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Museum communication: The role of translation in disseminating culture

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the English translation of Italian museum website pages as vehicles of cultural dissemination. Museum communication aims to make information about exhibits accessible to the wider public who will come from different cultural and educational backgrounds and age groups, with different learning styles and interests. The complexity of Museum Communication is compounded by the internationalisation of museum audiences where the use of English as a target language in translation will serve a dual purpose – firstly, to address native speakers and secondly, to act as a lingua franca for many other readers. Not only must the translation deal with textual difficulties (terminology, systemic and rhetorical differences between languages), but also culture-specific pragmatics and contextual factors, especially about readers' expectations. The analysis has been made drawing on Juliane House's Recontexualization Model of Translation (2006) and highlights three areas of interest: the lexicon, 'foreignness', and cross-cultural pragmatics.

Keywords: museum communication, translation, English as lingua franca, culture, context, pragmatics.

1. Introduction

Museums have traditionally been conceived as repositories of knowledge and culture, collecting, preserving, interpreting and displaying items of artistic, cultural or scientific significance. As such, they may be considered as ambassadors of culture. Indeed, a fundamental function of museums is education and the dissemination of knowledge from one generation to the next. As the Directorate General of Museums of the Italian Ministry of

Cultural Heritage and Activities and Tourism says in its Mission Statement, it aims "to favour research and the dissemination of knowledge on the Italian cultural heritage kept in museums and presented in cultural places, in order to share their values and originality with the rest of the world" (http://musei.beniculturali.it/en/structure). To guarantee transmission to as wide an audience as possible, the most representative channel of communication in this day and age of technology and globalisation is the Internet; its power and reach give it a potential for disseminating culture at an unparalleled level. And translation will necessarily play a fundamental role in this process. This contribution will therefore combine these three elements, museums, translation and the Internet, by analysing the English versions of Italian museum websites in relation to the source texts that present and describe their cultural treasures and milieu.

As Blum-Kulka (2000: 291) says, translation should be viewed as an act of communication and therefore must "relate to […] the linguistic, discoursal and social systems holding for the two languages and cultures involved". Similarly, Hatim – Mason (2005: 1) define translation as "an act of communication which attempts to relay, across cultural and linguistic boundaries, another act of communication (which may have been intended for different purposes and different readers/hearers)". In the virtual world of the Internet, as indeed in the real world, English frequently becomes the lingua franca, a vehicular language in its broadest sense, the language of all, therefore making it necessary to simultaneously cross multiple linguistic and cultural boundaries, thus amplifying the inherent difficulties of translation. This study aims to investigate how translations deal with this challenging task.

2. Museum communication

The history of the modern museum is marked by a gradual and progressive opening up to a wider, socially broader audience. The forerunners of the modern museum were the private collections of ruling families and distinguished scholars, which were jealously guarded as symbols of social prestige and power. Later, even with the first public museums of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, access to the exhibits was strictly limited to a close-knit circle of 'respectable' visitors; the attitude of museum directors was that "visitors were admitted as a privilege, not as a right"

(Hudson 1975: 6). Economic, political and social changes in the twentieth century led to a further democratization of museums, which nowadays have become educational facilities, sources of leisure activity, and a medium of communication. "There was a perceptible shift from serving the scholar, as befits an institution holding much of the primary evidence of the material world, to providing for a lay public as well. As a result of such innovations, museums found a new popularity and attracted an increasing number of visitors" (Lewis 2000), so much so that today museum policy aims, for obvious commercial reasons but not only those, to attract visitors from all walks of life and from all over the world, "which might be best described as total inclusion" (Fleming 2005).

Although museums are obviously embedded in the buildings they occupy, the need to expand and deepen audience engagement, perhaps to encourage people to actually visit them, has led museums to develop their online presence (http://musei.beniculturali.it/en/structure; Aquilino 2017; Johnson 2015; Serota 2009). It may be argued that the Internet provides so many sources of information that an extensive online presence of museums is not necessary. However, Nicholas Serota, former director of the Tate Modern in London, says it is the duty of a museum to act as guarantor of information about its exhibits (2009). Furthermore, it offers the opportunity to share knowledge with those people who are unable, for whatever reason, to visit the museums in person.

This change in approach has also impacted museum communication which was traditionally viewed as the transmission of knowledge from expert to non-expert, the authoritative voice of the museums interpreting the exhibits for visitors. Nowadays museum communication aims to make information about exhibits more accessible to the wider public. Hooper-Greenhill (1999) talks about the gap between the level of academic knowledge used to write texts and the level of knowledge visitors bring with them. People can only see and interpret what they can go some way towards understanding based on their personal background knowledge (Hooper-Greenhill 1999: 13). Visitors construct meaning using a variety of interpretative strategies based on their prior knowledge, beliefs and values. As a result, a more participatory, interactive approach is being adopted, so that it is not so much museum education as 'learning in museums' (Hooper-Greenhill 1999). It is possible, therefore, that museum discourse will involve a degree of 'popularisation', perhaps lowering the common denominator of knowledge, with a possible subsequent risk of dumbing down.

