

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

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#### **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?

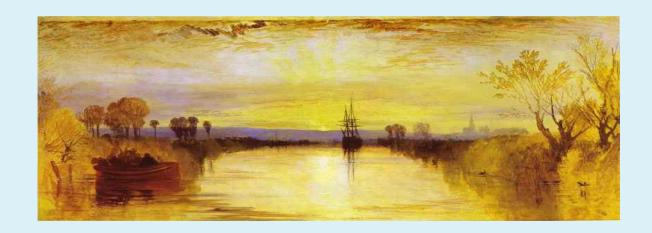
### INTERNATIONAL VISITORS, MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES AND 'LINGUISTS'

 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 ...

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