From Words to Keywords: The Journey from General Language to the Language of Tourism

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Abstract

Keywords are those words "which fire the imagination [...] not so much those which refer to the attributes of the destination but rather those which correspond to the requirements of the potential tourist" (Dann 1996: 74). This paper develops a methodology for analysing the process whereby a word changes its lexico-grammatical profile and is legitimately included among the tourism keywords. To this end, this study investigates the behaviour of two keywords, *adventure* and *dream*, in their migration from everyday language to the specialised language of tourism. The keywords analysed acquire, in the specialised corpus, a more concrete dimension linked to the planning and organisation of the holiday itself. They do not simply belong to the realm of abstraction, as in everyday language use, but in their journey towards the tourist language such keywords acquire a specific practical meaning linked to places, people and activities involved in the travel.

1. Introduction

It is widely recognised that the language of tourism is a complex and multifarious language both on a thematic and linguistic level. Tourism, in fact, has a plethora of linguistic domains, it combines different disciplinary and technical fields, from arts to history, geography, archaeology, economics and marketing, to name just a few. On a linguistic level, tourism uses discursive features and lexical items related to everyday language as well as specific linguistic techniques, giving life to "an elusive something" (Dann 1996: 2) or, more precisely, to "a very special type of communication, one which differs from other forms of human exchange" (Dann 1996: 1). Some fifteen years after Dann's early linguistic insights, the language of tourism can be safely classified among specialised languages, having

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specific lexical, morpho-syntactical and textual features (Gotti 2006; Nigro 2006a). It fulfils particular communicative functions: to make people come, stay and come back once again or, as Dann explains:

the language of tourism attempts to persuade, lure, woo and seduce millions of human beings, and, in so doing, convert them from potential into actual clients. [...]. (T)he language of tourism gently talks about the possible places they can visit by introducing various pull factors or attractions of competing destinations. (Dann 1996: 2)

Thus, having as its main purpose that of seducing millions of human beings and being addressed to a wide audience, the language of tourist texts tends to be clear, simple, and easy to understand with simple words taken from everyday language. The secret to effective tourist communication is thinking and writing in the reader's terms: "The researcher before writing should seek to discover 'key words' in the subject which fire the imagination" (Dann 1996: 174). On the basis of other previous studies (Cazes 1976: Mansouri 1988; Hanefors and Larsson 1993; Larsson 1994), the keywords Dann identifies are 'away, adventure, continental, escape, dream, imagination, lust, pleasure, sensuality, discovery, genuine, historical. real, authentic'. According to the scholar their function is twofold: 'firing the imagination', as already stated, and corresponding "to the requirements of the potential tourists" (Dann 1996: 174). If, on the one hand, Dann focuses on the functions of such keywords, on the other, he does not offer an analytical procedure for identifying the keywords or establishing how a common word may become a keyword. This paper aims to fill the gap in Dann's account of the language of tourism. It develops a methodology for analysing the process whereby a word changes its lexico-grammatical profile and is legitimately included among tourism keywords. To this end, this study investigates the behaviour of two keywords, adventure and dream, in their migration from everyday language to the specialised language of tourism.

2. Methodology

This study adopts an empirical and inductive approach. In this regard, corpus linguistics, based on the observation of real language data, provides a suitable methodology to investigate the lexico-

grammatical profiles of individual words in different subject-specific domains. Halliday maintains that corpus linguistics re-unites the activities of data gathering and theorising (Halliday 1993: 156). In fact, theoretical issues about language derive from observations of the actual instances (Tognini Bonelli 2001: 2). To reveal the shifts in the lexico-grammatical profiles of the two node words in their journey from common language to the language of tourism, the words *dream* and *imagination* are studied both in the British National Corpus and in a specialised corpus. This is a web-derived corpus, retrieved using WebBootCat and Sketch Engine (Baroni and Bernardini 2004), which provided the tools to investigate their collocation, colligation, semantic preferences and semantic prosody (Sinclair, 2003) in the two linguistic domains.