2.1 Italian museum communication

According to the Italian Guidelines for Communication in Museums, the language of museum discourse is characterized by specialised terminology, complex syntactic structure and high lexical density (Da Milano – Sciacchitano 2015: 56). It therefore strongly recommends avoiding an academic, formal and impersonal style of writing and advocates the use of a conversational mode to help engage with visitors (Da Milano – Sciacchitano 2015: 50). This requires a simplification of the texts, which, among other organizational and typographical strategies, involves avoiding nominalisation where possible, using the active form of verbs, expressing the subject at the beginning of the sentence, conveying one concept per sentence and explaining technical terms (Da Milano – Sciacchitano 2015: 58).

However, a formal and impersonal communication style, which the Guidelines explicitly discourage, is the cultural norm in Italy. Comparative analyses of Italian and British discourse have shown this to be true in a number of different contexts, as for example in the fields of business (Vergaro 2005; Salvi et al. 2007), law (Scarpa – Riley 2000; Turnbull 2010) and public administration (Ciliberti 1997; Turnbull 2012). All concur on the fact that Italian texts tend to be formal, impersonal and obscure, whilst the British tend to be more informal, clear and friendly. Each culture organizes discourse in a specific way and produces texts that differ at a rhetorical level, and therefore, even within the same professional community, different writing conventions and rhetoric will be used (Vergaro 2005: 11). This different approach is confirmed also within the museum context by Sabatini (2015), who made a comparative study of the British Tate and the Italian GAM. Both are modern and contemporary art galleries and both have made the shift in museum practices from the traditional asymmetrical construction and distribution of knowledge to a more participatory, symmetrical knowledge construction model. Nevertheless, he concludes that the Italian art gallery has not adapted its communication to visitors, maintaining a complex, heavily nominalized style. He suggests that "the writing protocols and degrees of formality are regulated by a different socio-cognitive mapping of cultural institutions and of their role in the arena of public communication" (Sabatini 2015: 124).

The complexity of museum communication is compounded by the internationalisation of museum audiences where the use of English as a target language in translation will serve a dual purpose – firstly, to address

native speakers and secondly, to act as a lingua franca for many other readers. The complications are not simply linguistic and terminological, but also contextual, cultural and pragmatic. As Guillot (2014: 74) has observed, visitor expectations may vary. She gives an example from her own experience with students who were on a work experience module and expressed a very negative perception of museum texts. Native German speaking students found that the source texts in English were not explicit enough, whereas native English-speaking students found texts in French and Spanish museums "formal, specialised and distant". To the best of my knowledge, no studies of this kind have been made in the Italian context, but differing approaches may well be expected. In any case, the 'wider public', especially in a global context, will include a very heterogeneous group of people, probably from very different cultural and educational backgrounds and age groups, with different learning styles, personal objectives and interests, multiplying the possible visitor expectations.

3. Theoretical background

The analysis of the translations will be made by referring first and foremost to the Recontextualization Model of Translation (House 2006). This model follows a linguistic approach based on Halliday's systemic-functional theory and considers the ideational, interpersonal and textual aspects of the translations, but it "is also eclectically informed by discourse analytic and functional-pragmatic approaches" (House 2006: 344). It takes in a number of issues raised in translation studies that are particularly relevant to the context of museum websites.

House picks up on Malinowski's observation that the meaning of a linguistic unit cannot be captured unless the interrelationship between linguistic units and the context of the situation is taken into account. He describes translation as "rather the placing of linguistic symbols against the cultural background of a society than the rendering of words by their equivalents in another language" (Malinowski 1935: 18, cited in House 2006: 343). House certainly views text as "contextually embedded language" (2006: 344), but in her Recontextualization Model of Translation she seems to be proposing a solution more radical than one which involves merely "placing linguistic symbols against the cultural background" or "relaying across cultural and linguistic boundaries" as Hatim – Mason propose (2005: 1).

She explains *recontextualization* as "taking a text out of its original frame and context and placing it within a new set of relationships and culturally-conditioned expectations" (House 2006: 356), perhaps suggesting the need for what we might call 'rewriting'.

Underpinning her model is the fundamental and much discussed notion of equivalence (Salvi 2012), which is a relative concept depending on a number of linguistic and contextual factors. She believes that a translation should be semantically and pragmatically equivalent, with the use of language appropriate to the context of the target language. In other words, it should have a function equivalent to the original, in our case the dissemination of knowledge.

There is another issue of fundamental importance in translation studies closely connected with equivalence, namely the degree to which translators make a text conform to the target culture, to what degree the translation is perceived as a translation, what House calls overt and covert translations. An overt translation is, as the name suggests, clearly a translation and remains close to the source language and culture. A covert translation does not read as a translation and may "enjoy the status of an original text in the target culture" (House 2006: 347). As purely informative texts, the museum website texts do not have the aesthetic or formal interest of literary works or historical documents; their value lies in the veracity and accuracy of the information they provide. It can therefore be presumed that according to House's model a covert translation is the preferred type in this context.

