Language Style Reflected by Tourist English Hypertext

ZHANG Jie
China Youth University for Political Sciences, Beijing, China

Corpus-based linguistic approach is one of the most used text studies. Nowadays, stylistic analysis has been adopted to shed new light on tourism English. The topic is to apply the language theory—the stylistic analysis to the tourist text analysis, to discover the style essence of Tourist English Hypertext. The stylistic features include graphological analysis of Tourist English Hypertext, lexical features in hypertext, syntactical analysis of Tourist English Hypertext. It summarizes online Tourist English Hypertext information with some typical samples, with the methods of examples and analysis. It aims to offer an in-depth insight into the stylistic features of online tourism English texts, helping people to grasp the key points of the online information when they are browsing the information on the Internet. So this paper both enlarges the application of the stylistic analysis and presents summary for online tourist information.

Keywords: language style, Tourist English Hypertext, stylistic features, tourist English, hypertext analysis, graphological features, lexical features, syntactic features

Introduction

Recently, tourism English has been acknowledged and analyzed as an important English variety in terms of tourism discourse. For tourist English, there could be both the traditional press text and the electronic online text—hypertext. With the differences, both of them are considered as the kinds of advertisements. But the online text has it specialty. It is typically graphological arranged, unique vocabulary, and deviant structured discourse. Various aspects of design in punctuation, capitalization, spelling, and paragraphing are resources which can be utilized for informative purposes. The layout is considered as very useful device clarifying the information, especially the hypertext information. As for lexicon, three aspects will be discussed in the e-discourse. They are the formality of a text, the specific or general words used in a text, and the loan words. In the E-discourse syntactic analysis simple sentences are preferred, and high frequency of noun phrases. This kinds of sentence structures are purposely used for the readers to understand and arouse the interests. For short sentences can make the e-discourse more understandable and powerful. The paper will analyze this aspects the language style of the hypertext in details.

A Brief Introduction of Hypertext and Its Features

According to Wikipeadia:

ZHANG Jie, associate professor, Foreign Language and Literature Department, China Youth University for Political Sciences.
Hypertext is text displayed on a computer or other electronic devices with references (hyperlinks) to other text that the reader can immediately access, or where text can be revealed progressively at multiple levels of detail (also called StretchText). The hypertext pages are interconnected by hyperlinks, typically activated by a mouse click, keypress sequence or by touching the screen. Apart from text, hypertext is sometimes used to describe tables, images and other presentational content forms with hyperlinks. Hypertext is the underlying concept defining the structure of the World Wide Web, with pages often written in the Hypertext Markup Language (HTML). It enables an easy-to-use and flexible connection and sharing of information over the Internet.\(^1\)

From the definition of hypertext above, a conclusion that hypertext is both linear and hierarchical—an attribute distinguishes hypertext from the traditional texts appear on the printed reading materials as brochures can be drawn. Interactivity is another attribute of hypertext with hyperlinks and other conventions such as menus and command lines. HU (2001) concluded the features of hypertext. According to HU (2001), there were six textual features of hypertext: (1) fluidity—without a fixed starting point or end due to the dynamic documents of the web pages; (2) integratability—the role-shifting between web text writers and readers; (3) multidimensionality—the complex and dynamic systems of linking and cross-referencing; (4) collaboration and democracy in the policy and morals decision; (5) medium-formality; and (6) openness—this means that hypertext can be written, audio, visual, and audio-visual.

These features summarize the hypertext from different points of view. The first point is the e-page feature; the second point is the relation between writers and readers; the third view is about the cross referencing; the forth one is the relation of the content in other websites; the fifth one is about the style of the hypertext; and the last one is the multimedia of the hypertext.

The above features highlight the features of hypertexts from the communication and function points of view. Tourist English Hypertext can also be discussed from the stylistic point of view. According to QIAN’s *Stylistics: A Course for Chinese EFL Students* (2006), the potential style markers are in phonology, graphology, lexical choices, and in syntax. So the Tourist English Hypertext here will be concerned with graphology, lexical choices, and syntax in this paper.

**Graphological Analysis of Tourist English Hypertext**

The graphology is the typical feature in language style. Various aspects of design in punctuation, capitalization, spelling, and paragraphing are resources which can be utilized for informative purposes. The layout is considered as very useful device clarifying the information, especially the hypertext information. The imposing figure is the best advertisement for those interested in Italy (see Figure 1).