2.1. WebBootCat and tourism

Some remarks are necessary to explain the reason why WebBootCat reveals a new, interesting and useful tool to investigate the language of tourism. Created by Baroni and Bernardini (2004), WebBootCat is a suite of programs capable of 'bootstrapping', that is to say, "of creating virtually ex-nihilo specialized corpora and term lists from the web in a very short time" (Gatto 2009: 102). WebBootCat contains general language corpora, e.g. British National Corpus, ukWaC, French web corpus, Spanish web corpus, and a session where 'my corpora', namely self-created corpora, are listed. To start the process of retrieving and downloading specialised corpora, the only thing WebBootCat needs is a number of words called 'seeds' which are likely to occur in the specialised domain for which the corpus is going to be built. Retrieved or general language corpora can be investigated using the Sketch Engine tool contained in WebBootCat, which

contributes to a thorough exploration of concordance lines by supporting complex queries and by providing statistics relating to the collocational profile and to the grammatical relations that each word in the corpus participates in. (Gatto 2009: 136)

Turning to the language of tourism, it appears to be a field of inquiry where WebBootCat can be profitably applied. Not only does WebBootCat enable us to build a corpus in a very short time, but

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also as far as tourism is concerned, it allows a balanced specialised corpus to be built. As corpus linguistics deals with language in use, all the material included in a corpus must be *naturally occurring*, "taken from genuine communications of people going about their normal business" (Tognini Bonelli 2001: 55). In this regard, the Internet has become one of the most important media through which the tourist industry reaches its potential clients, the first interface between the tourist and the attraction. Dann's early prediction on the language of tourism as a phenomenon that would increasingly become "a language of cyberspace" (Dann 1996: 6) is thus a reality. The tourist finds it less and less necessary to leave his/her comfortable armchair in front of the computer: "technologies [...] allow people to 'gaze' on tourist sites without leaving home" (Ritzer and Liska 1997: 102). The world's major destinations and the holiday itself are a mouse click away; all that is needed to gather information about a place, to book, participate in blogs, and to leave comments or impressions. So, a web-derived tourism corpus is a sample corpus representing e-communication 'naturally occurring' between the tourist industry and a post-modern idle tourist who finds it more and more comfortable 'to tour' on the web.

As for balance, the retrieval of a balanced corpus in the vast language of tourism is a thorny issue because a variety of fields converge in tourism. Dann, in fact, far from considering tourism as an undifferentiated whole sending messages to a homogeneous audience, maintains that "there is a variety of topics within this language which further indicates the presence of registers within the language of tourism" (Dann 1996: 212). In this regard, it can be safely assumed that tourist communication on the web "is realized in a rich and complex language in which many registers can be identified" (Pierini 2009: 96). On the web, different registers corresponding to specific domains can be found: spa, sustainable, religious, sport, cultural, food and drink, congressional or adventure tourism. Moreover, the great variety of websites is also representative of the main tourist text typologies: the leaflet, the brochure and the guidebook. As for the leaflet, although it includes descriptive and informative contents, e.g. prices, itineraries, journey timetables, it is the promotional and persuasive element that prevails. In its digital version, it takes the form of promotional webpages; most of the page – paper or electronic version – is filled with pictures. The linguistic and iconographic elements need to be

perfectly integrated and balanced, as this document must seem like the realisation of a dream.

The function of the brochure is twofold:

to provide practical information which visitors may use in their trip decision making and planning processes and/or to establish an image of the destination as a viable alternative when planning future trips. (Fesenmaier 2000: 813)

The promotional and informative functions converge in a text, which tries "to woo, seduce, inform, project and sell in one operation" (Dann 1993: 893). What is generally required in a brochure is first to describe the attractions as well as their services and facilities with a view to satisfying the needs of the tourist, then to propose different itineraries and finally to give practical information. In this regard, many tourist web pages masterfully combine the promotional function, e.g. colourful, attractive headings and slogans, with the informative one, e.g. descriptive captions, historical and cultural hints.

As for guidebooks, the original Murray and Baedeker handbooks, which have served the development of tourism as a sociological and cultural phenomenon since the second half of the XIX century, are now giving way to more practical guides such as *Lonely Planet* or *Time Out* both having a paper and a more reduced online version. The web, however, has produced its own online guide, Schmap guide (www.schmap.com); if on the one hand, the latter is divided into the classical guidebook sections (What's going on – Restaurants – Bars and Clubs – Art & Entertainment – Health & Beauty – Shopping – To do & See – More...), on the other hand, the Schmap guide is supported by the new social networks which allow constant updating of the web pages thanks to the users' comments and proposals.

Thus, the web is a useful resource for investigating the language of tourism, and WebBootCat can be considered a very useful tool for analysing *ad hoc corpora*. The seeds employed for this research are: holiday, tourism, attraction, visit, explore, discover, dream, adventure. For a first query, words specifically related to the field of tourism and the two keywords to be studied were inserted. After the first web download, a corpus of 55,735 tokens was retrieved. Using

the left hand menu link 'Extract keywords' the user is provided with a set of keywords that can be turned into new seeds for a second run². This operation was repeated five times and a final corpus of 274,971 tokens was produced.

