AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE LAYOUT FEATURES OF TEXTS INTRODUCING MUSEUMS IN LONDON

Nguyen Thi Thuy Hang[1], Nguyen Thi Quynh Hoa[2]

[1]*Master Student Course 29 (2014-2016), English Language Major; nguyenthithuyhang0181@gmail.com*
[2]*University of Foreign Language Studies - The University of Danang; quynhhoandng@gmail.com*

Abstract - Layout with its characteristics and functions have attracted much attention of many linguists and researchers. Discovering the marvel of the layout features and applying them in writing texts are always a matter of endlessness. In a text in general and a text introducing museum (TIM) in particular, the layout plays an important role in arranging ideas as well as sections. Thanks to the layout features employed in TIMs, readers are able to master the content of the text in a logical and effective way. This paper attempts to identify and analyze the layout features used in English texts introducing museums (ETIMs) to discover the patterns and the components used in ETIMs. The findings of this study can be applied in writing TIMs for tourism.

Key words - museums; layout; texts introducing museums; components; patterns

1. Rationale

With the development of the tourism industry nowadays, museums are wonderful destinations for tourists. Museums provide a unique interactive experience of getting up close to things we usually only see in books, newspapers or on television. Seeing the original Mona Lisa on permanent display at the Louvre Museum in Paris, for example, is a totally different experience to seeing one of millions of printed versions. Despite the competition of modern communication technologies, museums still play an irreplaceable role in presenting and telling about the heritage.

In terms of education, going to a museum can bring to life what is taught in school by seeing arte-facts or paintings. For example, if children are learning about the Romans and they go to an exhibition full of armour and weapons dating from that period, they are more likely to find it interesting and want to learn more about it. Research also shows that those who have had firsthand experience of such information are more likely to retain it in later life. Museums can then be an extremely valuable source of creativity, as many people find they are inspired and subsequently want to try such activities themselves. An important function of museums is not only to inform about the past but also to inspire people to take interest in their culture and history in order not to lose the sense of roots and continuation.

Museums are also instrumental to research. For many people undertaking research, museums provide an unrivalled wealth of information and resources as well as access to archives, scholars and highly trained professionals. It is the introduction about museums that brings visitors an overview of the museums they want to visit. It should strive to catch the readers' attention and make them concerned. The visitors often wish not only to learn more about the exhibits but also to think about the past and its links to the present time. Therefore, if the visitors are provided with appropriate and sufficient information about museums, they are eager to discover all the museums.

Texts Introducing Museums (TIMs) which usually appears on the homepage or on the *about us* page of the official website of a museum strive to gain the favour of visitors and to communicate the value of the heritage in a variety of interactional ways. Any type of text is embedded in a communicative situation. Therefore, its form is influenced by several factors that constitute the given situation and must be considered in linguistic features as well. As a matter of fact, in any discourse, how words are arranged can have a positive or negative effect on readers. Therefore, writers must take into consideration what makes an effective layout. Moreover, the results of the study can, to some extent, help us to better deal with this aspect of the English language in order to make a small contribution to the learning and teaching of the English writing skill as well as the English reading skill.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1. Texts Introducing Museums

Museums need to remain faithful to their traditional core values and continue to emphasize the care and development of collections that provide physical evidence of the culture and environment of the museum's chosen territory, whether this be a single historic or archaeological site, a city, a region or a whole country. Equally, however, the contemporary museum needs to have a strong focus on seeking excellence in its services to its many public members, whether these are young school children, advanced students, general visitors for the locality, international or national tourists, or professional researchers.

In the book entitled *Museum Texts*, Louise J. Ravelli [2] is primarily concerned with texts in museums - the language produced by the institution, in written and spoken form, for the consumption of visitors, which contributes to interpretative practices within the institution.

A TIM on the official website of a museum is intended to provide an overview of the key aspects of the operation of a museum that serve the needs and hopes of its visitors and the wider community. The information and advice on current "best practice" will be of practical value. Moreover, all communication needs to be understood in relation to its social context. Importantly, it argues that communication is an active process of meaning-making, and in this way, communication issues can be seen to lie at the heart of institutional practices, contributing in fundamental ways to what a museum is, who it relates to, and what it stands for.

TIMs themselves are a powerful communicative resource, and need to be understood as fully as possible. They play a very important role because they form a central component of a museum's agenda. Moreover, they are the development of the thematic exhibition, with their strongly educational goals, which have placed the role of exhibition texts at the forefront.

