very pricey, by US standards, perhaps <b>not Brazilian standards</b> . Service was 5 stars everywhere, lobby bar,       |     |     | 15,542 | 956 | 0% | 16 | 16 |
| 47 | grounds are meticulously maintained <b>by Brazilian standards</b> . The hotel is located in a very secure area          |     |     | 22,625 | 419 | 0% | 16 | 16 |
| 48 | Only 3 hotels in Sao Paulo truly reach <b>world class standards</b> and the Emiliano sets the bar very high             |     |     | 8,799  | 555 | 2% | 16 | 16 |

Figure 2: Partial list of concordances for ‘standards’, aligned by collocate on the left (AmBR subcorpus).

The next step was to investigate the semantic prosody of each collocation with ‘standards’, in other words, we analyzed each context to see whether the collocation was perceived with positive or negative associations. Overall Americans considered the American, international and European standards mostly as positive or superior; in contrast, Brazilian standards were seen as negative or inferior in most instances, as shown in the following examples:<sup>2</sup>

- 1) “American/US standards”: mostly positive semantic prosody

<sup>2</sup> Bold-types have been added here and in further examples to highlight the word/collocation under investigation.

---

[Describing a 4-star hotel] “By **American standards**, some would consider this a budget hotel, but it’s one of the nicer ones in the area.” [AmBR\_AVEBUS76]

2) “International standards”: mostly positive semantic prosody  
 “The more I travel through Brazil the more I realize that outside of São Paulo, most hotels are not up to **international standards**.” [AmBR\_AVEFAM132]

3) “Brazilian/Brazil standards”: mostly negative semantic prosody  
 “From what I understand, the resort was very nice by **Brazil standards**, but to me it felt a bit dated and really could have been cleaner.” [AmBR\_AVEBUS75]

In general, the standards described by Americans refer to three different aspects:

1) Americans use the word ‘standards’ to evaluate *hotel categories*. In this case, Brazilian hotel standards are mostly seen as inferior and ‘not up to American standards’. More specifically, most five or four-star hotels in Brazil do not match the Americans’ expectations for this kind of hotel. Similarly, the standard of international hotel chains in Brazil were seen as inferior as compared to the US and European countries. The following review exemplifies this use of ‘standards’:

“I am giving this 5 stars relative to other hotels I have stayed in Brazil. It would be a 3-1/2 to 4 stars by **European or American standards**. I found it using TripAdvisor for a convention we were attending in Curitiba (...).” [AmBR\_AVEBUS67]

2) Americans also used the word ‘standards’ to refer to the hotel *breakfast*. Overall Brazilian standards were considered superior when compared to the complimentary breakfast offered in American hotels, as described in the review that follows:

“(...) The suite was clean, and reasonably comfortable (a very good value for the price we paid). The breakfast (included in our room price) was excellent even by **Brazilian hotel standards** (Brazilian travelers expect



much more from a free breakfast than Americans typically do).” [AmBRA\_EXFAM217]

3) The use of the word ‘standards’ by Americans is also related to sizes and dimensions. In this case, Brazilian standard dimensions were viewed as smaller when describing rooms, beds, bathrooms, etc.

“(…) The lobby and public areas look very historic, but the rooms were very modern. They were small by **American standards**, but large compared to many I have stayed in Europe.” [AmBRA\_AVEBUS67]

Table 3 summarizes the findings discussed above:

| American/US standards               |         |          | Brazil/Brazilian standards |         |          |
|-------------------------------------|---------|----------|----------------------------|---------|----------|
| Positive                            | Neutral | Negative | Positive                   | Neutral | Negative |
| 29                                  | 6       | 0        | 8                          | 5       | 16       |
| World class/international standards |         |          | European standards         |         |          |
| Positive                            | Neutral | Negative | Positive                   | Neutral | Negative |
| 13                                  | 0       | 0        | 4                          | 0       | 0        |

**Table 3. Semantic prosody of collocations with ‘standards’ (AmBR subcorpus).**

Before discussing what these findings may reveal about American cultural orientations, let us take a look at how the words ‘*Brasil*’ [Brazil] and ‘*Estados Unidos*’ [United States] as well as ‘*brasileiro(s)*’ [Brazilian(s)], ‘*americano(s)*’ [American(s)] were used by Brazilians to describe their stay in the US (BraUSA subcorpus).

