

Use and Values of Verb Tenses in the Written Tourist Discourse

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Abstract

In printed travel guides, a recurring linguistic process is represented by the use of verbs that convey their persuasive force within the speech, using pathos in order to influence the reader who is dependent upon the utterance. In travel guides, the verb serves to guide, advise, support, but especially to manipulate the reader. The range of values and expressive nuances that verbs accumulate depending on the context is very wide, using the present tense of the indicative mood, in all voices, but also other moods, such as the imperative, the subjunctive, the optative, the conditional, the infinitive or the gerund.

Key words: to discover, to visit, to experience, to observe, to admire

J.E.L. classification: Z13

1. Introduction

Specialized languages are characterized by a narrower choice of verbal moods and tenses in relation to the general language. Nevertheless, verbal characteristics can vary from one language to another. In this section, we will analyze the verb forms that are most often encountered in the written tourist discourse, in Romanian and French languages.

For the purpose of this research, we used printed tourist guides from printing houses that published major guide collections, i.e. Ad Libri for the Romanian language and Le Routard and Le Michelin, for the French language. Thus, for the Romanian language, we analyzed “Ghid Turistic România”, Bucharest: 2015, “Ghid Turistic Sighișoara”, Bucharest: 2006, “Ghid Turistic Valea Prahovei”, Bucharest, 2006; “Ghid Turistic Culoarul Rucăr-Bran”, Bucharest: 2006; “Ghid Turistic Ținutul Neamțului”, Bucharest: 2006. For the French language, we used “Le Guide Vert Michelin Paris”, 2013; “Le Guide Vert Michelin-Alsace”, 2016; “Le Guide du Routard -Paris”, 2017; “Le Guide du Routard-Corse”, 2017.

2. Theoretical background

Regarding the use of verb tenses in specialized texts, the present tense of the indicative mood is used in the vast majority of cases not as a result of the specialist’s choice, but because this tense is necessary for the communication functions that are typical of these texts, i.e. the specialist defines, describes, observes, presents various qualities and traits, and states general truths.

When referring to tenses, Cohen (1986 apud Dann, 1996, p. 49) states that making a journey does not only mean a journey from one place to another, but, above all, a journey through time, often in the past and less in the future. What we often call absolute tenses are actually deictic tense. Within each sphere (present/ past and future), choosing a past/ present/ future form is deictic in nature. Within each sphere, the choice is made according to different aspectual axes, which contain linguistic subjectivity, because they bring into play the way in which the speaker presents the process that can be dilatated, contracted, approached in terms of its development or achievement in the past or, on the contrary, related to the present (Kerbrat-Orrechioni, 1997, p. 46). This indicates the variety of the verb system that allows the subject to place its speech in relation to three axes, i.e. present, past and future. As far as travel guides are concerned, the enunciation time corresponds to the time when the message reaches the reader, and the most frequently used verb tenses are the present (le present/

prezentul), compound past (le passe compose/ perfectul compus), the imperfect or the past imperfective (l'imparfait/ imperfectul), simple past or the past perfective (le passe simple) (for French) and simple future (future simple/ viitor simplu).

As far as verbal moods are concerned, the indicative is the updating mood, i.e. only the present can situate the utterance in relation to the moment of utterance (Maingueneau, 1999, pp. 55-56). Thus, the verb forms in the present provide a sense of continuity and eternity; the verb forms in the past contribute to the consolidation of the cultural authority of the discourse or to the proposal of an escape in time, and those in the future increase the seductive power of the product, while the imperative mood influences the purchase of the product, in other words the journey.

