

# Intercultural Interpretation Strategies in the Museum Context: The Case Study of a **Guided Visit** to the **Coach Museum** in Lisbon

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**Abstract** | A guided tour to the Coach Museum can either be a nightmare or a pleasant dream depending on the information guides convey about the vehicles exhibited. Lively visits may be provided where intercultural interpretation strategies are deployed, awakening in the tourist different kinds of emotions, from piety to amusement, from fantasy to reality. This paper discusses the different characteristics displayed by tourist guide interpretations at the Lisbon Coach Museum.

The author followed fifty professional guides during their tours at the museum, during the months of September and October 2009. The anthropological technique applied is direct observation. The study of tourist guides at their working context enables the identification of the intercultural skills developed by these professionals, such as their good knowledge and their language proficiency. However, some inappropriate attitudes were also detected. The interpretative strategies adopted in communication serve the scope of engaging tourists in the visit performance – questions, humour, storytelling, connections with the tourists' reality and fantasy. Although the information conveyed is similar, the interpretation strategies vary according to the tourists' nationality and to the guides and their personal characteristics.

Conclusions suggest that the appropriate intercultural communication skills and the effective use of intercultural interpretation strategies facilitate the change of the tourists' world representations.

**Keywords** | tourist guides, intercultural interpretation, Coach Museum, Lisbon.

**Resumo** | Uma visita guiada ao Museu dos Coches tanto pode ser um pesadelo como um sonho agradável, dependendo da informação que os guias intérpretes dão sobre os veículos em exposição. Podem fazer-se visitas muito animadas através do uso de estratégias interculturais que estimulam diferentes tipos de emoções no turista, da piedade ao divertimento, da fantasia à realidade.

Este artigo discute as características da interpretação utilizadas pelos guias intérpretes no Museu dos Coches, em Lisboa. O autor acompanhou cinquenta guias intérpretes profissionais nas suas visitas ao museu durante os meses de setembro e outubro de 2009. A técnica antropológica aplicada foi a observação direta.

O estudo dos guias intérpretes no seu contexto de trabalho permite a identificação das competências interculturais desenvolvidas por estes profissionais, tais como os seus bons conhecimentos e a sua proficiência linguística. Contudo,

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algumas atitudes menos apropriadas foram igualmente detetadas. As estratégias interpretativas adotadas na comunicação servem o objetivo de envolver os turistas na visita – questões, humor, pequenas histórias, ligações com a realidade dos turistas e fantasia. Embora a informação prestada seja semelhante, as estratégias interpretativas variam de acordo com a nacionalidade dos turistas, com os guias e as suas características pessoais.

As conclusões sugerem que as competências interculturais apropriadas e o uso efetivo de estratégias de interpretação intercultural facilitam a mudança das representações do mundo dos turistas.

**Palavras-chave** | guia intérprete, interpretação intercultural, Museu dos Coches, Lisboa.

## 1. Introduction

Tourism is, in its essence, a cultural and intercultural phenomenon. According to Rabotic (2010), the guide is an intermediary between the site and the tourist. In this intercultural relationship, tourist guides are attributed both the responsibility and the power of being providers of information – of hiding, showing, selecting and interpreting the information that is given to the tourist. Several authors have written about tourist guides, their role as information givers (Holloway, 1981) and interpreters (Almagor, 1985), pathfinders, mediators and leaders (Cohen, 1985) of intermediaries (Rabotic, 2010), their performance and discourse (Salazar, 2006), but very few have adopted an intercultural approach when analysing professional guide skills. In this regard several questions may arise, such as: Which are the intercultural communication and the interpretation strategies that tourist guides use when they explain heritage? Does their experience contribute to enhance intercultural communication competences and interpretation strategies?

Tourist guides are the essential interface between the host destination and the visitors. In fact, they are front-line employees who are very much responsible for the overall impression of and satisfaction with the tour services offered by a destination (Ap and Wong, 2001). Furthermore, Geva and Goldman (1991) found that the performance of a tourist guide is the key to the success of a tour. Pond (1993) describes the role of a tourist guide as a facilitator who knows

how and when to fulfill the roles of leader, educator, ambassador and host.

Arguably, it seems that the role of guides is changing. Recently, new roles have been attributed to guides whereas others are declining in importance. This is especially the case of two roles – pathfinder and information giver. Today, tourists easily access the GPS system, the Internet, I-phone, Podcast or any other new technologies, which help them in finding any tourist spot; maps, tips and all the kinds of spot specific information that have now become constantly available.

In this study, the author analyses tourist experiences in the context of a standard visit to the Coach Museum, in Lisbon (Figure 1). The core objective of this research is to distinguish information from interpretation and to understand the strategies guides deploy to interpret heritage and communicate with their audience.

