

The Use of Superlatives in the Written Tourist Discourse

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Abstract

In the specialized texts, adjectives represent a non-negligible part of the vocabulary used. As part of speech subordinated to the noun, the adjective has the role of highlighting inherent features of the promoted product with impact on the reader-traveler. The touristic discourse is characterized by a wide use of adjectives and, above all, of the evaluative type of meliorative type, as they are adjectives that transmit a positive image of the promoted product.

As far as it concerns tourism discourse, language is the most powerful force to promote tourism, its purpose is to persuade, attract, seduce millions of people to turn potential customers into real customers. Thanks to this force of persuasion, the tourist language can transform an unknown place into a tempting tourist destination that arouses the desire to be visited and where a simple garden is transformed into a "paradise oasis".

Key words: adjectives, tourism, discourse, guides, language

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1. Introduction

In the tourist guides are frequently encountered adjectives describing: the beauty of a destination (*a refined and intimate place, a superb view of the sea, a paradisiacque moment, des grottes étonnantes,*), the richness and variety of places (*the luxurious villas in the surroundings, une variété impressionnante de restaurants,* etc.) that evoke the history of a people (*cosmopolite, bullying, painful*), adjectives with suggestive and evocative power (*crystalline waters, miraculous destinations, unique beaches ...*); used in culinary art to suggest variety of dishes (*eccentric menu, French cuisine, Romanian, international, Saxon specialties, exquisite food, exquisite dishes, cuisine savoureuse, original et créative, raffinée, élégante et goûteuse,* etc.)

As Dann (Dann, 1966, p.95) states, magic and euphoria can be considered as two fundamental elements in accomplishing the two functions of the tourism discourse that help create a positive and attractive image of the destination to meet a need, namely to travel. Moreover, Calvi and Bonhomme (2008: 189) argue that the tourism discourse is dominated by optimism and positive values that have been put to good use by adjectives.

Calvi (Calvi, 2005, p.33) defines the language of tourism as a "*linguaggio dalla fisionomia sfuggente*", which does not have a well-defined content and clear functional limits because it is influenced by a wide range of disciplines and includes various communication functions such as persuasive, argumentative and vocative function. Normally, the two main functions we find in promotional texts are persuasive and informative ones. Because every text in tourism has the role of informing and convincing, it must attract attention, influence and must remain in the memory of the reader.

2. Degrees of intensity in tourism discourse

The use of the superlative by the locutor is in accordance with the particularities of the tourism discourse, characterized by a bombastic style that tends to emphasize to the extreme the qualities of the promoted destination, which awakens specific expectations and stimulates the desire of the tourists to experience them for real. (Dann 1966, p.123). Thus, the colorful, fascinating presentations and descriptions have the role of impressing, attracting potential tourists to make them visit the presented destinations.

Passing a word or phrase from the current use into intensive use will occur under special declarative conditions. In a communication situation in which the locutor's intentions are directed towards the receiver/addressee, there must be taken into account the effects that the former intends to produce on his interlocutor.

Finding different means of expressing the intensity and recognizing the forms associated with it, examining them to show what this operation is and identifying the main issues is another objective of this research. Exploring expressive language and observing it in the most current manifestations will bring a new light on this phenomenon that is often met in tourist guides. In this part of our research, we have stopped over the comparative and superlative structures as means of expressing the intensity in the tourism discourse. The expression of intensity and degrees inherent in this linguistic phenomenon is achieved through various intensive means or processes. Of these, the means associated with the expression of high intensity are found in a large number. In order to highlight the high degree, the locutor actually has a wider range of means that prove to be as effective as the others. Because in tourist guides, these are more numerous and more diverse, we have chosen to restrict our analysis to intensive processes related to the expression of high intensity.

In Romanian, the system of comparison and intensity has a much richer configuration than in French, with a remarkable expressive potential. This category specific to the adjective and the adverb is taken up by some subclasses of the adverb that we have analyzed in this paper.