3. Research methodology

This study was based on the analysis of the specialized written discourse, more specifically of the written tourism discourse. From a methodological perspective, we have chosen a corpus made from travel guides in Romanian and French languages, from the tourist field ("Ghid Turistic România", Bucharest: 2015, "Ghid Turistic Sighișoara", Bucharest: 2006, "Ghid Turistic Valea Prahovei", Bucharest, 2006; "Ghid Turistic Culoarul Rucăr-Bran", Bucharest: 2006; "Ghid Turistic Ținutul Neamțului", Bucharest: 2006; "Le Guide Vert Michelin Paris", 2013; "Le Guide Vert Michelin-Alsace", 2016; "Le Guide du Routard -Paris", 2017; "Le Guide du Routard-Corse", 2017).

4. Findings

The present tense

The present tense of the indicative mood is most used in scientific communication and it contributes to the presentation of facts, theories, definitions, observations, descriptions; it is also employed in order to assert general truths and to formulate scientific laws (Gotti, 2005, pp. 90-95). This is by far the most commonly used verb tense in travel guides. By resorting to this tense, the guide writer creates a special effect, i.e. the reader gets the impression that the action takes place under his/ her eyes, while s/he is reading or that s/he is a witness to what is going to happen (Jacobi, 1999, p. 67). This tense can cover various nuances that go from past to future; it is used in statements that take place on the timeline as a continuum or in different segments of the timeline. Analyzing its occurrences one by one, we can highlight the values of the present tense in travel guides.

Although it is considered that the present tense situates the utterance at the time when the discourse is performed (Dubois, 1991, p. 391), in fact, it can fulfill several functions because it is perceived as historical, descriptive, eternal; it may express a definition, a permanent state or a scientific or general reflection (Lapierre, 1994, pp. 7-22). In other words, a statement whose verb is in the present tense can situate the process in any other period, i.e. past or future or even in all eras (omnitemporal value). Depending on the time interpretation of the statement, we can talk about different contextual meanings as far as the present tense is concerned. For instance, this tense can express general truths, allowing the speaker to evoke an event in such a way that the reader gets the impression that everything is unfolding before his/ her eyes (the report model):

Până în secolul al XIX-lea, Comarnicul a fost cea mai mare și prosperă localitate de pe Valea Prahovei. În prezent, orașelul este doar un centru industrial, cunoscut mai ales pentru fabricile care produc materiale de construcții și cele de prelucrare a lemnului. (GTVP: 57)

L'image d'un Paris vidé de ses habitants au mois d'août est de moins en moins vraie. Actuellement, nombre de Parisiens passent volontairement les mois d'été dans la capitale, car c'est à ce moment-là qu'ils peuvent se réapproprier leur ville. (GVMP: 44)

Associated with adverbial expressions that specify a time interval, the verb is in the extended present (the so-called présent étendu):

De aproape un deceniu, la Piatra-Neamț funcționează Centrul internațional de cercetare a culturii Cucuteni. (GTȚN, p. 8)

Depuis quelques années, Belleville concentre également une communauté asiatique importante, avec ses restaurants et ses supermarchés. (GVMP, p. 47)

The verb form traditionally called permanent (generic) present shows the development of a process in a time interval that includes both the past and the future. Because this structure does not refer to a single moment or to a defined one on the time axis, such statements are called ubiquitous statements.

Fundata, situată în apropierea Pasului Giuvala, în zona de contact dintre Munții Piatra Craiului și Leaota, la altitudinea de 1270m, este cea mai înaltă localitate din culoarul Rucăr-Bran. (GTCRB, p. 44)

Le mystère de l'homme au masque de fer. Il est l'un des prisonniers les plus fameux de l'histoire de France. (GRP, p. 150)

A statement in the present tense can express repeated events or actions that are associated with a certain periodicity. There are statements in which the verb updates the iterative aspect, when associated with specific tense adverbials, usually expressed by repetition or frequency adverbs. For instance:

Spre deosebire de centrul istoric, Scheii au o atmosferă mult mai rurală, curți năpădite de verdeață și străzi mai sinuoase, care se încolăcesc pieptiș de-a lungul drumului.[--]; brașovenii obișnuiesc să vină la picnic aici, în weekenduri. (GTRo, p. 115)

Sous les halles de l'hôtel de ville de Saales se tient le vendredi apres.-midi, de mi-juin à la fin septembre, le marché des produits de montagne de la Haute-Bruche" (GVMA, p. 149)

By using adverbials of time or contextual or situational information, a present tense statement can evoke processes whose time intervals are placed in the past or in the future. Thus, when the statement remains related to the moment of utterance, but the process is delayed in the future, we speak of the prospective present and it can be combined with various specialized deictic expressions for the future time reference (GALR I 2008, p. 412).

