

# What can the discursive construction of stance and engagement voices in traveler forums and tourism promotional websites bring to a cultural, cross-generic and disciplinary view of interpersonality?

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## **Abstract**

This paper suggests that *interpersonality* as a framework for analysis is always necessarily conditioned by contextual variables. Genre and discipline, together with language and culture, challenge the initial model of metadiscourse (Vande Kopple, 1985; Crismore et al., 1993) as well as other approaches to interpersonal metadiscourse (Hyland & Tse, 2004; Hyland, 2005) that take English and academic discourse as their main referents. A model of interpersonality should be understood as containing variables, in order to cater for more insightful and accurate analyses. It is argued that stance and engagement voices (author and reader) (White 2003; Hyland, 2008), as construed in non-academic genres like traveler forums and promotional tourism websites, bring new data to the interpersonality framework, something that can fine-tune this model. To this end, the findings from several corpus-based studies of these two webgenres have been considered (Suau-Jiménez, 2011, 2012a, 2012b, 2014a), along with work on interpersonality and discourse that includes cultural, generic and disciplinary aspects (Dahl, 2004; Sala, 2006; Yakhontova, 2006; Giannoni, 2007; Gotti, 2010). Both sub-corpora used, of traveler forums and promotional tourism websites in English and Spanish, are drawn from the COMETVAL corpus (*Corpus Multilingüe de Turismo*, Universitat de València).

**Keywords:** interpersonality model, stance and engagement, tourism webgenres, contextual variables.

## Resumen

*¿Qué puede aportar la construcción discursiva de las voces “autoridad” (stance) e “implicación” (engagement) en los foros de viajeros y en las páginas de promoción turística a una visión cultural, trans-genérica y disciplinar de la interpersonalidad?*

Este artículo sugiere que la *interpersonalidad* como marco de análisis está siempre necesariamente condicionado por variables contextuales. El género y la disciplina, junto con la lengua y la cultura ponen en tela de juicio tanto el modelo inicial de metadiscurso (Vande Kopple, 1985; Crismore et al., 1993) como otros posteriores (Hyland & Tse, 2004; Hyland, 2005) que toman el inglés y el discurso académico como referentes. Se argumenta que un modelo de interpersonalidad debería considerar estas variables, con objeto de ofrecer mayor agudeza y profundidad de análisis. Parte de cómo se construyen las voces del autor y del lector (autoridad e implicación) (White 2003; Hyland, 2008) en géneros no-académicos como son los foros de viajeros y las webs de promoción turística y los datos que aportan al marco de la interpersonalidad. Se tienen en cuenta los resultados de trabajos anteriores basados en corpus (Suau-Jiménez, 2011, 2012a, 2012b, 2014a) e igualmente de estudios sobre interpersonalidad y discurso que incluyen aspectos disciplinares, genéricos y culturales (Dahl, 2004; Sala, 2006; Yakhontova, 2006; Giannoni, 2007; Gotti, 2010). Ambos sub-corpus de foros de viajeros y webs de promoción turística en inglés y español pertenecen al corpus COMETVAL (*Corpus Multilingüe de Turismo*, Universitat de València).

**Palabras clave:** modelo de interpersonalidad, autoridad e implicación, géneros digitales turísticos, variables contextuales.

## 1. Introduction

The framework for interpersonal metadiscourse, also called *interpersonality* (Vande Kopple, 1985; Crismore et al. 1993; Hyland, 2005), has been described, both theoretically and methodologically, with reference to the English language and to academic discourse. However, many other studies on contextual variables such as genre, discipline and language/culture can also contribute to the framework. Based on an analysis of two prototypical tourism web genres, it is claimed here that stance and engagement voices can provide valuable data on how interpersonality is construed in terms of promotion/persuasion and evaluation/advice in non-academic genres; thus, that this framework can be enriched with more fine-tuned analyses of these variables. A strong, reliable framework of analysis must be founded on

similarities more than on differences, even if this is at the expense of flexibility. Such has been the aim with the interpersonal metadiscourse/interpersonality model for English for Academic Purposes (EAP) since its beginnings. Academic disciplines and discourse communities needed a reliable model for the analysis of their discourse, one which might also help to build a common, interpersonal way of communicating and gaining recognition (Hyland, 2015: 3):

Essentially, communities provide the context within which we learn to communicate and to interpret each other's talk, gradually acquiring the specialized discourse competencies to participate as members. They are the places we craft our identities, cement relationships and achieve recognition, where we find the tools and resources to live out our professional lives.