A TIM is a general introduction providing the main information of the museum. It encourages people to have a good feeling of what the museum is generally about and understand immediately what they are going to see.

This study is concerned with texts: the language in written form produced by the institution on the *about us* pages of the official websites of museums.

In summary, ETIMs, in this study, are English language units with their definable communicative functions that introduce museums' activities of keeping and showing collections of objects for inspection, study and enjoyment. Therefore, the use of language plays an important part in this special discourse type.

2.2. Definitions of Layout

An effective piece of writing should have a proper layout. According to *Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary – 8th Edition* [3], "layout" is the way in which the parts of something such as the page of a book, a garden or a building are arranged.

Also, "layout" defined on *Dictionary.reference.com* [4] is a plan or sketch, as of an advertisement or a page of a newspaper or magazine, indicating the arrangement and relationship of the parts, as of type and artwork.

One more definition on the website *Wikipedia.org* [5] states that layout is the part of graphic design that deals in the arrangement and style treatment of elements (content) in the writing. Common uses of graphic design include identity, websites, publications (magazines, newspapers and books), advertisements and product packaging.

Moreover, Hornby [1] claims that layout is the way in which the parts of something are arranged.

Based on the above definitions, in this paper I take the view that the layout, in general, is described as the arrangement and organization of the related parts or elements in a piece of writing.

a. Pattern 1: H + Illus + BC / H + BC + Illus

Below is a typical illustration:

(3.1)

2.3. Research Methodology

This paper only focuses on studying the ETIMs collected from official websites of museums in London. Because London is home to some of the best museums in the world and can be proud of its culture and heritage. There is a wide range of museums to visit: they cover almost every theme from wartime and history museums to toys and advertising. Up to 2016, London have possessed 273 museums. ETIMs that usually appears on the homepages or on the *about us* pages of the official websites of the museums are a complex type of discourse with various forms, contents, lengths and discourse structures. This paper is only carried out with samples - ETIMs - with the medium length from 100 to 300 words (accounting for the highest percentage, 63.2 %). Consequently, I have decided to choose 160 samples of ETIMs that consist of 100 to 300 words for detailed investigation.

The aim of the study is to find out the layout features of ETIMs. In order to achieve this aim, I combine several methods, namely descriptive, analytic, deductive and inductive ones. Among them, the descriptive method and the inductive one are the most crucial.

The descriptive method is employed to provide a description of the layout features of ETIMs.

The analytic method helps to clarify and justify a certain feature or characteristic concerning aspects of discourse features of ETIMs.

The inductive method helps to synthesize the findings and draw out conclusions from the findings.

3. Findings and Discussion

3.1. Patterns of Layout in ETIMs

On examining 160 ETIMs, I realize that the components in their layout are the Headline, the Slogan, the Illustration and the Body Copy. Among these parts, the Headline (H), the Illustration (Illus) and the Body Copy (BC) are always obligatory, but the H and the BC are the main ones. The Slogan (Slo) can be sometimes present or absent in ETIMs. However, the above components do not always come in a fixed order. In reality, there are four patterns of ETIMs under investigation presented as follows:

	H	The Cinema Museum
Pattern 1	**Illus**	

	BC	The Cinema Museum's fascinating and comprehensive collection encompasses every aspect of going to the pictures, from the architecture and fittings of cinemas themselves to the ephemeral marketing materials that promoted the films of the moment. Museum co-founder Ronald Grant began his collection with some beautiful sets of tinted lobby cards he couldn't bear to see being thrown out, but with the closure of cinemas around the country from the 1960s and 1970s onwards his passion for the pictures drew him into a race against time and developers to rescue the equipment and furnishings being ripped from cinema buildings. The Museum now houses more than a million photographic images, including pictures of cinemas and cinema-going; a large collection of posters and original artwork; projectors from every era, both professional and amateur; cinema staff uniforms; fixtures and fittings such as cinema seating and carpets, ashtrays and signage; and more than 17 million feet of film. A fascinating archive of printed publications includes an extensive collection of periodicals, fan magazines and trade magazines, campaign books and cinema sheet music.