Mai târziu (1441-1456), Iancu de Hunedoara repară și întărește Branul, apoi îl însărcinează pe Vlad Țepeș, care pierduse tronul Țării Românești, cu apărarea sudului Transilvaniei. (GTCRB, p. 1)

Dorénavant, pour lever toute ambiguïté, Rodin sculpte des oeuvres plus grandes que nature.... (GRP, p. 260)

The present form can replace the past. In this case, we can talk about retrospective present (le présent historique), which cancels the present/ past opposition by updating previous real or fictive events, in relation to the present of the speaker, and implicitly of the reader. The unusual introduction of the present tense into a time system in the past leads to the acceleration of events, making the action more dramatic, as Riegel (2005, p. 301) argues.

După Primul Război Mondial, în anul 1918, Bucovina se unește cu Regatul României. (GTBucov, p. 11)

Ce minuscule resto monomaniaque, qui ne vibre que pour l'anguille grillée, est l'antenne parisienne d'un restaurant réputé de Tokyo qui, depuis le XVIII^e s., ne sert que ça" (GRP, p. 44)

The narrative present shows a synchronic perspective, i.e. the narration time and the time of the narrated events overlap. This tense stimulates the action and the reader gets the impression that s/he is participating directly in the historical events; s/he has the feeling that the events are narrated as they unfold. Such instances are:

De altfel, în fiecare an, timp de trei zile, de obicei în ultima săptămână din luna iulie, Sighișoara se reîntoarce în Ev Mediu: cavaleri în armuri strălucitoare se întrec în turniruri, se desfășoară procese ale vrăjitoarelor, domnițe în rochii strălucitoare se ivesc ca din pământ peste tot, menestrelii își deapănă cântările, la fiecare colț de stradă se improvizează piese de teatru, au loc concerte de muzică medievală, alte și alte spectacole. (GTRo, p. 23)

En Corse, le repas se termine généralement par un fruit. Ceux de l'île sont souvent excellents, notamment les oranges et les clémentines. Les gâteaux à la farine de châtaigne sont un véritable régal. Le pastizzu, parfumé au citron, est un petit gâteau de semoule. Mais, en matière de dessert, la grande spécialité corse reste le fiadone, sorte de tarte au brocciu et au citron, parfois imbibé d'alcool. (GRC, p. 386)

Due to the [-perfective] aspectual feature, the present tense can be used in descriptions. This form is called descriptive present and it corresponds to the speaker's concern for describing the place and the setting of the destination, and also the characters, in order to give the reader the opportunity to imagine the destination described.

Din acest punct al cetății **se deschide** o minunată perspectivă asupra văii Târnavei Mari și cea a Saeșului. **Urmăm** mai departe zidul de incintă, **trecem** pe lângă o mică poartă de intrare în cetate, cunoscută sub numele de Intrarea Törle (sau Târlei), din capătul străzii Cojocarilor și **ajungem** în fața Turnului Cojocarilor. (GTSighi., p. 32)

Inauguré en 1992, le parc **occupe** les terrains des anciennes usines Citroën. Deux serres, un axe symétrique, un large perspectif sur la Seine, de vastes pelouses, de l'eau ...c'est une sorte de Versailles moderne, disent les admirateurs. Déployé sur 14 ha, le parc **se divise** en trois zones distinctes: le Jardin blanc, le Jardin noir, et le grand parc. (GRP, p. 458)

