

A Discourse Analysis of the Perception of “Nature” in English Travel Promotion Texts

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Abstract

The increase in public concern over environmental issues has led to a surge of environmental appeals through advertisements (Hansen 2002), in which advertisers make essential (*mis*-)use of the terms *nature* and *natural* (Harré, Brockmeier, Mühlhäusler 1999). This research aims at revealing how *nature* and what is regarded as *natural* are described and employed by advertisers in British travel promotion texts in order to attract ecotourists. In particular, by tracing the discourses of nature through a corpus-based discourse analysis, the study investigates the meaning of the terms *nature* and *natural* in order to understand whether or not their usage in tourism advertising is deceptive. The results show that although the lexical items used to describe the natural world seem to express concern for the physical environment, the role of nature is limited. Indeed, the nature depicted in these travel promotion texts seems to be highly influenced by human beings. Nature is used as a recreational attraction and resource, the perfect setting for various activities and sports, while its preservation and respect on behalf of the ‘responsible’ tourist is marginal.

1. Introduction

Discourses regarding the perceived global environmental crisis and its effects have increased dramatically over recent decades. This *greening* process has particularly affected all those businesses and industries, such as tourism, that intend to “respond to any increase in consumer demand for more natural or environmentally friendly products or services” (Howlett and Raglon 1992: 245), leading to

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a proliferation of green advertisements in which advertisers make essential use or misuse of the terms “nature” and “natural”.

Advertising has the power to manipulate and alter our vision of nature and what is depicted as natural (Hansen 2002; 2010). The perception of the natural world risks being a social construction which is shaped over time according to the needs of society (Howlett and Raglon 1992; Thelander 2002; Hansen 2010). Studies on advertising illustrate how nature is continuously used in these types of media discourse to remind readers of how their attitude towards nature (e.g.: concerned, neutral, superficial) can shape the growth or decline of nature. Since the images associated to nature are various, this study will examine the uses of nature and explore how the search terms “nature” and “natural” are constructed. In particular, the aim of the paper is to: a) identify how nature is described by advertisers in travel promotion texts in order to attract potential ‘green’ tourists, and b) reveal how the words “nature” and “natural” are employed within these texts in order to reveal the function that nature, as a consequence, will play in these texts.

Corpus-based discourse analysis is the methodology adopted to analyse a set of British travel promotion texts in order to offer an integration of a quantitative and a qualitative perspective. To this purpose, a quantitative analysis of the collocations of the terms “nature” and “natural” and of their concordances will pave the way to a qualitative analysis which will serve to identify and uncover linguistic patterns (Baker 2006).

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. The content: environment and advertising

The relatively recent interest in and concern for the environment has led to an explosion of vocabulary related to the environment and environmental change. This process has been helped by the emergence of morphological patterns that signal this type of lexicon, such as the use of *eco-* as a prefix for various lexical items (e.g.: *eco-friendly*, *eco-disaster*). This prefix gives greater prominence to ecological concerns; yet, it can also become a convenient device for concealing the harmful nature of objects and processes in examples such as *eco-car* and *eco-tourism*. Although most of this lexicon and

its linguistic features derive from scientific, economic, philosophical contexts (Hansen 2010), the way we perceive the natural world and our knowledge of the environment is a reflection of how this is illustrated through the media.

Consequently, media discourses, and advertising discourse in particular, shape the discussion and understanding of environmental problems (Hansen 2002). As highlighted by Howlett and Raglon (1992) images of nature have been used in advertising since 1910. What has changed in the past 20 years is the way companies portray themselves and their potential clients, i.e. as "nature's caretakers: environmentally friendly, responsible and caring" (Howlett and Raglon 1992: 246).

Moreover, nature in advertising has been identified as fresh, imperfect, past idyll, wilderness, threat (Wall 1999; Hansen 2002) and, in analysing the visual image of nature in travel advertisements, four categories have been identified: *artificial nature*, *tamed nature*, *untamed nature* and *accessible wild nature* (Thelander 2002).