## 2. Conceptual Frame

Guides work with culture and the main motivation of cultural tourism is to know, to discover and to explore heritage facets of a region or country. Among academics, the discussion is how to typify these motivations since the act of practicing tourism is already a cultural act. While many types of heritage can be consumed as products, they can also be enjoyed in an active or passive way, according to

the respective experience type tourists seek. When travelling, tourists may expect high quality, varied and unique experiences. As stated by T.P. (2006), four experience types can be considered and defined according to their content and the degree of tourist involvement (Figure 1).

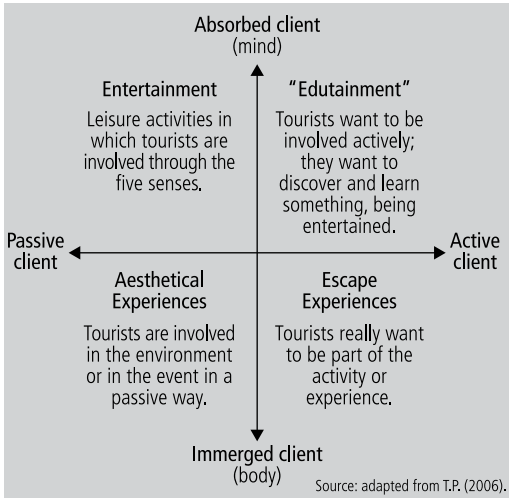


Figure 1 | Types of Experience.

As far as experience is concerned, the tourist guide plays a crucial role both in suggesting sensations and conveying emotions. Therefore, the experience of a guided tour is positioned in the upper part of Figure 1 – Absorbed client (mind) – and is connected both with entertainment and “edutainment”, depending on the passive (e.g.: guided tour) or the active (e.g.: guided treasure hunts) involvement of the tourist.

2.1. Tourist Information *versus* Heritage Interpretation

The concept of information is related to entropy, i.e. “randomicity, or absence of organization in a certain situation [...] Information is a measure of uncertainty or entropy in a situation. The more uncertain one is, the more information he needs” (Littlejohn, 1982: 153). The aim of information is to reduce, completely if possible, the uncertainty of the receiver. For a tourist guide, tourist information is a set of simple and precise data: transport options, timetables, numbers, monument locations, how to use maps, etc.

Information is a different concept from interpretation. Interpretation is personal, not repeatable and renders the unique character to guide speeches. In a very simple way, it may be said that interpretation is to reveal meanings, or to attribute meaning to something through a message. According to Tilden (1977: 8) interpretation is “an educational activity, which aims to reveal meanings and connections through the use of original objects, direct experience and illustrative means, instead of simply to communicate factual information”.

In its Internet site, the NAI (National Association for Interpretation) defines interpretation as “a communication process, which is based on the mission of establishing emotional and intellectual connections between the interests of an audience and the meanings inherent to a resource” (www.interpnet.com). We can distinguish between information and interpretation through comparing the two columns of Table 1.

Table 1 | Differences between information and interpretation

Information	Interpretation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Communication process</li><li>• Point out objects</li><li>• Set of organised data</li><li>• Informative activity</li><li>• Indirect experience</li><li>• Impersonal</li><li>• It may be repeated</li><li>• Result of processing, manipulating and organising data</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Communication process</li><li>• Reveal meanings</li><li>• Complex message</li><li>• Educational activity</li><li>• Direct experience</li><li>• Personal</li><li>• Unrepeatable</li><li>• To establish emotional and intellectual connections between an audience and the resource</li></ul>

Source: Brito (2010).

## 2.2. Intercultural Communication Competence for Guiding

Intercultural Communication Competence is defined as a “system of knowledge and skills enabling us to communicate successfully with people from other cultures” (Klyukanov, 2005: 227). In the case of guiding, cultural mediation consists in establishing connections between the audience and the resource. Therefore, intercultural competence for guiding is defined as “The degree to which a guide is capable of being an effective cultural mediator” (Yu *et al.*, 2001: 77). Tourist guides must have relevant competences in two or more cultures to act effectively as mediators, i.e. they have to be bicultural or multicultural to deeply understand the visitor.

Intercultural skills may be presented in different forms. The ICOPROMO Project (ECML, 2007) proposes the development of several skills, which are crucial for tourist guides. The first one is the awareness of the self and the other that implies a deep analysis of norms, values, beliefs and behaviours and is the starting point towards accepting, understanding and enjoying otherness.

The second one is communication across cultures, defined as “communication on the basis of respect for individuals and equality of human rights as the democratic basis for social interaction” (Byram *et al.*, 2002: 9). One has to be correspondingly aware of the non-verbal communication, the most important component of intercultural communication, because it may reinforce or contradict verbal communication.

The third one is acquisition of cultural knowledge, divided into general and specific knowledge. General knowledge relates to the world and may be defined as the perception people have about the others, the way they interact and how it affects their behaviour. But more specific knowledge of a society could also prove beneficial in facilitating intercultural relations.

The fourth one is sense-making, related to the capacity of dealing with new information, uncertainty and ambiguity and of processing these elements in a way coherent with pre-existing cultural frameworks.

It also includes the capacity of interpreting and relating facets of the world and of discovering and interacting, creating new knowledge.

