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**GENRE HYBRIDITY IN DOMAIN-SPECIFIC TOURISM TEXTS: FOCUS ON LANGUAGE FUNCTIONS****Elena Kondeva**South -West University – Blagoevgrad, Bulgaria [elena.kondeva@swu.bg](mailto:elena.kondeva@swu.bg)

**Abstract:** The present study is an effort to represent the multifaceted nature of the language in the domain of tourism from the applied linguistics perspective. Referring to a multimodal analysis, the paper brings a constellation of relations between empirical and theoretical viewpoints on tourism and discourse in the context of communication studies. Some of the key concepts explored include *promotional discourse*, *persuasion*, *specialized tourism language*, *tourist communication*, *the role of stereotypes* as well as *genre colonies (genre mixing and embedding)*. Special attention has focused on tourist discourse via the meaningful role of the communication functions taking into account the hybrid aspect of genre construction and its interpretation. The aim is to clarify the theory of genre analysis, to identify the significance of genres function as vehicles for persuasion, and to discuss the multidimensional nature of tourism communication. It concerns the promotional functionality investigated linguistically within tourist resources (brochure, guide, leaflet and so on). In addition, the body of work suggests a set of linguistic traits of specialized discourse, its degree of specificity with respect to tourist texts. Indeed, linguistic properties and persuasive effects employed in tourism promotional materials should provide an interpretation of the functions characterizing the language of tourism as abbreviated LSP (« *language(s) for specific purposes* », « *langue de spécialité* »). Although discourse and communication are of central importance in tourism studies, they remain relatively unexplored among tourism researchers, and the specific links that have been made between language and tourism have for the most part ignored the vast tradition of discourse and communication studies. This study, in fact, focuses on a very crucial question concerning the language of tourism which occupies a predominant role in LSP, differently classified as language of social control, modernity and promotion. On the other hand, on the basis of the functional approach, persuasive language in tourism will be explored with its communicative functions. Another important point to note is the emphasis on the concept of « promotional discourse » which is seen in the form of a constellation of several closely-related genres with an overlapping communicative purpose of promoting a product or service to a potential customer. In other words, the concept of a genre colony is introduced as a collection of genres within and across disciplines with a common communicative purpose and also as “a process whereby generic resources are exploited and appropriated to create hybrid (both mixed and embedded) forms”. Furthermore, it is worth drawing attention to Dann’s model and Gotti’s classification in terms of the language of tourism as LSP.

**Keywords:** hybrid network, persuasive language, LSP functions, tourism discourse, promotion

**1. INTRODUCTION**

Tourism is globally promoted as a driver of growth, creator of jobs and engine for development. This paper is intended to explore some key language functions that are revealed in tourism promotional materials. The lexical means contribute to the image of novelty and strangeness of the offered destination. The aim of tourism as discourse is outlined by Graham Dann (1996: 2) “...tourism, in the act of promotion, as well as in the accounts of its practitioners and clients, has a discourse of its own. Seen in this light, the language of tourism is thus a great deal more than a metaphor. Via static and moving pictures, written texts and audio-visual offerings, the language of tourism attempts to persuade, lure, woo and seduce millions of human beings, and, in doing so, convert them from potential into actual clients”. A genre-based view illuminates identification of the functions that the language of tourism fulfills in terms of promotional discourse.

**2. BUILDING A PICTURE OF LSP HYBRIDITY IN GENRE THEORY: A DIACHRONIC TOURISM PERSPECTIVE**

Genres are socially constructed, interpreted and used in specific academic, social, institutional and professional contexts, and have their own individual identity. The word *genre* originates from the French (and originally Latin) word for ‘kind’ or ‘class’. The term is widely used in rhetoric, literary theory, media theory, and more recently linguistics, to refer to a distinctive type of text. The viewpoints expressed by some researchers such as **Bhatia**<sup>176</sup> and **Jean-Michel Adam**<sup>177</sup> contribute to the assertion that genres are the media through which members of