Yet, it is also true that any discursive framework should be open to change and evolution. This is especially the case when the findings of empirical analyses challenge previously established models and argue for flexibility, with variations not previously considered being brought into the analysis, often with unexpected results. A number of studies on such variability in relation to academic discourse have challenged the initial English-based framework in this sense (Valero-Garcés, 1996; Abdollahzadeh, 2003; Dahl, 2004; Sala, 2006; Yakhontova, 2006; Giannoni, 2007; Crismore & Abdollahzadeh, 2010; Gotti, 2010). Such work, often including empirical evidence, supports the claim that contextual variables constitute an important factor in interpersonal metadiscourse analyses. Our hypothesis, based on those works that address variability, is that non-academic genres generated by professional communities and non-academic disciplines also shed new, potentially enriching light on the interpersonal framework model. To this end, a brief review will first be presented of new digital modes or genres (traveler forums and promotional websites), where interpersonal communication is central to the field of travel and tourism. An overview of the conceptualization of metadiscourse and its evolution into our view of interpersonality will also be given, including stance and engagement (author's and reader's voices), their strategies, and their markers in promotion websites and traveler forums. The results of the analyses of interpersonality in these two web genres are then set out, in order to illustrate that they both have specific rhetorical characteristics and specific interpersonal markers associated with generic, disciplinary and cultural-linguistic elements. This specificity implies that a framework for interpersonal metadiscourse/interpersonality should be conceptualized in

the light of contextual conditions in order to provide more insightful applications.

## **2. Tourism 2.0 and its impact on digital interpersonal communication: New modes and genres**

Tourism 2.0 allows people to make their travel plans wholly on their own using the internet, an innovation that has revolutionized the industry. As a result, new computer-mediated communication (CMC) texts have emerged, transforming the way in which marketers and customers relate. According to Couture et al. (2015: 66), “the tourism industry accounts directly for 5% of global Gross Domestic Product (GDP), 30% of global exports of services, and 1 out of 12 jobs worldwide (WTO 2015)”; a significant proportion of these commercial operations are now carried out directly via the Internet. Given that the internet has also become the most effective place for people to share their consumer experiences, it seems that opinions, commentaries or reviews posted online through the so-called eWOM or electronic Word of Mouth system have proved extremely valuable for marketers and hoteliers, as well as for individual users. These opinions can help businesses to ensure the competitiveness of their products and to focus their marketing strategies on potential new customers. Consumers have also access to the experiences of previous travelers and can thus make more informed choices when buying a product or service (Pekar & Ou, 2008) as well as influence tourism organizations to constantly re-appraise their marketing strategies (Phillips et al., 2015), although the effect on predicting sales performance remains unclear (Blal & Sturman, 2015). Tourism institutions and businesses can thus sell destinations and hotels as products with specific identity traits, with customers as social actors, and this has also become part of the overall marketing strategies in the sector (Dolón, 2014; Kim et al., 2015).

Studies of this new type of digital communication have analyzed Tourism web genres and found the abundant use of recurrent discursive strategies that stand for interpersonal relations. These interpersonal relations and linguistic materializations are represented by the writer’s voice, as with self-references (first person pronouns) or attitudinal markers (adverbs), meant to show authority, or with boosters (positive evaluative adjectives), which are applied to enhance products or services. Likewise, they are represented by the reader’s voice, as with second person pronouns and directives

(imperatives) (Mapelli, 2008; Pierini, 2009; Edo-Marzá, 2012; Suau-Jiménez, 2012a, 2012b, 2014), which seek to involve readers in the aim of the promotional or evaluative discourse. Research here has tended to take a broad perspective on interpersonality and interpersonal metadiscourse. This theoretical framework also includes the viewpoint of the author and how her/his authority and credibility is achieved (stance), and the viewpoint of the reader and how s/he is involved in the discourse and in the interpersonal game (engagement) (White, 2003; Hyland, 2008). In this way, a more accurate account of lexico-grammatical features or markers can be identified, since the division into author's stance and reader's engagement creates a new level of analysis, one that helps to delineate those rhetorical functions which characterize and explain how interpersonal communication works in a given genre.

