4. A cross-cultural contrastive analysis of interpersonal markers in promotional discourse in travel agency websites

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ABSTRACT

The present study is an investigation into the use of interpersonal markers in English and Italian tourism texts obtained from three successful online travel agency websites: one American, one British and one Italian. The aim is to explore cross-linguistic, cross-cultural pragmatic perspectives through a comparative analysis of the discoursal and pragmatic features related to the interpersonal use of language, so as to better understand how the discursive patterns of tourism texts from different cultures might affect the communicative function, or the interactional metadiscourse strategies, in promotional discourse. Results show how a comparative analysis of interpersonal devices in tourism websites offers insights not only into the way in which culture is conveyed and transmitted via tourism discourse, but more specifically into how authorial stance is constructed in the websites and how the audience is engaged in the discourse. The premise is that an awareness of the cross-linguistic and cross-cultural differences involved in interpersonal discourse can contribute to improving cross-cultural understanding, and ultimately contribute to the fields of intercultural and translation studies.

1. Introduction

The present article focuses on the use of interpersonal markers in English and Italian tourism texts from a cross-linguistic, cross-cultural pragmatic perspective and presents results of an ongoing research project concerning corpus-based studies in the language of tourism. This part of the research employs a specifically designed corpus of tourism texts from three successful online travel agency websites from the USA, Britain and Italy. By applying a comparative analysis of English and Italian data, the investigation focuses on the discoursal and pragmatic features related to the interpersonal use of language (Halliday 1994), the aim being to understand to what extent the discursive patterns of tourism texts from different cultures might affect the communicative function, and more specifically how they affect interactional metadiscourse strategies (Hyland 2005a) in essentially promotional discourse. In light of this, the study takes a model of interpersonality originally devised by Vande Kopple (1985) and Crismore et al. (1993), later developed by Hyland (2005a; 2005b) and Hyland and Tse (2004). This model establishes the categories of stance and engagement (author and reader) as key elements in social interaction.

The general hypothesis is that an analysis of interpersonal devices in tourism websites can offer insights not only into the way in which culture is conveyed and transmitted via tourism discourse, but more specifically into how authorial stance, i.e. conventions which shape the writing of the website texts, is constructed and how the audience (the reader) is engaged in the discourse. Given the premise that interpersonal discourse and its related pragmatic features can vary cross-linguistically and cross-culturally, an awareness of the differences can contribute to improving cross-cultural understanding, ultimately contributing to the fields of intercultural studies and translation studies. However, this work is not in itself about translation, but rather a study of the cultural interpretation of words and lexical items which function in a specialized way.

In fact, issues regarding linguistic and cultural representations in all types of genre arising from the interplay of systemic or pragmatic differences across languages and cultures are gaining significance with increasing internationalization in all spheres, especially in tourism. This in turn leads to changes in terms of marketing strategies. The Web has transformed the way marketers and customers interact. Today's travel agencies are increasingly faced with the big challenge of capturing and retaining the attention of potential travelers aware of their greater control over information. The traditional brochure has now evolved into

the dynamic website, joined by other digital resources such as smartphone apps, blogs, and travel forums and wikis. This has led to a new type of "hyper interactive travel consumer", forcing a convergence of all marketing and distribution channels into a single channel, i.e. the "customer engagement channel" (Eye for Travel 2011). These new emerging global contexts make it necessary to give intercultural and cross-cultural issues more attention, especially in terms of engagement, which is still an under-researched aspect in the field of discourse analysis (Suau-Jiménez 2017).

One important element of travel and tourism websites is multimodality, which is paramount for attracting the customer (Francesconi 2014). Despite acknowledging the fundamental role of multimodality, this paper focuses on the verbal word in the belief that the written text performs a key role in the decision-making process which draws people to a tourist destination. Hence, the focus of the analysis is on language as a commercial tool in promotional discourse, and how it conveys meaning in specialized semiotic spaces.

2. Research question

It is generally agreed that the language of tourism represents a particular type of specialised language made up of a wider range of stylistic, pragmatic and lexical features intertwined with and influenced by different registers (Dann 1996; Gotti 2006). Its characteristics have been studied both at the linguistic and social level by a variety of scholars, in comparative studies and in various types of tourism genres (Diani 2017). However, the study of this language as specialized discourse is incomplete if we do not take into account its metadiscourse, used to help the reader organize, interpret and evaluate given information (Hyland 2005a). Much has been done on metadiscourse in academic discourse (Bortoluzzi 2000; Bondi 2006), but far fewer studies have been carried out on interpersonal strategies in non-academic genres in different cultures. It is the cultural load present in tourism genres which makes the field particularly suitable for cross-cultural analysis. Hence, the main research question can be formulated as follows: to what extent do the American, British and Italian cultures differ in their interpersonal strategies in order to attract tourists and to promote tourist destinations?

It is hypothesized that the different values held by the three cultures will each foster a different interpersonal and interactional stance and approach to the persuasive strategies of the websites, and potentially different cultures will use different forms and ways of promoting destinations according to differing linguistic and textual systems affected by cultural filters. Before continuing, certain assumptions need to be made explicit, first regarding language systems in general and second regarding the relationship between language, cognition (knowledge) and culture. This chapter does not go into the intricacies of contrastive or language-typological differences but points out, if only in brief, that English and Italian

are first and foremost two distinct languages, the former Germanic and the latter a Romance language, each with long, rich histories, and with two very different ways of expressing thoughts. The languages offer not merely two parallel ways of saying the same things, but rather different ways of thinking about them – two distinct lenses through which to see the world (Crystal 2004). It follows that writing conventions, rhetoric and style are culturally shaped, and that linguistic and cognitive elements are interwoven with the cultural frame (Stubbs 2001).

The paper is structured as follows: section 3 presents the theoretical premises to the study, section 4 describes the corpora, data and methodology. Section 5 discusses the key findings, focusing on high frequency lexis and phraseological units emerging from the data. The final section takes into account the results and draws conclusions.

