
The Genre Of Tourist Leaflets

Ania Saorín Iborra

Miguel F. Ruiz Garrido

Universitat Jaume I - Castellón

Abstract

There have been many studies of Genre Analysis justifying the pedagogical implications of the Discourse Analysis system in the ESP classroom. Most of them have focused on research articles, medical texts, legislative documents and business correspondence, but little has been done about tourist texts. Based on the communicative purpose that several authors (Swales, 1990; Bhatia, 1993; Andersen, 1998) take as an essential criterion for defining a genre, we have selected 12 tourist leaflets to analyse their move structure. We have observed whether the stages of each text present a common order and content related to some specific intention for the reader. Accepting a specific structure for this type of text, we have studied some textual features observing if they fit the main communicative purpose of the genre.

1. INTRODUCTION

According to Paltridge (1997a) there are three main approaches to the analysis of genres within the area of applied linguistics. We are concerned with the one he calls *ESP Genre Analysis* founded mainly on the works of Swales (1990) and Bhatia (1993). This system of Discourse Analysis has been widely used in studies about Academic and Business written texts.¹ Most of them have

focused on research articles, medical texts, legislative documents and business correspondence. In the late 1990s, international conferences held in Spain and Portugal have proved the growing interest in English for Tourism, as well as some European Union projects and some other scarce works found in other countries (i.e., Leetch (1996) on the genre of hotel brochures).

¹ For references on different studies see Swales, 1990; Bhatia, 1993; Paltridge, 1997a; Fortanet, Posteguillo, Palmer & Coll, 1998.

This growing field of research seems to be in parallel with the great expansion of the tourist industry, which is demanding a high percentage of professional people trained "specially in all aspects related to international communication and collaboration" (Bosch Abarca & Giménez Moreno, 2001, p. 242). In this specific training, English plays a crucial role (García Berzosa, 1999). There are many different situations in which Tourism students will have to use English in their future careers. For that reason, they should acquire competence in the four skills. As for writing, the tourist leaflet is a very frequent type of text in the Tourist Industry, and students may have to produce similar texts in their future jobs.

From the fact that ESP Genre Analysis lets us find out about "what learners need to do with language, what texts they use and how these texts work" (Dudley-Evans, 1998, p. 9) and based on our teaching experience, we came across the idea of studying this kind of tourist text because it is relevant for future professionals to know how to write it. Moreover, some studies reflect a great lack of precision when writing tourist leaflets, especially when they are written into a second language (Vázquez de Parga, 1998). This is why the corpus we have studied consists of authentic leaflets found in Local Tourist Information Centres from various English-speaking countries.

Strutt (1992, p. 49) defines a leaflet as "one piece of paper, perhaps folded into two or three sections, which gives information on a product, service or event." A tourist leaflet, therefore, should be a piece of paper, usually folded into two or three sections, which informs tourists about places to visit

or events to attend in a destination and describes specific locations in order to attract the visitor's interest.

One of the main aspects considered to select the texts was their common communicative purpose. Based on ideas from different authors working on Genre Analysis (Swales, 1990; Bhatia, 1993; Andersen, 1998), this communicative purpose is a very important criterion to classify a group of texts as belonging to the same genre:

The principal criterial feature that turns a collection of communicative events into a genre is some shared set of communicative purposes (Swales, 1990, p. 46).

According to Bhatia (1993, p. 14), important changes in the communicative purpose could result in a different genre but "minor changes or modifications help us distinguish sub-genres." This author considers the tourist leaflet as a sub-genre of what he calls the promotional genre. Some of the features he points out about this genre are as follows:

- it has persuasion as one of its main functions
- it should capture the attention of the potential customer
- it addresses the potential customer who has some need
- it is short and effective, and it highlights the most essential information about the product or service
- it is the first link between the seller and the customer

The two main communicative purposes, shared by all the samples of this sub-genre we have worked with, are to inform the readers about what to visit in the destination described and convince them that what the destination offers can make their stay more pleasant. These two communicative purposes determine the characteristics shown by these tourist texts (Juan González, 2000).