### **3. Interpersonal metadiscourse or interpersonality: General framework and variations**

The theoretical and methodological framework called 'interpersonality', understood as the discursive markers and strategies that an author uses to express authority and to engage readers throughout a text in order to achieve its generic aim, can be taken as a synonym for interactional or interpersonal metadiscourse. It is the result of a long and complex evolution. The concept was initially termed metadiscourse, defined by Vande Kopple (1985) and Crismore, Markkanen and Steffensen (1993) as spoken or written linguistic material that adds no new propositional content but helps the reader to organize, interpret and evaluate the information given. This early model introduced by Vande Kopple had two main categories: textual and interpersonal metadiscourse. The textual category establishes the relationship between author and text and how the former is positioned over the latter. Interpersonal metadiscourse, by contrast, identifies the author-reader relationship and how the author can lead the reader towards her/his pre-conceived aims, using specific discursive strategies. This first model has been applied mostly to academic discourse genres, particularly in English, although other languages, such as Finnish, Spanish, Russian, Persian and Brazilian Portuguese, have also been the object of analyses (Mauranen, 1993; Valero-Garcés, 1996; Abdollahzadeh, 2003; Ferrari, 2004; Beke, 2005; Dahl, 2004; Yakhontova, 2006; Zarei & Mansoori, 2011; Junqueira & Cortes, 2014; Kuhl & Mojtahid, 2014). However, it seems that none of these studies

explicitly claims that these results could modify the metadiscourse framework, in the sense of having to be contextually adjusted when applied to a given corpus, taking into account variations dealing with culture and language, genre, gender, discipline and/or others having to do with internal differentiations within these variables.

Crismore et al. (1983: 2) described metadiscourse as the phenomenon of writers directing readers towards an understanding of what is said and meant in the primary discourse and how to ‘hook’ the reader. One interesting notion here, although somewhat vague, was that they included propositional content as being used generally to refer to information about external reality: all that which has to do with thoughts, actors or states of affairs in the world outside the text, this based on Halliday’s (1985) ideational macro-function. Crismore et al.’s work was an interesting contribution to the model since it accepted markers other than the strictly metadiscursive ones (only about the discourse) claimed by Vande Kopple. It also contributed to a broadening of the concept of metadiscourse, while also implying greater complexity and difficulty in establishing a taxonomy of markers, which is methodologically unavoidable in rigorous analyses.

A metadiscursive taxonomy that included patterns of textual and interpersonal markers was finally proposed by Hyland and Tse (2004) for academic discourse in English, as a result of previous empirical studies (Hyland, 1998). It thus created a reliable model, one that has been the basis for many further analyses, applied to academic and non-academic corpora. Hyland (1998, 2005, 2008) and Hyland and Tse (2004) aimed to systematize this framework, and their work represents a turning point in the conceptualization of metadiscourse. They revisit the notion of textual and interpersonal markers in depth throughout their various studies, defining it as a system of meaning realized by an open-ended set of language items which can only be recognized as fulfilling their function at the moment of their realization, in their corresponding context. It is “the cover term for the self-reflective expressions used to negotiate interactional meanings in a text, assist the writer (or speaker) to express a viewpoint and engage the readers as members of a particular community” (Hyland, 2005: 37).

Hyland and Tse (2004) assume a difference between textual and interpersonal metadiscourse and claim that metadiscourse had often been wrongly characterized as “discourse about discourse”, suggesting that interpersonal or interactional metadiscourse is more interesting than textual

metadiscourse in that it portrays the writer-reader relationship in cognitive terms, which is the core of interpersonal. One of their arguments here is that propositional content does not rule out the idea of metadiscourse but rather includes it, although pushing it too far into a rigid subcategory would be unwise (2004: 161). They view writing as a form of social engagement, where writers project themselves into their discourse to signal their attitude towards both the content and the audience of the text. They regard it as an open and functional category that can always accept new items (markers, categories) to fit the writer's needs of facilitating communication and building a relationship with an audience, which they see as a key aspect. One of their most interesting suggestions, in line with Crismore et al. (1983) but set out more explicitly, is that propositional content can also be part of metadiscourse, although it can be difficult to distinguish what is content from what is not. In our view, the cognitive aspects that define interpersonal metadiscourse and explain the 'game' of the interactants pave the way for a connection with rhetorical functions such as persuasion, evaluation, solidarity, etc. and provide interpersonal with a solid theoretical basis when it comes to characterizing genres from an interpersonal perspective.

Although based on academic genres in English, this approach to interpersonal metadiscourse has been used as a means of analyzing tourism web genres. As a result, a new, cross-generic and disciplinary taxonomy has been identified for this area of research, in which it is proposed that interpersonal can be flexible and context-conditioned. Such an approach also has other interesting applications, as with translation, since it is essential, especially when translating persuasive texts, to know the differences between the interpersonal pattern of the source and the target language; otherwise, bad translations can be made leading to difficulties to identify the interpersonal strategies deployed, and thus the persuasive aim of the text being compromised (Suau-Jiménez, 2014b).