3. Theoretical frameworks

The concept of metadiscourse is defined here as "the linguistic resource used to organize a discourse or the writer's stance towards either the content or the reader", dealing with "the ways writers project themselves into their discourse" (Hyland and Tse 2004:156-157). These authors developed a metadiscursive taxonomy of markers which distinguished between textual and interpersonal or interactional strategies, involving two broad categories: a) interactive and b) interactional. The former helps to organize the discourse by indicating topic shifts and deals mainly with propositional content; the latter modifies and highlights aspects of the text and reveals the writer's attitude through particular features that draw the reader into the discourse and gives them an opportunity to interpret and react to it (Hyland 2005a: 52). This paper focuses on the second function of metadiscourse, i.e. the interactional strategies binding the writer and reader relationship, involving the voices of stance and engagement. *Stance* is represented by markers which express "textual" or "community" voice (Hyland 2005b: 176) and includes features referring to how writers present themselves, convey opinions, judgments and commitments, imprint their personal authority onto the text or, as in academic discourse, how they purposely step back and disguise their involvement in the text. Stance markers generally comprise four main elements: *self-mentions, hedges, boosters, attitude markers*. *Engagement* on the other hand is the way writers relate and align their readers with respect to the propositions in the text, involving readers in the discourse and connecting with them by using direct ways of address, e.g. the pronoun *you*.

Since culture, like other aspects of reality, is actively construed through language and reveals itself in language, a useful approach to the culture of a society is to focus on its lexis or capture patterns in its language (Bednarek and Bublitz 2007). For this reason, this paper also draws on insights from studies in phraseology (Sinclair 1991; Tognini-Bonelli and Manca 2002) and intercultural commu-

nication studies (Hall 1989; Hofstede 2001; Katan 2004) only briefly mentioned here for space constraints. Following Sinclair's (1991) ideas on extended lexical units of meaning, Tognini-Bonelli and Manca (2002) developed a methodology for identifying "functionally equivalent units of meaning" when comparing two languages. Their approach proposes translation equivalence by considering the collocational profile of a given node word in the source language, rather than a one-to-one correspondence between words, which can then be interpreted within the framework of linguistic representations of conceptual and cultural schemata.

Cultural orientations are a particular way of perceiving reality (Katan 2004), which inevitably has implications on language. Cross-cultural communication studies are often linked to the theories of High Context Cultures (HCC) and Low Context Cultures (LCC) elaborated by Hall (1989) and Hofstede (2001) who added more cultural dimensions to the model, e.g. the individualism/collectivism distinction. The present article takes these intercultural models into account, but acknowledges the need to redefine cultural boundaries which are becoming fuzzy as a result of globalization and the increasing use of social media.

4. Corpora

To verify the assumptions made above and address the research question, the study is empirically based on data from three comparable and relatively small corpora consisting of texts downloaded in the year 2016 from the websites of three large, successful adventure holiday travel agencies, namely the US travel agency *Grand American Adventures, Exodus Adventure Holidays* in the UK, and the Italian travel agency *Viaggi - Avventure nel mondo*. I say comparable because the websites contain similar texts with the same communicative purpose, selling destinations as *adventure* (not extreme adventure). The texts can thus be said to contain lexically homogeneous data, especially in relation to ideological categories such as *adventure, nature, environment, freedom*. To ensure further comparability and equivalence, only texts describing the main destinations and the travel agency's history, purpose and mission were sourced. Texts describing hotels, accommodation, legal services and contracts were not included in the corpus.

Source – Travel Agency	Total words: token/type ratio
Grand American Adventures - USA http://www.grandamericanadventures.com/	80,352/5,749
Exodus Adventure Holidays - UK https://www.exodus.co.uk/	130,405/10,733
Viaggi Nel Mondo - IT www.viaggiavventurenelmondo.it	91,151/13,027

Table 1. Corpora used for the study.

The number of running words totaled 80,352 in the American tourism corpus (hereafter UST), 130,405 words in the British tourism corpus (UKT) and 91,151 in the Italian tourism corpus (ITT). Although comparable, the UK corpus is notably larger, so relative frequencies were considered in the analysis.

5. Methodology

The research methodology adopted for this study follows frameworks which integrate quantitative and qualitative techniques for analysis, such as corpus-assisted discourse analysis (CADS; Partington et al. (2013)), and refers to studies which have adopted corpus linguistic retrieval techniques in cross-cultural communication studies and translation, especially in the fields of tourism (Tognini-Bonelli and Manca 2002).

As far as the methodological procedure is concerned, after reading the texts for first impressions, the first step was to create frequency lists for each corpus (not shown here for space constraints). I used *Wmatrix* (Rayson 2003) for word lists and part-of-speech (POS) tagging; *ConcApp* and *ConcGram* (Greaves 2009) for concordance lines, collocation patterns and concgram configurations; *Sketch Engine* (Kilgarriff et al. 2014) for Italian word frequency lists and POS tagging.

In the English corpora the items of most relevance to this investigation ranked in the top ten/twenty of the word frequency lists, i.e. the pronoun *you*, the possessive adjectives *our/your* and subject pronoun *we*. I then looked for the equivalent Italian interpersonal markers, i.e. the 1st person plural subject and object pronouns *noi* and *ci* ('we' and 'us'), the possessive adjectives *nostro**[1] and *vostro** ('our' and 'your'), the 2nd person plural subject and object pronouns *voi* and *vi* ('you'), the 1st person plural of verb forms, e.g. **iamo, *emo*, and the 2nd person plural of verb forms, e.g. **ate, *ete, *ite.* However, only *si* (impersonal 3rd person singular 'one') and *ci* (1st person plural object pronoun 'us') as candidate pronouns were high frequency items in the ITT corpus. I then checked their occurrences to exclude any pragmatic use as an adverb, e.g. *ci siamo andati* (we went *there*). The next stage was to analyse the items within their concordance lines followed by expanded text and context, and the collocational profiles of the word, which can tell us a great deal about the linguistic environment of the interpersonal marker and the noun phrase it supports, including evaluative and affective attributes.