According to Bhatia (1993), the common communicative purpose is what gives the genre an internal structure. The analysis of this structure into moves (Swales, 1990) is a very useful tool for non-native speakers when they have to deal with several writing tasks in academic and professional contexts (Bhatia, 1993; Paltridge, 1997b; Dudley-Evans, 1998). To make a long story short, we can use Swales' words (1990, p. 58), who states that, "exemplars of a genre exhibit various patterns of similarity in terms of structure, style, content and intended audience." Nevertheless, genre analysis is not only based in the study of moves and steps applied to the teaching of writing (Dudley-Evans, 1998) since genres also present some significant linguistic features which perform particular functions within each move.

Therefore, we have focused our study on the structure regularities of the selected tourist leaflets, since students admit having great difficulty organising content in order to get the appropriate communicative purpose when writing. Furthermore, we have also analysed some of the significant linguistic features which perform particular functions within each move.

2. METHOD

We have analysed 12 authentic leaflets, found in countries where English is the first language as we mentioned above. All of them deal with a destination offering several different attractions to visitors. They were selected at random from the Tourist Information Centres by asking for a leaflet of each destination. All of them are of similar length, being an average of 319.5 words (including the few headings and subheadings). We have not taken into account the layout of the text or its visual appearance (pictures, colour, type of paper, etc.) since this is not relevant for our analysis.

We have followed the pattern of moves by Swales (1990). According to this approach, the structure of texts is made up of several moves, each of which may have one or more steps. We understand the term *move* as "a unit that relates both to the writer's purpose and to the content that s/he wishes to communicate" (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998, p. 89).

For the second part of our study, we have analysed some lexico-grammatical features taking into account frequencies and form-function correlations when possible. Thus, we have divided the analysis into five parts (nouns, adjectives, verbs, pronouns and linking words), relating them to the results obtained in the first part.

3. MOVES APPEARING IN TOURIST LEAFLETS

After dividing the leaflets into moves, the results are as follows:

Moves	No. Leaflets
General description Image of the destination, location, main attractions, main historical events	12
Places to visit Museums and art galleries, well-known buildings, historic sites, excursions to the surroundings, shopping centres	12
Historical background Important past events which took place in the destination	2
Summary/ Conclusion A final call for visitors	4
How to get there Means of transport, communication networks	5
For further information Telephone or addresses to make enquiries	5
Accommodation Recommendation to stay in destination	1
Location within the area	1
Landscape description of the area	1
The newest attraction Detailed explanation of one attraction in particular	1

As we can see from the above results, only two moves appear in all the leaflets analysed: *General description* and *Places to visit*. After them, much lower regularity show three other moves, which are *Summary/ Conclusion*, *For further information*, and *How to get there*. The rest appear only once or twice.

In the table we can also observe which kind of content may be included in each move. All this information does not appear in every single leaflet, depending on the characteristics of the destination and the attractions it can offer. The content in each move is intimately related to their common communicative purpose. Each destination tries to attract visitors through the means it has. For this reason, we can find within the *General description* move a piece of

information (*location*) which appears in one of the other leaflets as a different move. This particular case deals with a destination whose main attraction is its University. Apart from this, there are very important large cities nearby. Therefore, *location* in the first move refers to colleges, while the move called *Location within the area* deals with the situation of the destination regarding the surrounding cities.

Like content organisation, the order of the moves also plays an important role in achieving a communicative purpose. *General description* is always the first move, acting as an attention call to the reader, giving an attractive image of the destination as a whole. The *Places to visit* move comes after it, sometimes separated by other moves, sometimes as the second one.

Everything depends on the relevance of the information within the whole text.

About the other three moves which appear in four and five leaflets, they always do it in the same order: *Summary/Conclusions*, *How to get there*, and *For further information*. However, we have not found in any of the leaflets analysed the three moves at the same time. For this reason, we can suppose they are not considered as compulsory regular moves.

We can find a possible explanation regarding these general results from the point of view of Andersen (1998) when he speaks about the conventionality of genres. As for textual structure, this author (1998, p. 12) states that such conventionality has two versions:

- a) a strong version that supports the existence of a prescribed order of stages carrying a specific intention for the reader; and
- b) a weak version that claims "that a text instantiating a particular genre consists of a number of obligatory and a number of optional stages." This means that some genres need a particular temporal order of stages to achieve their communicative purpose, while other genres only need some obligatory stages without any fixed order.