As pointed out by Hansen (2002), the image of nature used in travel advertisements refers to 'a nice place to be'. This image is not only simplistic but also quite obvious. The changing perception of the landscape combined with the changing social and economic sphere of the 19th century gave tourism entrepreneurs the chance to encourage travelling by showing the environment in a new light (Hansen 2010). Travel advertisements use nature imagery to persuade the tourist to escape from the complexities of urban life to the tranquility and beauty of nature, which becomes a symbol of simplicity, authenticity, family intimacy and enjoyment (Dann 1996; Hansen 2002).

Thus, the idea of nature is analysed along the lines of ideology and culture. Social and economic actors, i.e. advertisers and tourism entrepreneurs, are involved in the construction of social realities; the "failure to recognize that naturalness is a [socially and] culturally constructed concept, rather than a universal one, has produced [...] inconsistency and ambiguity in the terminology used for these assessments" (Taylor 1990: 411).

By adopting the theoretical framework of Discourse Analysis (DA), it is possible to examine the discourse used in travel promotion texts to explore the meaning and real use of "nature" and "natural" in these texts.

2.2. The approach: discourse analysis and corpus linguistics

The aim of discourse analysis is to investigate how the context affects the use of language, providing a different understanding and interpretation of constructions of discourse, in this case of nature.

Moreover, DA is a multidisciplinary endeavour that is performed differently across academic fields, with the support of various methodologies and techniques. “Recent developments in the use of corpora stress the potential of corpus linguistics methodologies for the study of social meanings, ideologies and the construction of social reality” (Mahlberg 2007: 191). When discussing the use of corpora in the study of ideology and culture, Hunston (2002: 123) asserts that since “data in corpora is de-contextualized, the researcher is encouraged to spell out the steps that lie between what is observed and the interpretation placed on those observations”.

The potential of corpus linguistics methodologies for investigating social meanings, ideologies and the construction of social reality has been widely accepted by experts (Orpin 2005; Baker 2006), who have advocated the corpus-based approach to discourse analysis. Following these assumptions, the present study will focus on the interrelationship between discourse, context and social meanings and will adopt a combination of the quantitative approach of corpus linguistic with the qualitative approach of DA to provide an integrated model of discourse analysis.

The following section describes the methodology employed in the research study and the data selected for the analysis.

3. Corpus data and methodology

The data for this study were drawn from travel promotion texts collected from *Travel Weekly*, a British periodical addressed to potential tourists. A corpus of 266 travel promotion texts (TW corpus), dated from January 2003 to March 2010 comprising 166,040 tokens, has been compiled for the purpose of this study.

As mentioned above, the two terms chosen for the analysis were “nature” and “natural”. Among the various discourses on environmental issues, these have become buzzwords in commercial advertising for all types of industries, including tourism, which want to sell *their* image of the environment. Indeed, the uses

and constructions of nature are ideological since they are able to present "particular views, understandings, and interests as being 'for the common good', 'universal', and 'right'" (Hansen 2002: 501). The study follows Baker's (2006) methodology on collocational technique, drawing on DA theory to interpret the sociological implications of the findings. Indeed, in order to clearly understand a text and its possible underlying meanings, it is necessary to analyse the contexts of production and reception of such text (Stubbs 1996). Thus, the goal is to highlight certain aspects of the discourse to reveal what the producers of the discourse are aiming at and how the respondents may possibly react. The focus is on the lexical items chosen by the writers to get their readers to see the facts, in this case nature and natural, as they want them to be seen.

Through an automatic search, all references to the two node words appearing in the heading and the body of the text of each article were identified. The articles used to compile the corpus were downloaded from the journals' websites and manually transformed into text files; the files were run through the concordancing software Wordsmith Tools 5 (Scott 2007).