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1 The * symbol means the word or verb can be inflected or conjugated according to gender of person or object, and according to singular or plural.

6. ANALYSIS

A detailed contrastive analysis of the texts in each corpus shows that specific communicative functions such as the description of destinations, their historic, geographical or cultural aspects, exemplification and explanation, have basic similarities. On the contrary, what appears to be different is the interpersonal metadiscourse.

6.1 STANCE

For the purpose of this paper, given the input of the quantitative results and to efficiently manage the data, I quantify and investigate the high frequency features of *self-mentions* and *hedges* and only mention the use of *boosters* and *attitude markers* when they occur within the examples, acknowledging that these latter two elements are also incisive on the persuasive intensity of promotional discourse but are not the focus of this research.

6.1.1 SELF – MENTIONS

Self-mention as a category is displayed in the corpora principally through: the name of the company, i.e. *Exodus, Grand Real Adventures, Viaggi - Avventure nel mondo*; the 1st person plural subject and object pronouns *we* and *us* in the UST and UKT corpora; the equivalent subject and object pronouns *noi* and *ci*, and the 1st person plural verb form in the ITT corpus; and the possessive pronouns *our* and the Italian equivalent *nostro**.

Self-mention presents a "discoursal self" (Ivani 1998), which can produce a powerful rhetorical strategy for constructing authorial identity. In corporate discourse and in particular in promotional discourse, *self-mention* becomes a key strategy for implementing competitive marketing through positive identity construction. In actual fact, differences were found not only between the Italian and English corpora, but there are also notable differences between the UST and UKT corpora. For example, the subject pronoun *we* in the UST corpus is almost always an "exclusive authorial *we*" (Quirk et al., 1985) used to refer to the travel agency itself, and rarely includes the customers. On the other hand, *we* in the UKT corpus and the *we* equivalents in the ITT corpus had a variety of contextual and situational 1st person plural constructions involving both inclusive and exclusive *we*.

Table 2 quantifies the high frequency self-mentions (excluding company names) in the three sub-corpora, which are then explored within their textual environment for comparative analysis.
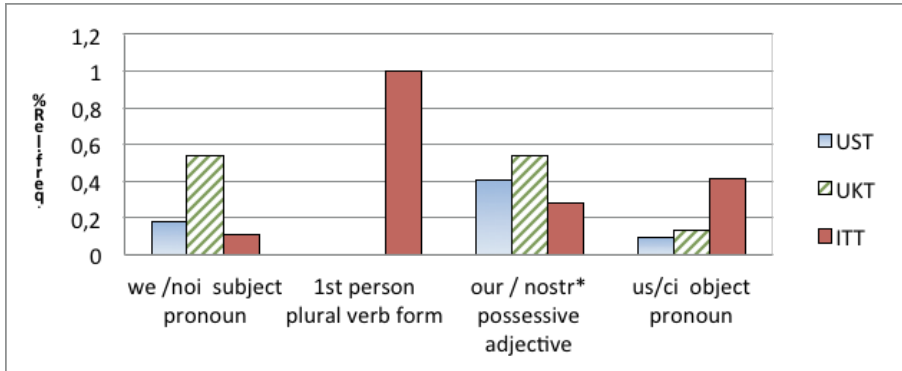
Table 2. Self-mention stance markers in the corpora.

We can see how the Italian corpus, although smaller than the UKT corpora, is heavily represented by self-mentions in the 1st person plural of the verb, with a total of 966 instances (1% relative frequency) compared to the total *we* mentions in the UST corpus (167 instances, 0.18 %) and the UKT corpus (797 instances, 0.54%). The subject pronoun *noi* ('we') is less frequent in the ITT corpus (90 instances, 0,11%) due to the prominent use of the inflected verb forms, and probably also due to the fact the Italian, unlike English, can use verbs without expressing the subject. The object pronoun *ci* (*us*) is more frequent in the Italian corpus (0.4%) than in the English sub-corpora, each with less than 0.1%. *Ci* functions both as a reflexive pronoun, e.g. *ci rilassiamo* (*we* relax) or as a direct or indirect pronoun, e.g. *ci mostrano* ('they show us'), sometimes in an enclitic position, e.g. *fateci sapere/guidandoci* ('let us know/driving us'). In the ITT corpus, the 1st person plural is represented mainly by the present indicative **iamo* (847 instances), and to a lesser extent the future tense **emo* (99 instances) and the conditional **emmo* (17 instances), e.g. *abbiamo, proseguiremo, potremmo.* The examples below illustrate how *self-mentions* are constructed in each sub-corpus.

(1) **Grand American Adventures** specialises in small group holidays…, with **unrivalled** knowledge and experience, **we are committed to** bringing **you** the **finest** small group adventures. UST

(2) **Our tours** are aimed at people of all ages, although most of **our** travellers are aged between 25 and 55, **we believe** that age is most definitely just a number. UST

(3) **We love** finding new ways of discovering the world to share with **our** customers. UST

Frequent reference is made to the travel company's name (example 1) in all three sub-corpora. In the UST corpus close investigation of *we* concordance lines showed how exclusive *we* and *our* often combined with lexis referring to the company's *credo, belief, commitment, style,* as in examples (1) - (3) *we are committed to, we believe, we love,* also creating a level of informality in the register. Besides, the examples show how self-mention patterns, for example the retrieved concgram *Grand American Adventure/we/ our* juxtaposed near positive evaluative adjectives and adverbs increase the (persuasive) illocutionary force of the statement, e.g. *Grand American Adventure has unrivalled knowledge and the finest adventures.* Example 2 highlights their strategy of marketing flexibility and inclusion open "to all ages". Let's now turn to examples from the UKT corpus.