The analysis of our leaflets suggests that this kind of genre would have two obligatory stages, and some optional ones depending on the specific intention that the writer wants to carry out to attract readers.

4. LEXICO-GRAMMATICAL FEATURES IN TOURIST LEAFLETS

a) Nouns

From an average of 319.5 words per leaflet, 40.48% are nouns. From those, 25.94% are compound nouns, while the rest (74.06%) are simple nouns. More than half of the compounds (58.58%) are made up of proper names (names of *museums*, *churches*, *streets*, *attractions* or *local famous characters* among others). As for the common compound nouns, the greater part of them refer to locations. This kind of nouns mainly appears within the second move of the leaflets ("Places to visit"), which could be understood as a frequent device related to the type of content characteristic of this move.

As for simple nouns, results show an opposite trend: there are more common nouns (82.88%) than proper ones (17.12%). The most repeated common nouns refer to places or time. Again, the simple common nouns referring to place are more frequent in the second move. However, those related to time appear in the first move as well as in the second to date buildings, historical events which took place in the destination, famous people who lived or visited the destination some time in the past, and so on. Regarding proper names, the repetition of the destination's name is one of the main cohesive devices found in these texts.

In an analysis of the noun phrases, we found that complex noun phrases predominate over simpler ones. They represent 64.24% of the total. This particular linguistic feature seems to be usual in tourist texts (Juan González, 2000, p. 41), as well as in some other genres (Bhatia, 1993, p. 148). In general, the use of complex noun phrases in these tourist leaflets promotes concise referencing to avoid long descriptions since they allow information to

be added through premodification and postmodification.

b) Adjectives

The qualitative adjectives (10.95%) represent a smaller group than expected according to previous works (Leetch, 1996; Juan González, 2000). Moreover, after analysing the quantity and the kind of adjectives in our corpus, we must conclude that in this case adjectives play a role more informative than persuasive; there are more "objective" adjectives (age, size, origin, and so forth) than subjective opinion ones. To take just some examples of the former, we can mention *medieval*, *Roman*, *Norman*, *cobbled*, *large*, *grey* or *Neo-Gothic*; among the latter, the most frequent ones are *beautiful*, *peaceful*, *attractive*, *charming*, *perfect* and *pleasant*. Besides, there are only 24 groups of two or more adjectives before a noun.

We have also analysed the use of degrees of comparison. Superlatives appear in 8 of the 12 leaflets, 3 being the maximum number found in some of them. We have found even less comparatives: just a couple of examples in one of the leaflets. In both cases, some places are recommended as more interesting than others or is emphasised some quality of the destination itself.

As far as quantitative adjectives are concerned, the most frequent are *many* and ordinal numbers dealing with centuries. On the one hand, *many* explains the wide range of things that the destination offers the visitor; on the other hand, ordinals refer back to origin.

Finally, we have some examples of demonstrative adjectives in the corpus. Although the frequency of *this* is not very high, it is clearly the most recurrent form. It

functions as a regular cohesive device used to avoid repeating the name of the destination or places to visit or to add some qualities about such places (i.e. *This historic university town...*). As for the rest of the demonstrative adjectives in the texts, *that* and *these* appear only once and three times, respectively.

c) Verbs

Regarding verbs, the finite forms account for 6.34% of the corpus. It represents a small group compared to the nominal and adjectival ones. In this case, we have paid attention to tenses, modal verbs, and active/passive voice. The most common verbal tense is the simple present (147 examples), followed by the simple past (42) and the imperative (16). Within those examples, we have found the verb *to be* as copular 79 times, 67 in the present and 12 in the past. As for the rest of the tenses, the frequency is as follows: present perfect (6), future *will* (5), conditional (2), present continuous (1) and past perfect (1).

There seems to be a relation between these results and the content and communicative purpose of the leaflets. This type of text describes what the destination offers the visitor adding some characteristics of the past of each place when considered relevant. This description fits the frequent use of the simple present with some examples of the simple past.