As a characteristic of adjectives and adverbs, intensity is defined and presented in various grammars or specialized studies devoted to both Romanian and French linguistics. Traditionally, the phenomenon of intensity is studied in the Comparative Degrees or Degrees of Intensity section of Grammarians such as M. Avram (1986), I. Coteanu (1987), or D. Irimia (1999), GARL I 2008, J-C. Chevalier and his collaborators (C. Blanche-Benveniste, M. Arrivé and J. Peytard) 1994, M. Riegel et al. (J-Ch. Pellat and R. Rioul) 2005, M. Grevisse (1994) Cristea. (1978), and others.

Degrees of comparison express the intensity of manifestation of the quality of the product or the gradual way of carrying out the action, which, in general, has a subjective character (Șișcanu-Boz 2010, p.167). In our corpus, the appreciation of quality and action by the locutor stems from the degrees of comparison of the adjectives and adverbs of manner.

The degrees of intensity are expressed by a variety of means both in Romanian and in French, so the intensity of an attribute can be expressed using adverbial modifiers with the role of approximation or equality reduction: almost, slightly,... enough, and so on. (GARL I,2008,p. 156)

" *Luna Park, cu diverse jocuri și carusele **cam** demodate*" (Luna Park, with various games and some **pretty** outdated carousels.)(GTRo,p.413); (Cluj) "*A păstrat însă un aer **ușor** subversiv și sfidător, și reputația de oponent al regimului*" (But it kept a **slightly** subversive and defiant air, and the reputation of the regime's opponent).(GTRo, p.224) "*(Hotel nou de trei stele, **destul de** agreabil și amenajat cu gust*" (New three-star hotel, **quite** agreeable and tastefully decorated.)(GTRo, p.392).

According to Irimia (1999, p. 91), the relative intensity is built with the structures quoted above.

" *Pe lângă o colecție **destul de** frumoasă, dar **cam** săracă în explicații[-] muzeul include și o reconstituire la scară reală a Curții Domnești*" (In addition to a **fairly** beautiful collection, but rather poor in explanations [-] the museum also includes a real-scale reconstruction of the Royal Court) (GTRo, p.308).

In French, the average intensity is marked by a few adverbs such as: *assez, moyennement: "a beau cadre, organisé en terrasse, assez bien ombragé* (GRC, p. 91), *quasi (plus quasiment)* (GRP, p. 601) and its familiar substitutes of *assez*, such as *plutôt* and *pas mal* (Riegel, 2005, p.362).

"*Pas mal de groupes mais pas seulement*" (GRP,p.296).

The quality designated by an adjective or an adverb can be compared to one or more other elements. In this case, we can talk about *comparative*; and when compared to a limited number of other elements, it is *superlative relative* (Chevalier, 1994, p. 199).

3. Levels of comparison and the specificity of tourist texts

In grammar, three levels of comparison are known: the positive, the comparative (equality, inferiority and superiority), and the superlative (relative and absolute), in which degrees of intensity are expressed by different means.

The comparative degree includes an explicit comparison with other things, beings, and other situations, and can mark equality, superiority or inferiority. The comparative of equality is expressed with the help of: adverbial phrases, *as... as /aussi* which conveys an autonomous morphological expression.

"*La fel de vestite sunt și cergile, covoarele și cojoacele lucrate în zonă*" (There are also the cages, carpets and cobbles worked in the area) (GTBN, p. 32); "*Ajutată de un bătrân arhitect de încredere, tot la fel de însuflețit ca și mine*" (Helped by an elderly trusted architect, as animated as I am) (GTCRB, p. 20); "*Les villages sont aussi sympathiques, nichant leurs maisons --*" (GRC, p.49);

As far as the adverb is concerned, the comparative of equality in French is expressed by the adverb *aussi* accompanied by an adverb, and by *autant* together with a verb. (Grevisse, 1994, p. 1396)

"*On peut tout aussi bien goûter quelques vins rares*" (GVMA, p.140); "*les chambres combleront autant les bohèmes au budget serré mais sensibles aux jolies décors que les amoureux--*" (GRP, p.297)

The adverb *davantage* appears alongside the verb (often after the verb) and is more expressive in comparison with the adverb *plus* (Grevisse, 1995, p.1395).