(4) **We** are **very proud** to have **won the Best** Overall Special Interest Tour Operator accolade at this year's **British Travel Awards.** UKT

(5) That is what **Exodus** was founded upon … exploring this amazing planet we all live on. UKT

(6) W**e** always remember that **we** are only guests. So **we** travel courteously and respectfully, in smaller groups to minimise **our** impact. UKT

(7) **We believe** in small environmentally aware ships … to ensure **we travel responsibly. Our** vessels burn Marine Gas Oil … clean fuel with a low emission factor. UKT

Example 4 is a very corporate-like way of constructing identity. The mention of the award received by the company is a key strategy in competitive marketing to convince customers of a company's expertise and excellence.

In example 5 inclusive *we* links the company to the reader and the whole of the human race (*this amazing planet we live on*). Examples 6 and 7 construct the company's image and mission as an environmentally aware and socially responsible travel company. It is interesting to see how *we* alternates between vaguer and more precise references, as in 6: *we are guests* can ambiguously include both the company and the participants or even humanity itself. In fact, inclusive *we* strategically embraces the customer/reader in socially responsible actions, e.g. *We believe in small environmentally aware ships* (7), thus co-creating values of membership and purpose. The marketing strategy is based on well-defined messages reinforced by evaluative boosters and adverbials.

On the surface, the use of self-mentions as a marketing strategy in the ITT corpus appears similar to that in the English corpora. However, the analysis revealed some interesting differences in the collocates and co-text of person markers.

(8) **Noi** di **Avventure nel Mondo** siamo stati creatori e protagonisti di **questa formula** di affrontare l'esperienza del viaggio.

(9) **Noi forniamo** una puntuale documentazione, garantendo la scrupolosa preparazione dell'itinerario. Consulta la **nostra** libreria e scegli il tuo libro per viaggiare.

(10) **I nostri** sono **viaggi** disorganizzati riservati a viaggiatori **culturalmente motivati**.

The subject pronoun *noi* ('we') is used in examples 8 and 9 to emphatically strengthen the authorial stance of the travel company, e.g. *Noi di Avventure.* In examples 9 and 10 the 1st person plural possessive pronoun *nostri* ('our') and the 1st person plural *forniamo* ('we provide') co-create values based on a 'cultural motivation' (see example 10) for travel, highlighting the fact that *Avventure nel Mondo* (henceforth *AM*) is a well-read travel agency through lexis such as *documentazione, libreria, preparazione.* The aim is to appeal to an 'educated', 'cultured' public.

(11) La **nostra formula …, le nostre avventure** sono viaggi scomodi.

(12) Per chi fa gia' parte della **nostra grande famiglia**, …, riconosce in pieno la **nostra** competenza, **la nostra** professionalita' e **la nostra** preziosa originalita'.

The *we/our* patterns in the ITT corpus construct a strong identity with characteristics which are quite different from those highlighted by the American and British travel agencies. The Italian travel agency seems to use rhetorical repetition, based on the possessive adjective *nostr* + noun/noun phrase*, with the aim of constructing a niche for itself in the travel market. The most frequent collocates of exclusive *nostr**, are *formula* (16 hits) and *avventura* (11 hits), other collocates include *viaggi* (trips/tours), *libreria* (bookshop), *famiglia* (family). The emphasis on *nostra formula* ('our formula') constructs 'uniqueness' and binds customers by appealing to their own 'uniqueness'. Examples 10 and 11 imply exclusion and self-selection, e.g. *I nostri viaggi sono scomodi/disorganizzati* ('our trips are uncomfortable/disorganized'). Here *AM* has a clear idea of its target audience and prefers to 'exclude' customers who may not be suitable for their adventure holidays. This makes their marketing strategy very different to the Anglo-American model, which makes every effort to 'include' a reader/customer. In effect, *AM*'s marketing strategy may be a defence measure against tourists who have expectations *AM* may not be able to meet. At the same time, they strongly believe in this *formula* as the key to their *success*, their *originality* and *professionality* (see example 12). In other words, they seem to propose a whole philosophy or way of life and an alternative to the mass market ideology. The identity construction is particularly evident in the use of emphatic reflexive

noi stessi ('ourselves'), e.g. *Viaggiare per conoscere noi stessi; l'Avventura è in noi stessi* ('we travel to know ourselves'; 'the adventure is inside us').

Example 13, from the UKT corpus, shows how sometimes authorial stance overlaps with engagement, as illustrated in the *we /you* proposition.

(13) At **Exodus**, **we know** what makes **you** tick when it comes to holidays. UKT

Stance and engagement are in fact "two sides of the same coin" (Hyland, 2005b:176), as both contribute to the interpersonal dimension of discourse with overlap in the functions of the two voices. The result is a powerful interpersonal engagement strategy, the key concept being *We have exactly what you want for a perfect holiday.* Overlapping strategies of voice are frequent in the UST and UKT sub-corpora. The retrieved concgram *we/you* in the UST (63 instances) and UKT (192 instances) corpora is representative of this strategy. The pattern *we* (the travel agency) + *verb* + *you* (customer) underlines the strategy of assuring the client (*you*) that (*we*) the company can take care of them, e.g. *we recommend/suggest/advise you to*.

In contrast, there are fewer instances of the 1st and 2nd person markers within the same proposition in the ITT corpus. This gives the impression that the overlapping interpersonal strategy is less represented in the Italian travel agency website. On the whole, we can conclude that self-mention interpersonal markers are particularly effective in constructing identity, uncovering different marketing priorities.

6.1.2 HEDGES

Although there are various ways of hedging both in English and in Italian, for example through attitude markers (e.g. *it is interesting to*), high frequency hedging markers in the tourism corpora are represented by the modals *can, may*, and the Italian equivalent *potere* (with all its inflections) and *if* conditionals (*se* in Italian; Table 3). *Potere* and *volere* are called 'verbi servili/modali' so they have the same pragmatic function as modal verbs in English. Hedging devices generally indicate "the writer's decision to withhold complete commitment to a proposition" (Hyland, 2005: 178): this makes modal verbs good candidates for hedging as they allow information to be expressed indirectly or 'hedged' as an opinion rather than as a fact.