The instances of imperative and future *will* present more direct language addressing the visitors. The imperative mainly functions as a device to encourage directly the reader to visit a place of particular interest. There are also 4 examples of imperatives in conditional sentences that appear in the

move "For further information" to give some instruction to the visitors. Besides, there is a connection between the examples with *will* and the personal pronoun *you*.

The modal verbs have 23 examples which appear in 9 leaflets, *can* being the most recurrent one (17 times). There are also instances of *should* (3), *might* (2) and *may* (1). As for the correlation form-function, all the cases of *can* and the one of *may* indicate possibilities that the destination offers the visitors. The two examples of *might* express probability in the expressions "The more energetic *might* like to try ..." and "You *might* also like to visit ..." In contrast, the modal *should* represents three different functions: recommendation, mild obligation, and as part of the conditional "... but *should* you require ..."

Among all finite verbal forms, the active voice is more common in our tourist leaflets than the passive voice (25 examples). Taking into account their communicative purpose, this result is not surprising if we consider that the active voice offers greater dynamism and directness to attract the readers' interest. Besides, the active voice makes the reading easier and quicker for a better understanding of the text.

To finish with the analysis of verbs, we would like to point out a particular use of non-finite forms (2.92%). According to Juan González (2000, p.42), non-finite clauses with *-ed* participles are frequent in tourist texts and they usually appear at the beginning of a sentence. In the leaflets we have analysed, there are seven examples appearing in this position, five of which belong to the first move indicating the location of the destination. With the same

characteristics, we have also found 2 non-finite clauses with present participles.

d) Pronouns

Possessives, personal and reflexive pronouns account for 2.37% of the corpus, being the possessive adjective *its* the most repeated form with 22 examples. The references of this cohesive device are of two kinds: to the destination itself or to places to visit in it. Following with the references to the third person singular neuter, there are nine instances of *it* as subject (including two impersonal ones) and three examples of *it* as object. They have the same references as *its*.

The second more common pronoun is *you* as a subject (20 examples). According to Juan González (2000), this feature is a direct formula to address the reader. Its function in our leaflets seems to be attracting the visitor's interest. Related to this pronoun, there are three more forms to serve the same function: *you* as object (2 examples), *your* (8) and *yourself* (2).

We also have some forms referring to the first person plural: *our* (6), *we* (2) and *us* (1). The possessive *our* appears four times referring to the types of accommodation and services offered by the surrounding destinations or places as options for the visitor, and it appears twice in the move "For further information." The two examples of *we* belong to the "Summary/Conclusion" move.

The rest of the forms refer to the third person singular masculine and to the third person plural. The former relate to famous characters connected with the destination: *his* (5), *he* (1) and *him* (1). The latter have a more varied reference: *their* (6), *they* (2) and *them* (1).

e) Linking words

Finally, we have studied linking words, another small group of words in our corpus (6.91%). As a whole, the sample shows a predominance of the coordinator *and* (58.87%), used more for phrasal co-ordination (133 examples) than for clausal co-ordination (23 examples). The other two co-ordinators present a low frequency of appearance: *or* (11 examples) and *but* (5 examples).

As for the subordination, relative clauses are the most recurrent device (38 examples) always connected with the addition of information about the places to visit and famous people related to them. The most common relative pronoun is *which* (23 instances) followed by *where* (5), *who* (3), *whose* (3) and *that* (2). There is not a great difference between the number of defining (22) and non-defining (14) relative clauses but we must mention the existence of only two examples of these clauses with the omission of the relative pronoun.

The rest of the linking words present a diverse classification. None of them suppose a relevant feature for the study as the percentage of each one is very low. Examples of this group found in our corpus are the following ones: *also* (8), *as* (for comparison) (7), *so* (4), *after* (4), *even* (3), *if* (3), *from...to* (3), *as...as* (3), *although* (3), *as* (causal) (3), *since* (2), *before* (2), *such as* (2), *from...through* (2), *in addition* (1), *whilst* (1), *whether...or* (1), *in addition to* (1), *apart from* (1), *as well as* (1), *like* (1), *that* (nominal clause) (1).