3. Analysis

Word

In this section the two keywords, *dream* and *adventure*, are analysed in order to identify the ways in which they acquire the status of keywords in tourism. In this paper, intended as a pilot study, the node words are analysed in the singular form.

Occurrences in the BNC

Occurrences in the Specialised corpus

| Word | Occurren | Occurrences in the Specialised corpus | | Occurrences in the BINC | | |
|-----------|-------------|---------------------------------------|--------|-------------------------|--|--|
| Dream | | 228 | 8,561 | | | |
| Adventure | | 335 | 2,038 | | | |
| TABLE I | of dragn | | | | | |
| N. | Word | Tota | l Left | Right | | |
| I | Dream | 214 | . 4 | 5 | | |
| 2 | Hanoi | 35 | | 5 6 | | |
| 3 | Place | 13 | | 9 | | |
| 4 | Australia | 11 | | 4 | | |
| 5 | Florida | IC | IO | 0 | | |
| 6 | Tour | IC | 5 | 5 | | |
| 7 | Hotel | 9 | 0 | I | | |
| 8 | Destination | 8 | | 7 | | |
| 9 | People | 8 | 7 | I | | |
| 10 | Travel | 8 | 4 | 4 | | |
| II | Visit | 8 | | 2 | | |
| 12 | Makes | 7 | 5 | 2 | | |
| 13 | Rome | 7 | | 4 | | |
| 14 | Tourist | 7 | 2 | 5 | | |
| 15 | True | 6 | | 6 | | |
| 16 | Adventurist | 5 | 5 | 0 | | |
| 17 | Agonda | 5 | | 0 | | |
| 18 | Beaches | 5 | | 5 | | |
| 19 | Country | 5 | 0 | 5 | | |
| 20 | Facilities | 5 | 2 | 3 | | |

¹ Keywords are automatically retrieved by cross-tabulating the wordlist of the corpus under investigation and the wordlist of a reference corpus.

² For specific downloading procedures, see Gatto (2009: 101-28).

The first level of analysis regards the collocational profile of the two node words, that is "two or more words occurring near each other in a text" (Sinclair 2003: 173). The tables below show the words that appear most frequently in the collocation span of the two node words, the first five words to the left and to the right.

| TABLE 2 Collocates of adventure | | | | | |
|---------------------------------|-------------|-------|------|-------|--|
| N. | Word | Total | Left | Right | |
| I | Adventure | 473 | 36 | 49 | |
| 2 | Tours | 63 | 28 | 35 | |
| 3 | Trips | 50 | 45 | 5 | |
| 4 | Group | 49 | 47 | 2 | |
| 5 | Travel | 38 | 18 | 20 | |
| 6 | Pounds | 21 | 14 | 7 | |
| 7 | Safaris | 20 | 8 | 12 | |
| 8 | Tour | 20 | II | 9 | |
| 9 | India | 19 | 8 | II | |
| IO | Nepal | 19 | 9 | IO | |
| II | Trip | 18 | 5 | 13 | |
| 12 | Day | 17 | 9 | 8 | |
| 13 | Tourist | 14 | II | 3 | |
| 14 | Australia | 13 | 4 | 9 | |
| 15 | Companies | 13 | 4 | 9 | |
| 16 | Trekking | 13 | 8 | 5 | |
| 17 | Family | 12 | 7 | 5 | |
| 18 | Backpackers | II | II | 0 | |
| 19 | Falconview | II | II | О | |
| 20 | Wildlife | II | 4 | 7 | |

The main collocates of *dream* suggest:

- the subjects the dream refers to (adventurist; people);
- the destinations of the dream (Hanoi, Australia, Florida, Rome, Agonda, beaches, country);
- how the dream could come true (tour, travel, facilities).

As for *adventure*, a first analysis of the collocational profile reveals:

- the subjects involved in the adventure (group; Pounds name of a travel company; tourist; group, companies, family, backpackers);
- the destinations of the adventure (Safaris; India; Nepal; Australia);
- how it takes place (trip/s; travel; tour);
- the activities linked to the adventure (trekking; falcon viewing; wildlife).

The collocates suggest that both node words make references to a concrete dimension of the holiday itself by specifying the subjects, the places and the modalities through which the dream and/or the adventure take place. However, it is by reading the single concordances that their profiles emerge. A closer analysis of the two node words confirms the relation of the two words to actual and specific instances.

Dream is more precisely related to the services offered to make the dream hotel, holiday or view become a concrete reality:

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...attraction. Your dream hotel is close to public transportation.
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- ... A dream holiday provides practical room facilities...
- ...destinations. Accommodation at Agonda dream view...