In order to achieve the functional equivalence between the source and target text in the context and discourse world of the target culture, a 'cultural filter' is necessary to account for the differences in expectations and discourse conventions between the two linguistic communities, such as 'directness' versus 'indirectness', 'explicitness' versus 'implicitness', 'orientation towards content' versus 'orientation towards persons' (House 2006: 34).

House herself gives a definition of translation which reads as follows: "Translation can then be defined as the replacement of a text in a source language by a semantically and pragmatically equivalent text in a target language" (House 2006: 345). Here she talks about "the replacement of text", which should allow the translator a certain degree of freedom.

In the context of museum websites which invite a global audience, an English translation, even if not intentionally conceived as such, will in use become a translation into English as a lingua franca. The original definition of ELF as "a 'contact language' between persons who share neither a common native tongue nor a common (national) culture and for whom English is

the chosen foreign language of communication" (Firth 1996: 240, cited in Hewson 2013: 258) has been revised to acknowledge the frequent presence of native speakers in ELF situations, even if they remain a minority in the population of English speakers in the world. This broader definition of ELF aptly reflects the context of museum communication. However, it also means that the concept of a target language and also a target culture, become an illusion. ELF speakers will cover an array of linguistic competence levels, as well as a wide range of knowledge and culture.

The implications of ELF for translation today may be far reaching, as more and more ELF speakers translate into English (Taviano 2013). ELF is characterised by great variability and creativity, but its main aim is "mutual intelligibility in efficient and easy processes of communication" (House 2013: 281). Efficiency is not associated with grammatical correctness measured against native speaker standards, but is rather the result of participants' efforts to "work out some sort of joint linguistic, intercultural and behavioural basis for communication to be smoothly effective" (House 2013: 282). Indeed, most ELF research has centred on spoken rather than written discourse and the pragmatic adjustments made to overcome difficulties in communication. Clearly this collaboration is not possible in written language and the focus of this study is on the target text and how it may succeed or fail to meet the needs of a wide spectrum of receivers, each of whom will read and interpret it using his/her own linguistic and cultural resources.

4. Corpus

The corpus on which this study is based is composed of pages from the websites of eighteen Italian museums. Only the official websites of the museums were included as they focus on the description and explanation of the exhibits, whilst information about museums in tourist websites may use more promotional and commercial discourse. The selection of websites was made on the basis of a very broad interpretation of the terms 'culture' and 'museums'. Consequently, culture includes art, architecture, history, literature, music, science and way of life, and museums include institutions, organizations or foundations that collect artefacts of one kind or another or watch over some historically significant buildings or sites. The result is that the museums included in the corpus represent different aspects of Italian national culture which have been divided into five general categories, as can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Corpus structure: list of museums and relevant tokens

Museum	Italian (words)	English (words)
Art		
Vatican Museums	10,447	12,272
Brera Pinacoteca	2,556	2,894
Borghese Gallery	7,050	7,569
Palazzo Dora Pamphilj	6,524	7,369
Palaces of historical interest		
Palace of Venaria, Turin	6,646	4,314
Royal Palace of Caserta	5,223	4,502
Doge's Palace	9,465	9,556
Archeological heritage		
Pompeii	9,406	5,757
Riace Bronzes	8,420	8,417
Ostia Antica	3,285	3,586
Literature		
Dante's House	7,981	8,467
House of Manzoni	9,784	10,763
Miscellaneous		
Puccini Museum	9,344	9,334
Museum of Science and Technology, Milan	6,635	5,490
Wine and Oil Museum, Torgiano	3,012	3,097
Burano Lace Museum	2,829	3,084
Total	**108,607**	**106,471**

The choice of museums, however, was necessarily limited by the availability of an English version, a fact which seems very surprising in view of the importance of museums in tourism. Some websites included only general information, such as opening times, tickets and directions to the museum, in English. Others do not always have all the pages about the collections translated into English, and the English pages of the Vatican Museums website are just a small sample from its vast website.

5. Analysis

The analysis is not intended to highlight the errors of various kinds that appear in the translations, which unfortunately include some rather amusing howlers, but rather to capture the common characteristics of the translations. Three areas of interest emerged from the corpus-driven analysis, namely the

lexicon, foreignness, that is the perception of something strange in the target text, and, lastly, the cross-cultural pragmatics of the translations. Following Baker's approach (1992) they will be presented in a bottom-up order, starting with the word, then the sentence level, even though this paper focuses on context and recontextualization. However, as Baker explains, meaning is realized through words and "the individual words, phrases and grammatical structures control and shape overall meaning of the text" (1992: 6).