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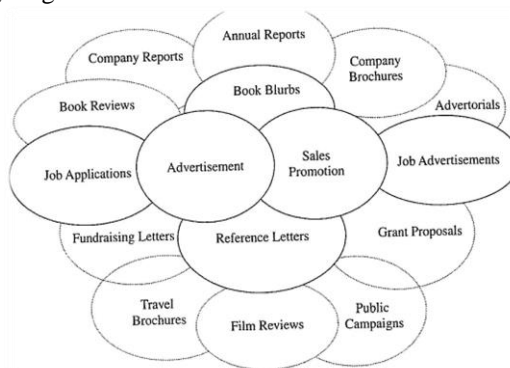
<sup>176</sup> Vijay Kumar Bhatia is known internationally as one of the leading researchers and theorists on the subject of genres and is a renowned international author in the field of English for specific purposes. He is best known for his work in critical genre analysis of professional discourse. Over the past 44 years his specialities have grown to

professional or academic communities communicate with each other. **Vijay Kumar Bhatia** suggests the idea with a figurative meaning: “Language is power, and the power of language is the ‘power of genre’. Power of genre is not only to construct, use, interpret and exploit genres, but also to innovate novel generic forms. This is the function of the knowledge of genre, which is accessible only to the expert members of disciplinary communities” (2004: 189). Moreover, genres are essentially identified in terms of communicative purposes they tend to serve.

In the real world of discourse we often come across genres that are mixed (Bhatia: 1995, 1997a), embedded (Bhatia: 1995), or what **Fairclough** (1993, 1995) calls *hybrid genres*. With regard to the theoretical framework for genre theory, the concept of *genre colony* is crucial. It is difficult to make clear-cut distinctions between one genre and another because genres overlap and there are ‘mixed genres’ as result of their dynamic fluidity. As the generic corpus ceaselessly expands, genres (and the relationships between them) change over time. **Jane Feuer** stresses that ‘a genre is ultimately an abstract conception rather than something that exists empirically in the world’, (Feuer 1992: 144). In this sense, a genre could be regarded as a shared code between the producers and interpreters of texts included within it.

More specifically, *genre colonies* represent groupings of closely related genres serving similar communicative purposes. Specific genres tend to be easy to recognize and **Steve Neale** highlights the fact that ‘particular features which are characteristic of a genre are not normally unique to it; it is their relative prominence, combination and functions which are distinctive (Neale 1980: 22-3). Indeed, a genre can be regarded in any medium as embodying certain **values** and **ideological assumptions**. Typical examples are texts in the area of tourism (such as **travel brochures** in tourist sector), which tend to promote not necessarily a product or service, but possibly an idea, a research proposal, a public concern, a particular place of **tourist attraction**. In our case, attention is paid to **tourism discourse (or travel specialized discourse) through the notion of genre**.

In Bhatia’s view, informative functions in tourist resources are more likely to be colonized by promotional functions. These two functions of language, i.e. informational and promotional, are therefore unlikely to create tension. In fact, genres are not isolated, but are strictly interconnected, a concept exemplified by Bhatia through the well-known metaphor of the galaxy, according to which genres exist in **colonies**, like stars exist in galaxies, and colonies, like galaxies, interact with other generic star systems (Bhatia, 2002). Colonies – for instance, **promotional genres** – include similar genres with common features used within different discourse communities. Within the domain of ESP (or more generally LSP) in applied linguistics, scholars like Bhatia (1993, 2002, 2004, 2010) and Swales (1990) have been addressing genre as a communicative event, occurring within a particular discourse community and following a specific communicative purpose or function. The membership of such a genre colony can be illustrated by the following diagram:



**Diagram 1: Colony of promotional genres interpreted by Bhatia (2004, p.62)**

include discourse and critical genre analysis, legal analysis, as well as ESP and professional communication (theory and practice). He is a professor in the Department of English at the City University of Hong Kong and the founding president of the Asia-Pacific Association of LSP and Professional Communication; he is also an adjunct professor at the Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia.