Firstly, 198 occurrences of "nature" and 297 of "natural" were found. However, an analysis of the concordance lines was not sufficient to reveal the construction of nature, therefore the analysis of the terms was carried out by focusing on collocation, i.e. "the statistical tendency of words to co-occur" (Hunston 2002: 12). As Stubbs (1996) claims, words occur in characteristic collocations, showing the associations and connotations they have, and thus the assumptions which they embody. After considering different collocate spans, the decision fell upon the 3:3 span, since it provides words that are included in the noun phrases containing "nature" and "natural". The collocation program calculates the frequency of each item in the chosen span. However, the most frequent items are function words, which do not provide significant information on the true collocates nor help understand the meaning of the analysed words. Therefore, the analysis focused on lexical items² which are meaningful for this study. However, since raw frequency lists of

² In this study lexical items refer to nouns and qualifying adjectives.

lexical words are not always sufficient to analyse the significance of collocates and reveal interesting patterns, a statistical approach, specifically a T-score, was adopted to identify the lexical attraction between the two analysed words.

In order to conduct a systematic study, the obtained concordances of the collocates were manually analysed along with the surrounding co-text, and the collocates were placed into four nature categories³. These were used to identify and explain the functions that nature serves in the analysed texts:

- *Artificial nature*: few natural elements are present and are mainly controlled by man. The image of human mastery is depicted, while the role of nature is limited;
- *Tamed nature*: nature is always presented in relation to human artifacts, in particular, as a recreational resource. There is very little consideration for nature;
- *Untamed nature*: human artifacts are present but they do not dominate the environment. Nature is a spectacle thanks to which people can relax and escape the alienating effects of city life;
- *Wild nature*: there is little or no human impact. Nature is exotic and pure. There is a sense of infinity, and of untouched nature to observe.

The results will be discussed in the following section with evidence taken from the corpus.

4. Results and discussion

The results illustrated in the following figures are discussed in an attempt to answer the two questions that guide this study: a) how “nature” is described in travel promotion texts, i.e. what lexical items are most frequently used to describe it, b) how “nature” and what is regarded as “natural” are employed in these texts, i.e. what their function is.

4.1. How advertisers describe nature

Table 1 shows the occurrences of the collocates of the two node terms, “nature” and “natural”, ranked by frequency.

³ As described by Thelander (2002) with adaptations taken from Hansen (2002).

TABLE 1
Collocates of “nature” and “natural” ranked by frequency

“Nature”		“Natural”	
Frequency rank		Frequency rank	
<i>all words</i>	<i>lexical words</i>	<i>all words</i>	<i>lexical words</i>
1 And (68)	Reserve (43)	The (106)	Beauty (32)
2 The (63)	Lovers (15)	And (73)	Disasters (30)
3 To (50)	Park (10)	A (70)	Attractions (22)
4 Reserve (43)	Reserves (8)	Of (67)	Environment (12)
5 In (31)	Walks (8)	In (43)	Search (12)
6 A (28)	Close (7)	Beauty (32)	Wonders (9)
7 Of (26)	Trails (7)	Disasters (30)	Terrorism (9)
8 Is (16)	Culture (6)	Its (28)	Disaster (6)
9 Lovers (15)	Best (5)	Is (27)	Habitat (6)
10 With (14)	Mother (5)	To (27)	Wildlife (5)
10=	National (5)		Ingredients (5)
10=	Tourism (5)		Rich (5)
10=	Tours (5)		Springs (5)
10=			Pools (5)

As shown in the ‘frequency rank-all words’ column, most words are function words, which, as explained above, have not been taken into consideration since they cannot provide useful insights for the purpose of this research. The second column illustrates the frequency rank of the lexical words. However, a further step was taken in order to analyse the most significant collocates, as shown in the following table.

Table 2 illustrates the collocates of “nature” and “natural” obtained using the t-score measure. Specifically, the collocates that will be analysed are those lexical words with a T-score of 2 or higher, following Hunston’s (2002) suggestion.