5. CONCLUSIONS AND PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

From the results observed in our first analysis, we can conclude that there is not a unique structure to be followed when writing tourist leaflets. The texts studied show two compulsory moves and some optional ones. Among the latter, there are some more frequent than others. This supports the idea given by Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) who consider the moves as options for the writer who will construct a certain argument through the choice and ordering of them.

Consequently, we should advise our students on using the following schema as a starting model when writing leaflets for a Local Tourist Information Centre:

Move 1: General Description (including the main characteristics of the place and points of interest)

Move 2: Places to visit (attractions that the destination offers following an appealing order for the reader)

Move 3: Summary/Conclusion

Move 4: How to get there

Move 5: For further information

We should notice that moves 1 and 2 would be the obligatory ones. The three last moves would be considered optional as they are not present in all the leaflets, although when appearing they follow the order that we recommend above. Along with them, there could be as many optional moves as necessary for each particular leaflet. Since there are genres with less predictable structures than others (Dudley-Evans, 1998, p.10), the move structure that emerges from the analysis of some kind of texts should not be seen as a rigid pattern; it represents what it is always possible to do, not what must be

done (Swales, 1990; Skelton 1994; Williams, 1999). Thus, it is advisable to teach moves in a rather flexible manner (Dudley-Evans, 1998).

On the other hand, we have seen that most of the lexico-grammatical features found in the tourist leaflets play their particular role in order to get the common communicative purpose of these texts. Some of them are more common in some moves than in others, establishing a relationship with the content peculiar to each move.

Furthermore, we have found that some relevant lexico-grammatical features point to the informative-descriptive communicative purpose as the main one, the persuasive-promotional purpose being a secondary one. This is mainly supported by the results obtained from the analysis of adjectives. The qualitative adjectives account for a much smaller group than the nouns. This means that content and information are very important in these texts. Besides, the kind of adjectives describing age, size or origin, predominates over those expressing subjective opinion. The prevailing informative-descriptive communicative purpose is also maintained by the few superlatives found in the leaflets, with no other device of superlative language characteristic in persuasive-promotional texts. To these results we must add the high frequency of verbs in simple present and simple past compared to the group of examples in the imperative.

For pedagogical purposes, we accept the idea that genre analysis is a second step after needs analysis which offers ESP practitioners "an approach to the analysis of text that will provide the linguistic data needed for the preparation of teaching

materials" (Dudley-Evans, 1998, p. 9). Therefore, our analysis could be part of that second step, because the writing of tourist leaflets for Local Tourist Information Centres is already considered a need that tourism students may have in their future career (Vázquez de Parga, 1998; Cerdá Redondo, 2000).

We can contrast now our conclusions with a writing skill exercise found in a course book for Tourism studies. Jacob and Strutt (1997) propose students to design a tourist leaflet describing what visitors can do in their area. The instructions to be followed to organise the content include four stages:

- museums, art galleries and monuments
- places of outstanding natural beauty or historic interest
- local amenities and facilities
- eating out

This shows the incomplete instructions given in this instance to teach how to write this type of tourist text according to the authentic material. It is not so much a question of content as it is of advising on how to organise it and which linguistic features they ought to use. The activity should provide students with clearer and more specific guidelines about the structure and the language of this kind of text.

Needless to say that further research is needed to support our study. The corpus is too small for the results to be taken as definite. However, they can be considered a starting point. This way, we will be able to create better teaching materials to help students improve their writing within an English for Tourism context.

The Authors

Ania Saorín-Iborra is teaching English for Business Administration at University Jaume I (Castelló, Spain) and, since 1992, English for Tourism at a private college. She is currently working on her Ph.D. Dissertation about English for Tourism. Her main fields of interest are ESP and genre analysis.

Miguel F. Ruiz-Garrido is teaching mainly Business English at University Jaume I (Castelló, Spain). His research interest focuses on Business English, mainly writing, and genre analysis. He is currently working on his Ph.D. dissertation about business writing.