(http://www.cinemamuseum.org.uk/topics/collection/overview)

b. Pattern 2: H + Slo + Illus + BC / H + Illus + Slo + BC

Let us have a look at the following example:

(3.2)

Pattern 2	**H**	**Leighton House Museum**
	Illus	
	Slo	**Where East meets West**
	BC	Leighton House Museum is the former home of the Victorian artist Frederic, Lord Leighton (1830-1896). The only purpose-built studio-house open to the public in the United Kingdom, it is one of the most remarkable buildings of the nineteenth century, containing a fascinating collection of paintings and sculpture by Leighton and his contemporaries. Built to Leighton's precise requirements, the house was extended and embellished over the 30 years that he lived in it. From modest beginnings it grew into a 'private palace of art' featuring the extraordinary Arab Hall with its golden dome, intricate mosaics and walls lined with beautiful Islamic tiles. Upstairs, Leighton's vast painting studio was one of the sights of London, filled with paintings in different stages of completion, the walls hung with examples of his work and lit by a great north window. Many of the most prominent figures of the Victorian age were entertained in this room; including Queen Victoria herself who called on Leighton in 1859. But Leighton lived alone in his palace, occupying the house's only bedroom on the first floor. Leighton House Museum is surrounded by a group of other studio-houses, all of which were built during the second half of the nineteenth century. This group provides a unique insight into the wealth, status and taste of successful artists in the late-Victorian period. To find out more please visit **The Holland Park Circle**.

(https://www.rbkc.gov.uk/subsites/museums/leightonhousemuseum/aboutthehouse.aspx)

c. Pattern 3: H + Slo + BC

 Here is an example:

(3.3)

Pattern 3	**H**	**Carlyle's House Museum**
	Slo	**Victorian writers' shrine Chelsea**
	BC	Hidden in the quiet back streets of Chelsea is the home of Thomas and Jane Carlyle. A twist of fate turned Carlyle into a star of the 19th-century literary world. Suddenly this was the place to be. When you pull the bell to enter you will follow in the footsteps of Dickens, Ruskin, Tennyson and many more. William Makepeace Thackeray said: 'Tom Carlyle lives in perfect dignity in a house in Chelsea with a snuffy Scotch maid to open the door and best company in England ringing at it!' Come and learn more of their remarkable story as you look around this authentic, evocative, very special place. Telephone +442073527087 Email carlyleshouse@nationaltrust.org.uk

(http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/carlyle-house)

d. Pattern 4: H + BC

Let us take a look at the illustration below:

(3.4)

	H	**Wandle Industrial Museum**
Pattern 4	**BC**	The museum was founded in 1983. Its mission is to preserve, store, and interpret the heritage and history of the industries and people of the River Wandle. On this website you will find information on many of the different industries that used the River Wandle. This includes the likes of Young's Brewery at Wandsworth, William Morris and Liberty's at Merton, Connolly's the leather makers plus the lavender, snuff and dye industries. You will find information about the mills which existed in Croydon, Carshalton, Mitcham, Merton, Wimbledon and Wandsworth that used the river. In addition, there is information about Merton Priory and the first public railway The Surrey Iron Railway. The pages also include news about new exhibitions and any events we are running or attending. There is information about visiting us – the only way to really get to know the river the river and its former industries, as well as The Wandle Trail and our Outreach Programme for schools and other groups. We hope that you will find the information about The Wandle Industrial Museum of interest and that it will encourage you to visit us. We look forward to seeing you soon. If you are doing research on any aspect of the River Wandle and cannot find what you are looking for, please contact the museum by email atoffice@wandle.org or call 020 8646 0127. please be aware that it may take up to 7 days before you get a reply.

(http://www.wandle.org/about-us/aboutus.html)

These findings are shown in the table below:

Table 1. Distribution of Patterns of Layout in ETIMs

Patterns	Occurrence	Rate
Pattern 1	113	70.6 %
Pattern 2	23	14.4 %
Pattern 3	21	3.1 %
Pattern 4	3	1.9 %
Total	**160**	**100 %**

In short, it can be concluded from the figures above that Pattern 1 accounts for the largest number. This means that ETIMs cannot do without three main elements, namely, the Headline, the Illustration and the Body Copy. Although sometimes only the Headline and the Body Copy themselves are sufficient enough to build up an ETIM, it is typical that an ETIM lends its success to those three main elements.

3.2. Components of Layout in ETIMs

3.2.1. The Headline

The Headline is the title of an ETIM and can be seen as the most important part of an ETIM. It contains the words that will be read first and usually appears in bold letters, bigger than those of the other parts. Hence, the Headline tends to catch the readers' eyes and arouses their attention to the text. For example:

(3.5) Whitewebbs Museum of Transport [14]

(3.6) Barnet Museum [8]

The headline in ETIMs usually comprises names of museums, types of museums, especially names of famous people who formed the museums. Here is an example:

(3.7) Museum of Domestic Design and Architecture [11]

(3.8) British Optical Association Museum [9]

The headline may be formed by a noun or a noun phrase. Typographically, all of these ETIMs' headlines are in lower case with different and bold font size.