‘*Brasil*’ [Brazil] and ‘*Estados Unidos*’ [United States] occur 43 and 11 times respectively. Their list of collocates showed no content words, featuring only grammatical words. Consequently we could not identify an equivalent collocation with ‘standard(s)’, such as ‘*padrão*’ among the collocates. By analyzing each concordance line, 75% of the instances of ‘*Brasil*’ were in general contexts, without reference to any kind of national standard, as in:

“*Por uma ligação para o Brasil, paguei 59 US\$.*” [BraUSA\_POBUS42]  
[“For a call to **Brazil**, I paid 59 US\$.”]

Only 8 instances of ‘*Brasil*’ implied some comparison between Brazil and the US. Two instances referred to the hotel breakfast, which is considered better in Brazil; the other instances referred to general issues (beds, beach, service).

“O café da manhã não é como o do **Brasil**, saudável. Mas isso pode ser devido à cultura americana.” [BraUSA\_EXBUS192]

[“Breakfast is not as healthy as it is in **Brazil**. But maybe this is due to the American culture.”]

The few concordance lines (11) containing ‘*Estados Unidos*’ [United States] also pointed to general contexts, without any explicit comparison of standards.

“Falando-se em **Estados Unidos**, onde tudo se faz de carro, o hotel fica bem localizado.” [BraUSA\_EXFAM87]

[“Speaking of the **United States**, where you drive everywhere, the hotel is in a good location.”]

We then analyzed the word ‘*americano(s)*’ [American(s)], which occurs 97 times (BraUSA). The main collocates refer to the type of breakfast, as in ‘*café da manhã estilo/padrão/típico americano*’ [American style/standard/typical breakfast], but there were no recurrent comparison of standards.

“Café da manhã razoável **estilo americano** sem muitas opções.”

[BraUSA\_VGFAM14]

[“**American style** average breakfast without many choices.”]

Finally we investigated the use of ‘*brasileiro(s)*’ [Brazilian(s)], with 57 hits (BraUSA). The list of collocates showed no content words, there were no recurrent clusters and the concordance lines pointed to very general contexts. We then analyzed each concordance line in order to assess the semantic prosody. Out of 57 concordance lines with “*brasileiro(s)*” [Brazilian(s)], 23 presented a neutral semantic prosody, referring to Brazilian staff or Brazilian restaurants, etc. Six of them were positive, in reference to the Brazilian breakfast. Surprisingly though 11 contexts had very negative semantic prosody, describing cases of humiliation tourists had gone through for being Brazilian, associated with words such as ‘*odeiam*’ [hate], ‘*tratar mal*’ [mistreat], ‘*deboche*’ [mockery], ‘*descaso*’ [neglect].

An example and possible explanation for this will be given in the following section, ‘discussion of results’.

Summing up, when reviewing their hotel stay in Brazil, Americans frequently referred to some kind of standard – Brazil/Brazilian, US/American, European, international – as evidenced by collocations such as ‘not up to American standards’, which was used to express frustration and unmet expectations regarding hotel categories. Conversely, Brazilian reviews did not feature a significant number of occurrences of ‘*padrão*’ [standard], which shows that the reviews were not based on comparisons between US and Brazilian standards, suggesting that Brazilians tend to express their opinions resorting to a different kind of communication strategy.

## 6. Discussion of results

The findings described above may be interpreted in terms of three cultural orientations.

Firstly, we identify a difference between Brazilians and Americans in terms of *thinking orientation* (Walker *et al.*, 2003). The American culture shows traces of *linear and inductive thinking*. This form of reasoning emphasizes the analysis of data, empirical observation, concrete facts, and precision. There is great concern with accuracy. Therefore, Americans tended to describe their experience in more concrete ways and express opinions based on a benchmark by which their impressions could be measured, judged, and justified. This orientation was illustrated by the collocations with the word ‘standard’: ‘by Brazil/Brazilian standards’, ‘by/not up to American/US standards’ and ‘by European/International standards’.

In contrast, Brazilian cultural thinking shows characteristics of *systemic and deductive thinking* (*ibid.*). The emphasis is on an integrated or holistic approach. This viewpoint focuses less on concrete facts and more on connections and relationships among the parts, with frequent use of analogies, metaphors, and similes. This orientation helps explain the lack of frequent references to any type of ‘standard’ as the starting point for evaluations in the Brazilian reviews, which were based more on general subjective impressions and less on concrete comparisons.