As shown in Table 2, more collocates of the node word “natural” were found, presumably due to the fact that there are many more occurrences of “natural” in the corpus (297 occurrences of “natural” vs. 198 of “nature”).

TABLE 2
T-score results for collocates of “nature” and “natural” (lexical words)

“Nature”			“Natural”		
Word	T-score Relation	# of occurrences	Word	T-score Relation	# of occurrences
1 RESERVE	6.5	43	BEAUTY	5.6	27
2 LOVERS	3.8	15	ATTRACTIONS	4.6	19
3 PARK	3.0	10	ENVIRONMENT	3.4	12
4 RESERVES	2.8	8	WONDERS	2.9	7
5 WALKS	2.8	8	HABITAT	2.4	6
6 TRAILS	2.6	7	PHENOMENON	2.2	4
7 CLOSE	2.6	7	SPRINGS	2.2	5
8 MOTHER	2.2	5	RICH	2.2	5
9 TOURS	2.1	5	POOLS	2.1	5
10 TOURISM	2.1	5	HERITAGE	2.1	4
11 NATIONAL	2.1	5	HISTORY	2.1	4
12 BEST	2.0	5	WILDLIFE	2.1	5
13			WORLD	2.0	5

Moreover, there are very few adjectives compared to nouns. In the case of “natural” this may occur since “natural” is an adjective itself or it may be due to the fact that the text writers aim to present what nature offers rather than describe it by means of adjectives. Furthermore, the lexical items used tend to express the concern for the physical environment which typifies green tourism, such as *habitat*, *wildlife* for “natural”, and *reserve*, *trail* for “nature”. The purpose is to attract tourists who want to be environmentally responsible, therefore the emphasis is on features, locations and activities which allow the tourist to experience natural and cultural resources. Indeed, 34% of the collocates of “nature” are represented by *reserve*, which is a symbol of preservation and respect for nature. It is also worth noticing how the occurrence of *lovers* (12.1%) is used to refer to the individual among the crowd (e.g. ‘you, nature lover’) with the aim of arousing strong personal feelings associated with the environment. In the case of “natural”, not surprisingly, the most frequent collocate is *beauty* (25%) since this noun is commonly associated with the natural characteristics of the environment.

In order to understand how “nature” and the “natural” are socially described and constructed, it is also important to analyse the texts considering the relationship between society, environment and tourism. Indeed, after the 1980s, issues such as global warming and ozone depletion began to appear more frequently in media coverage, leading to a rise in environmental consciousness (Holden 2008). By the end of the 20th century these concerns became more prominent, resulting in a need for the tourism industry to respond to them through the implementation of so-called eco-tourism. In 1992, two billion dollars were spent on nature travel, presumably due to the fact that 75% of vacationers chose their holidays with environmental concerns in mind (Dann 1996). In order to respond to such a demand, the tourism industry takes advantage of the concept of nature travel by linguistically exploiting the term in its adverts.

An example of such linguistic misuse can be seen in the concordances of the collocates, *reserve/reserves* (41.5% of occurrences), which suggest the idea of protection of the environment and conservation of natural habitats. The examples in table 3 show how the representation of nature reserve is contradictory. The advertiser uses this site to attract tourists interested in preservation issues, but at the same time these issues are overshadowed by the idea of luxury and relaxation. Indeed, entrepreneurs are making the environment more user-friendly, moving away from the idea of nature in its *natural* state.

TABLE 3
Sample of concordances of *nature reserve*⁴

	Concordances of <i>nature reserve</i>	File
1	Set in a private nature reserve near Plettenberg, Castle on the Cliff, has been completely rebuilt	TW99_04.txt
2	...hotels make the area popular for <i>spa holidays</i> , Ajloun Nature Reserve : located in the...	TW91_03.txt
3	in New South Wales in the Wolgan Valley nature reserve a five-star <i>spa resort</i> opened	TW31_06.txt
4	...South Africa This <i>property</i> , set in a private nature reserve , has 16 <i>residences</i>	TW109_08.txt

⁴ For information on the files see *Appendix*.