References

- Andersen, B. (1998). Business letter genres: A communicative-purpose based approach. Netværk LSP, 13, 1-16.
- Bhatia, V.K. (1993). Analysing genre: Language use in professional settings. London: Longman.
- Bosch Abarca, E. & Giménez Moreno, R. (2001). Tourist's needs versus student's needs: A pedagogical approach to teaching English for Tourism. In S. Posteguillo, I. Fortanet & J. C. Palmer (Eds.), Methodology and new technologies in languages for specific purposes (pp. 241-249). Castellón: Publicacions de la Universitat Jaume I.
- Cerdá Redondo, E. (2000). English teaching for tourism studies: A Methodological approach in A. Cabral, H. Freire, M. Coelho & S. Oliveira (Eds.), Proceedings of X congresso luso/Espanhol de línguas aplicadas às ciências e às tecnologias (pp. 4-11). Portalegre: Escola Superior de Tecnologia e Gestao. Instituto Politécnico de Portalegre.
- Dudley-Evans, A. (1998). Introduction. In I. Fortanet, S. Posteguillo, J. C. Palmer & J. F. Coll (Eds.), Genre studies in English for academic purposes (pp. 9-12). Castellón: Universitat Jaume I.
- Dudley-Evans, A. & St. John, M. J. (1998). Developments in English for specific purposes: A multi-disciplinary approach. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Fortanet, I., Posteguillo, S., Palmer, J. C. & Coll, J. F. (Eds.). Genre studies in English for academic purposes. Castelló: Universitat Jaume I.
- García Berzosa, M. J. (1999). El Inglés en turismo. In F. Luttikhuisen (Ed.), II jornades catalanes sobre llengües per a finalitats específiques actes (pp. 142-144). Barcelona: Universitat de Barcelona.
- Jacob, M. & Strutt, P. (1997). English for international tourism. Harlow: Longman.
- Juan González, P. (2000). Análisis Contrastivo del Lenguaje de los Folletos Turísticos en Inglés y en Español. In A. Cabral, H. Freire, M. Coelho & S. Oliveira (Eds.), Proceedings of X congresso luso/Espanhol de línguas aplicadas às ciências e às tecnologias (pp. 38-53). Portalegre: Escola Superior de Tecnologia e Gestao. Instituto Politécnico de Portalegre.

Leetch, P. E. (1996). The genre of hotel brochures. Unpublished Master's thesis. Guildford: University of Surrey.

Paltridge, B. (1997a). Genre, frames and writing research settings. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Paltridge, B. (1997b). Thesis and dissertation writing: Preparing ESL students for research. English for Specific Purposes, 16 (1), 61-70.

Skelton, J. (1994). Analysis of the structure of original research papers: An aid to writing original papers for publication. British Journal of General Practice, 44, 455-459.

Strutt, P. (1992). Longman Business English Usage. Harlow: Longman.

Swales, J. M. (1990). Genre analysis: English in academic and research settings. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Vázquez de Parga, M. J. (1998). El Lenguaje del Turismo. Utilización y Traducción. In F. Luttikhuisen, M.O. Sánchez & R. Torrens (Eds.), I jornades catalanes sobre llengües per a finalitats específiques (pp. 308-318). Barcelona: Universitat de Barcelona.

Williams, I. A. (1999). Genre analysis in the ESP classroom: Medical case reports. In S. Barrueco, E. Hernández & L Sierra (Eds.), Lenguas para fines específicos (VI) (pp. 251-256). Alcalá: Universidad de Alcalá.

Leaflets analysed

A Peaceful Paradise: Rye (Rye Chamber of Commerce)

Amherst, Massachusetts (Illustrated Guides, Northampton)

Ancient Pevensy (Wealden District Council)

Battle: The Heart of 1066 Country (Battle Promotion Ltd.)

Dublin (The Irish Youth Hostel Association)

Cambridge

Canterbury

Hastings: the Most Famous Resort in History (Hastings Borough Council)

Make the Discovery: Royal Tunbridge Wells. Town & Country (Tunbridge Wells Borough Council)

Stratford-upon-Avon

Welcome to Guildford (Guildford Borough Council)

Windsor