The node word is linked to a comfortable holiday where the tourist, surrounded by facilities, can relax and enjoy his 'dream':

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...is the place to have a dream vacation just remember to book...
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- ...then peace and comfort in their dream destination...
- ...for relaxing and regaining lost energy. The dream destination is...

The concordances of *adventure* disclose all the possible activities and nuances of the adventure:

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...History, Walking, Cultural Adventures. 10 days – Trip...
...Archaeology, Cultural Adventures. 6 days to pass...
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- ...on the Walking Softly Adventures, a stunning itinerary...
- ...Biking tour, popular adventures, Annapurna tour offers...
- ...walks, whitewater rafting adventures, Tjapukai...
- ...and domestic family adventures specifically...
- ...twin towns. Local canoe adventures usually enter...

The factual dimension of both the node words is also confirmed by the verbs accompanying them:

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...yourself guide the way let me make your dream a reality...
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- ...ordinary evening and turn it into a dream coming true...
- ...if you plan to put these in your dream, or just want to see what...
- ...you are on the path to planning your own dream safari, it is our...
- ... Moreover, the Hanoi dream provides fun recreational...
- ...Islands, South Pacific, chosen as 1 of the top 12 adventure...
- ... Australia has a lot to offer if you seek an adventure in a remote...
- ...that these travellers *share* their *adventure* with a spouse ...
- ...while you spend days *going* from one *adventure* to another out...
- ...Trip Resources *Prepare* for your *adventure* with additional tips...
- ... up 185 new trips! Start planning your 2010 adventure. Top 20...

Far from giving the node words an imaginary dimension, these verbs indicating material processes "[which] could reasonably be said to involve 'doing-words'" (Bloor and Bloor 2001: 110; Halliday 1994) have the effect of presenting the holiday as a handy experience, something that the tourist can plan or organise. In a small number of instances the node words collocate with verbs indicating processes of 'sensing' (Halliday 1994: 112-119), that is, mental processes evolving around the inner experience of the world and personal reactions or feelings to the event:

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...Come and enjoy your dream holidays and treasures...
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...before bed, I want a good dream tonight...

...to enjoy our outdoor adventures, and you'll try...

...who want to try adventures will find...

Those verbs, however, are not used to give abstraction to the experience, but to involve the tourist in the adventure proposed, to get to his/her emotions, feelings and will.

Colligation refers to "the occurrence of a grammatical class or structural pattern with another one, or with a word or phrase" (Sinclair 2003: 174). In this regard, the node words³ function as premodifiers for noun phrases.

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...what makes Australia a dream tourist destination under...
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...with two new dream destinations and this time they...

³ In a very small number of instances *dream* functions as a verb; relevant patterns did not emerge.

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...tourists to spend their dream vacation here in Australia...
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- ...memories as well as live your dream holidays in a much...
- ...a comfort for your Hanoi holidays. Hanoi dream hotel staff are...
- ...popular tourist attraction. Agonda dream resorts offer an...
- ...tours, peak climbing, adventure package tours, Himalaya journey...
- ...Panorama Tour I Day A real adventure package of Nepal...
- ... gorilla tracking and adventure tour package like kayaking...
- ...Ltd, a leading adventure travel company in India, having great...
- ... for an Australian adventure travel trip. Australians are sport...
- ... against those of other adventure travel companies. Twenty years...
- ...ethnic group festivals, adventure tours and specials of China...
- ...the most exciting adventure trip to the remote part of the world...

Dream and *adventure* appear as an added value to the experience proposed or the resort promoted. When the node words occur as head nouns, they are pre-modified by adjectives or nouns:

Adjective modifiers - Croatian dream; sweet dream; perfect

dream;

Authentic adventure; exciting adventure;

amazing adventure.

Noun modifiers - Travel dream; vacation dream; visit dream,

day dream;

Space adventure; two day adventure; day

trip adventure.

Adjective modifications highlight the promotional component of tourism or refer to the country where the dream or adventure takes place. Noun modifiers point out the different ways in terms of activities, holiday type or time, through which the dream or adventure are presented to the tourist.

As regards semantic preference, that is, "a clear preference in the structure of a phrase for words of a particular meaning" (Sinclair 2003: 175), it clearly shows how the two node words are linked to leisure or free time. They are connected with the tourist subjects, places and activities which make the dream and adventure converge into a holiday easy to book, to plan, and organise.

Semantic prosody "reveals the special meaning conveyed by words grouping together [...] recognized in part as connotation,

pragmatic meaning and attitudinal meaning" (Sinclair 2003: 178), the latter feature being very tentative owing to the limited corpus size. In this regard, the node words suggest a concrete, handy and positive experience. Adventure is linked to more exciting practices, and dream refers to a more relaxing and comfortable type of holiday.