<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/9781405198431.wbeal0086/abstract>

<sup>177</sup> See, for instance: [http://www.persee.fr/doc/rbph\\_0035-0818\\_1997\\_num\\_75\\_3\\_4188](http://www.persee.fr/doc/rbph_0035-0818_1997_num_75_3_4188)

As we can see genre configurations are offered in the form of a constellation with an overlapping communicative purpose of promoting a product. The colony has a variety of occupants which membership can be displayed on various clines in terms of the degree and nature of appropriation of promotional elements. Advertisements, sales promotion letters, job advertisements and book blurbs are some of the primary members (presented in bold) of the colony of promotional genres, whereas film reviews, travel brochures, public campaigns, grant proposals and several others of this kind are **secondary members** (shown with dotted lines in the above model). Although tourist brochures are designed to serve informative purposes, they focus on positive aspects and incorporate persuasive and even promotional elements. As we move down from the top level to the lower levels of generalization, we need to define communicative purpose(s) in an increasing order of specificity. In the context of tourism texts, the mixing is realized in a manner that the promotional generic value reinforces the communicative purpose. The ceaseless innovation and hybridization in specialized genre instances imposes a more complex frame of reference. Particularly, Calvi's multifunctional framework<sup>178</sup> is based on the categories of genre families, macro-genres, genres and sub-genres, as follows (Calvi, 2010: 16):

◆ Genre *families* comprehend texts in a given socio-professional context with a similar communication purpose. The main genre families in tourism discourse are **editorial** (for instance, travel books, travel guides, travel and tourist magazines), **institutional** (official leaflets, brochures, websites, advertisements), **commercial** (hotel brochures, travel agent websites, leaflets), **organizational** (tickets, bookings, cards, invoices), **legal** (regulations, norms), **scientific and academic** (critical volumes, articles, essays) and **informal** (travel blogs, travel chats).

◆ Defined by common communication purpose and medium, channel and sender, *macro-genres* include different genres, textual typologies and styles. Examples of tourist macro-genres are: the brochure, the travel magazine, the travel catalogue, the webpage and the tourist guide, the latter including itineraries, practical guides, maps and pictures.

◆ Either autonomous or embedded in macro-genres, *genres* are determined by communication and pragmatic function, formal distinctiveness and common language features. Among the wide range of tourist text genres are the practical guide, the itinerary, the travel programme, the travel report and the advertisement.

◆ *Sub-genres* are characterized on a thematic level. For instance, art, history, crafts, food and drink, nature, sport, events and entertainment are topics covered by most tourist texts.

## 2.1. THE MULTI-DIMENSIONAL NATURE OF TOURISM COMMUNICATION

In spite of their diverse focus, Calvi, Gotti and Dann's grids have stressed the importance of the pragmatic **communication function** in determining a tourist text's genre (Maci, 2010: 48). While acknowledging multi-functionality and functional hybridity, several predominant functions can be identified in specific tourism texts. Within the tourism domain, for example, different text genres can be detected that fulfil the main communication functions of information and promotion; that is, they convey information about a site (history, culture, facilities) and convince readers to choose that site as their holiday destination. In fact, communication function varies with reference to involved actors, tour operators being prominently concerned with persuading readers to visit a location, whereas travel writers are motivated by aesthetics. As in the case of the aesthetic function, the entertaining function may be used either intentionally or unintentionally as a destination-enhancing strategy.

According to **Maurizio Gotti** (2006), attention should be paid to the **actors** or agents involved in the communication system and to the roles and functions they play. The Italian linguist points out that the language of tourism has a 'multi-dimensional nature' meaning that communication can variously occur between:

- specialists;
- specialists and non-specialists /in an educational context/;
- specialists and a wider audience.

In the first case, formal tourist documents are produced, such as reports or projects. The second case includes textbooks, essays and manuals used to explain concepts and terms pertaining to the tourism domain. The third group includes reports published in travel magazines. The above mentioned components may be systematized in the following table:

<sup>178</sup> Calvi, M.V. (2010) "Los generos discursivos en la lengua del turismo: una propuesta de clasificación", *Iberica*, 19, pp. 9-32.