Images of wild landscape and references to the natural environment are used throughout the texts by advertisers to attract those tourists who wish to protect nature and be involved in it. Indeed, collocates such as *trails* (5.7%), *habitat* (5.6%), and *wildlife* (5.5%) are relatively frequent in the texts. An interesting example is given by the collocate *environment* which occurs 12 times (11.1%) in the corpus. Table 4 shows a sample of concordances of *natural environment*, in which the collocate *environment* is used solely for recreational purposes. Interestingly, in this sample the preservation of nature is not mentioned, nor is the behaviour that the responsible tourist should adopt in such locations.

TABLE 4
Sample of concordances of *natural environment*

Concordances of <i>natural environment</i>		File
1	Clients looking for first-class pampering in a totally natural environment enjoy the <i>hotel spa</i> , accessed via a lift that [...] emerges at sea level...	TW157_06.txt
2	The reef is the only natural environment near five-star <i>hotels, bars</i> and <i>fairground rides</i> of the resort	TW170_06.txt
3	Thanks to some careful planning, the alligators inhabit a completely natural environment and behave as they would in the wild. In this natural environment you can <i>view, feed</i> and even stand above an alligator (on a bridge)	TW252_04.txt

These are examples of how the visualisation and construction of nature presents a “clear convergence of particular ideological and commercial interests” (Hansen 2010: 125), presenting a selective portrait of nature and the environment. In concordances 1 and 2, the natural environment of the beach offers an image of nature which is overshadowed by the construction of hotels and other types of accommodation. This may result in the destabilisation of the beach, firstly, and subsequently in the destruction of coral reefs. In concordance 3 the writer is tempting the tourist with the idea of meeting face-to-face with wild animals, but there is no mention of how human presence may be “disruptive to their breeding and eating patterns” (Holden 2008: 89).

4.2. What functions nature serves

The second question regards identification of the function of nature. In order to address this issue, the collocates have been categorised in the four categories of *artificial nature*, *tamed nature*, *untamed nature* and *accessible wild nature* as illustrated in the methodology section.

The results in Tables 5 and 6⁵ show distribution of the collocates of both “nature” and “natural” in the categories obtained by the analysis of the concordances of the collocates and the surrounding co-text. In order to understand the categorisation, examples taken from the corpus will be given.

TABLE 5
Distribution of the collocates of “nature” in the categories

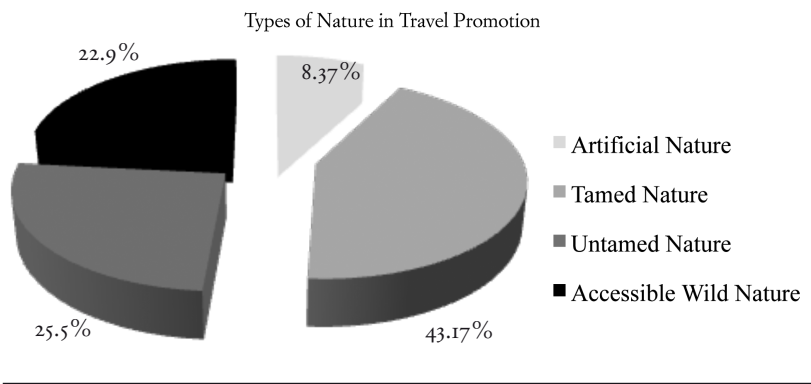
	Artificial Nature	Tamed Nature	Untamed Nature	Accessible Wild Nature
<i>Reserve</i>	2	13	20	8
<i>Lovers</i>	2	6	4	3
<i>Park</i>	2	7	1	0
<i>Reserves</i>	0	2	3	3
<i>Walks</i>	2	6	0	0
<i>Trails</i>	1	6	0	0
<i>Close</i>	0	3	1	2
<i>Mother</i>	0	3	1	1
<i>Tours</i>	0	3	1	1
<i>Tourism</i>	1	3	0	1
<i>National</i>	0	3	2	0
<i>Best</i>	0	2	1	2
Total	10	57	34	21

⁵ The concordances contained in texts TW33_06 (*close*), TW83_03 (*beauty*) and TW235_04 (*rich*) are not relevant to the purpose of the study, so they have been discounted, while the text TW133_06 (*beauty*) does not contain enough information to be analysed.