On closer manual inspection of concordance lines and expanded co-text, the pragmatic use of *can* or *may* in the UST and UKT sub-corpora and *potere** in the ITT corpora are not always used to express hedging: for example, *you may apply for an East African Visa* (UKT) expresses permission. After checking meanings in expanded text, the total numbers were lower than expected, e.g. *can* had 360 overall instances but, on verification, 227 instances as a hedging marker.
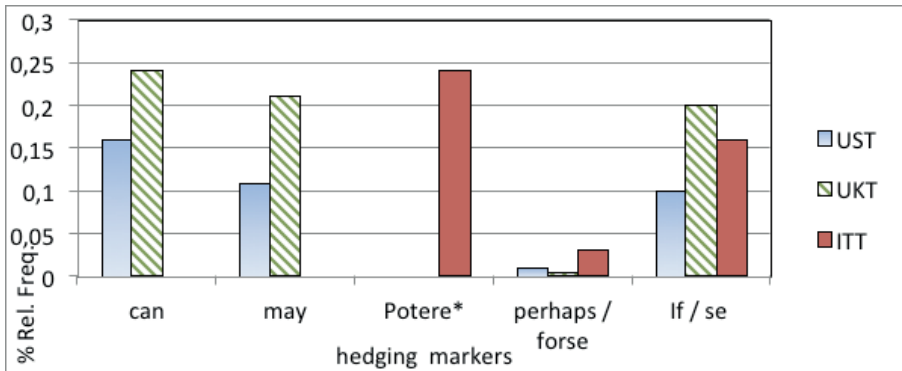
Table 3. Sample hedging markers in the three corpora.

We can see in Table 3 above that cumulatively, *can* and *may* in the UKT corpus have more instances than *potere** in Italian, (227 instances, approximately 0.2%). The UST has lower frequencies (e.g. *can*: 110 instances, or 0.15%). *Potere** (182 instances, 0,2%) comprises various conjugated forms, the most frequent of which are the 2nd person plural future tense *potrete* ('you will be able to'; 27 instances), and *potete* ('you can/may'; 20 instances), followed by a few other inflected forms, e.g. *può, potresti. possiamo, potremmo.* Adverbs such as *perhaps* have lower frequencies in the English sub-corpora than in the Italian corpus (*forse* has 32 hits in ITT; *perhaps* has 12 hits in UST and 3 in UKT).

(14) The facilities **can** be quite simple but cosy with all huts heated by a wood-burning stove. UST

(15) There is a stunning view from baboon cliffs…, and here we **may** see the small furry Rock hyrax. UKT

(16) From June to September it is monsoon season, it will be hot and humid in Nepal and you **may** well get rain. UKT

In the examples above we can see how claim-making is hedged so as not to raise too many expectations, but guarantee a certain amount of customer satisfaction. As claiming certainties is risky business, travel agencies prefer to invoke potential barriers in the way of their (future or past) actions which can help them disclaim responsibility for the absoluteness of their propositions. This defensive device, enacted through the pragmatic use of modals and *if* clauses, is convenient when talking about accommodation (14), wildlife (15), and the weather (16), widely 'hedged' topics in the UST and UKT corpora.

Compare the following examples of *potere** ('can/may') in the ITT corpus.

(17) Quest'oggi **potrete** dedicarvi allo shopping, al relax, **oppure** ad un "pub crawl" nella città di Galway, **probabilmente** la città più graziosa e vivace d'Irlanda.

(18) **Oppure, potreste** dividere le Vostre energie tra Galway e le isole Aran.

(19) **Tempo e clima permettendo**, **potrete anche** provare la pesca sul lago ghiacciato.

When we investigate close collocates of *potere** what is interesting in the Italian corpus is how the modal is juxtaposed to other modifiers and conditions creating a double hedging effect, e.g. the hedging patterns *potrete* ('you can') + *oppure/probabilmente* and *tempo e clima permettendo + potrete.* The examples also show how the 2nd person plural future tense *potrete* is more frequent than the other tenses. Although the prima-facie translation in English is *you will be able to*, its pragmatic function is to 'politely' make a suggestion to the reader. The effect is 'we're telling you what you *can* do' offering options, rather than 'we're telling you what to do'. Compare: *Take a tour to Burrow Hill* with *Se volete, potete godere di un tour a Burrow Hill.* ('If you want you can take a tour to Burrow Hill'). The hedging in Italian has two pragmatic functions: first it has a politeness and mitigating effect; second, the proposition gives the reader/customer the impression they are in control of their holiday. This is all part of the agency's stance. The concgram *se /volere*/ potere** is a recurrent pattern (8 instances) in the ITT corpus (Figure 1), whereas the *if /want/ can* concgram does not occur in the two English corpora.

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1        Se non vi basta, alla fine del tour, potete se volete,  prolungare il vostro soggiorno a
2         la più antica università dell'Irlanda dove se volete potete ammirare nella Old Library (Vecchia
3      di una contea famosa per le sue mele da sidro. Se volete, potete godere di un tour del sidro a
4      e le maestose ed imponenti Scogliere di Moher. Se vorrete, dopo il tour potete prolungare il vostro
5          Che ci crediate o no, accade anche oggi! Se proprio volete rivivere quelle immagini, potete
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Figure 1. *Se + volere/potere* concgram pattern in the Italian corpus.

To conclude, the main difference between the English corpora and the Italian corpus is in the pragmatic use of the hedging devices. In the former, the modals *can/ may* and *if* sentences create a defence strategy in marketing the product, whereas hedging in the Italian corpus focuses on modifying the illocutionary force of the proposition for politeness and mitigation.