**Table 1.** *The multi-dimensional nature of tourism communication (Gotti 2006: 20, adapted)*

actors	specialist - specialist	specialist - non specialist (education)	specialist wide audience	non - specialists
text	reports, projects	textbooks, essays	reportage, brochures	chat, forum word-of-mouth
language	highly specialized language, mono - referential vocabulary	specialized vocabulary mixed with academic language	specialized vocabulary mixed with general language	general language with some specialized vocabulary

More specially, in the area of tourism, intercultural communication regards the interaction between tourists of different nationalities, between tourists and the local population where they spend their stay, between tourists and specialized personnel with whom they meet, between employees of different nationalities or cultures which operates in various units of tourist accommodation such as hotels, restaurants, leisure centers, travel agencies, etc. Indeed, one of the key issues of intercultural communication represents incorrect communication or even misunderstanding. In fact, for a sustainable development of the tourism industry, communication in all sense and levels between all emitters and receivers of tourism messages and tourists has become a significant element. The experiences of intercultural communication help tourists to understand and appreciate other cultures. In situations of intercultural relations, could arise communication barriers, caused by the differences in behavior or perception, that exist between tourists coming from various cultures as well as negative stereotype activation. The contact with other cultures changes the tourist's perceiving way, thus contributing to its cultural and spiritual development.

## 2.2. PERSUASIVE MESSAGES IN TOURIST PROMOTIONAL DISCOURSE

Tourism discourse is highly persuasive because its ultimate purpose is to sell a product by describing a reality which has to be perceived by potential tourists as authentic and which can give them the illusion of really living an 'off-the-beaten-track' holiday experience (Maci, 2013: 21). In order to achieve this, both verbal and iconic elements should be combined to meet the tourist's expectation. In other words, **tourism discourse** is a domain where the combination of both verbal and visual communication contributes to the achievement of final aim – namely, language, images and sounds are strategically combined together to inform, attract and persuade the potential tourist at the pre-trip stage. Referring to tourist brochures Gotti says that “their aim is to attract the holidaymaker/traveller in order to sell tourist products, such as flights, package holidays, hotel accommodation, etc. Although these materials are also highly informative, their main aim is persuasive” (Gotti, 2006: 32). The persuasive force which drives a tourist towards a tourist location is achieved through a set of discursive and linguistic strategies.

## 3. LANGUAGE FUNCTIONS APPLIED IN TOURIST TEXTS AS LSP /VIA DANN'S MODEL AND GOTTI'S CLASSIFICATION/

The typical properties and techniques of the language of tourism as LSP are outlined by Dann (1996) and Gotti (2006). The use of emphatic language or euphoria, combined with the property of keywords and keying, is present to a great extent in tourist texts. The *emphatic language* is defined by Gotti (2006: 26-29) as a distinctive feature in tourism discourse compared with other LSPs, characterized by predominantly persuasive function that resorts to the use of nouns, adjectives, expressions capable of conveying an hyperbolic, positive image of the destinations described in tourist texts. This notion corresponds to the property of *euphoria* that is the tendency of the language of tourism “to speak only in positive and glowing terms of the service and attractions it seeks to promote” (Dann, 1996: 65) by means of superlatives, hyperbole and other linguistic devices able to emphasize the uniqueness of the attraction to be promoted. The property of *keywords and keying* is defined by Dann (1996: 174-175) as “a series of attributes of the destination [...] which correspond to the requirements of the potential tourist” through the use of “appropriate language able to give an aura genuineness and authenticity to the destination promoted”. *Languaging* is a very common linguistic strategy in tourist texts, which is defined by Dann (1996: 183-185) as “the use of real or fictitious foreign words” or “a manipulation of the vernacular” with the aim of providing local colour to the text. The technique of *ego-targeting* employs “lexical devices typical of a conversational style” (Dann, 1996: 185-188), such as the use of first and second person (plural and singular) pronouns, possessive adjectives and pronouns, interjections through which readers of tourist texts can be directly addressed and be “linguistically transposed into the tourist experience to be sold”.

**4. CONCLUSION**

To sum up, a variety of language techniques in the area of tourist texts have been introduced from both informing and promoting angle. Also, these two aspects are indivisible sharing a specific communicative purpose. As a result, precise semiotic messages are transmitted through targeted selection, purposeful organization and effective combination of verbal and visual elements. A particularly significant is Graham Dann's extensive and in-depth examination of various travel-related texts such as brochures, advertisements, and posters which concludes that there is a 'language of tourism', incorporating specific narrative techniques that address tourists and stimulate tourist activities.

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