TABLE 6
Distribution of the collocates of “natural” in the categories

	Artificial Nature	Tamed Nature	Untamed Nature	Accessible Wild Nature
<i>Beauty</i>	3	16	3	3
<i>Attractions</i>	1	9	6	6
<i>Environment</i>	3	2	1	6
<i>Wonders</i>	0	3	2	4
<i>Habitat</i>	0	1	3	2
<i>Phenomenon</i>	0	0	0	5
<i>Springs</i>	1	1	2	1
<i>Rich</i>	1	1	2	0
<i>Pools</i>	0	3	0	2
<i>Heritage</i>	0	1	2	2
<i>History</i>	0	4	1	0
<i>Wildlife</i>	0	2	2	1
<i>World</i>	0	1	2	2
Total	9	44	26	34

GRAPH 1
Nature categories in the TW corpus



As shown in Tables 5 and 6 separately and in Graph 1 as a whole, the category of nature that is mostly depicted in the analysed texts is *tamed nature*. This type of nature, which is influenced by human beings, occurs in 43.2% of the texts. Nature is considered as a recreational resource,

the perfect setting for various activities and sports. Specifically, we can assume that nature is being used for marketing purposes.

As we can see from the following examples, nature serves to advertise enjoyment and it does not require attention or consideration on behalf of the tourist. In particular, in concordance 2 the reference to *nature walks* is used as a peripheral activity with the aim of persuading tourists interested in the natural world.

1. With surfing, scuba diving, golfing and riding among activities on offer, there is no time to get bored in Hawaii.

Hawaii is **mother nature's playground**, with *endless activities* on land and sea to suit all ages and levels of experience. [...]. *Events* take place throughout the year... (TW96_04)

2. ...the many *activities* on offer. These include archery, fencing, **nature walks**, salsa classes, high-rope adventures and horse riding. All are for children and adults so families can try *activities* together. (TW35_06)

3. **Natural attractions.** Mount Charleston is 35 miles from Las Vegas, with its highest elevation at 1,918 ft. [...], Mount Charleston is perfect for *skiing, picnicking, hiking* and *horse riding*. (TW137_06)

In *untamed nature*, which is the second most frequent type of nature (25.5%), the human presence is not so obvious. Nature is more authentic, it appears to be untouched and it offers panoramic views. It is suitable for small groups of tourists who wish to admire the surroundings. People in *untamed nature* experience calm and relaxation through the spectacle of nature.

1. Spending some time in Iceland's outdoors is a perfect way to *recharge the batteries* while *feasting the eye* on some of the world's **natural wonders**. Here are a few of the country's natural highs: Bird watching [...], Whale watching [...]. (TW61_04)

2. With grizzly bear, polar bear, walrus, wolves, eagles, [...] among Canada's abundant *wildlife*, this is a country for **nature lovers**. *Away from the cities* many tours offer *great wildlife spotting opportunities* without even trying. *Look out for moose and mountain goat* in the Rocky Mountains and grizzlies along the rivers and coast in the west. (TW76_04)

3. *Away from the metropolis*, a different world awaits — a world with 100 km of coastline, mountains and seductive, historically-rich villages hidden away in **natural landscapes**.

One of the most *exhilarating and relaxing ways* to view this *diverse landscape* is to take to the skies for a *bird's eye perspective*. (TW80_03)

Accessible wild nature (22.9%) is the most authentic type of nature. There are very few suggestions of human impact. Panoramic scenery is used to describe nature. The nature depicted in this category is distant, wild and untouched. Tourists, who are rarely mentioned, are intrinsically considered as people who will experience nature through its observation, appraisal and respect.