Compound past (le passe compose/ perfectul-compus)

Analyzing our corpus, the constructions in the indicative mood are distinguished by the use of the "compound past" as an intermediate tense whose role consists in making connections between past events, prior to the enunciation moment, and the contemporary ones. In utterances where the time interval can be deduced from the discursive context, the location in the past can be ensured only by the verb form without any other time specification (GALR 2008: 416). For instance:

Ca printr-un miracol, centrul istoric al Sibiului **a reușit** să-și conserve aproape integral trăsăturile originale. (GTRo, p. 12)

Situé à l'orée de la place de la République et de ses métros, cet hôtel offre des chambres fonctionnelles côté rue et assez agréables car elles sont plus grandes et plus lumineuses que celles donnant sur la cour. On **a préféré** celles du dernier étage, aux allures mansardées et offrant une jolie vue. (GRP, p. 112)

However, the process can also be placed in time by using time adverbs and expressions (*cândva*, *odată*, *pe vremeuri*) that confirm the past time reference and add the meaning of the distant past:

Orașul Fălticeni, devenit așezare de tip urban dintr-un fost târg provincial, **a fost cândva** "locul unde nu se întâmplă nimic"; astăzi însă oferă turistului clipe de nespusă încântare. (GTRo, p. 102)

À 18 km de Propriano, le petit village, **autrefois** modeste hameau, **a offert** aux touristes venus une vue sublime sur le golfe du Valinco. (GRC, p. 227)

When combined with the present tense, the compound past marks anteriority (in relation to the present tense) (Riegel, 2005, p. 302):

De la Horaia **putem** ajunge, după o oră de urcuș, la Schitul Horaicioara, amplasat într-un cadru natural deosebit de pitoresc. Biserița, cu hramul Buna Vestire, **a fost construită** tot de arhimandritul Ermoghen Buhuș, în secolul al XIX-lea. (GTȚN, p. 48)

Ce puits Renaissance **est** un des plus beaux et des mieux conservés d'Alsace, même s'il **a connu** au cours du temps quelques mésaventures qui **ont entraîné** des rénovations. (GVMA, p. 156)

Imperfect (past imperfective)

As far as rendering meaning is concerned, the imperfect or past imperfective refers to an interval located in the past, an interval that can be rendered by other verb forms or time expressions. In both the written and the oral register, the imperfect/ past perfective is used with multiple time and aspect values, assigned by grammarians. The affinity between this tense and the present is a well-known and interesting feature. Regarding this connection, Wagner and Pinchon (1962, p. 52) draw the attention to their parallel use, stating that the imperfect or the past imperfective is the homologous form of the present tense. The uses of both these tenses are parallel; the only difference is related to the way in which we envisage the processes:

Tâlharii **bântuia** prin acele locuri: ca atare, în 1701, domnitorul Constantin Brâncoveanu **poruncește** să fie scutiți de dări cei 40 de oameni aduși din trăisteni, spre paza mănăstirii, iar Mihai Șuțu înființează primul cătun din Sinaia-Izvorul. (GTVP, p. 39)

Malgré de difficiles conditions d'existence, une vie de quartier extrêmement riche **unissait** l'ensemble des habitants. Fuyant les logements trop exigus, les habitants **se retrouvaient** dans les cafés et la rue, assurant une vie sociale animée qui **perdure** encore aujourd'hui. (GRP, p. 436)

The use of the imperfect tense instead of the simple past tense has always drawn the grammarians' attention, who have tried to discover its various nuances. The analytical aspect allows the imperfect tense to introduce a rupture expressed by the simple past tense, which interrupts the process in the imperfect tense, dissociating the two parts: the initial part, which is achieved, and the other, which remains virtual (must be fulfilled) (Riegel 2005, p. 306). According to Imbs (1960, Gardes-Tamine

1987, p. 43), unlike the simple past tense, the imperfect tense introduces a so-called halo of continuity around it.