Structurally, the conjunction *"and"* and the preposition *"of"* are frequently used when the museums are a composite of more than one type of museums.

Table 2. Distribution of The Headline in ETIMs

Types of Headlines	Occurrence	Rate
Names of Types of Museums	114	71.2 %
Names of Museums	46	28.8 %
Total	**160**	**100 %**

From the above table, it can be seen that all ETIMs contain a headline. Moreover, the writers have a strong tendency to use the headlines consisting of both names and types of museums described (making up 71.2 %), whereas the headlines including only names of museums occupy 28.8 %.

3.2.2. The Slogan

A slogan is a catch phrase or group of words that are combined in a special way to identify a museum. In reality, slogans are short, often memorable phrases. They are the most effective means of drawing attention to one or more aspects of a museum. Below is a typical illustration:

(3.9) 575 Wandsworth Road

An extraordinary home and an intriguing work art [12]

(3.10) Rainham Hall

An historic house with a difference [13]

The purpose of the slogan is to make a strong impression on the readers so that they can remember much about the museum described. The slogans are not only short and memorable but also unique. They affirm the

difference with the other places and represent distinct features of the museum.

Typographically, slogans are also printed in the italic and bold font style with stylized fonts. As a matter of fact, the design of letter forms plays an important role in creating strong impressions on the readers.

3.2.3. The Illustration

Supporting the Headline, the illustration is an indispensable part in an ETIM. In fact, most ETIMs are accompanied by pictures. Pictures, or illustrations provide scenic views of museums as well as images of objects displayed in the exhibitions or in the galleries to attract readers' attention and desire to pay a visit to these destinations. This part is sometimes attached to a site map that appears in brief, right below every picture. Together with the power of words, the illustration may enhance the effectiveness and makes the whole text more vivid and more convincing. Let us take a look at the illustration of Leighton House Museum as follows:

(3.11)

(https://www.rbkc.gov.uk/...aspx)
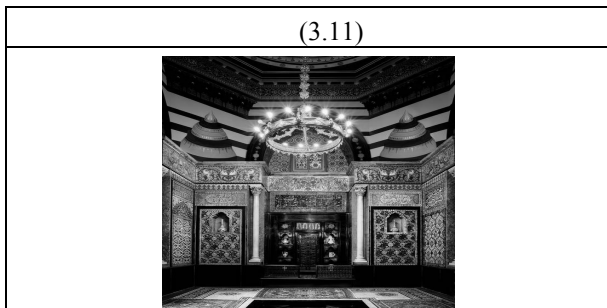
In most ETIMs, the illustration normally appears after the headline or in the body copy to illustrate artefacts that are mentioned. The vital pictures of the museums are presented clearly, beautifully and colourfully. Along with the Headline, the illustration catches the readers' attention and bring them good impressions on the museums as well as artefacts being displayed.

3.2.4. The Body Copy

The Body Copy is considered the principal part of an ETIM, because it gives detailed information about the museums and the way for the readers to explore these places. In spite of its own features, the body copy of ETIMs are presented in long paragraphs (with main information) or divided into short ones. The body copy consists of introduction, main information and further information.

a. Introduction

The introduction provides a background or a brief description of what it is going to be about. The introduction is usually constructed within only a few sentences in order to provide the readers with a general picture of the museum mentioned. For instance:

(3.12) *The Household Cavalry Museum is a living museum about real people doing a real job in a real place. Through a large glazed partition you can see troopers working with horses in the original 18ᵗʰ century stables. [10]*

Introductions of ETIMs with specific features of typography and grammar tend towards clarity and condensation. Every component which constitutes these overview parts plays its own important role, of which the Heading is an outstanding element. The whole overview part of an ETIM has the functions of awaking the readers' interest and drawing their attention to the whole text. Therefore, on the basis of what has been aroused, the readers may be in the mood for exploring the remaining parts of the texts.

b. Main Information

In ETIMs, the detailed information about the museums consists of all facts such as location, history of foundation and development of the museums, striking features of the collections, objects as well as exhibitions and further information. The main information usually consists of 2 to 5 short paragraphs. It can also be a whole paragraph. Here is an example:

(3.13) *It shows exhibitions about the work of Dr John Langdon Down, Normansfield and the Royal Earlswood Asylum. It also displays objects made by James Henry Pullen.*

The museum tells the story of the Langdon Down house at Normansfield and includes objects from the Royal Earlswood Asylum. On display are artifacts made by James Henry Pullen (1835-1916), a savant known as the Genius of Earlswood Asylum. This includes his ships, a model of Brunel's Great Eastern, paintings and other objects.