The fifth one is perspective-taking, a difficult skill, because it requires the individual to look at reality from a different viewpoint, reducing or cancelling ethnocentrism. It is a difficult task because every individual has his/her own beliefs and values, most of them taken for granted and unconscious. The adoption of a different perspective is based on empathy, flexibility, decentering, open-mindedness and coping with ambiguity.

In this paper, three types of intercultural competences are considered: knowledge, attitudes and interpersonal communication skills. These competences are defined below, based on the before presented models and adapted to guiding.

Knowledge (cognitive competence) is the amount of information that the tourist guide possesses on the tourist site, its attractions and products. However, this also incorporates a deep knowledge of the culture s/he is interpreting and the tourist culture (verbal and non-verbal language, communication styles, values, social codes, artefacts). A guide who is fluent in both the language of the tourist and the language of the host faithfully translates the culture of the place and successfully contributes to intercultural exchange. Thus, s/he provides the tourist with a deep insight into the destination, s/he can help tourists understand and accept local customs without passing value judgment on them and s/he can show visitors how to act to avoid possible cultural shock. In order to develop these competences, a guide should travel to other countries to be acquainted with the geography, the history, the society, and the culture of his/her guests.

Attitudes (affective) have to do with the personality of the individual and include motivations, tolerance, and the ability to overcome stereotypes. Attitudes are also related to the respect and empathy for both visitors and hosts. The guide's attitude will leave a lasting impression on the tourist about the destination, because tourists look at the guide as a representative of the whole national population, with whom they

usually have limited contact, whereas hosts look at the guide as the representative of a group of tourists. From the guide’s perspective, it is important to realise which is the best attitude in each different situation. For instance: how to behave on a coach with Christians, Jews and two Muslim ladies wearing *burka*.

Interpersonal communication skills and behaviour must be both appropriate and effective. They define the guide’s capacity of actually acting as an effective cultural broker in situations of intercultural misunderstanding or conflict. Guides must constantly negotiate shared meanings and communicate with dissimilar individuals. For instance, a gesture may be misunderstood in intercultural communication and cause trouble. Such is the case with holding the lobe of one’s ear between thumb and forefinger and moving it back and forth – meaning “good” in Portugal and “gay” in Italy. Table 2 shows the suggested intercultural competences for tourist guides.

2.3. Intercultural Interpretation Strategies

Guides establish connections between the tourists’ world and the tourist destination to approach both cultures by resorting to the above mentioned

strategies. These strategies are only used by experienced guides, who hold the intercultural competences presented in the previous section, when they want to impart energy to their narratives and enhance comprehension of heritage.

Table 3 shows examples of three information/interpretation levels. The lines present four types of attractions suggested by Smith (2003). The columns represent three different levels of information/interpretation of several Portuguese attractions for English speaking tourists. According to Tilden (1977), when the same attractions are presented to another audience, the interpretation should be different, as it always has to be tourist centred.

In other words, Table 3 illustrates some practical examples of how intercultural interpretation can change basic information (recognising column) into interpretation (understanding column) or even into intercultural interpretation (applying column), giving the tourist intangible emotions based on the five senses (passive mind), but at the same time increasing the tourist’s knowledge (active mind)<sup>1</sup>.

Besides the above mentioned intangible experiences, cognitive based intercultural interpretation

<sup>1</sup> See Figure 1.

Table 2 | Intercultural competences for tourist guides

Knowledge	Attitude	Behaviour
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– To be in possession of the necessary information about the tourist destination, its resources, attractions and products available to the tourist</li><li>– To have a proficiency language level (C1* of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages as minimum level to guide visitors and B2** for the guide area-specific qualification) in the language of the tourist and in the local language</li><li>– To hold deep understanding about the culture that s/he interprets and the culture of the tourist (verbal and non-verbal language, communication styles, values, social codes, artefacts)</li><li>– To be well acquainted with the geography, history and society both of the tourist’s place of origin and the tourist destination</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Openness</li><li>– Tolerance towards difference</li><li>– Empathy and critical respect for the tourist and his/her culture</li><li>– Empathy and critical respect for the host community and its culture</li><li>– Focus tourist information and adjust it according to the tourist</li><li>– Adopt the other’s perspective</li><li>– Research and develop accurate information aiming to improve commentary</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– To have an appropriate and effective performance in accordance with the communication profession s/he performs</li><li>– To use verbal and non-verbal language suitable to the working context</li><li>– To act as a cultural mediator facilitating cultural exchange and communication</li><li>– To correctly use the tourists’ social codes</li></ul>

\* Level C1 - Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognise implicit meaning. Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes. Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices (Council of Europe, 2001:24).

\*\* Level B2 - Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options (Council of Europe, 2001:24).

Source: Brito (2010).