À l'origine, le Louvre n'était qu'une forteresse destinée à la protection de la rive droite; depuis, il ne cessa jamais de se transformer. (GRP, p. 48)

The contextual values of the imperfect, seen as extensions of the basic values, materialize in certain particular values that are much more expressive. Thus, like the present tense, the imperfect is used both in descriptions and in narratives; its narrative function is often closely related to the descriptive one. In narrative utterances, the imperfect show secondary actions, placing the facts in the background, namely comments, explanations or descriptions.

Gospodăria întărită avea formă poligonală, cu 5-7 laturi neregulate; anexele erau amplasate cu spatele spre exterior și fața spre curtea închisă pe toate laturile. (GTCRB, p. 6)

À l'époque, ce pont long de 280m et large de 30m était révolutionnaire: il ne portait aucune maison et le trottoir permettait aux passants de circuler sans danger. (GVMP, p. 79)

However, what is most often highlighted is the picturesque value of the imperfect tense, when it expresses a series of images rather than actions, evoking a certain expectation and arousing the reader's attention. In this case, we speak of the pictorial imperfect as a species of the descriptive imperfect (GALR I, 2008, p. 429), which transposes in writing the expressive means used in painting:

După ce se usca și se crăpa puțin lutul, se dădea încă o spoială de lut și după aceea se văruia alb pe dinăuntru și pe dinafară. Astfel își făceau oamenii casele care țineau până la 150 de ani și era totdeauna cald în ele. (GTCRB, p. 7)

À l'époque, pour la teinture des fils, on employait des plantes ou des racines tinctoriales: la garance donnait du rouge, le pastel du bleu, etc. En revanche, le seul moyen qu'on avait de blanchir une laine naturellement écriue était de l'exposer à la rosée matinale, très oxygénée. Pour tisser 1m² de ce type d'ouvrage, il fallait 1 mois. (GRP, p. 181)

Simple past tense

This tense shows a clearly delimited process in its development; moreover, it is directed towards the final term (Riegel, 2005, p. 303). Depending on the verb semantics, this process may have a longer or shorter duration, but it is always delimited. It is the fundamental tense of recounting past events; it is the tense used by historians in order to present facts from a closed and distant past (Chevalier et al., 1994, p. 346). The verbs in the simple past tense lead the reader to the forefront and contribute to the sudden acceleration of the story.

Il y a longtemps, le jeune Georges Brassens débarqua chez une certaine Mme Jeanne. Il y resta de 1944 à 1966, goûtant la chaleur et l'amitié des habitants de l'impasse. Puis le petit jeune grandit et fit chanter pendant près de 30 ans tous les coeurs de France. Il mourut en 1981, laissant une centaine de chansons immortelles. (GRP, p. 437)

Sometimes the simple past tense is used with the imperfect tense that describes the setting, explains the circumstances of the action or presents the characters. In other words, the simple past tense shows a sequence of facts, being the tense of the narration or the narrative simple past.

En 1908, on décida de faire passer le métro sous la Seine, entre Saint-Michel et Cite (ligne 4). Le sol trop boueux, était impossible à creuser. On décida alors de le geler à -24 ° C. Il fallut donc installer une usine à glaçons sur les quais. Dix mois furent nécessaires pour avancer de 14km. Cette incroyable prouesse technique fut couronnée de succès.” (GRP: 87)

In French, in the current language, in order to denote an event that ended before the moment of speaking, the compound perfect replaced the simple perfect. Instead, the simple perfect appears in the literary language, exclusively in narrative texts or in other genres such as biographies, scientific texts, etc.

The standard/ simple future

Used in order to express processes subsequent to the enunciation act, the future is an absolute tense (GALR I, 2008, p. 442). In our corpus, it is important to point out the use of the standard/ simple future.