Engagement is the means by which writers bring readers into the discourse by anticipating their possible expectations and interpretations. Two main engagement strategies can be identified in the tourism corpora, confirming previous studies (Hyland, 2005b). The first strategy uses linguistic devices aimed at meeting the readers' expectations of inclusion and solidarity. Readers are addressed as participants by means of the personal subject or object pronoun *you*, the Italian equivalents being the subject pronoun *voi*, the object pronoun *vi* and the *2nd person plural* verb forms, **ate, *ete, *ite*, e.g. *visitate, proseguite,* (the 2nd person singular pronoun *tu* and the 2nd person singular verb forms are not frequent in the ITT corpus), and the possessive adjectives *your* and *vostr**. The second strategy consists in rhetorically aligning and positioning the audience, guiding the reader to interpret or carry out particular actions. This process is achieved through *directives* and *questions* (see section 4.2.2; Hyland (2005b) also identifies other engagement features common to academic discourse, such as *references to shared knowledge* and *personal asides,* which are not discussed here).

6.2.1   2ND PERSON ENGAGEMENT MARKERS

Table 4 quantifies 2nd person reader engagement markers across the corpora.
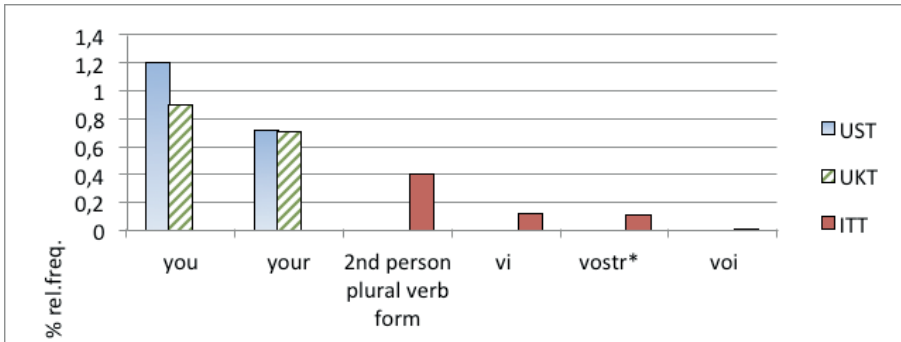

Table 4. Person reader markers in the tourism corpora.

As we can see in Table 4 *you* and *your* are high frequency pronouns in the UST and UKT corpora. The 2nd person plural subject pronoun *voi* (17 instances) is not common, (also related to the fact that Italian does not need to express the subject); it is used to address the audience or as a polite form of reference. The context of the situation usually reveals who *voi* is referring to, but here in the tourism texts the item can be ambiguous and we are left to interpretation. There is a clear preference for the direct and indirect pronoun *vi* (108 instances, 0.11%), sometimes acting as

a reflexive particle or as an enclitic pronoun, e.g. *vi potete lavare, vi suggeriamo, fat-evi.* Overall, *you* in the ITT corpus is most frequently expressed in the 2nd person plural verb form, for a total of 365 hits (0.40%), e.g. *avete, continuate, siete.* Nevertheless, propositions using these subject verb forms in the ITT corpus are far less frequent than *you* propositions in the UST (885 instances, 1.2%) and UKT (1120, 0.90%) sub-corpora. The possessive adjective *vostr** (0.11%) is also less frequent in the ITT corpus than in the UST (0.71%) and the UKT (0.72%) corpora. It is worth pointing out here that the low frequencies may also be due to the fact that Italian commonly uses the impersonal third person singular to address an audience, e.g. *si può visitare,* a polite but distant way of addressing the customer. *Si* refers to the impersonal 'one', e.g. *one can visit,* but it can also be translated by the vague 'you'. Of the 600 instances of *si,* approximately 200 are for impersonal address.

The examples below illustrate how engagement strategies in each corpus are qualitatively constructed in relation to specific cultural and institutional contexts.

(20) Have **you** ever fancied a bit of time travel? These routes are guaranteed to transport **you** back to some of the world's oldest continually inhabited settlements. UKT

(21) Daily **you will** see ancient sites and experience the countryside and the gastronomic delights. UKT

(22) The moment **you** fly over the rim [Grand Canyon]is an experience **you'll never forget.UST**

(23) The snowy peaks and mountain lakes of this superb national park **will leave you falling head over heels** for this incredible area. UST

(24) **You'll** soon realise just what an enchanted world **you'v**e had the **privilege** to enter into. UKT

In examples 21, 22 and 23 customers are engaged in the co-creation of values like history and culture (*ancient sites, the world's oldest, gastronomic delights*), nature and environment (*countryside, canyon*), through the persuasive strategy of linking 'you' the customer to exhilarating experiences *you'll never forget, you'll feel head over heels*. Notice also the engagement question in example 20 (*have you ever...?*). The informal personal question creates a pseudo-dialogue which takes the form of an intimate, private conversation with 'you', appealing directly to the customer. Likewise, the company constructs a privileged *you* which is taken 'special' care of; the reader/customer is made to feel the only person in the world to live such an extraordinary travel experience.

(25) Whatever trip **you** decide upon, there's always an **inclusive** atmosphere, with all activities taking place as a **group**. UST

(26) Exodus offers **FREE** airport arrival and departure transfers …so no matter which flight **you** choose to arrive on **you** will be met and transferred to **your** hotel. UKT

(27) All of **our** tours are designed to be flexible …, helping **you tailor your** tour to **your own** interests, budget and level of adventure. UKT

