



MUSEUMS AND THEIR INTERNATIONAL VISITORS – WHAT MIGHT LINGUISTS CONTRIBUTE TO ENHANCING THEIR EXPERIENCE?

ROBIN CRANMER
UNIVERSITY OF WESTMINSTER

OUTLINE

- Can conventional translations meet International Visitor (IV) needs? Probably not ...
- Improving our understanding of IV needs – academic disciplines plus a collaborative project
- Ways of welcoming IVs – options for museums and galleries, roles for linguists

CAN TRANSLATIONS MEET INTERNATIONAL VISITOR NEEDS?



AWKWARDLY 'HYBRIDISED' TRANSLATIONS

German

**Im Britischen Museum ist der
Eintritt für alle Besucher
kostenlos.**

Das Museum ist täglich
geöffnet von 10.00–17.30.

[Öffnungszeiten](#)

[Verlängerte Öffnungszeiten](#)

French

**L'entrée au British Museum
est gratuite pour tous les
visiteurs.**

Le musée est ouvert tous les
jours de 10h00 à 17h30.

[Calendrier des horaires](#)

[d'ouverture](#)

[Horaires d'ouverture](#)

[nocturne](#)

COULD SUCH TEXTS PLAUSIBLY MEET IV NEEDS?

- The variety of readership expectations across languages - layout, visuals, representations etc.
- The variety of readership needs linked to broader cultural difference – values, cultural adaptation
- The limits of awkwardly ‘hybrid’ translations

MUSEUM AND GALLERY 'DISCOURSE'

- The visitor 'experience'
- The 'responsive', the 'inclusive' museum
- Can museums and galleries afford not to engage in meeting needs of International Visitors?

INTERNATIONAL VISITORS, MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES AND 'LINGUISTS'

- What forms of communication do IVs actually need in order to get the most out of their visits?
- How might museums and galleries realistically try to meet those needs?
- What role might linguists play in any of this?

SOME CONTRIBUTIONS TO THIS DEBATE



A FIRST 'FORM OF CONTRIBUTION'

- **Applied linguistics** ... Translation studies, Written Discourse Analysis
- **Social and Cultural Theory** ... Social Psychology, Intercultural Theory

A SECOND 'FORM OF CONTRIBUTION' – MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES WORKING WITH LINGUISTS



A 'COLLABORATIVE' PROJECT

- London museums and galleries working with University of Westminster linguists
- Aiming to produce 'culturally appropriate' leaflets
- Process involved pairing museums and galleries with linguists and a series of plenary workshops

SOME POSITIVE OUTCOMES OF PROJECT

- Less hybridised leaflets, hints of change
- For **museums and galleries** – improved intercultural understanding and some challenges
- For **linguists** – improved understanding of constraints on museums and galleries

SOME RESERVATIONS ABOUT PROJECT

- Cost, sustainability ...
- Linguistic preferences of IVs ignored
- A 'multicultural London' concept of welcome

WELCOMING INTERNATIONAL VISITORS – MOVING FORWARD

**NATIONAL PORTRAIT
GALLERY**

**Die größte
Porträtsammlung
der Welt**



SOME POSSIBLE AGENDAS

- Research agenda – better understanding of IVs
- Museums and galleries – some harsh decisions
- Linguists – contributing to research agendas and decision-making

OPTION A – TAKE IVs FIRST CULTURE AS CENTRE

ADVANTAGES

- Format is familiar to IVs
- Content actually meets needs
- A profound gesture of 'welcome'

DISADVANTAGES

- How will it meet constraints of cost, sustainability?
- Is it the form of welcome most IVs do or will want?

OPTION B – ‘INSIDER’/‘OUTSIDER’

ADVANTAGES

- Acknowledgement that IVs have different needs from domestic visitors
- A partial gesture of welcome
- Possible ‘Tool Kit’ option (principles for base text)?

DISADVANTAGES

- ‘Outsider’ is a large category
- IV needs very partially met
- Can one create a cultural common denominator ?

OPTION C – AN ‘ACCESSIBLE’ VERSION OF DOMINANT LANGUAGE

ADVANTAGES

- Meets aspirations of many IVs (with English)
- Analogies with domestic inclusion agenda
- Principles of text production (toolkit option?)

DISADVANTAGES

- Needs of domestic visitors are compromised
- The politics of language (post-colonialism, globalisation)

THE SHORTER TERM

- Culturally sensitive translation, localisation
- Language teachers
- Principles of text production

CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS



WAYS AHEAD

- Engaging with the issues
- No single solution, variety of contexts
- London's National Gallery, the Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, Braunschweig ...

CONTACT

Robin Cranmer
University of Westminster
London

r.p.cranmer@wmin.ac.uk

