Stylistic features of museum and tourism discourse:

Delhi National Museum and

Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya

The language of museum discourse belongs to the wider area of tourism discourse, and it has different levels of expressions: on the one hand, this language represents an instance of highly specialized discourse used by experts in the field of tourism to communicate with one another; on the other, when it is adopted in interactions between specialists and non-specialists, it tends to be more similar to general discourse (e.g. think about what you can read in information panels and captions in museums).

The lexis of the language of tourism displays specific characteristics:

1) Monoreferentiality (in a given context only one meaning is allowed)

2) Conciseness (shortest possible form and reduction of lexical surface via blending, acronym, abbreviation etc.)

3) The relationship with general language (from general language via metaphorisation, neologism, etc.)

4) The relation with other specialized languages (drawing on other semantic fields)

5) The use of emphatic language (a very emphatic and highly evaluative vocabulary, hyperbole)

Brochures are advertising materials produced to attract the traveller, to present and ‘sell’ a tourist product; they inform, but above all they aim to persuade the reader through predictable features of the genre, standardised formulae and technical terminology. Tourist texts are primarily oriented towards a performative aim, they propose to the tourist a series of action to be accomplished.

The notion of ‘implied tourist’ (Federici 2006, 2007 cf. Umberto Eco’s theory of ‘implied reader’): the rhetorical and textual structures of the brochure invite the reader to follow a specific path and to act, to produce an action, after reading it. However, differently from the implied reader enclosed in a narrative world where the suggested paths remain at a cognitive level, in the brochure the proposed routes can really be discovered and experienced. At a pragmatic level, the tourist reads and follows the instructions/indications and can accept them, take the advice, and if s/he does so the performative aim will be fulfilled. Considering communicative transaction, pragmatic action and semantic interaction with the context, brochures can be seen as sociocultural messages, forms of discourse in a definitive context and they reflect a social activity expressed through cultural and linguistic codes that perform a communicative act with the reader.

Points to reflect on:

How do readers construct their text worlds when they approach tourist materials/museum texts? What kind of effect do these texts try to generate in readers? How do they pragmatically function?

“Modality is the term given to those aspects of language which express a speaker’s attitude to a particular subject” (Gavins 2007: 91)

“[we need to be aware of] the textual processes by which the fundamental features of time and space are constructed for a text world and some of the parameters of the social world in which human participants act are set up” (Jeffries 2010: 146)

Analyse the two tourist texts (National Museum-Delhi and Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya), in particular by taking into account the following areas:

* Deixis
* Paratext and other semiotic resources
* Exemplifying and enumerating
* Modality
* Text World Theory
* Schema theory
* Vocabulary and register
* Ideology
* Point of view
* Metaphor
* Foregrounding
* Evaluative language