Example 25 refers to values related to group inclusion, a clear signal of membership binding writer and reader. Examples 26 and 27 are meant to co-create the values of care, ease and efficiency in the services offered. The items *your* and *you* directly align the readers in the co-creation of 'economic' values such as a *free* service and *budget* holiday. The uniqueness of the holiday is emphasized: it is *personally tailored* to suit *your own interests* and needs. Here the engagement strategy is constructed around the lexical unit *your own*, which enhances 'personal freedom'. The pattern *your own + noun phrase* is recurrent in both the UST and UKT corpora (59 instances, 0.07% v. 237, 0.17% respectively), but with different collocates reflecting different cultural orientations. Figure 2 shows sample concordance lines of the recurrent collocation pattern in the UST corpora.

```
1     the whole experience of setting up camp, doing your own cooking, getting supplies. It was very satisfying
2   land of rock spires that leave you searching for your own description of this bizarre landscape. Day 5
3    Hire 52 If you want to take your adventure into your own hands, our range of campervans will give you every
4   more leisurely feel, allowing you to explore at your own pace. With plenty of free time and optional
5   national parks where you are encouraged to find your own path off the trails. Alternatively, take to the
6    itinerary Optional Solo Sleeper available, for your own room and tent Meals: 10 breakfasts, 12 lunches,
7     is compulsory). However, if you would prefer your own space then we can offer an optional Solo Sleeper
```

Figure 2. Sample concordance lines for *your own + noun phrase* in the UST corpus

In the UST corpus the closest collocates of *your own* are *room* (27), *pace* (12), *space* (6), *interests* (4). This phraseological pattern focuses on 'doing/having something yourself', conveying the idea that the participant is the key player in the holiday, actively taking the adventure into their 'own hands' (figure 2, line 3).

(28) On the park's extensive system of trails, **you'll** encounter **a kaleidoscope of colour** and **a fantasyland** of rock spires that leave **you** searching for **your own** description of this bizarre landscape. UST

In example 28 powerful evaluative noun phrases (*a kaleidoscope of colour, fantasyland* etc.) construct the company as an agent who can make dreams come true. Interestingly, in the UKT corpus *your own* appears to collocate more with items related to tourist services, providing practical information and advice, e.g. *dates* (190), *flights* (13), *visa* (8), *expenses* (5), as in *If you miss the transfer you must make your own way back at your own expense.*

Turning now to engagement strategies in the ITT corpus, as 2nd person singular/plural markers are less frequent, on the surface it would appear almost like the readers/customers are barely taken into account in the construction of shared values. Nevertheless, where the Italian equivalents of *you* and *your* engagement markers do occur (i.e. *voi/vi*, 2nd person plural verb forms, and *vostr**), they have similar pragmatic functions.

(29) È possibile scegliere tra tantissime attività per **personalizzare** il **vostro** viaggio.

(30) Benvenuti nel **mondo dei sogni** realizzabili…, il mondo intero è ai **vostri** piedi.

(31) Se la fortuna è con **voi**, **assisterete** ad un fenomeno indimenticabile.

The 2nd person engagement readers personalize and tailor the holiday to the customers' tastes (examples 29-30), and aspire to bring the world to 'your feet' (*ai vostri piedi*). What is different is the fact that Italian prefers the collective plural, i.e. the 2nd person pronoun *voi/vi* and the 2nd person plural verb form, with verbal actions often expressed in the future tense, e.g. *assisterete*. This could be interpreted as a polite way of suggesting a tourism activity, where perhaps the English would use a directive.

6.2.2 Directives

Directives represent an important engagement device in the tourism corpora. Their pragmatic function is to create the shortest distance with readers. As a basic speech act they are hortative because they encourage action (Searle 1976) and they can be conveyed in different ways. In the English corpora they are mainly signaled by the imperative mood, e.g. *click, discover*; similarly, in Italian: *clicca, scoprite*. There are also occurrences of "indirect directives" (Quirk et al. 1985) often with verbs of recommendation which suggest or give advice, e.g. *we recommend/ suggest you, vi consigliamo/suggeriamo* (IT), as well as instances of modals of obligation, such as *must* and *should*, e.g. *You must have adequate travel insurance.*

In the tourism corpora, directives are used as metadiscourse mostly to guide readers around the website for information, recommending the use of services, or enhancing the enjoyment of specific values. On the webpages, the travel companies constantly point to basic booking online actions, e.g. *request your free brochure, look for the blue flag.* Hyland (2005b:184) calls these types of directives "textual acts". He also identifies two other types of directives, those involving "physical acts", e.g. *Drive along Route 66,* and those involving "cognitive acts", which have the function of guiding readers through a line of reasoning, e.g. *Think about it, paradise!* In fact, directives involving cognitive acts can be highly persua-

sive, because of the power they have in raising the tourist/traveler's imagination. Similar acts and metadiscourse functions are found in the ITT corpus, e.g. *fate un giro* ('take a tour'). However, directives occur to a much lesser extent in the ITT corpus (Table 5). Once again, this may be due to the commonly used impersonal pronoun *si* in Italian.

I calculated the number of (direct) directives first by generating a verb list (with POS tagging) for the simple present tense of verbs (base form) in each corpus. I then examined all the concordance lines to check for the imperative mood, and investigated the linguistic environment of the verb to observe the directive acts in context. This type of analysis revealed differences not only between the English and Italian corpora, but also between the American and English data, reflecting different cultural concepts and norms.

Category	UST Total /Rel. Freq.	UKT Total / Rel. Freq.	ITT Total /Rel. Freq.
Directives	432 /0.5% e.g. *Enjoy* *Book* *Discover Drive* *Explore* *Find* *Relax* *Take* *Walk* *Hike*	268/ 0.2% e.g. *Choose* *Enjoy* *Request* *Feel* *Book* *Talk* *Drive* *Fly* *Visit*	78/ 0.08% e.g. *Godetevi* *Continuate* *Guidate* *Fate* *Clicca* *Prenota* *Prendi* *Provate* *Proseguite*

Table 5. (Direct) directives in the three sub-corpora

As we can see from the results in Table 5, directives in the imperative form are highly represented in the English corpus, above all in the UST corpus (432, or 0.5%). The directives differ in type and frequency across all three corpora. The UST corpus employs a lot of physical action verbs in the imperative, e.g. *drive, explore, hike, walk*. Cognitive directives appear to be more common in the UKT corpus, perhaps to strategically create an interactive dialogue to increase the reader's desires, e.g. *Think crystal clear waters, pristine beaches!; learn more about how to make bibimbap!* The following example is representative of the English corpora.