Table 3 | Information/Interpretation levels (English speaking public)

Information	Interpretation	Intercultural Interpretation
Basic: Recognising	Advanced: Understanding	Proficient: Applying
A. Built Heritage		
That is <i>Batalha</i> Monastery. It was built in the 14 <sup>th</sup> century, in gothic style, under the orders of King John I.	<i>Batalha</i> (battle, in English) Monastery is called so, because it was built after a Portuguese victory in a battle against the Spaniards.	The English helped the Portuguese. Besides, the gothic architecture has English influences, because king John I of Portugal married Philippa of Lancaster, the daughter of John of Gaunt (son of Edward III) – <b>alliance, family and love.</b>
B. Natural Heritage		
That is a cork oak field.	The bark of the tree is used for isolation of heat, humidity and vibrations and to make bottle stoppers.	The NASA uses Portuguese cork to isolate space shuttles – <b>collaboration, connecting tradition with innovation.</b>
C. Industrial Heritage		
There are many windmills along the Portuguese coast.	Portuguese windmills are round. They don't follow the European model, but the Arab one.	But new mills are not used to grind cereals but to produce electricity, using the energy of the wind – <b>connecting tradition and innovation.</b>
D. Literary or Artistic Heritage		
Several foreign writers described Sintra in the 19 <sup>th</sup> century	They <b>all</b> loved the nature and the romantic atmosphere of Sintra	One of them was Lord Byron, who lived in Hotel Lawrence. It has a perfect atmosphere for a five o'clock tea. Shall we have tea there? – <b>comfort, home.</b>

Source: Brito (2010).

strategies may also include connections and comparisons of the interpreted heritage with the tourists' own world, memories and fantasy, storytelling and strategies leading to the direct participation of tourists in the interpretation, such as humour and questions.

2.4. The National Coach Museum

According to its official Internet site, the National Coach Museum (NCM) was founded by Queen Amelia of Orleans, in 1905, in the former 18<sup>th</sup> century royal riding school attached to Belem Palace, which is now the official residence of the Portuguese President of the Republic. The collection includes over 50 vehicles divided in two rooms: on the ground floor – coaches, berlins, sedan chairs, carriages, etc., and other objects related to horse riding on display in one room on the first floor. The most important vehicles are the 16<sup>th</sup>/17<sup>th</sup> century

coach of Filipe II of Portugal, the three 18<sup>th</sup>-century coaches of the Portuguese Embassy to Pope Clement XI and a 19<sup>th</sup> century coach used by Queen Elisabeth II of England.

The NCM is the most visited museum in the country, both by national and foreign tourists. In 2009, there were 197,718 visitors, 141,284 non-nationals and 56,434 Portuguese citizens<sup>2</sup>. Tourist guides typically visit the two rooms on the ground floor where the most important vehicles can be seen. They usually explain 12 to 15 coaches (Figure 2). If they have time, they suggest a quick visit to the first floor, where the less relevant coaches are kept. Unfortunately, there is no room for large groups.

<sup>2</sup> Statistical information kindly provided by Mrs. Marto, from MNC, in January 2010, and partially published on the website of the Portuguese Institute of Museums (www.ipmuseus.pt).