1. [T]iny Dominica is a place for getting **close to nature** [...]. Instead of glamorous resorts and pristine sandy beaches, Dominica boasts a *landscape of rainforest, soaring mountains, volcanoes, boiling lakes and rivers ...* (TW65_05)
2. ...Alaska is one of the *wildest* destinations on the planet, [...] where you can still see polar bears in their **natural habitat**. "Alaska is home to *huge glaciers, green forests*, snow-capped mountains and *remote townships*," [...]. "Denali National Park has bears, caribou, moose, wolves and bald eagles, as well as *spectacular* views of Mount McKinley". (TW122_08)
3. If you go to the Boiling Lake, you cross *spectacular* volcanic landscape. [...] Belize offers [...] a completely *untouched natural environment*. It [...] has the most *pristine* section of the Barrier Reef. (TW85_03)

Finally, in the least frequent category (*artificial nature*, 8.4%) the natural environment is presented as a product of mankind, and the role of nature is limited. Indeed, it is an appendage to human activities; people's happiness does not come from nature but from the act of being involved in activities with others. The following examples highlight the elements which suggest how the natural world is anything but natural.

1. [...] Pretoria is a city of government buildings and embassies. The huge student population gives it a lively edge. [...]

City highlights

National Botanical Gardens: a mass of subtropical and temperate plants with *paved nature trails* and a *tea garden*. (TW36_06)
2. Visit the Domaine Les Pailles, a 1,200-hectare **nature park** with lots of *facilities* including a Chinese *restaurant*, an Indian *restaurant*, *pizzeria* and a *casino*. [...]
3. Suitcase essential: *swim suit* and *sun cream*. (TW27_06)
3. True *eco-luxury* can be found in a variety of specialist operators and small travel companies.

[...] Each guest of Banyan Tree contributes \$2 a night and the hotel

matches the contribution, which goes towards funding environmental and social projects in the area.

Inkaterra, an eco and adventure travel company in Peru, has five *luxury* hotels set in areas of outstanding **natural beauty**, such as Lake Titicaca and the Sacred Valley of the Incas. Each property is part of a conservation and education programme with training initiatives. (TW109_08)

This last example is particularly interesting since the writer uses the term *eco-luxury* with a double goal to attract, and maybe persuade, tourists who are interested in eco-tourism and those purely interested in a luxury vacation, avoiding the discomforts that a true natural setting would include. Moreover, any sense of guilt about environmental pollution is paid off with a \$2 dollar contribution to a conservation program that seems only interested in building more luxury accommodation.

5. Pedagogical implications

The huge increase in environmental awareness in the last part of the twentieth century has led governments, businesses, academia and individuals to take an active part in the understanding of the greening process. Indeed, “the maturing of environmentalism has been marked by prolific scholarship in the social sciences and humanities, exploring the complexity of society-environment relationships” (Hansen 2010: xv). Attention to the interdisciplinary approach which will help understand the link between language and content (e.g.: environmental issues in this case) should, thus, be a key issue for many linguists and language teachers. The aim is to provide students with strategies which enable them to pinpoint possible mismatches between saying and meaning. Discourse analysis in a language classroom, supplemented by concordancing and corpus linguistic techniques, offers the opportunity to describe and explain how language is actually used. This should hopefully raise students’ awareness of language use and conveyed concepts. Indeed, students majoring in Tourism, Communication, Business Administration, as well as students with other disciplinary backgrounds, could benefit from the use and analysis of a specialised corpus (in this case ‘travel promotion texts’) since they can be encouraged to:

- analyse lexical and grammatical features in detail in order to facilitate interpretation;
- analyse the social-textual relations represented in the texts (e.g.: reader-society, writer-reader);
- consider what points of view are expressed from political, social, environmental perspectives and, therefore, have a more critical approach to the text.