The comparative of superiority is built with the adverb *mai* (*plus* in French) and accompanies the positive form of adjective or adverb.

"*Nu există loc mai bun în Sibiu pentru a vă bucura de mâncare simplă*" (GTRo, p.216) (There is no better place in Sibiu to enjoy simple food) (GTRo, p.216)

"*On conseille vraiment celles avec balcon et vue sur mer ---nettement plus agréables, celles sur rue étant bruyantes dans la journées.*" (GRC, p.182); "*Une façon de voir la Corse sous un angle plus spirituel que d'ordinaire*" (GRC, p.39); "*---etajul unde se află locuința începând a fi decorat mai bogat, în diverse stiluri--*" (GTRo, p.25)

In modern French, the comparative of **superiority**, besides the analytical forms built with an adverb, preserves three comparative synthetic adjectives from Latin : "meilleur" for the adjective "bon"; "pire" for the adjective "mauvais" and "moindre" for "petit". However, in the spoken language, the analytical comparatives formed with the adverb *plus* (*plus bon, plus mauvais* and *plus petit*) compete with the three Latin forms.

Like adjectives, adverbs can take the form of comparative of superiority (further, just as well). Especially, one can compare adverbs of manner identical in form with adjectives. There are also some adverbs of place or time that express relative characteristics and bear the comparison (closer, very late /*mai aproape, foarte târziu*).

"*Un fel de Mic Berlin, zic unii, cu o viață de noapte atât de zbuciumată, că mai nou a căpătat și reputația de destinație europeană de clubbing*" (A kind of a Little Berlin, some say, with such a tumultuous nightlife, that it has also gained a reputation as a European clubbing destination.) (GTRo, p. 20); "*Ei reprezentau mai mult decât o colonie, [---] devenind o populație de sine stătătoare*" (They represented more than a colony, [---] becoming a self-contained population) (GTTim, p. 24); "*Un fel de "Pour rester plus longtemps, la demande se fait au Canada auprès d'un consulat de France.*" (GRC, p.314)

In French also there are types of adverbs that can be part of other comparative structures than of ordinary ones. To mark the degrees of comparison, a limited number of adverbs (4 in number) have synthetic forms. Thus, the adverbs *beaucoup, peu, bien* and *mal* have synthetic forms in the comparative of superiority: *plus, moins, mieux* and *pis*.

"*Domage pour les uns---tant mieux pour les autres*" (GRC, p.68)

"*Et, tant pis pour le cliché, direction Le Sacré-Coeur*" (GRC, p. 198)

The majority of adverbs with degrees of comparison followed by the preposition *de* (*trop de*, *beaucoup de*,) and by the article *des* (*bien des*), accompany the nouns expressing quantity.

"Beaucoup d'habitues et de touristes : mieux vaut arriver tôt le soir." (GRP, p.41)

"En fin de saison, et même avant, bien des magasins n'ont plus de véritable charcuterie corse." (GRC, p.382)

In our corpus, the adverbs remain an element of the ad text, the most representative being, undoubtedly, the adverbs of intensity. All types of adverbs (manner, time, place) contribute not only to the formal organization of the text but also to the semantic sequence of the facts.

The abundance of qualifying adjectives, which come to complement the information provided by the nouns, could accentuate the positive and enthusiastic emotion, rendered by adjectives in the superlative degree. The superlative is the degree to which the maximal potentiation of quality comes. To highlight the hyperbolic character of the tourist text, the guide-scriptor uses numerous and varied procedures, some of them being of a stylistic nature, others forming a complex morphological system. (Chevalier et al, 1994,p. 197).