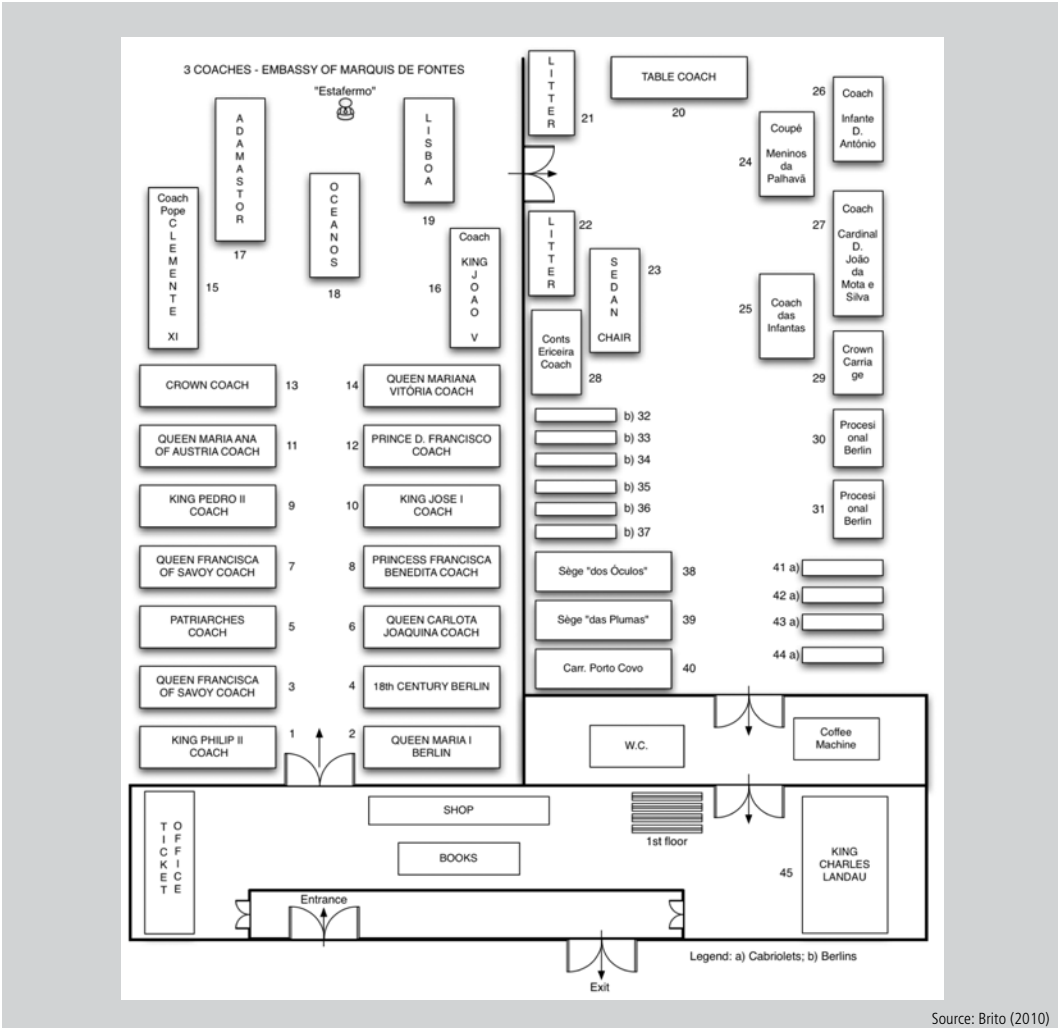


Figure 2 | Schematic plan of the National Coach Museum.

### 3. Method

Guides are overall cultural mediators, heritage interpreters and leaders. Although their knowledge can easily be tested by means of questionnaires, the study of their attitudes and behaviours has to be carried out using other investigation techniques, such as direct/participant observation.

Considering this, the direct/participant observation anthropological technique was used in this research, being defined as the "direct involvement

of the field researcher with the social group studied, within the parameters of the group standards" (Iturra, 1987:149).

This stage of the fieldwork consisted on "being present and involved in a social situation to record and interpret it, trying not to change its features" (Peretz, 2000:13), i.e. "to see in the actions the forms of culture and the knowledge of the people" (Peretz, 2000:36). Following the same author, a field diary and an observation report were written, in order to interpret the collected data.

The NCM was chosen for the observation of guides because of its following excellent conditions for such research: (i) the visit is very structured (the pathway cannot be changed from the entrance to the exit (Figure 2), even though guides can select which coaches they want to interpret along the route); (ii) it is a round tour, meaning that guides return to the starting point; (iii) the visit is short (lasting from 20 to 40 minutes); and (iv) neither too much noise nor other circumstances hinder the guides’ audibility. Typically, guided visits include only the ground floor. The plan (Figure 2) gives a good idea of the museum vehicle layout in the two ground floor rooms.

Fifty guides and 1,281 tourists were observed (Table 4), intermittently, in September and October 2009. Most of them were French tourists. Guides and tourists were observed at random. The initial aim was to record the behaviour patterns of tourists and guides as well as deviations to those patterns. However, as data were classified, the idea of organising them according to guide intercultural skills (knowledge, attitudes, behaviour) took shape and a table was prepared. Afterwards, the data were analysed and categorized to enable researcher understanding of the interpretation strategies used by tourist guides.

The researcher followed 50 guided visits, observing guide and tourist behaviours and trying not to interact or talk with the tourists, whenever possible. However, when a tourist started talking to the researcher, he obviously had to answer. For that reason, this research technique is called direct/participant observation.

The researcher registered professional guide and tourist behaviour patterns, but the observation concentrated above all on the extent of the guides’ intercultural skills and cultural heritage interpretation strategies. It also registered some tourist behaviour typologies. The research began with the prior analysis of figures and historical data on the NCM, held in its library and collecting basic information on the monument. The museum was already familiar to the researcher, who was a tourist guide for 20 years and led countless visits to the museum.

On the first day observation focused on the museum’s employees and the interpersonal relations they establish among them and with the tourists and the guides. Observation began on the second day. The researcher waited at the museum entrance for the tourist parties and asked the guide whether he could follow the visit. If the answer was positive<sup>3</sup>, he would discretely follow the group, usually right behind the last client. Observation consisted on listening to the guide, looking at the selected coaches, observing the behaviour of both the guide and the tourists and writing some notes, which were completed after the visit.

At the end of each visit, the researcher talked with the guide, offered him/her a honey drop for the throat and collected some extra information about the party, such as the total party number, the circumstances of the visit, impressions of the

<sup>3</sup> No guide refused to be observed, although two guides were rather reluctant.

Table 4 | Tourist parties observed in the National Coach Museum

Language/Nationality	Nr. of parties	Total nr. of tourists
French	17	556
Germans	5	129
Americans	5	125
Italians	4	98
Spanish	2	63
Portuguese	3	50
Other English speaking (Israeli, Chinese and Japanese)	3	84
Mixed (several languages)	11	176
Total	50	1281

Source: Brito (2010).

guide about the tourists and other data, which would complete the observations. After that, the investigator mentally reviewed the visit and wrote his final comments.