The use of precise standards in the American reviews can also be interpreted in terms of *universalistic orientation* as opposed to *particularistic*

---

*orientation (ibid).* Universalistic cultures, such as the American, value the consistent application of rules, processes, procedures, and laws. If the same product is produced in two different countries, it is expected to be identical, i.e., must comply with the same “standards”. Take the classic example of the Big Mac. This orientation was evidenced by the many references to hotel chains and numbers of stars. In fact, American expectations were frustrated when a well-known hotel chain did not meet the same quality standard in Brazil as in the United States or other countries. The following review illustrates the American universalistic orientation:

“Best Hotel in much too expensive Florianopolis, never ever a Sofitel, Ibis maybe.

Being an Accor Platinum Le Club Member I actually would have expected more. (...). No executive lounge, just a bad welcome cocktail, smalllll (*sic*) rooms, yes, the suite was small and smelt of cold smoke. This is at its best an Adagio hotel, never ever a Sofitel (...)”[AmBR\_AVEBUS66]

Even though many international hotel chains are well known by Brazilians, their reviews were not frequently based on comparisons between local or international standards, which reflects a tendency towards particularistic orientation, i.e., exceptions are accepted, tolerated and even expected, the value is on particularity. The following review exemplifies the Brazilian particularistic orientation.

*“Confortável, mas muito impessoal.*

*Este hotel fica próximo ao metrô e é muito confortável. Próximo a grandes lojas (Macy’s) e a Time Square fica a uma distância tranquila de ser percorrida a pé. O quarto é pequeno, mas na medida certa para uma temporada de até uma semana. O único problema é que o hotel é muito impessoal, sem nenhum mimo ou detalhe que possa realmente conquistar o hóspede. Não é um hotel que eu voltaria, prefiro procurar outro que me encante.”* [BraUSA\_AVESO29]

[“Comfortable, but too impersonal.

This hotel is close to the subway and it’s very comfortable. Close to major stores (Macy’s) and Time Square is within an easy walking distance. The room is small, but just right for a stay of up to one week. The only problem is that the hotel is too impersonal, without any kind of pampering or detail that can really win over the guest. It’s not a hotel I would go back to, I’d rather look for another one that enchants me.”]

The guest is writing about a three-star chain hotel (Wyndham), which

exists all over the US as well as in Brazil. In spite of the hotel's good location and comfortable rooms, the guest rates the stay as average and says she would not go back to this hotel. The main reason for the disappointment is not in terms of hotel category or brand standards, but the lack of personal attention; that is, the guest expected some kind of special treatment that would make her feel appreciated and unique.

Finally, the findings presented previously could be interpreted in terms of *action orientation* (*ibid*). This orientation distinguishes between two forms of motivation *being* and *doing*. Cultures tending towards doing, like the American, do not find it difficult to separate between facts and personal feelings. This way, it is natural to criticize the action without necessarily implying a criticism of the person's identity. In contrast, in cultures oriented towards being, like the Brazilian, criticism is easily understood as an attack on the personal level of identity, causing more emotional reactions.

This difference could be identified in the way the words '*brasileiro*' and 'Brazilian' were used by Brazilians and Americans respectively. When criticizing the quality of Brazilian hotels, quite harshly at times, Americans drew on concrete facts (objective comparisons of standards, stars, chains). It is clear that what was being criticized is a market reality and not a nationality, that is to say, American hotel standards being superior to Brazilian standards does not imply one nationality is superior to the other in the American's view. However, for Brazilians, this distinction is not so clear, as illustrated in the following review:

*"Odeiam brasileiros"*

*Fora a localização, o hotel é péssimo, todos os funcionários extremamente grosseiros, mal educados, só respondem de maneira estúpida, acho que eles odeiam brasileiros, além do check in ser as 16 horas, ainda cobram pelos pacotes entregues no hotel, sem o menor critério, 25 dólares, por pacote, mentem que o pacote não chegou, nos sentimos lesados e ultrajados.*

***Brasileiros não fiquem neste hotel, eles são treinados para nos maltratar!"***

[They hate **Brazilians**"]

Except for the location, the hotel is terrible, all the employees are extremely rude, impolite, always reply bluntly, I think they hate **Brazilians**, also check-in is at 4pm, they even charge for the packages delivered to the hotel, no criteria at all, 25 dollars per package, they lie to you saying the package hasn't arrived, we felt aggrieved and outraged. **Brazilians**, do not stay at this hotel, they are trained to mistreat us! [BraUSA\_TERFAM27]

The example above illustrates the Brazilian orientation towards being. The disapproval of the poor service was readily taken on a personal level

---

and associated with the guest's nationality ("I think they hate Brazilians"). While American reviews were mostly grounded on comparisons of clear standards, Brazilians tried to establish an emotional connectedness with the reader by making recommendations based on feelings and subjective impressions ("we felt aggrieved and outraged", "do not stay at this hotel, they are trained to mistreat us").