5.1 Lexicon

The most noticeable feature of the lexicon is the use of some extremely 'technical' terminology, certainly appropriate to the subject matter, but dauntingly specialised at times. The following example is taken from the Doge's Palace Museum in Venice which fires a rapid sequence of architectural terms in a very short space, none of which are explained (the italics are mine, as in all the following examples).

(1)   Room V has 3 *shafts* of columns from the arcade; against the left-hand wall are a column and *foliated* capital of the upper loggia on the Piazzetta side corresponding to the *tondo* with Venice in the form of Justice on the *facade*. There are pieces of stonework from the *tracery* of the upper loggia with the capitals, *ogival* arches and intricately interweaving *quatrefoils*; above this is the *cornice* with rosettes. In the *spandrels* between the arches, one can see the lion heads that run all the way along both Gothic sides of the Palace. (Doge's Palace)

In fact, there is rarely any explanation of the words, even when they could be misunderstood by native speakers. For example, the Dante's House website narrates the different phases of Dante's life, one of which is 'Dante the prior' (www.museocasadidante.it). However, it fails to indicate the historically and culturally specific meaning of *prior* as a magistrate in Renaissance Florence as opposed to its more common meaning as the head of an abbey or monastery. This may confuse the reader in the middle of a text describing the political situation or even tempt him/her to adopt a let-it-pass strategy considering the information as not necessary, at the risk of not fully understanding the text.

(2)   Dante was appointed ambassador to San Gimignano on 7 May 1300 and elected a prior from 15 June to 15 August of that same year.

During his time in office he devoted his efforts above all to having the commune pursue a policy of independence from the hegemonic aims of Pope Boniface VIII.

In the next example, it is interesting to see how the three 'technical' words are treated differently. The first two, *host* and *corporal*, are not explained, whilst the second, *transubstantiation*, comes with an explanation in brackets that was also present in the original.

(3)   La Messa di Bolsena rappresenta un episodio avvenuto nel 1263 a Bolsena, nei pressi di Orvieto, ove, durante la messa celebrata da un prete boemo, al momento della consacrazione stillò dall'ostia il sangue di Cristo, macchiando il *corporale* e fugando così i dubbi del celebrante sulla *transustanziazione* (vale a dire sul cambiamento della sostanza del pane e del vino in quella del corpo e del sangue di Cristo nell'Eucarestia).

The Mass of Bolsena depicts an episode that took place in 1263 in Bolsena, near Orvieto. During the Mass celebrated by a Bohemian priest, at the moment of consecration the blood of Christ trickled from the *host*, staining the *corporal* and thus dismissing the doubts of the celebrant on *transubstantiation* (that is to say the changing of the substance of the bread and wine into that of the body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist). (Vatican Museums)

Host and *corporal* are very specific terms. Like *prior*, they both have other meanings that will come more immediately to mind. Even within the context of the Church the words are very specialised, but no attempt is made in the translation to explain their specific sense, which will not necessarily be known to the potentially global audience formed by people of different beliefs who do not have a deep knowledge of the Christian religion. The use of highly technical language was found predominantly in the websites concerned with art, architecture, archeology, but the only website that provided a glossary to help the reader understand the technical terminology was the Burano Lace Museum.

In view of the fact that English will most probably serve as a lingua franca for many receivers, there are some unnecessarily difficult expressions for non-native speakers, some of which may remain obscure even to native speakers. These expressions are usually the result of 'literal' translations, staying very close to the original text and using English cognates. Although

the terms may be quite common in Italian, they do not correspond to 'normal', natural usage in English.

(4)   This space also provides a *conspectus* of early 16th century Ferrara art with the series of stylistically well matched panels painted by the most important painters of that period: Garofolo, Mazzolino, and Ortolano. (Dora Pamphilj)

(5)   In the 10th century, the Doge's Palace was partially destroyed by a fire, and subsequent reconstruction works were undertaken *at the behest of* Doge Sebastiano Ziani (1172-1178). (Doge's Palace)

(6)   The theory proves itself to be weak as it concerns the iconography of the Dioscuri, who are always portrayed as *glabrous* boys and never as bearded men. (Riace Bronzes)

(7)   The Oath of Leo III illustrates an episode that took place the day before the crowing of Charlemagne, when the Pope responded to the *calumnies* of the nephews of his predecessor Hadrian I by reaffirming the principle that the vicar of Christ is responsible to God alone for his actions. (Vatican Museums)

At the other extreme, we can find examples of over simplification or flattening of the language, making the translation rather bland. *Vicissitudini* translated by the neutral *events* seems to lose the negative connotations of its meaning:

(8)   La Storia
        Il Piano Seminterrato, con gli affascinanti locali un tempo adibiti alle attività di servizio alla vita della corte, *è concepito per far cogliere e riflettere su fatti storici, temi e vicissitudini* della dinastia sabauda dalle mitologiche origini dell'anno Mille fino alla prima metà dell'Ottocento, quando si estinse il ramo principale dei Savoia.