The researcher also evaluated guide language skills. This was done instinctively because that is his everyday work as a teacher, language coordinator and member of the official jury evaluating candidates to the national tourist guide examination (for 15 years). The European system of language skills evaluation was used due to its simplicity and clarity, dividing competences into levels A1, A2, B1, B2, C1 and C2<sup>3</sup>.

#### 4. Results and Findings

A pattern to Coach Museum visits may be established by means of the 18 most interpreted coaches. Tourist guides (G) convey the same information about the dates, owners of the coaches and their styles but a different interpretation was given for the same vehicles. The most interpreted vehicle was the Oceans coach. The maximum number of coaches interpreted was 21 and the minimum was zero (two guides conducting regular tours just gave a general account of the museum). The average visit lasted 31 minutes.

Most parties were French, as shown in Table 4 (along with the Italians, French are the most frequent cultural touring clients in Europe). Sometimes tourists verbalised how lovely the museum was. However, tourists' attention changes along the visit. Four different attitudes were observed:

- Participant – tourists ask and answer questions and there is dialogue.
- Attentive – tourists listen to their guide but don't talk.
- Variable – tourists take pictures, read signs and listen to the guide.
- Absent – tourists walk away from their guide after some time.

Arguably, these four attitudes are related to different factors, above all, the communication skills of the guide, but also to the existence of a real interest in the museum, the attraction exercised by the coaches and their magnificence, the environment and the actions of the other people around.

In general, guides revealed good knowledge about the coaches. Nevertheless, many guides made some typical mistakes, passing on inaccurate information or changing details on purpose. For instance, they exaggerate about the number of coaches that made up the Embassy of King João V to Pope Clement XI or its wealth (G4: "The coaches are covered with gold"; G5: "Our embassy was constituted by 15 coaches"<sup>4</sup>).

They also incorrectly explain the coat-of-arms on one coach to justify it as belonging to the natural sons of King João V (G2: "The coat-of-arms of King João V is askew because this coupé belonged to three natural sons of the king and a nun").

They sometimes exaggerate the wealth of the Portuguese royal family in the 18<sup>th</sup> century (G11: "King João V can be compared with the Sun King, Louis XIV, for his power and wealth"; G17: "The crown coach is what you could call a show-off coach"; G17: "The coach of Queen Maria Ana of Austria was built to impress"). The objective in using the hyperboles is to impress the tourists, granting magnificence to both coaches and their owners. The information is not always accurate, but guides pass it on clearly and in an understandable and organised way.

Guides usually have a proficiency level in the languages they speak, between B2 (12 guides = 24.4%) and C2 (11 guides = 22.4%). However,

<sup>3</sup> The Common European Framework divides learners into three broad divisions, which in turn can be divided into six levels: A Basic User (A1 Breakthrough or beginner and A2 Waystage or elementary); B Independent User (B1 Threshold or intermediate and B2 Vantage or upper intermediate); C Proficient User (C1 Effective Operational Proficiency or advanced and C2 Mastery or proficiency).

<sup>4</sup> There were really only 5 Portuguese coaches.

most guides have attained the C1 level (26 guides = 52.9%). When levels C1 and C2 are considered together, three fourths (75.3%) of professionals are above the minimum language level for guiding while one fourth have the minimum level (24.4%).

The use of sayings and idiomatic expressions in the language of the tourist generates a positive effect (G 17: "It's a show-off coach"; G 38: "Time is money"; G 40: "This is the origin of the Italian idiomatic expression *fare il portoghese*"<sup>5</sup>). This kind of vocabulary synthesis facilitates comprehension and cancels out any remaining doubt. Another important factor is the concatenation of ideas. The speech has to flow naturally and each fact has to be connected both to the previous and the following one (only two guides revealed difficulties in this area).

As far as attitudes are concerned, profession related technical issues were analysed, as well as non-verbal expression. For instance, performing one of their relevant roles – heritage preservation – guides always advised tourists of the existence of two rules: "photos with flash are forbidden" and "touching the coaches is prohibited". The imposition of rules also serves another aim: leadership. Many tourists consciously ignored the first rule; whereas the second was generally obeyed (only ten tourists were seen touching the coaches). Unfortunately, sometimes tourists visibly expressed their rejection of the guide's instructions, expressing a snobbish and arrogant attitude that could be seen in their faces and gestures.

Sometimes overly long descriptions are given or the visit takes too long becoming a sort of academic lecture. Instead, the role of guides is to entertain while educating (edutainment), as showed in Figure 1. Another behavioural failing is related to the objects used to point out details on the coaches, such as small flags, plastic bottles, rolled-up magazines, and so forth. The use of such objects is neither aesthetic nor appropriate for either the museum or the professional guide and certainly decreases the global perception of the tour.