Urcați-vă într-una din săniile trase de cai care adastă în centrul Branului și veți vedea că viața poate curge și în ritm de zurgălăi. (GTCRB, p. 25)

*Le top du jazz mondialisé donne rendez-vous au Duc, comme on va au Blue Note ou au Village Vanguard à New York. Il suffit de dire Phill Woods, Bireli Lagrene, Wynton Marsalis. Ce sont eux que vous **viendrez** écouter ici.* (GRP, p. 47)

There are two other forms that appear occasionally in the travel guide in Romanian (besides the canonical form), especially used in colloquial or dialectal speaking. One of them is the colloquial future constructed from the invariable particle "o" and the subjunctive of the conjugated verb. Some examples extracted from the proposed corpus are:

*Plimbându-vă prin acest micuț oraș **o să descoperiți** alte câteva obiective interesante.* (GTVP, p. 30)

*Contrar așteptărilor, **n- o să-i auziți** invocându-l pe sângeerosul Dracula.* (GTCRB, p. 5)

Despite its rare occurrences in travel guides, we must point out another use of the future, i.e. in Romanian, there is the periphrastic construction called future in the past *trecut* (GALR I 2008: 441), which expresses the posteriority to a landmark in the past. It is formed with the imperfect of the auxiliary "to have" and the subjunctive of the conjugated verb.

*Astfel, unitățile transferate **aveau să fie locuite** de către familiile reprezentative pentru zonele din care erau aduse.* (GTRo, p. 57)

In many cases, the speaker uses the future in order to perform an action that will take place, and which will also involve the audience. The tense of desires, par excellence, this verb form is employed by the speaker in order to trigger the audience's adhesion to the presented product and to make them to act.

*În satul de vacanță **veți găsi** restaurante amenajate în stilul diferitelor zone ale țării.* (GTRo: 34)

*On aime s'y poser la nuit venue pour siroter lentement. Les barmans sont de véritables experts en mixologie et ils **auront** faire votre bonheur.* (GRP: 47)

In French, the simple future tense is competed by various auxiliaries (devoir, pouvoir) or verbal periphrases. Thus, in the French corpus, we have noticed the form of the near future (le futur proche), which is frequently encountered in oral discourses; however, its occurrence in the analyzed corpus is limited. It is formed with the present (indicative mood) of the verb "aller" and the infinitive of the conjugated verb (aller + l'infinitif).

*Le Paris qu'elle fantasme **va se heurter** à la réalité.* (GRP, p. 615)

*Nous **n'allons pas énumérer** ici tout ce qu'il y a à voir: chaque pièce, pour ainsi dire, est un chef-d'œuvre!* (GRP, p. 263)

The future perfect tense

As the name suggests, the future perfect tense expresses facts prior to the action rendered by the simple future. Associated with an adverbial that specifies the time frame, the future perfect tense can be used in an independent sentence, in order to express the end of an action in the future. In Romanian, the future perfect tense, which has a bookish nature, being replaced by the standard future, consists of the auxiliary verb "to be" in the simple future and the participle of the conjugated verb. We did not find any example of this type in the guides written in the Romanian language. In French, the future perfect tense, as a compound form, consists of the simple future of the auxiliary verbs "avoir" or "être" and the past participle of the conjugated verb:

*En partant, il lanca à son père: "Tu n'auras de mes nouvelles que lorsque **j'aurai fait** fortune".* (GRP, p. 263)

5. Conclusions

Based on the hypothesis professing that the verb is the center of the sentence, it may be stated that its value is defined only by reference to the context where it occurs and in relation to other morphological elements that surround it. Thus, the present tense of the indicative mood places the events in a given era through the tense's temporal, timeless and impersonal value, while the perfect-compound and the imperfect tenses recall fulfilled or nonfulfilled past actions.

This analysis of the verb tenses in the selected corpus shows the complexity of the verbal system in which the combination of different types of tense and mood values leads to a range of various effects whose stylistic uses are innumerable. The verb mood indicates the speaker's attitude towards his/ her utterance and the relationship s/he adopts with the audience when utterance is performed.

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