        History
        The basement level, characterized by the fascinating spaces that once housed the court's kitchen, storage and service rooms, *illustrates significant historical facts, themes and events* concerning the House of Savoy, from its mythological origins in the year 1000 to the early nineteenth century, when the main branch of the family went extinct. (Palace of Venaria, Turin)

Similarly, in the following example *unique* loses the idea of its 'singularity', of being the only one in the world as is intended in the source text. Although it appears to be the same word, in English it usually conveys the meaning of 'special' or 'unusual' and therefore it is 'somehow tamer' (Kenny 1998: 520).

(9)   Palazzo Doria Pamphilj ospita da secoli una collezione privata *unica al mondo*.

        The Palazzo Doria Pamphilj has for centuries housed this *unique* private collection. (Doria Pamphilj)

5.2 Foreignness

As the translations tend to be quite literal, this often leads to a feeling of foreignness, of something strange or not quite right, even when there are no grammar mistakes. This section obviously deals with a matter which will be perceived most by native speakers and the more competent ELF speakers. The following example presents a number of problems.

(10)   Nell'ala sud-ovest del Palazzo era previsto l'Appartamento o "quarto" del Re, nell'attuale percorso di visita indicato come Appartamento dell'Ottocento.

        Il "quarto" del Principe ereditario, nell'ala sud est del Palazzo – nel percorso di visita indicato come Appartamento del Settecento – fu in realtà l'unico ad essere abitato dai reali borbonici per più di mezzo secolo, non essendo terminata la costruzione del lato occidentale del piano nobile a seguito delle vicende storiche degli anni tra la fine Settecento e gli inizi Ottocento.

        In the south-west of the Palace was planned the Apartment or "quarter" of the King, in the current tour route designated as the XIX century Apartment.

        The "quarter" of the Crown Prince, *in the south east of the Palace – in the guide tour referred to as XVIII century Apartment* – was really the only one to be inhabited by the royal Bourbon for more than half a century, *not being completed the construction of the western side* of the main floor as a result of the historical events of the years between the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. (Royal Palace of Caserta)

Firstly, the subject and verb have been inverted, *in the south-west of the Palace was planned the Apartment or "quarter" of the King.* Although subject-verb inversion is possible in English, it is used for emphasis and is marked, but there is no reason for this in (10). The second problem concerns the word order patterns, which are very different in Italian and English. Whereas Italian has a fairly elaborate system of inflections which allows it to have fewer restrictions, the word order in English is relatively fixed. In Italian the main clause may be split by parenthetical contextualizing elements, wherever the author desires. In English, this disturbs the sequential ordering of words and appears very unnatural, as in *in the south east of the Palace – in the guide tour referred to as XVIII century Apartment*. The third problem is the last part of the final sentence with the present participle being used in a passive form to give the explanation for the Crown Prince's quarter being the only one used. The negative form complicates the meaning and makes the structure heavy. In any case, the subject of the clause with the present participle (*the construction of the western side*) should be the same as that of the main clause, which of course it is not. These problems can be found in many of the target texts, and they may be considered as typical mistakes in translation from Italian to English.

In the following example there is a strong feeling of foreignness, because of a lack of concretization.

(11)   Invece il merletto ad ago che si sviluppa nella Venezia del Rinascimento, anche se nasce da tale incipit iniziale, è un diverso insieme complesso ed evoluto di molteplici punti e, come quello a fuselli, è espressione creativa e manuale di sensibilità femminile aristocratica, acculturata per stretta frequentazione con ambienti artistici e intellettuali raffinati.

Instead, the needle lace which developed in Renaissance Venice, even though stemming from that initial origin, is a different, complex and advanced ensemble of manifold stitches and, as in bobbin lace, it was *the creative and manual expression of aristocratic female sensitivity*, cultured thanks to close contact with refined artistic and intellectual circles. (Burano Lace Museum)

In the face of the elegant, but artificial language of the Italian text which is difficult to understand, the English version, especially with the abstract words *expression* and *sensitivity* and the lack of personalization, is a word-for-word translation and does not contribute in any way to clarifying its meaning.

So far, we have seen examples where the feeling of foreignness is felt, but there are occasions when the foreignness has been avoided successfully, especially when the method of transposition, the replacing of one word class for another, is adopted (Vinay – Darbelnet 2000: 132). In the following examples a noun is replaced by a verb and an adjective by a verb:

(12)   Nel 1773, *a seguito dello scioglimento dei Gesuiti*, il Collegio di Brera divenne proprietà dello Stato e l'Imperatrice Maria Teresa d'Austria volle farne sede di alcuni dei più avanzati istituti culturali della città

When the Jesuits were disbanded in 1773, the Collegio di Brera became state property and Empress Maria Theresa of Austria decided to use it to house several of the city's leading cultural institutes. (Brera Pinacoteca)

(13)   All'età di 56 anni il cardinale Scipione Borghese commissionò al giovane Bernini il suo busto ritratto. Filippo Baldinucci racconta *che a lavoro terminato*, lo scultore si accorse di un'imperfezione nel blocco di marmo, tale da provocare una crepa (detta anche pelo), tuttora visibile sulla fronte del cardinale.