Some mistakes were also detected in the positioning of both guides and parties. Guides do not give clear instructions regarding where to stand for the best view and also give way to other groups and independent visitors in the museum. In addition, some guides stand between their clients and the coach preventing tourists from clearly seeing the lower part of the vehicle or they only point out details very vaguely. The use of laser pointers, schemes and other props is recommended even if no guide currently uses them.

Non-verbal communication also influences comprehension. Most guides smile and have an informal and pleasant attitude. They display their own styles, eloquent and convincing, as you would expect from a good communicator. Nevertheless, sometimes gestures are not appropriate and they reveal hidden tension or even hostility. Hand, eye and facial expressions, usually with a nice voice modulation, are in keeping with verbal expressions. Attitudes are generally adapted to the clients and their nationality.

Questions are an important motivation strategy for guides. Sometimes they are rhetoric questions. They are used to inform, retain the attention of tourists, and clarify doubts, while also being entertaining, they improve interaction and even test the clients' knowledge about the tour (G9: "Do you have any questions?"; G 16: "What is a patriarchate?" and then she explains; G24: "What is the difference between a coach and a berline?"; G28: "Who was King Afonso VI? Do you remember?"). These facts contradict the idea that guiding involves a monologue. Although monologue predominates, well-guided visits include significant interaction through dialogue.

<sup>5</sup> In Italy, when someone gets through the entrance of a theatre or stadium without paying, Italians say they "do it the Portuguese way". Legend tells the Portuguese who were in Rome for the Embassy of King João V to Pope Clement XI were offered a free evening show. At the entrance, they just had to say they were Portuguese to attend the show for free. Actually, nobody knows a real reason for this Italian idiomatic expression.

Curious tourists ask many questions, sometimes not directly related with the museum, and guides politely answer. The most common questions are: How many horses did they need to pull the coaches? What is the weight of a coach? Which materials were used to build the coaches? Obviously tourists want to be impressed. Accordingly, many guides anticipate questions, showing the depth of their professional experience, leadership skills and good control of the visit.

Another key interpretative feature is humour, which was used by 36 guides (72%). The most common anecdote regards the evacuation system in the Filipe II of Portugal coach (G1: "The system of evacuation of this coach is a round hole under the seat, possibly the toilet of the coach"; G18: "The toilet of Philip II"; G19: "A hole to relieve himself"). However, it is interesting to note that the reaction is not always the same. Sometimes people laugh; sometimes they do not. Of course, it all depends on how the joke is told and on how amused and relaxed tourists are.

Countless illegal romantic relations also seem to work fine, as well as spicy details about the personal behaviour of kings and queens or bizarre 18<sup>th</sup> century fashion (G5: "In the 18<sup>th</sup> century ladies wore very high wigs. The top of this sedan-chair was pulled up while the ladies were seating down to keep the wig in the upright position"; G15: "King Afonso VI had shot all the bullets before the wedding with Maria Francisca of Savoy, so his brother had to substitute him, both at home and on the throne"; "King José I used this black coach to visit his mistress"). Tourists laugh or smile with this staged or improvised humour, which is a key to the guides' interpretation. The best guides actually use this strategy in their own style, according to the language spoken and engaging the fantasies of their clients.

Quality interpretation includes a lot of storytelling besides information. Coaches are often related to other monuments visited before, to places and characters known by the tourists or to their home country (G 9: "There is a story about this coach called

*The exchange of the princesses*"; G 10: "This coach is a bit macabre. It may recall the story of Jack, the ripper, in 19<sup>th</sup> century London"; G 11: "I'll tell you why you say *fare il portoghese*"; G28: "Remember the king that was locked up as a prisoner in Sintra?"). The scope is always to set references that help in understanding the history, culture and habits of the Portuguese people.

But guides also connect the visit with intangible elements, such as feelings, values and lifestyle. Examples of these are the atmosphere of an Embassy to Pope Clement XI, the description of a royal wedding, or even gossip and scandal in the Portuguese court. Some stories aim to provoke compassion and piety, such as the shooting of the royal family in 1910, the cruel extinction of the Távora family or the never-ending trip from Madrid to Lisbon made by King Filipe II. Alliance and friendship with other European courts, especially the French and the Austrian, are mentioned, not only to make a connection, but also to prove the wealth and power of the Portuguese court in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Quite significant is the relationship between the past and the present. A good example is the comparison of old coaches with present cars (G 7: "The crown coach is like an 18<sup>th</sup> century Rolls-Royce"; G 13: "The berline of Queen Mary I? It was like a Maserati"; G 16 and G 24: "Think of the museum as a family garage".) This strategy makes them more familiar and their owner (the Other) more similar to us (the Self). Several guides use these strategies, evoking the intangible notion of home, family and everyday life (see Table 3).