It can therefore be claimed that interpersonal patterns should be described in terms of different variables, such as language, genre and, in this case, discipline, in order to provide a grid reference for where markers and categories have socio-cultural and contextual coherence (Suau-Jiménez, 2012, 2014). Other variables that should also be considered to have an impact have been suggested, although they do not fall within the scope of the present study. These include gender and the different ways male and female express interpersonally, and differences between beginning and more proficient learners of a second or foreign language, as reported by Crismore

and Abdollahzadeh (2010). To sum up, in order to be flexible and usable in a variety of settings, interpersonality should be understood in the light of contextual conditions or variables.

The term ‘interpersonality’ was coined as a synonym for interpersonal or interactional metadiscourse, in part due to the influence of the Spanish research group InterLAE at the University of Zaragoza, which has a long tradition in the study of academic genres and disciplines. The edited volume *Constructing Interpersonality: Multiple Perspectives on Written Academic Genres* (Lorés-Sanz, Mur-Dueñas & Lafuente, 2010) contained a variety of approaches to interpersonal metadiscourse in a number of genres (abstracts, book reviews, referee reports, electronic popularizations, academic weblogs, student essays and conference handouts) and disciplines (business organization, economics, law, linguistics, literature, medicine, psychology and physics), and soon became a reference text within the field. Breeze, Gotti and Sancho (2014) have also drawn on interpersonality as an umbrella term and as a synonym for interpersonal metadiscourse, with a collective work that offers a broad selection of studies of public and private legal genres.

### **3.1. The notion of voice**

The notion of voice, central to our present approach, is also taken from Hyland (2008), who in turn draws on Bakhtin (1986) and White (2003) and introduces a new level of specificity with a division into disciplinary voices (author’s and reader’s voice). This allows interpersonal markers and categories to be classified as belonging to voices of stance or engagement, thus creating an intermediate socio-linguistic layer of analysis between, on the one hand, markers of lexico-grammatical realizations in the two voices, and on the other, rhetorical functions that aim to characterize the genre.

### **3.2. Interpersonality as a result of language, genre, and discipline variables**

In this article we assume that interpersonality is the result of at least three variables, language, genre, and discipline, and that these must be taken into account in any analysis. Their simultaneous presence in a text renders a specific interpersonal pattern, constructed with the aid of genre-related rhetorical functions, voices of stance and engagement in various combinations, and a battery of *ad hoc* markers and categories, influenced by the culture/language and the discipline.



In this sense, several studies have shown the influence of cultural context, discipline and genre in metadiscursive output. Yakhontova (2006), for example, describes a contrastive genre analysis of English and Slavic (Ukrainian and Russian) conference abstracts in the field of applied mathematics, focusing on the use of the self-mention pronoun “I/we”. She claims important interdisciplinary variations compared with a similar, prior study from the field of applied linguistics. Dahl (2004: 1807) considers culture and discipline markers from textual metadiscourse in English, French and Norwegian research articles, encompassing three disciplines: economics, linguistics and medicine. Findings suggest that language is the most important variable for economics and linguistics, where English and Norwegian show very similar patterns, using much more metatext than French. She concludes that English and Norwegian both have a strong stance (author’s voice), while French is more reader-oriented (engagement). Regarding discipline, it is suggested that for economics and linguistics, the national culture is more important than in the case of medicine. This study is a good example of the influence that language and discipline have on the discursive construction of genres. Giannoni (2007) reports studies on the disciplines of medicine, linguistics, economics and law, and proves that there is more hyperbolic, ironic or emotive language in linguistics and economics than in medicine. Sala (2006), meanwhile, assumes disciplinary traits, yet goes further, looking for additional traits within the same disciplines. Gotti (2010: 51) suggests that beyond the screen of apparent homogeneity, “disciplinary communities show idiosyncratic specificities which reflect the varying experiences, interests and professional roles of the individual members of a community”. Crismore and Abdollahzadeh (2010) draw on a series of studies into the so-called soft sciences within the Iranian academic context, with cross-linguistic comparisons between English and Persian, and with native and non-native speakers of English. Their close observations highlight variations due to the influence of culture and language; Anglo-American writers showed a more author-responsive use of metadiscursive strategies in contrast to Iranian writers, who were more prone to be reader-oriented; significant variations due to gender influence were also reported. Finally, Li and Wharton (2012: 345) report different patterns of metadiscourse use in their corpus of Mandarin students working with English in China or in the UK, these associated with both disciplinary and cultural (language) factors. Their findings indicate that local cultural factors have a stronger effect than disciplinary ones, although discipline was also linked to significant differences.