Moving the analysis to the British National Corpus, *dream* collocates most highly in the field of psychology, e.g. waking, sleep, nightmare, asleep, nightmare, childhood, memories, woken, troubled, REM. There follow the fields of:

- leisure time: romantic, holiday, come true, electric;
- personal life: hopes, impossible, fulfil, memories, aspirations; desire; fear, fantasies, thoughts;
- literature/culture: Midsummer, American, fantasy, erotic; utopian; myth, Freud, interpretation.

As for the verbal pattern of *dream* occurring as a noun, it mainly collocates with verbs denoting mental processes: remember, haunt, realise, analyse, interpret, forget. By focusing on the inner sphere of the individual, on his/her mind, these verbs give a sense of abstraction to the search word. Only a few instances make reference to verbs presenting existential processes, that is, things that exist or happen (Halliday 1994: 139), such as: fulfil, come true, achieve.

The collocates of *adventure* refer to:

- literature: romance, stories, epic, fiction, hero, junior, perilous, fantasy, allegory, novel, sexual, artistic, creative, Ulysses;
- leisure time: excitement, climbing, games, playground, fun, holidav.

Adventure has no relevant verbal patterns except for structures indicating existential processes through the use of the verb *to be*, e.g. ...it is his most recent adventure... /... Scarborough is now an adventure...

The colligational analysis of *dream* suggests that when the search word occurs as a verb (2,513 occurrences) its main subjects are: men, women, people, unveiling how the act of dreaming is carried out by common people. It mainly occurs as a noun (6,048 occurrences) modified by adjectives: wildest, vivid, bad, erotic, sweet, impossible, terrible, disturbing, lifelong. The occurrence of *dream* in coordinate noun phrases with words linked to the inner sphere of a human being such as fantasy, aspiration, hope, illusion, ambition, fear, desire,

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thought, memory, further underlines the high level of abstraction of the node word.

Adventure mainly occurs as a noun modified by adjectives: amazing, exciting, endless, greatest, excellent, great, hair-raising, perilous, brave, daring. As for recurrent patterns in coordinate noun phrases, the search word appears in lexical structures linked to:

- the literary world: romance and adventure; tale and adventure; novel and adventure;
- free time: fun and adventure; travel and adventure; excitement and adventure; holiday and adventure;
- danger: danger and adventure; challenge and adventure; risk and adventure.

As for semantic preference, while *adventure* makes clear reference to the semantic field of literature and free time, *dream* appears to have a wider range of semantic fields. It has a clear preference for psychology; however, other semantic fields are connected to the dream such as: literature and culture, leisure and entertainment as well as a personal inner dimension.

In terms of semantic prosody, *dream* suggests an experience related to the soul, mind, spirit and consciousness both as a positive and a negative life experience. The search word, as well as being connected with leisure activities, is a well-known component of literature as it is the element around which many works have been produced.

As for *adventure*, the leisure dimension is somehow overshadowed by its widespread reference to the literary field, a metaphorical space *par excellence* where an adventure can take place. As well as being a rewarding life experience it is also characterised by danger and risk.

4. Conclusion

My investigation shows that there is a clear change in the lexicogrammatical profile of the search words when they move from everyday language to the specialised language of tourism.

In everyday language, such words find their ideal setting in the abstract, imaginative world. They occur as nouns and their adjectival modification makes *dream* and *adventure* pleasant but also distasteful events. In the process of migration to the tourism domain, the abstraction connoting the search words turns into

precise, concrete reference to the subjects and the places where the dream and adventure can take place, the sports and activities colouring the adventure, the services and facilities making a relaxing dream holiday a comfortable and perfect experience.

If it is true that the language of tourism is made up of common words and does not have a specialised terminology of its own, it is also true that some of the 'common words' acquire a new physiognomy when moving to the specialised domain. My results suggest that these two keywords tend to present the holiday as a ready to book handy experience. Not only does the language of tourism have to promote holidays, but it also has to provide the answers to diverse tourist needs in terms of services and facilities, choice of accommodation and activities. The dream or adventure holiday, far from being presented as a distant utopia, is presented as an experience easy to achieve.

This study also suggests that the specificity of the language of tourism lies in the fact that key lexical items acquire and convey specific connotational meanings that fulfil one of the main purposes of the tourist industry, namely promoting and selling its services. Thus, it can be safely assumed that the tourist keywords do not only 'fire the imagination' or 'correspond to the requirements of a potential tourist', but they bring the holiday close to the tourist. In the journey from everyday language to the language of tourism, the keywords leave behind the literary, fantastic or inner component to refer to a well-planned and organised experience, ready to be enjoyed.

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