Some of the most pleasant and charming connections are made with reverie and relate to childhood universes. For instance, one of the coaches is called the "Cinderella coach" due to its very feminine decoration, its curved and wavy lines and its elegant baroque style (G 5, G 13, G 15, G 17, G 25 and G 40); a carriage evokes Sherlock Holmes and 19<sup>th</sup> century life in London (G10); and another one is sometimes related to the adventures of Jack the Ripper (G 10). These stories produce a magic and

amusing smile in the face of the tourists who recall their own childhoods, their pasts and a fairy-tale world. Only six guides did not use storytelling during the museum visit and hence deemed deviations to the norm. Three of these were speaking in English to the tour leader who then translated the content into the language of the tourists, two of them were guiding regular tours in several languages and one guide who was apparently too tired to work appropriately.

Another three professionals (G 15 guiding Italian, G 24 guiding French and G 38 guiding American parties) also represent a deviation to the general pattern. They surprised the researcher due to the quality of their interpretation, wisely changing their speech from entertainment to education and skilfully using a full range of interpretation strategies. The way these guides deployed information and entertainment was deeply related to the nationality of the clients and the guide's personal style. For that reason, it was unique, unrepeatable and cannot be converted into any sort of general receipt.

Guide 24, who was working in Italian, constantly combined information and questions, storytelling and humour, with erotic connotations, fantasy and comparisons between the coaches and cars. The guide who was working in French was above all a very good communicator. She controlled the language easily and was perfect in the way she connected the ideas. Her most important skills were the capacity of synthesizing history and telling stories, thus establishing many connections between France and Portugal.

The guide who was working with Americans was exuberant. One could tell she was quite familiar with American tourists, because she knew exactly how to give them the references they needed in order to facilitate comprehension of the coaches. She selected words they could easily understand – for instance she would not say “in the 18<sup>th</sup> century” but “300 years ago” or “one hundred years have passed between this coach and the previous one”; she used many idiomatic expressions and sayings,

such as “*time is money*”, “*to fall apart*”, “*show-off*” and “*I’m in the dark*”, with double meanings. She was constantly interacting with clients asking them questions about the coaches and comparing them with contemporary cars in several details (car lights, safety and cost reduction while retaining performance levels) thereby keeping them motivated. She was an excellent storyteller; she knew how to use her clients’ imagination and above all she knew American humour and its limits very well, suggesting eroticism and telling jokes without offending her clients’ feelings.

The interpretation strategies used by the last three guides were partly similar: language resources, humour, erotic references, sex, power and money references, fantasy, storytelling, and etc. However, verbal expressions (semantic fields, intonation, rhythm, tone, voice volume) and non-verbal expressions (face, eyes, hands, and body) were used in completely different ways. For such reason, it is impossible to commute interpretations. They would lose all meaning and would become ridiculous if translated into a different language.

## 5. Conclusions

Tourist guides are an essential element in the tourism experience. They play an important role in the tourists’ learning process. They could and should make a better contribution towards heritage preservation, conveying responsible tourism messages and playing a more active role in sustainability. However, unfortunately, they are not sufficiently trained to achieve this. As they are good communicators in foreign languages, they are furthermore familiar with the tourists’ own references and thus tourists would better understand their preservation messages. Within this process, guides should draw tourist attention to the importance of heritage while simultaneously explaining its relevance. Tourists thereby become aware of heritage and understand

it with comprehension leading to respect. As tourists become keen on heritage, they themselves start contributing towards sustainability.

Although guides show good knowledge about the Coach Museum, they sometimes make (un)conscious mistakes about historical data even while the aim is usually to impress the tourists. 75% of guides have a proficiency language level (C1 according to the European framework) and they build clear and well-organized speeches, using idiomatic expressions, hyperboles and other figures of speech. Some guides insist on academic speech whereas they should be blending education and entertainment.

Guides use entertaining strategies to nurture active tourist attention, such as questions and humour. Working with questions can be quite motivating for tourist involvement with the site or the museum. Besides, when tourists provide answers to the questions they are, in a certain way, playing the role of the guide. That makes them feel like the leaders of their party for a moment.

On the other hand, good quality humour also draws tourists in. Nevertheless, to this end, knowing the type and limits of humour for each nation and culture is vital, in order to keep control within the guided tour context. Furthermore, tourists should also be able to participate in the jokes as one joke leads onto another and people have to feel they are part of the event, contributing to whatever is happening.

Leadership is also a crucial role of guides. This requires not only keeping control over different situations on a tour but also making sure tourists respect basic rules. In this matter, guides have to be aware that when explaining a rule, their voice or their body language cannot run counter to what they are saying. Otherwise, that rule simply shall not be followed because non-verbal language always prevails over verbal language.

As intercultural mediators, besides conveying information, guides give different interpretations of the coaches, even while presenting the same data. Good quality interpretation changes according to

the nationality of the tourists. Interpretation is not translatable from one language to another exactly because it is directly related to the respective tourist's culture. Therefore, interpretation has a unique style and aims to motivate tourists and create emotions through their memories. Representations of the world may slowly and unconsciously change after a tour, following substitution by new representations. Arguably, in this eternal process, cultural change may occur. Indeed, further studies as to the depth and extent of such change are needed in other museums and tourists' sites, as well as studies on the communication and interpretation strategies used by the guides and explored in this paper.

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