## 4. Stance and engagement in tourism web genres: *promotion websites and traveler forums*

Stance and engagement, or writers' and readers' interpersonal voices, have been studied in a number of tourism web genres (Suau-Jiménez, 2012a, 2012b, 2014a). I address here how these voices are construed in the touristic promotion website (Figures 1 and 2):



Figure 1. Touristic promotion website for Britain.<sup>1</sup>

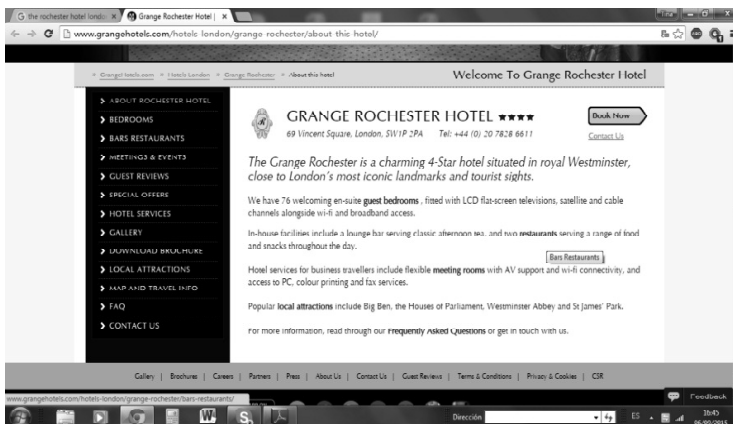


Figure 2. Touristic promotion hotel website.

and in the traveler forum (Figure 3):



Figure 3. Traveler Forum from TripAdvisor.

These two web genres entail recurrent and prototypical communicative purposes: persuasion, in the case of promotion websites, and evaluation and advice, in the case of traveler forums. Both web genres constitute invaluable sources of information for tourism marketers and travelers: both discursive communities use them to communicate through an intricate, implicit dialogue that sometimes takes unconventional dialogic forms, as is the case with promotional websites, where the text stands for the entity's voice, although customers are also engaged in the discourse.

#### 4.1. Touristic promotion websites

Touristic promotion websites are a common kind of CMC genre, although not accurately part of the Web 2.0, since their structure does not allow for open dialogue between writer and reader. Rather, the genre can be regarded as an example of the Web 1.0, with a kind of hidden writer-reader interpersonal dialogue in which readers are engaged, since their evaluations and feedback are generated and transmitted via their own reactions to tourist products or services. We could say that it is a remodelled web genre, in that it reproduces all the characteristics of the old printed tourist guides, but now customers' feedback is essential for the constant updating of the website. Persuasion is the central aim here, and the rhetorical functions that help to achieve this are descriptions, exemplifications, explanations and recommendations (Suau-Jiménez, 2012b). Its register is generally standard, with an elaborate language that can contain technical terms together with figurative or metaphorical elements for embellishment and to reach the

customer through a highly aesthetic style. It is like the matching of two opposed forces, with these trying to reach the best possible agreement. Customers' voice and demands, or "user-generated-content" (Cheng & Ab Hamid, 2011), usually appear in the subgenre Review, a digital mode that most promotion websites now offer, and which tourism marketers and hoteliers consider as part of the process of continually updating their websites and keeping them competitive (Chen & Popovich, 2003).

#### 4.1.1. Stance

As a category *hedges* occur frequently here (Suau-Jiménez, 2012a), as also noted in previous studies on English interpersonal metadiscourse, albeit in academic disciplines (Dafouz, 2008; Mur-Dueñas, 2010). Modal verbs seem to be the most frequent markers, with examples such as these from the COMETVAL corpus:

- (1) Here we *can find* contents and designs based on the species in...
- (2) You *can also find* here the novel Chroma Key photographic...
- (3) ...one *can park* inside L'Umbracle's covered car park and have...
- (4) Valencia *can be* a city of clichés: the light, the moon...

Another important category is self-mention. Formed by personal pronouns and possessives, it is about as frequent as hedges. Self-mention illustrates how persuasion is also constructed by means of a strong authorial presence and through the force of self-experience. We might also note that this authorial presence embodies an overlapping engagement since it is used with the plural "we", something that could be interpreted as a particular interpersonal strategy meant to involve customers, and thus having a double purpose: showing self-experience and involving readers. Self-mentions with the first person singular do not figure at all in this web genre.

Examples from the COMETVAL corpus:

- (5) ...over the entire complex, *we can stage* a variety of open-air events...
- (6) In this building, covered by an igloo-like roof, *we can observe* two marine mammals.
- (7) *We will be transported* to a unique environment that...
- (8) ...some 30 meters long *let us* access to the observation of animal life...