When he was 56 years old, Cardinal Scipione Borghese commissioned his portrait bust from the young Bernini. Filippo Baldinucci tells that, *after he had finished the work*, the sculptor noticed a flaw in the block of granite had caused a crack that is still visible on the cardinal's head. (Borghese Gallery)

5.3 Cross-cultural pragmatics of the translations

The third and last aspect to be discussed is the cross-cultural pragmatics of the translation, which is concerned with the different cultural conventions in the two languages and the attempts to take account of them. This may lead to various modes of adaptation at a local level to achieve functional equivalence.

In (10) we saw that a sense of foreignness resulted from the lack of personalization. Indeed, one of the cultural conventions of English is that it tends to orient text towards people (House 2006: 352) rather than towards content, unlike Italian which tends to focus on things or processes.

(14)   *Incaricato della progettazione e prosecuzione dei lavori fu Giuseppe Pier-marini*, uno dei protagonisti del Neoclassicismo in Italia. *A lui si*

devono la sistemazione della biblioteca (un salone è visibile dalla sala I della Pinacoteca), il solenne portale di ingresso su via Brera, ed il completamento del cortile, al cui centro fu posta nel 1859 la statua bronzea che raffigura Napoleone in veste di Marte pacificatore, fusa a Roma su modello di Antonio Canova.

The man commissioned to design and execute the work was Giuseppe Piermarini, one of Italy's leading Neoclassical architects. *He was responsible for renovating* the library (one room of which can be seen in Room I in the Pinacoteca, or picture gallery), for building the solemn entrance on Via Brera and for completing the courtyard. (Borghese Gallery)

In (14) the thing, in this case the responsibility of carrying out work, is in theme position *Incaricato della progettazione e prosecuzione dei lavori*, whereas in English the person, *the man* who takes that responsibility, is fronted and is also the subject, *He*, in the second sentence.

Another convention that may cause problems in translation is punctuation, whose rules may vary with language, location and register. It is used to signal information structure in written language and therefore it contributes to the cohesion of texts. Although the translation in (15) follows very closely the source text, it flows naturally and smoothly, especially with the slight adjustment of *più che sulla costruzione… sulla rappresentazione* to *not so much … as*.

(15)   L'esempio dell'artista padovano è ben visibile nell'incisività delle linee di contorno e nella plasticità scultorea delle figure, trascinate in primo piano a invadere lo spazio dello spettatore; tuttavia, Bellini immerge la scena entro un'atmosfera fatta di luce naturale, ammorbidendo i toni e concentrandosi, più che sulla costruzione di un rigoroso spazio prospettico, sulla rappresentazione della dolente umanità dei protagonisti; egli crea così un linguaggio nuovo che diverrà, negli anni successivi, la sua personale e inconfondibile cifra stilistica.

L'opera, che faceva parte della collezione Sampieri di Bologna, fu donata a Brera, nel 1811, dal viceré d'Italia Eugenio di Beauharnais.

The lesson of the Paduan artist is clearly visible in the incisiveness of the outlines and the sculptural plasticity of the figures, brought into the foreground to invade the space of the observer. Yet Bellini immerses the scene in an atmosphere of natural light, softening

the tones and concentrating not so much on the construction of a rigorous perspective as on conveying the sorrowful humanity of the protagonists.

In this way he creates a new language that will become, in the years to come, his personal and unmistakable stylistic mark. The work, which used to be in the Sampieri collection in Bologna, was donated to Brera in 1811 by the viceroy of Italy, Eugène de Beauharnais. (Brera Pinacoteca)

However, the target text shows a number of changes in punctuation and, as a consequence, changes in the relations between chunks of information. The first sentence, which is made up of three clauses joined by semicolons, is broken down into three sentences, but the various parts of the Italian seem to be linked much more closely than in the translation. In particular, the use of *yet* after a full stop instead of a semi-colon seems to create a greater contrast, as indeed a new paragraph for the third sentence which undermines the cohesion and also the coherence of the text. Whilst the first paragraph in Italian talks about the style of the painting and the painter, the last sentence, standing on its own, gives details about its provenance.

Other examples of adaptation found in the corpus are the result of the search for cultural adequacy (Bastin 2011: 4) or appropriateness in the target context. In (16) the cloud from the eruption of Vesuvius appears 'like a pine tree' in the sky.

(16)   La mattina del 24 agosto del 79 d.C., si sentì un boato nella regione vesuviana. Dal vulcano una nube di gas e pomici si proiettò in alto, *simile ad un pino*, ed oscurò il cielo.