(32) **Make sure you try** the dish with Walnut and Pommegranate sauce! **To die for**. **Go for a walk** along the bridges in Esfahan and **mingle** with the locals. **Don't be afraid** to chat and have tea. UKT

The directives engage readers/customers in creating their perfect holiday: *make sure you…; go for a walk; don't be afraid*. Figure 3 presents sample directives in the imperative in the ITT corpus.

Rwanda , Tanzania , Eritrea , Gibuti , Madagascar) chiedi l' amicizia a questo gruppo aperto Centro Africa :
Se vuoi condividere questo viaggio con i tuoi amici clicca sull' icona Facebook a lato CLASSIFICAZIONE ,
il tutto al riparo dentro una calda tenda Sami (lavvo) . Fateci sapere in anticipo se desiderate guidare la slitta
lasciatevi tranquillamente trasportare, fidatevi dei vostri compagni di viaggio . Rispettiamo
lasciandoli per poter guidare liberamente. Godetevi la costa artica con le sue fantastiche vedute su Tromsø
esplorare le strette strade con piccoli negozi e pub . Godetevi una visita alla Galleria d' Arte Waterside che presenta
vedono l ' ora di raccontarvi il perché . Visitate uno dei tanti bars o cafés , vi prometto che non riuscirete
sicurezza e di praticabilità di ogni servizio scelto . Siate pure critici ma esprimete le vostre perplessità

Figure 3. Sample imperatives in the ITT corpus

Notice that most of the directives in Italian are in the 2nd person plural; some are reflexive or enclitic, e.g. *fidatevi, fateci sapere* ('trust us/let us know'). On the whole, they have the same type of textual or physical function as their equivalents in the English corpora, e.g. *Visitate uno dei tanti bars o cafés* ('Visit one of the many bars and cafes'). However, we can conclude from the quantitative data retrieved that direct directives are not a common engagement marker in the ITT corpus. Italian appears to have alternatives: the use of the impersonal *si*, or a softer approach through hedging devices. For example, compare the following extracts. They are not direct translations in that they present different destinations and situations, but they are representative of the preferred rhetorical style peculiar to the language, culture and genre.

(33) Il cielo è uno spettacolo…, **si può godere** di una stellata meravigliosa.

(34) **Enjoy** sunset views of the inner circle and Colorado River from Plateau Point.UST

The generic impersonal structure (*si può godere*) creates a vague 'you', a polite distancing effect, conveying something which is programmed and routinely done, rather than drawing the reader into some novel experience. The English directive *enjoy* is more concise and follows a rhetoric of explicitness, with information often appearing in snippets alongside multimodal devices.

It is interesting to note that the most frequent directive in the UST corpus is *enjoy!* (101 hits), whereas of the 60 instances in the UKT corpus only 10 act as a directive. The explanation for this perhaps lies in the American culture, in how it views enjoyment and the cultural connotations of *enjoy* (c.f. Bednarek and Bublitz, 2007). Moreover, in the ITT corpus the prima-facie translation of *enjoy - godere**appears only twice as a directive (in the 2nd person plural) *godetevi*, e.g. *Godetevi una visita alla Galleria d'Arte Waterside* ('Enjoy a visit to Waterside Gallery'). One presumes that the ITT corpus uses other ways of conveying pleasure. Other verbs referring in Italian to the concept of *enjoy* are *divertire, gustare, piacere,* but these rarely occur in the imperative in this case study; in some cases, they are used with an inclusive 'we', e.g. *ci gustiamo una meritata birra* ('we enjoy a well-deserved beer').

7. Conclusions

The results of this case study of travel and tourism texts show that English and Italian seem to favour certain interpersonal categories independently of the genre. Despite some similarities, the stance and engagement markers in the tourism promotion websites are different both quantitatively and qualitatively, with idiosyncratic peculiarities in each corpus implying that the three cultures operate differently from one another. This in turn reflects the adoption of different marketing strategies. Quantitatively speaking it can be noted that engagement is more highly represented in English than in Italian, where stance seems to bear the propositional force of the communication, priority is given to the writer's identity and authority, and pre-conceived values seem to be imposed on readers, e.g. in the way *AM* presents their holidays as a philosophy. This attempt to find a niche reflects an 'exclusive' marketing strategy, very different from the Anglo-American one which makes a great effort to accommodate and 'include' a wider audience.

In the American and English corpora, the customers are well aligned and engaged through the use of personal pronouns and directives. This happens less in the Italian corpus, which does not mean that they have a weaker engagement strategy, but rather that persuasion is realized in a different way, that is, either through politeness or through evaluative language. Hedging, as we have seen, generally creates a softer approach, proposing services and activities rather than imposing them on the customer. Italian also shows a preference for traditional writing conventions and rhetorical style, through the use of the impersonal 3rd person structure *si*, despite evidence of a progressive convergence towards a global homogenization of web-marketing.

Differences also came to light between American and British cultural norms. For example, the UST corpus employs more directives, used (informally) to engage the customer and promote services. In addition, differences emerged in the cultural concept of ideologies like enjoyment and freedom, potential areas for future research.

All in all, the findings presented here support the claim that interpersonality in language (regardless of genre and discipline) is conditioned by cultural elements. In this particular case study, the interpersonal strategies are reflected in the marketing style of the culture and language. The issue is whether the travel agency websites would be able to attract someone from another country or culture. This is where the importance of understanding cross-cultural features lies. Features of metadiscourse need to be translated appropriately so as to avoid the loss of nuances. Writing conventions are cultural and linguistically rooted, and when language and culture come into contact, variation at different discoursal and pragmatic levels can be an area of potential difficulty and cross-linguistic misunderstanding. The results presented here may be a valuable source of information for travel agency companies and new marketing styles. Finally, this type of comparative analysis has highlighted the need to redefine intercultural paradigms due to shifting cultural identities in an era of fast globalization.

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