- (9) ...the City of the Arts and Sciences *invites us to* discover a genuine marine park...

Boosters merit special mention in terms of stance. They occur frequently and in a rich variety. Formed mainly with positive evaluative adjectives that transmit pre-conceived and well-designed values (history, variety, diversity, modernity, etc.), they are meant to enhance the product and persuade the customer (Suau-Jiménez, 2012a).

Examples from the COMETVAL corpus:

- (10) A self-service restaurant with a *great variety of* dishes designed for the whole family.
- (11) ...screen, *spectacular* lighting equipment simulates the light cycles...
- (12) ...your *best* snapshots with the *most spectacular* images of your visit.
- (13) ...with the philosophy of the *most modern and important* aquariums in the world are being developed.

The following category, attitude markers, is found at a moderate frequency and are all formed by adverbs in phrasal constructions like adverb + adjective/noun or verb + adverb. Some examples from the COMETVAL corpus are:

- (14) The park includes two *clearly differentiated* scenarios: installations for fish....
- (15) ...audiovisual project can be appreciated *even more clearly* in Artico...
- (16) ...the service received is considered satisfactory, *especially in* bars and restaurants...

#### 4.1.2. Engagement

Engagement, the means by which a reader is addressed and involved in the discourse, is most commonly created in English interpersonality of tourism promotion websites through the use of commitment markers. Both their frequency and variety are as significant as hedges are in expressing the stance voice. They take the form of the personal pronoun “you” in the function of subject or object, as well as the possessives “your” and “yours”.

Examples from the COMETVAL corpus:

- (17) *You* will find hotels for all tastes and at the best...
- (18) Cinema Jove Internacional Film Festival brings *you* another year of quality films...
- (19) If *you* are looking for something special, pay a visit to...

Directives are another important category for the engagement voice. They represent one of the most direct ways of addressing the reader/customer, and are used for actions where there is a supposed benefit to customers, thus reminding them of simple but basic rules or actions. Examples from the COMETVAL corpus:

- (20) Request *your* FREE Tourist Pack. A pack with everything...
- (21) Hotels and hostels Book *your* stay in Valencia.

As noted above, self-mentions are particularly strategic in this web genre since they also stand as a form of engagement, in that they are formed with plural personal pronouns and possessives.

It should be added that the equivalent web genre analysis in Spanish, also from the COMETVAL corpus and mentioned here for comparative purposes only, shows different figures and a different interpersonal pattern. As Suau-Jiménez (2012a, 2012b) reports, the promotional tourism website in Spanish is characterized by a very high number of boosters, a moderate use of attitude markers and self-mentions, and a low number of hedges and directives, together with practically no commitment markers (second person personal pronouns). These findings support our claim that interpersonality is conditioned by language due to socio-cultural elements, even if genre and discipline are the same in both linguistic communities.

## 4.2. Traveler forums

Traveler forums are a type of new CMC mode or web genre, emerging from the internet and the so-called Web 2.0, where users ask other users/travelers for advice on specific questions related to their doubts and concerns about travelling, destinations or other similar issues. As Suau-Jiménez (2014: 185) suggests, it is a web genre where “individuals negotiate understanding, pursue and attain self-interest within a socially and rhetorically driven medium as is dialogue, or polylogue”. Its fluid conversational style, full of colloquial terms and expressions, relies heavily on interpersonal markers and

strategies where readers become writers and vice versa, thus giving way to the concept ‘wreader’ (Koskensalo, 2012).

Stance voice and the authority that governs this side of the dialogue/polylogue is expressed mainly through self-mentions and hedges. In this way, a strong authorial discourse voice is created, based on self-experience and offering opinions and evaluations of a peer-solidarity nature. Hedges play an important role in not committing completely to the message or statement, thus keeping a fluid tone of friendship, typical between comrades, one in which advice is suggested rather than directions imposed. Engagement voice shows a reader’s orientation or attitude based on personal pronouns/commitment markers, as well as on directives. The reader is thus constantly involved in the writer’s evaluations and judgements, something that gives a strong impression of solidarity and peer-to-peer communication.

Example no.1: Traveler Forum conversational thread from *TripAdvisor*, 2012, with several conversational turns (Suau-Jiménez, 2014), from the COMETVAL corpus:

#### STANCE

[...*I am coming* to london from Australia in July with *my* 8 year old daughter. *I have been* a couple of times already but it is her first time. / *I want* to show her all the usual sites but *I guess* architecture and history *can be* a little boring for kids.]