## 7. Conclusions

By investigating the language of travelers' reviews, this study attempted to demonstrate how cultural orientations operate in unconscious and subjective ways, affecting people's perceptions and consequently the language used to describe personal experiences.

The findings discussed above, while preliminary, are significant in at least two major ways. Firstly they demonstrate how a corpus approach can be used to investigate culture, which until recently has been rarely done (Bianchi, 2012: 28), and even less so for Portuguese-English. Furthermore these results add insights that uphold some of the claims found in the literature regarding cultural orientations. The study of 'standards' reveal the American tendency towards a linear and inductive thinking orientation, as well as universalistic and do orientations, evidenced by the frequent use of comparisons grounded on clear reference points or standards. The lack of equivalent recurrent collocations with 'standards' in Portuguese point to a different thinking orientation, systemic and deductive, as well as to particularistic and be orientations, with reviews characterized by subjective, general and emotional impressions.

This study may also be useful for related disciplines. Translation Studies, for example, could benefit from a pragmatic understanding of cultural differences, which is imperative to the notion of equivalence; Corpus Linguistics studies may profit from research that attempts to bring a cognitive explanation to the phraseological nature of language; the area of Tourism could apply cultural knowledge to improve the promotion of its products and services across cultures. For instance, hotel websites, hotel brochures and tourist guides could be translated and adapted, taking into account the importance of 'standards' on one hand and 'personal attention' on the other. Finally, research in Intercultural Studies may profit from the insights of an empirical linguistic study that contrasts cultures based on values and orientations.

---

**References**

- Bianchi, F. 2012. *Culture, Corpora and Semantics. Methodological Issues in Using Elicited and Corpus Data for Cultural Comparison*. Lecce: Università del Salento.
- Fina, M. E. 2011. “What A TripAdvisor Corpus Can Tell Us About Culture”, *Cultus*, (4), Terni: Iconesoft, 59-80.
- Gladstone, J.R. 1969. “Language and Culture”. In *ELT Journal*. Vol. 23 (2), 114-117.
- Hall, E. T., [1959] 1990, *The Silent Language*. New York: Anchor Books.
- Hall, E. T. 1976. *Beyond culture*. New York: Anchor Press/Doubleday.
- Halliday, M. A. K. 1991. “Corpus studies and probabilistic grammar.” In: Aijmer, K.; Altenberg, B. (orgs.). *English corpus linguistics: studies in honor of Jan Svartvik*. Londres: Longman, 30-43.
- Hofstede, G. 2001. *Culture’s Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviours, Institutions, and Organizations across Nations* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.), Thousand Oaks (CA): Sage Publications.
- Katan, D. 2004. *Translating Cultures. An Introduction for Translators, Interpreters and Mediators*. Manchester: St. Jerome.
- Kluckhohn, F. R. and Strodtbeck, F. L. 1961. *Variations in Value Orientations*, Evanston (IL): Row Peterson.
- Manca, E. 2012. “Translating the language of tourism across cultures: from functionally complete units of meaning to cultural equivalence”, *Textus. Tourism and Tourists in Language and Linguistics*, a cura di L. Fodde e G. Van Den Abeele, Roma: Carocci editore.
- McEnery, T. and Wilson, A. 2001. *Corpus Linguistics: An Introduction!* (2 edition). Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Scott, M. 2007. *Wordsmith Tools*, version 5. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Sinclair, J. 1996. “The Search for Units of Meaning”, *Textus* 9 (I), pp. 71-106.
- Sinclair, J. 1991. *Corpus, Concordance, Collocation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Tognini-Bonelli, E. 2001. *Corpus at Work*, Amsterdam, Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Tognini-Bonelli, E. 2002. “Functionally Complete Units of Meaning across English and Italian: towards a Corpus-driven Approach”, in B. Altenberg and S. Granger (eds), *Lexis in Contrast: Corpus-Based Studies*, Amsterdam, Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 73-95.

Trompenaars, F. and Hampden-Turner, C. 2000. *Riding the Waves of Culture: Understanding Cultural Diversity in Business*, 2nd ed., London: Nicholas Brealey Publishing.

Walker, D.; Walker, T, Schmitz, J. 2003. *Doing Business Internationally: The Guide to Cross Cultural Success*, USA: McGraw-Hill.