The relative superlative is formed with the help of the article the / the + adverb *most* + an appreciative / affective adjective or the existence of superlative lexical-semantic marks such as: in the dream world, in the world. This form is used to praise the product's qualities, being one of the features commonly found in tourism advertising.

In French it has the same form as the comparative of superiority or inferiority that is distinguished by the presence of the determined article.

"The best hotels on the most beautiful beaches ..." (GTRo, p. 34)

"C'est la meilleure, la plus fertile, la plus douce, la plus charmante contrée qui est au monde" (GRC, p.10)

"Entourée par la Méditerranée, vous y découvrirez des paysages splendides et uniques au monde"(GRC,p.31); *"C'est l'un des parcours les plus durs d'Europe"* (GRC, p.26); *"C'est évidemment l'hébergement le moins coûteux"* (GRC, p.39);*"--La Sorbonne ferme désormais à la moindre manifestation--"* (GRP, p.183);*"Iar schimbarea se vede cel mai bine în Centrul Vechi, înainte pustiu și dezolant."* (GTRo, p.20);*"În lumea muzicii, eu sunt cinci într-unul : compozitor, dirijor, violonist, pianist, și profesor. Cel mai mult prețuiesc darul de a compune și nici un muritor nu poate poseda o fericire mai mare, a mărturisit George Enescu despre sine."* (GTVP, p.47)

"Le mieux est de suivre la numérotation." (GRP:56)

The high intensity, from a morphological point of view, can be rendered by using adverbs. Being the correspondent of the traditional absolute superlative, the intensity is expressed by the adverbs: "very" and "très, tout, fort, bien" for the French language. To these, Riegel (2005, p. 362) annexes the adverbial "tout à fait"

"The Church of the Holy Voivodes, [-] preserves a very expressive painting" (GTTN, p.34);

"biserica Sfinții Voievozi, [-] conservă o foarte expresivă pictură" (GTTN, p.34);

"l'accueil très bonhomme" (GRC,p. 245); *"un bien beau musée"* (GRC,p.321); *"à prix fort modérés"* (GRC,p.427); *"belle randonnée trop difficile"* (GRC,p.327); *"-- donne alors une qualité de raisin tout à fait exceptionnelle"* (GVMA,p.53);*"Certains jours, le vent souffle très fort."* (GRC,p.37)

"Dans un immeuble de famille, un hotel d'une vingtaine de chambres, fort bien tenu."(GRC, p.76)

The **absolute** superlative, the exaggeration, the hyperbole, has a variety of means to achieve. Thus, constructions with the adjective in the positive degree compared to a typical object for the respective characteristic are the equivalents of the absolute superlative. (GALR I, 2010, p.155)

"On our way to Câmpina, we pass through the village of Cornu, famous for its luxurious villas that have come out on its territory, like the mushrooms after the rain." (GTVP, p.63)

A large number of adverbs of manner with the termination *-ment* (*grandement, divinement, joliment, carrément, diablement, vachement*, etc.) expresses high intensity. (Chevalier et al 1994, p.198)

"Parfois, le toponyme utilisé couramment provient carrément d'une erreur." (GRC, p.41)

"Petite église de Saint Sebastien, datant de 1450, joliment restaurée par un particulier"(GRP, p.376);*"Succulent et divinement original quant aux parfums proposés."* (GRC, p.187)

The main variants of the maximum intensity are the suffix *-isim* and the adverbs: *very ...*, *extremely* and the degree of **maximum intensity exceeded** is marked by prefixes (*ultra-*, *extra-*, *arhi-*), or by adverbs: (*excesiv (de)*, *exagerat (de)*, *peste măsură (de)*(excessively,exaggerated, over..) (Irimia 1999, p 91)

"*peisaje extrem de pitorești*" (GTRo,p.28); "un restaurant **excesiv de** zgomotos" (GTRo,p.171).

"*castel supraestimat*" (GTRo,p.192); "*localitate hiperturistică*", "**extrasezon**" (GTRo,p.156).