On the morning of August 24, A.D. 79, a great noise was heard in the area around Vesuvius. *A mushroom shaped cloud* of gas and volcanic rock rose high in the air, darkening the sky. (Pompeii)

The shape of a Mediterranean pine tree will certainly be familiar to Italians, but the term is more likely to conjure up the image of a Christmas tree shape for Northern Europeans. 'A mushroom-shaped cloud' is a less culture-specific, more universal expression and therefore may be considered a more appropriate, explicit and comprehensible translation.

Idioms may or may not have equivalents in another language. The following example shows how the idiom, *vero e proprio fiore all'occhiello*, has been translated by using an idiom of similar meaning but dissimilar form

(Baker 1992: 74) and then integrating it to include the emphasis *true* and the specification *in the collection's cap*. Although this may be considered very successful from the perspective of a native speaker, it does raise the question of whether it is appropriate in ELF and for an international community.

(17)   Tra questi, oltre ad artisti italiani conosciuti in tutto il mondo quali Caravaggio, Tiziano, Raffaello, troverai anche moltissimi maestri fiamminghi di epoca barocca, *vero e proprio fiore all'occhiello* della collezione.

Amongst these, as well as the Italian artists of world renown such as Caravaggio, Tiziano, and Raffaello, you will also find many Flemish Old Masters from the baroque era, *true feathers in the collection's cap.* (Doria Pamphilj)

Adaptation may also take the form of explicitation, by which information that is implicit in the source text is made explicit in the target text. It can take many forms, linguistic and cultural, obligatory and optional. Here is an example of linguistic explicitation.

(18)   Comunque solo alla fine del secolo venne costruito un fortilizio (castrum) a pianta rettangolare, circondato da possenti mura in tufo e *con gli assi viari principali, decumano e cardo, disposti secondo i punti cardinali.*

Only at the end of that century a squared fortified post (castrum) was built. This castrum was surrounded by strong tufa walls and *its main road axes – the Cardus and the Decumanus – were north-south oriented and east-west oriented, respectively.* (Ostia Antica)

Here the explicitation is necessary in English because the expression 'cardinal points' suggests a static, precise place, and would not have conveyed the sense of direction.

However, it seems more relevant to extend the term to include cultural pragmatic explicitation (Pym 2005), which is of specific interest in this study because of the presumed lack of shared general knowledge between source and target language communities. Blum-Kulka refers to this as 'reader-focused shifts of coherence' (2000: 296). An example is in the Pompeii website where the technical word *testudinate* is explained very explicitly, albeit still in technical language and in a close translation.

(19)   A seconda del tipo di copertura l'atrio poteva essere:
- tuscanico, privo di colonne a sostegno delle falde inclinate del tetto;
- tetrastilo, con quattro colonne di sostegno agli angoli della vasca;
- corinzio, con la vasca circondata da più colonne;
- *testudinato*, chiuso al centro.

According to the type of roof it had, the atrium could be one of the following:
- Tuscanic, without columns to hold up the sloping sides of the roof;
- Tetrastyle, with four columns supporting the roof, placed at the corners of the pool;
- Corinthian, with the pool surrounded by a larger number of columns;
- *Testudinate*, which means arched or vaulted like a tortoise shell and here means closed in the center, i.e., without a compluvium. (Pompeii)

Often, however, there is no explanation given. The historical, political and/or social background and setting of events and lives in the relevant period and place are essential for a proper understanding of the information that is being transferred. In the following example where the description of Manzoni's family tragedies is mixed with a general observation about the historical period in which he was living, a non-Italian reader is left wondering what laws and injustice of the times are being referred to and in what way they affected Manzoni himself. The text seems to unreasonably presume a knowledge of the 'local' history.

(20)   An unexpected outcome of this by no means infelicitous union was the birth of twin baby girls, one stillborn, the other surviving her by only a few hours. Donna Teresa's grief and her age (by now she was 46) allowed illness and fatigue to enter those no longer happy rooms. The laws and injustice of the times, his marriages and the premature deaths of his sons and daughters (only Enrico and Vittoria survived him) were perhaps intended to create a silence around Manzoni, in which he would await his last visitor alone: his own death, which came on 22 May 1873. (House of Manzoni)

The most extreme example of adaptation can be found in the Milan Science and Technology Museum website where there was an actual rewriting of the text. It shows clearly how due consideration has been given to what a non-Italian visitor might expect.