#### ENGAGEMENT:

[*Any suggestions on things to do to interest children?* / *Is there any hidden treasures you locals can let me in on?*]

#### STANCE:

[...*I am sure you will find plenty...* / Lastly, *do let us know where you are* staying and *I am sure we can then advise you* of some child friendly things within a short walk of *your* accommodation... Large animatronic animals, a ‘storm’ rumbling around, and a huge aquarium of fish *would keep* her entertained whilst *you* eat. *I mean, whilst you* both eat, (just in case it sounded like *I wanted your* child to starve!). *I am* actually staying in Letchworth in Hertfordshire *we will be catching* the train into London.]

#### ENGAGEMENT:

[...*you* will find an *excellent* sticky produced by Theartgirl... / to keep *your* daughter amused there... / *You could also use* the search engine... / If *you have to do* the architecture and history stuff, *you can* then redeem *yourself*

by taking... / and *you avoid* the lines.2 / *your* daughter to the Rainforest Cafe for dinner. / That way *you have*...].

Example no.2: Traveler Forum conversational thread from *TripAdvisor*, 2012, with several conversational turns (Suau-Jiménez, 2014) from COMETVAL corpus:

STANCE:

[...hi all, *have lived* in london for a few years but this weekend *am having* to entertain *my* nieces for the first time in london... they are 3 and 6 and *i'm after* some advice as to suitable places to take them to - *i was considering* the museum of childhood in bethnal green, but *have heard* that this is more suitable for adults rather than kids...]

ENGAGEMENT:

[*any thought?*]

STANCE:

[*I would suggest* the London Eye, The Natural History Museum and the Science Museum. *It will totally freak them out!!!!!!!I agree* the museum of childhood will be too 'adult' for them and as for the London dungeon - it scared the pants off *me* let alone a 6 year old! The natural history museum *is a good idea* but *I would restrict* it to seeing just one or two exhibitions eg just the dinosaurs and mammals. *I took* my 12 year old brother last year and after seeing the dinosaurs he got bored rather quickly. The science museum has a section for under 8's to play in.]

ENGAGEMENT:

[*Check out* [www.bigbus.co.uk](http://www.bigbus.co.uk). *I guess* they *would love* Madame Tussauds but *beware* of the queues. *Buy your tickets* in advance from any tube station. The weather folk says it is going to be cold again this weekend so *wrap up* warm.../Also *take them to* a matine of the Lion King or Chitty Chitty Bang Bang.Word of warning, *DO NOT take them* to the London Dungeons.]

The data described here challenge other findings on interpersonality in promotional Tourism websites in Spanish (Mapelli, 2008; Pierini, 2009) and English (Suau-Jiménez & Dolón-Herrero, 2007), and also on hotel webpages in English and Spanish (Suau-Jiménez, 2011, 2012; Edo-Marzá, 2012), where personal pronouns and, especially, boosters tend to be the most frequent markers. Second person pronouns are the preferred markers for engaging



readers (customers) in English promotional discourse, whereas boosters, in both English and Spanish, are the way in which products and services are enhanced through positive qualifying adjectives.

The analysis of traveler forums also exhibits a different interpersonal pattern here. As Suau-Jiménez and González-García (2013) report, this web genre is characterized by a certain balance of stance and engagement in English, whereas its Spanish equivalent shows a much stronger stance or author's voice, denoting a more explicit authority in the realization of evaluation and advice.

Examples in Spanish:

*Stance* (COMETVAL corpus): 67% of total markers

Hedges:

(22) “Además de Praga, te *recomendaría* París, Brujas y Amsterdam”

Boosters:

(23) “En un día soleado, la vista panorámica es *realmente espectacular*”

Attitudinals:

(24) “*Estoy de acuerdo* con todo lo expuesto por María”

Self-mention:

(25) “*Yo* en 12 días no *me* movería tanto”.

*Engagement* (COMETVAL corpus): 33% of total markers

Reader's pronouns:

(26) “También tenía el mismo temor que *tú*”

Directives:

(27) “*Haz* fotos antes y después”

In English, this is shaped with a more subtle message, where the reader's involvement is more important than the author's authority. Traveler forums in English are construed with a higher number of hedges, and the Spanish

ones with more self-mentions and boosters. These characteristics are in line with previous cross-linguistic studies, especially in terms of the input for specific interpersonal markers in Tourism web genres (Suau-Jiménez & Dolón-Herrero, 2007; Suau-Jiménez, 2012a). This constitutes additional evidence in support of the idea that culture/language is a conditioning factor in interpersonal communication, since English and Spanish seem to favour certain interpersonal categories, independently of the genre.

