



This is a contribution from *Cultus: the Intercultural Journal of Mediation and Communication* 2016: 9,2

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# *Cultus*

THE JOURNAL OF INTERCULTURAL  
MEDIATION AND COMMUNICATION

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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

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*via Giuseppe Antonio Landi 13 – 40132 Bologna*

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# CULTUS

*the Journal of Intercultural Mediation and Communication*

## The Intercultural Question and the Interpreting Professions

2016, Issue 9, Volume 2

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*the Journal of Intercultural Mediation and Communication*

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## Table of Contents

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

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Intercultural Communication in Tourism Promotion*Nikolas Komninos*

155

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

*Sandra Navarro*

173

Notes on contributors

190



## 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.

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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’.

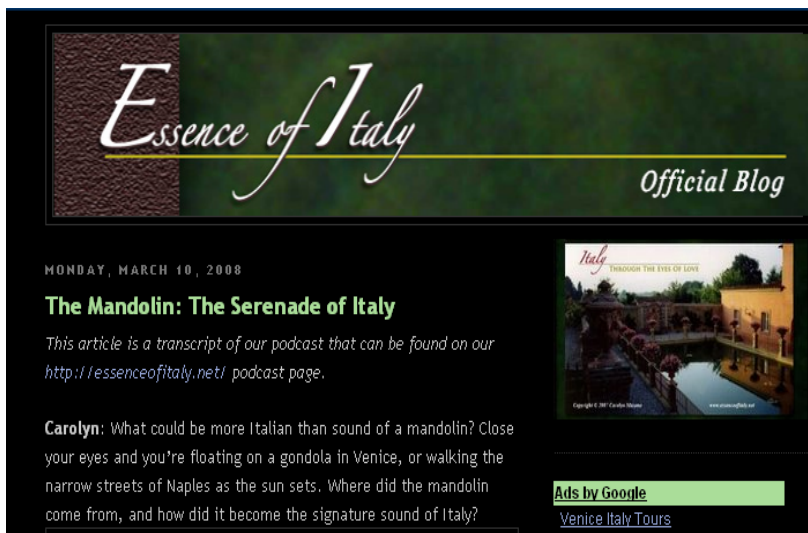
### 1.1 The Filters and Logical Levels model of the Tourist Gaze

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.



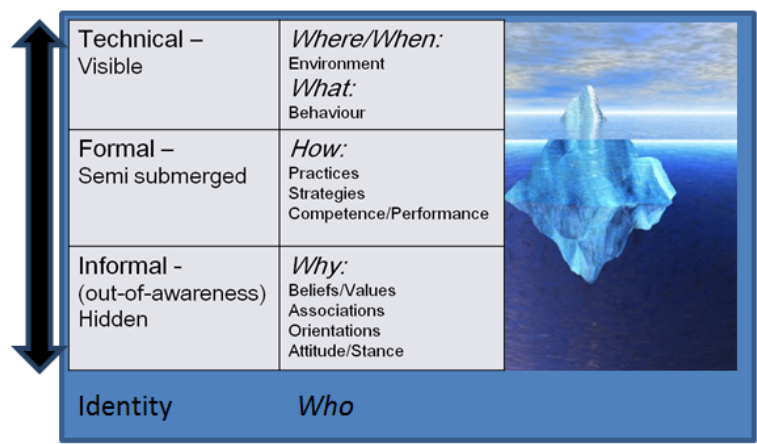
The lexeme "essence" gives the idea of an objective distilling of what is Italy, written by one who has been there, and who is mediating for those who, we may imagine, are interested in going. A distillation necessarily must delete much of what is Italy. This particular gaze is fixed in a past time, 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

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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.

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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

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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

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<sup>3</sup> [http://www.trenitalia.com/cms-](http://www.trenitalia.com/cms-file/allegati/trenitalia/area_clienti/Brochure_Regolamento_Europeo_EN.pdf)

[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.

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ESPRESSO COFFEE

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### 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

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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 Klockhohn (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”).

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<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.

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### 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

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<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".

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<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*

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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,

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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”.

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## 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 Be	e.g. British Do
<b>Beliefs:</b>	Life is complex (WYSI <del>not</del> WYG)	Life can be simple (WYSIWYG)
<b>Orientation:</b>	Particularism (flexibility) HCC	Universalism (stability) LCC
<b>Preferred strategy:</b>	<i>Verba</i> ; non-verbal communication in context .....because of the danger of: <i>scripta manent</i>	<i>Scripta</i> communication in the text <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>	KILC Self expression Writerly Contextual details Abstraction The relationship	KISS Other oriented Readerly On topic Concrete The skopos /The task

### Practice

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

## CULTUS

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