(21)   Carro Armato
       DESCRIZIONE
       Il modello rappresenta un carro armato a forma di testuggine, rinforzato con piastre metalliche e aperto da un lato per poter vedere l'interno. E' sormontato da una torretta interna di avvistamento e armato di cannoni. Il movimento del carro è garantito da otto uomini che azionavano dall'interno un sistema di ingranaggi collegato alle quattro ruote.
       FUNZIONE
       Il carro è pensato per portare panico e distruzione tra i nemici.
       MODALITA' D'USO
       La direzione del fuoco poteva essere decisa dagli uomini posti nella parte alta del carro, da dove, attraverso delle strette fessure, potevano vedere il campo di battaglia.
       RIFERIMENTI BIBLIOGRAFICI:
       Scienza Tecnica "*Scienza e Tecnica di Leonardo/Artiglieria-Genio-Marina-Aeronautica*" 1952 Roma
       Sutera S. "*Leonardo / le fantastiche macchine di Leonardo da Vinci al Museo Nazionale della Scienza e della Tecnologia di Milano /disegni e modelli*" 2001 Milano argomento categoria: Armi lunghezza:1

       ARMOURED CAR
       "I shall make covered chariots, that are safe and cannot be assaulted; cars which fear no great numbers when breaking through the ranks of the enemy and its artillery. Behind them, the infantrymen shall follow, without fearing injury or other impediments".
       Leonardo's idea of sowing panic and destruction among the enemy troops was embodied in his design of a tortoise-shaped car, reinforced with metal plates, with an inner turret and armed with guns. The car was to be operated from inside by 8 men, who would turn the cranks to move the wheels. The notes on the drawing show that Leonardo had thought of replacing the men with horses, although he was soon turned off the idea by the thought that the animals might become restive in such a narrow and noisy environment. The firing direction would be decided by the men in the upper part of the car, from where they could see the battlefield through slits or portholes. *Codex Arundel, sheet 1030* (Museum of Science and Technology, Milan)

The original Italian version describing a model of Leonardo da Vinci's armoured car first gives information about its size, weight, differential gear

system, inventory number, material, etc. and is followed by a very schematic description, as appropriate for the classification and cataloguing of objects in a museum. In contrast, the English version is presented in a discursive style saying what it was, how it worked and the purpose it served, responding to the curiosity of visitors. It is also characterized by personalization, first with the quotation from Leonardo himself and then when he and his idea become the subjects of the sentences and the topic of the paragraph, rather than the armoured car. It is interesting to note that the website has changed its format since this analysis was made and the Italian text follows exactly the same content and wording as the English, a reflection of the changing attitudes to museum communication in Italy rather than the translation itself.

6. Concluding remarks

The website texts are informative and therefore, according to House's Recontextualization Model of Translation, suitable for a covert type of translation. The analysis, however, has shown that the translations of the museum websites tend to be literal, close to the source text and at times even word-for-word. They also show features, such as explicitation, transposition and modulation, that are common translation strategies, but nevertheless a feeling of foreignness frequently seems to permeate the translations. As English most probably is being used here as a lingua franca, this 'foreignized' English translation may not appear so foreign to the less competent ELF speakers.

However, the main issue with the translations is the question of culture. A large part of the ideational content of museum websites is inevitably culture specific, culture meant as the body of knowledge acquired socially and through education in a national context. Most of the museums use a highly technical and specialized vocabulary, and there are very few signs of popularisation or attempts to simplify the information. On the one hand, this could stimulate interest and curiosity in readers and give greater understanding of the specific topic or exhibit, encouraging them to investigate the subject further. On the other hand, it makes heavy demands on the level of knowledge required to understand and appreciate fully the content of the texts, which many visitors to the museums are unlikely to have. This is a consequence of the approach adopted by Italian museums and local visitors' expectations.

A more frequent application of House's 'cultural filter' would, therefore, seem an appropriate solution to the problems of text comprehension.

Mediterranean culture, history and artistic heritage, obviously well known to Italians, will not necessarily be familiar to all British or European visitors, not to mention visitors from other continents. Neil McGregor (2009), former Director of the British Museum, has expressed the need to 'de-Europeanise info' to make it clearer to people from outside Europe. It seems more consideration should be given to the pragmatic aspects, whether in the form of de-Europeanization or greater explicitation but, in any case, those related to greater contextualisation. The translations should start from a lower common denominator of knowledge about history, art and culture, especially in the Italian context, in order to achieve close functional equivalence between translations and source texts. If a high level of equivalence were achieved, the purposes of disseminating cultural knowledge to as wide a public as possible would be better served. House's proposal to place text "within a new set of relationships and culturally-conditioned expectations" seems to find corroboration in these translations.

The findings of the study raise the question of whether ELF can satisfactorily and successfully be used in translation. The use of English as a lingua franca certainly creates many challenges for the translator. How 'franca' can a lingua actually be? It has to take into account such a wide variety of speakers that the task of meeting all their needs, both linguistic and cultural, is formidable. Extract (3) with its religious references is a clear example; explanations would be superfluous for native speakers, Europeans and some speakers from Latin America, Africa and Asia, but they would probably be necessary for many global readers. Even accommodating numerous linguistic nuances and creative variations, the pragmatic cultural differences among speakers frequently defy acceptable levels of comprehension, and will continue to do so until, perhaps, a greater 'cultura franca' may somehow be formed. Translation is always a compromise between various options, never more so than when the target language is a lingua franca.

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