## 5. Conclusion

As noted above, the construction of stance and engagement in these two web-genres is, following Suau-Jiménez's (2012a, 2012b, 2014a) recent research on tourism CMC, the result of three contextual variables that constrain and shape their interpersonal pattern: language, genre and discipline. This recalls the work of other authors who support the idea that interpersonal metadiscourse is an activity of social engagement (Fairclough, 1992) and that it is linked to the norms and expectations of particular cultural and professional communities (McDaniel-Mann, 2014), thus being the result of specific settings and contexts.

The way promotional tourism websites are construed in terms of stance and engagement in English shows that, on the one hand, the author's stance, representing the tourism business or institution, deploys an authority that is strongly "filtered" through hedges, so as not to impose any of its propositions but to smoothly suggest them. This purposeful distance with the reader is balanced with a clear focus on the product through a heavy use of boosters that enhance the touristic offering or the hotel's qualities through positive evaluative adjectives that transmit adequate pre-conceived values in order to make a competitive difference. Readers – customers – are very tightly engaged by means of personal markers (second person pronouns) that involve them in the discourse, establishing a direct dialogue in response to their demands and commentaries, received through reviews on the same website. Another engaging strategy is the use of self-mentions using the inclusive pronouns "we", "us", "our" and "ours", these referring to author and readers and therefore acting as stance and engagement simultaneously. Directives, another type of engagement marker, create the shortest distance with readers, actually instructing them to carry out a specific action, based on a supposed level of trust and confidence

established through other interpersonal markers and strategies, such as personal pronouns of the self-mentioning author. As for the Spanish equivalent web genre in the COMETVAL corpus, it can be said that the main difference stems from the greater use of boosters (positive evaluative adjectives), the other categories remaining at a moderate level of use (attitude markers, directives, self-mentions) or non-use (hedges). We can conclude that the genre and discipline variable constraints, and the way to achieve persuasion, are visible in the specific use of boosters, the most salient category in English and Spanish. Such a conclusion is supported by similar findings on promotional web genres in tourism (Suau-Jiménez & Dolón-Herrero, 2007; Mapelli, 2008; Pierini, 2009; Edo Marzá, 2012) and by Vázquez and Giner (2009), who report similar results with persuasion in academic genres. The language constraint to the interpersonal pattern in promotional tourism websites is recognized through the use of hedges, reported to be more abundant in English than in Spanish (Suau-Jiménez, 2011, 2012a). This coincides with previous work on academic genres in a variety of disciplines, where the communicative aim is also to convince or persuade readers (Hyland, 1998; Dafouz-Milne, 2008; Mur-Dueñas, 2010).

As for traveler forums, the analyses of the COMETVAL corpus show significant differences between English and Spanish, as described above. If we compare these with promotional tourism websites, we can see that evaluation and advice, based on peer-solidarity, coincide in terms of culture/language constraints. Hedges and personal pronouns are also abundant here in English, whereas Spanish users prefer attitude markers, self-mentions and boosters. This clearly reflects the language variable. Regarding stance and engagement, traveler forums in Spanish deploy a stronger author's voice and authority – stance – whereas in English a clear engagement focus is adopted to involve the reader and thus attain the basic aim of providing evaluation and advice. Finally, in terms of disciplinary constraints, both web genres coincide in the use of boosters, a specific marker associated with persuasion, and one present in all analyses of texts dealing with tourism (Suau-Jiménez & Dolón-Herrero, 2007; Mapelli, 2008; Pierini, 2009; Suau-Jiménez, 2012a, 2014a). This suggests disciplinary identity features.

To sum up, the interpersonal pattern seen through the analysis of stance and engagement voices in these tourism webgenres seems to be strongly influenced by linguistic, genre and disciplinary traits. Although more research is needed, other studies also support the claim that interpersonality

is the result of these variables in other disciplines, languages and genres (Dahl, 2004; Sala, 2006; Yakhontova, 2006; Giannoni, 2007; Crismore & Abdollahzadeh, 2010; Gotti, 2010; Li & Wharton, 2012). We therefore suggest that it should be considered a key aspect for any theoretical and methodological development of the field, and that more accurate analyses of these contextual variables be undertaken when designing and applying interpersonal models.

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Source: <http://www.visitbritain.com/en/EN/>.

<sup>2</sup> Source: <http://www.grangehotels.com/hotels-london/grange-rochester/about-this-hotel/>.

<sup>3</sup> Source: [http://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowTopic-g186338-i17-k5565676-Top\\_ten\\_things\\_to\\_do\\_with\\_kids-London\\_England.html](http://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowTopic-g186338-i17-k5565676-Top_ten_things_to_do_with_kids-London_England.html).