Moreover, corpora can be used to enhance students' ability to *play* with collocates by:

- creating definitions of the most frequent collocates in the list or any other they find interesting, e.g.: *beauty, attractions*;
- searching for synonyms and antonyms of a set of collocates in the list, e.g.: *heritage, wildlife*;
- creating sentences related to the topic (e.g.: environment and tourism) using collocates in the list.

As for the use of concordances, students could be invited to create:

- a descriptive text on the given topics by using the most frequent collocates or any other they find interesting for the task;
- an advert or a set of commercials for a tourist resort they would like to promote, by using the appropriate collocates;
- a set of video clips for the media which invite people to respect nature, by using the collocates which best fit the task.

The analysis should enhance students' critical thinking and awareness of how language can play a central role in presenting images of a reality which changes according to the different perspectives and which, as in the case of travel promotion texts, is often seemingly created for the well-being of society, but even more often devised to create wealth for the tourism industry.

6. Conclusion

Representations of nature are widely employed by tourism entrepreneurs to promote responsible travel and environmentally-friendly routes in an era in which ecological concerns have become prominent in our everyday life. This study has been aimed at investigating the meaning of the terms "nature" and "natural" in travel promotion texts, in order to understand whether their use in

tourism advertising is deceptive. The analysis regarding a corpus of British promotion texts has categorised the representations of nature in four different categories. The results show that almost half of the texts depicted the so-called *tamed nature*, a type of nature controlled by man, which becomes a perfect setting for human activities, a playground for adults. Nature is considered as "a nice place to be, [...], as a space for human recreation and with recreational powers" (Hansen 2002: 507). The use of nature in these texts, and its representations, is due to its ideological power (promoting holidays which are eco-friendly and responsible in an era in which *going green* is mainstream), but it is, above all, due to its economic value.

Nevertheless, there are some limitations to this study. Although 266 articles have been analysed, this is not sufficient to offer decisive conclusions. In fact we do not claim that the results can be applied to all travel promotion texts. Therefore, further research will have to be conducted using other sources related to different cultures (e.g.: U.S. periodicals). Secondly, there may be some misinterpretations in the classification of nature. This could be disambiguated by involving an extra rater in the interpretation and classification of "nature" and "natural".

Further research could also be addressed to investigating to what extent the analysed texts follow the guidelines on sustainable tourism in protected areas provided by the World Tourism Organization. The aim is to understand the modality in which advertisers promote the positive aspects of sustainable tourism (e.g.: local social-economic benefits) and verify whether the less sustainable aspects of tourism are omitted. This will hopefully provide further pedagogical implications which will combine both linguistic and content perspectives.

Appendix

File	Article	Issue date	Page/s
TW27_06	Ask the concierge	3/17/2006	74
TW31_06	Hotel boost for Business Bay area	6/9/2006	44
TW32_06	Hotel	5/12/2006	50
TW35_06	Park life	9/1/2006	12
TW36_06	Pretoria	9/1/2006	19
TW61_04	Natural Highs	2004 Supp Iceland	14-15
TW65_05	Somewhere over a rainbow	3/11/2005	64
TW76_04	5 of the best tours in Canada	2/2/2004	78-79
TW80_03	Barcelona: Up, up and away	12/02/2003 Supp Catalonia	4-5
TW85_03	Gear up for action	10/27/2003 Supp Caribbean	10-12
TW91_03	Mother nature's calling	8/25/2003	62-63
TW96_04	Time for action	5/24/2004 Supp Hawaii	12
TW99_04	Wilderness addition	5/31/2004	59
TW109_08	Going Green	8/22/2008 Luxury Supp	28-30
TW122_08	The really wild show	1/11/2008	56
TW 137_06	Enjoy the good life in Vegas	10/13/2006	71
TW 157_06	5 of the best luxury hotels in Bali	4/7/2006	56-57
TW170_06	Girls just wanna have fun - but underwater	6/2/2006	58-59
TW252_04	See you later, alligator	5/24/2004	52

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