The building also contains a Grade II* listed Victorian theatre. This rare example of a private theatre contains original painted scenery and other ornate fixtures and fittings.

The Langdon Down Museum of Learning Disability is owned and managed by the Down's Syndrome Association.

The museum contributes to the social history of learning disability.

The archive acquires and conserve artifacts, documents, photographs and other materials with historical importance.

It is currently working on an oral history project about Normansfield Hospital. [6]

An important function of the museums is not only to inform about the past but also to evoke interest in culture and history in order not to lose the sense of origins. Therefore, many museums are not-for-profit organizations, they are owned and run by volunteers. They are also registered and educational charities. They receive no funding from the government. Hence, in the main information of the body copy, the writers pay attention to the operation as well as programmes that donate fund and organize volunteering work to the museums. Below is a typical example:

(3.14) *We are a small local history museum and none of our staff are paid. We welcome new volunteers of all ages and backgrounds who are able to offer a long term commitment to the Museum. Volunteers do a whole range of jobs including welcoming visitors, manning our shop, helping visitors with research, cataloguing our collection,*

researching the history of Barnet, keeping our garden tidy, cleaning the museum, etc. [8]

However, not all the above components always exist in the body copy and they do not always come in a fixed order, but some of these components such as location, history and collection are indispensable. Therefore, the writers tend to pay their attention to the making of a brief introduction on the formation, development and operations of the museums as well as the valuable artefacts and collections.

c. Further Information

Further information is usually the last part of ETIMs. The readers can search for accessibility, amenity as well as other services available in the museums. Moreover, this can provide visitors with sufficient details so that they can be well-prepared for the trip. Below is a typical example:

(3.15) *Visit*

48 Hopton Street / London / SE1 9JH

info@banksidegallery.com */ 020 7982 7521*

Public Transport

You will find us on the south bank of the Thames, on the river walkway in between Blackfriars south station entrance and the Tate Modern, just down the steps by the Founders Arms pub. We are ten minutes' walk from Southwark, St Paul's and Mansion House tube stations, and just a stroll along the river from Waterloo and London Brige underground and main line stations.

Parking

For artists or buyers collecting work from the Gallery, limited parking is available in Hopton Street for loading and unloading only. There is a car park five minutes away in Great Suffolk Street.

Taxis

There is a taxi rank on Holland Street to the rear of the Gallery, directly outside Tate Modern. [7]

In reality, not all the time do ETIMs contain all those elements. On examining the collected samples, it can be seen that ETIMs themselves are constructed with different styles. Together with different designs on the websites, many museums' *about us* pages are not accompanied by the above further information part. It may be shown in detail on another page of the website such as *visit us* page or home page.

4. Conclusion

In summary, the study reveals that the layout of ETIMs is constructed with different segments and consists of four main components: the Headline, the Slogan, the Illustration and the Body Copy. Among these, the Headline and the Body Copy are the main parts that are informative and persuasive. Appearing in bold letters and being read first, the headline – the title of the museums, is the museum's name which usually show what type the museum belongs to. The Headline attracts the readers' attention and helps them easily remember the museums. The Slogan, which only appears in 26 cases, is optional. It occupies a small percentage (16.3 %). However, it is the most effective means of drawing attention to one or more aspects of a museum. It should be used more frequently in writing TIMs because it also plays an important role in making an effective TIM. Besides, the Illustration performs the function of supporting the Headline as well as attracting the readers. Lastly, the body copy, which is the most informative part, often covers such common facts as locations of the museums, history of their foundation and development , striking features of the collections, objects as well as exhibitions and further information relating to accessibility and amenity. In the body copy, a brief introduction to the history of the foundation and development and the extraordinary collections of the museums are always obligatory, the others are optional. The format "Headline + Illustration + Body Copy" accounts for the highest occurrence, with 70.6 %, which suggests a rather fixed way to present enough information about museums in London, England to the readers. Although these components do not always come in a fixed order, each of them has its own role in forming an ETIM.

Layout features are very useful and necessary for building up a complete TIM. A good knowledge about layout types of TIMs help students to improve not only their writing skill but also their reading skill. Moreover, students can also learn more about the culture and heritage of different countries through TIMs.

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THE INTERNET

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