## Notes on contributors

**Mirella Agorni** is Associate Professor in English Language and Translation at the Catholic University and teaches in Brescia. Her research interests include ESP and the language of tourism, translation history, theory and methodology and translator training. She is author of several articles in these fields, has edited a collection of essays on memory and translation *Memoria, Lingua, Traduzione* (2014), two volumes on tourism studies, *Prospettive linguistiche e traduttologiche negli studi sul turismo* (2012) and *Comunicare la città. Turismo culturale e comunicazione* (2012), a translation theory anthology *Le teorie della traduzione oggi* (2005), and has published a book on the history of translation, *Translating Italy for the Eighteenth Century* (2002).

**Robin Cranmer** works in the areas of Intercultural Communication and Language Education. Until 2016 he was Senior Lecturer in Applied Linguistics at the University of Westminster in London where he worked on courses focusing on the intercultural needs of language teachers, translators, interpreters and mediators. He jointly co-ordinated a EU project ‘Promoting Intercultural Competence in Translators’ (PICT) and also has extensive experience in Europe and beyond of running staff development workshops on the inclusion of intercultural skills on university courses in Translation and Language Teaching. His research publications have also focused on intercultural aspects of Translation and Language Teaching.

**Maria Elisa Fina** is contract lecturer of English at the University of Salento. She received her PhD in Translation and Intercultural Studies from the University of Salento (Lecce) in 2016, with a thesis on tourism communication entitled *On effective audio guiding. A multimodal investigation of Italian, British and American audio guides*.

Her research interests include Travel 2.0, Corpus Linguistics and literary translation. She has published her works on various journals and volumes.

**Nickolas D.G. Komninos** is a lecturer of English language and translation at University of Udine. A graduate from the University of London, King’s College London, he started teaching at the Advanced School for Interpreters and Translators at the University of Trieste. He is member of the BAAL (BritBAAL (BritBritish Association for Applied

Linguistics), and AIA (Associazione Italiana di Anglistica) among other association. He has participated in various national and international financed research projects: to improve and standardise the teaching of domain specific English; to standardise domain specific language testing; to improve intercultural communication strategies between public and private institutions and the user in various contexts including tourism and healthcare; to further understanding of child development within multimodal communication in the context of digital literacy; to advance organisational processes to endow greater coherence in multi-translator translation; to further understanding of the relationship between culture and communication in the context of child empowerment. His research interests include Mediated Discourse Analysis, Critical Discourse Analysis; Intercultural Communication and Domain Specific English.

**Novriyanto Napu** is lecturer in English language and translation at the Department of English language education, Universitas Negeri Gorontalo in Indonesia. He holds a Master of Applied Linguistics with Distinction from the University of Newcastle, Australia and a PhD in Translation Studies from the University of South Australia. His current research interests focus on the translation of tourism discourse. He has also worked as a freelance translator and interpreter for public and private sector in Indonesia.

**Sandra Navarro** holds a master's degree in Linguistic and Literary Studies in English (2011) from the University of São Paulo and is currently pursuing her PhD in Translation Studies at the same university. She is also a professional technical translator with over 10 years of experience. Her research interests include Translation, Cultural Studies, Corpus Linguistics, Terminology and Tourism.

**Josélia Neves** has a degree in Modern Languages and Literatures, an MA in English Studies, a PhD in Translation Studies, with a dissertation on Subtitling for the Deaf and the Hard of Hearing. In her career as a University teacher and researcher, she has led a number of collaborative projects in various fields – television, the cinema and DVD, museums and cultural venues, the performing arts and education – in an effort to provide access to people with a disability, which has made her an expert in interlingual subtitling, SDH, AD and in multisensory communication. She is presently an Associated Professor at Hamad bin Khalifa University, in

Qatar, where she teaches on the MA in Audiovisual Translation. She is a member of the TransMedia Research Group and a board member of the European Association for Studies in Screen Translation.

**Mohamed Zain Sulaiman** has been working as a professional Arabic-English-Malay translator and interpreter since 1995. He has been employed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Saudi Arabia in one of its diplomatic missions as Chief Translator & Interpreter and subsequently as Researcher for more than eight years. In 2008 he joined the National University of Malaysia as a lecturer in Translation Studies and continues to work as a professional translator. He has also lectured and supervised postgraduate students at Monash University, Melbourne from 2011 to 2013. His doctoral research on the translation of tourism won third place for the CIUTI PhD Award 2015. At the present, he is working on a book on tourism translation which will be published by Springer.