"*un loc ultracentral*"(GTRo,p.226); "**Extremely** picturesque landscapes" (GTRo,p.28); "An **Extremely** Noisy Restaurant" (GTRo,p.171); "**Overestimated** castle" (GTRo,p.192); "**extraseason**" (GTRo,p.156); "An **ultracentral** place" (GTRo,p.226); "*Après le célébrissime Baiser de Brancusi*" (GRP,p.432); "*une kitchissime boutique*" (GRP,p.413); "**super petit déj.**" (GRC,p.251); "*des pizzas hyper copieuses et goûteuses*"(GRC,p.264); "*de belles chambres ultra-confortables et bien insonorisées.*" (GRP,p.447)

What we can notice, both in Romanian and French, is that some of the elements of composition have acquired, in familiar language, autonomy, becoming invariable adjectives.

"*birou retro*" (retro office) (GTRo,p.349), "*hartă velo interactivă*"(interactive **velo** map) (GTRo,p.171)/ "*plusieurs producteurs bio, salons de coiffures afros*" (GVMP,p.364); "*ambiance gastro et cuisine inventive*" (GVMP, p.229); "*service pro*"(GVMP,p.242); "*accueil vraiment sympa*"(GRC,p.318); "*Piscine super sur une vaste terrasse.*"(GRC,p.79); "*Tester la scène électro à Vienne*" (GRC,p.71); "*un endroit extra*" (GRC,p.291).

Apart from these grammatical processes, *the idea of superlative* is also achieved by other means. Chevalier et al. (1994,p.198) asserts that the high intensity has the greatest number of means of stylistic expression. These include phonetic procedures: dividing into syllables and the repetition of adjectives without a pause (in the familiar language), and the use of the following adverbial phrases: *plus que*, *on ne peut plus*, *tout ce qu' il y a de (plus)*, *des plus*.

"*Orsay est l'un des plus beaux musées du monde*"(GRP, p.21); "*Bref, du beau, du bon, du bon--heur*"(GRP,p.466)

The language of advertising is recognized for its lexical innovations. Adjectives with diminutive suffixes can express the superlative:

"*o cafenea micuță*(= foarte mică) *și primitoare*"(A small (= very small) and welcoming café) (GTRo, p. 167)

According to GALRI (2005,p.207), morphosyntactically, the quality of the object can also be replicated by repeating the adjective in a diminutive form. For example, we propose the following example:

"*blocuri cu apartamente nou-nouțe construite pentru cei strămutați din sate.*" ("New apartment blocks built for the displaced ones from the villages.") (GTRo,p.85)

By analyzing the proposed corpus, we have noticed that, unlike adjectives that occur frequently in comparative (superiority) and superlative (relative and absolute) degrees, the number of adverbs in both forms is rather narrow.

For Agorni (2012, p. 6), exaggerations and hyperboles made with the adjectives are one of the distinguishing features of the touristic discourse. Moreover, in order to influence the attitude of the future traveler, the deliberately oriented language of tourism exploits communication resources such as: superlatives, the complex adjective system and valuable terms, creating the impression of a reality consisting of moments of relaxation.

As stated by Angela Faccin (2015, p. 21), the tourist guide and the language used by tourism specialists have the mission to inform the reader, persuade and attract him, playing the role of a mediator between the destination and the reader, who will turn from the passive reader into a potential tourist, and why not into a real tourist.

4.Conclusions

In the tourist guides, the purpose of the language is to motivate the tourist to travel and, thanks to the intervention of a familiarity note towards the reader, specialists in this field introduce destination as a novelty and as an exchange in relation to everyday life. It turns out that the specialists, through the language they use, aim at informing, persuading and attracting the reader,

playing the role of a mediator between the destination and the reader who, suppose, will become a potential tourist. And, in order to sell its tourist product, the language tends to reorganize and re-produce both the information and also the language of the common language. So the function of language is to present the destination in a most attractive way to give the tourist the idea of entertainment and exclusivity.

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