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The first line on the top of the e-page</th>
<th>The second line of the e-page</th>
<th>The third line of the e-page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Italy home</td>
<td>Destinations: Where to go in Italy &amp; what to do there</td>
<td>Rome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation</td>
<td>Holiday ideas: Itineraries, seaside resorts, islands, the best hotels…</td>
<td>Venice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Airports</td>
<td>Special interest: Activities, spas, art, cruises, events…</td>
<td>Florence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel &amp; transport</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sicily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy map</td>
<td>Amalfi Coast</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning a trip</td>
<td>Italian Lakes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>Cinque Terre</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Tours &amp; packages</td>
<td>Tuscany</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Discover Italy</td>
<td>Milan</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Verona</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Sorrento</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Puglia</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Sardinia</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>More places</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The information shows that on one hand, every underlying item in discourse has another discourse (see Table 1). That enables hypertext readers to get more opportunities to browse the Internet information. On the other hand, the hypertext readers also have other options: (1) tourist attractions; (2) off the beaten track; (3) entertainment; (4) sport; (5) shopping; (6) transport; (7) Rome airports; (8) Ostia Antica; (9) Daytrips; and (10) Useful information and tips.

And for Venice readers, they may find more detailed information on Venice: (1) venice accommodation guide: (a) where to stay—location advice, and (b) hip hotels—style and design; (2) hotels on the grand canal: (a) Luxury hotels—smart five-star destinations, (b) Mid-range hotels—3 & 4-star choices, (c) Budget hotels—cheap places to stay, and (d) Recommended B&Bs—affordable, with character; (3) hotel reviews; and (4) hotel availability search.

So the layout of the tourist hypertext is complex and multiple, loaded with much information. And the visual coding is also auspicious with underlines and lists of the options. The readers can browse the detailed information with the underline items.

The second greatest feature of graphological aspects of the language style is more paragraphs. For the graphological aspect, the Tourist English Hypertext is different from the traditional text in the way of paragraphing. For a traditional tourist text, the editors could use more paragraphs to catch the attention of the readers, to provide more resting-places for the eye and appeal to the readers in a hurry. Beside the application of the paragraphing as that in the traditional texts, Tourist English Hypertexts could be also with more paragraphs, and each paragraph can be extended into more paragraphs, which is also one of the graphological features of Tourist English Hypertext.

The third greatest graphological feature is the embedded discourses. Take the Italy heaven as case study. The e-page multiple information can be retrieved. The underlined elements has its own discourse with specific
information, that is the embedded discourses. This feature is the same as “the multidimensionality owning to the complex and dynamic systems of linking and cross-referencing” (HU, 2001, p. 325). With the horizontal and vertical information of Italy heaven, nothing of the specific information cannot be found in the hypertext. The layout of the dominant is the body of the e-page.

**Lexical Features in Hypertext**

Stylistics concerning to lexicon, three aspects will be discussed in the e-discourse. They are the formality of a text, the specific or general words used in a text, and the loan words. The formality of a text marks by any of the four aspects: (1) the percentage of polysyllabic Latinate words in a text; (2) whether the Latinate words are shortened or not; (3) frequency of phrasal and prepositional verbs; and (4) the use of slang and colloquialism. The hypertext is taken from the above example.

**Medium-Formality in Lexicon**

Example (1) Hip hotels in Rome

Boutique and design hotels and special places to stay:
This selection of hotels in Rome features places which are a cut above the average. Some are small and lovingly-run boutique hotels and B&Bs, others are larger modern design hotels. Most Venice hotels are old-fashioned Venetian in style, with swags, gilding, and faded brocade—exactly what you want to avoid. On our “design hotels” page we’ve picked out some recommended places to stay with a contemporary atmosphere and look. Or for something unusual—though not precisely comfortable—you could always try sleeping on a boat B&B. All offer something special to the traveler, whether it is cutting-edge design or simply a fresh up-to-date aesthetic.

Example (2) The Inn at the Roman Forum:

What could be cooler than Roman ruins in the building and a stylishness which combines four-poster elegance with plasma-screen modernity? This contemporary hotel is an ideal place to stay for an elegant, unique break right in the heart of Rome—it has a great location close to the Roman Forum and the Colosseum. One of the Small Luxury Hotels of the World, and with only 12 rooms, this is a hotel which offers just about everything the discerning traveler could wish for. Book in advance to avoid disappointment.

One of the four lexical markers above is capable enough indicating the degree of formality of a text. Tourist English Hypertext is medium-formality. Tourist information texts in English should be readable for and used by people in many different branches of study and work, and those promotional and informational texts are addressed to the general public. So English in online tourist text should be neither too formal nor too informal, medium-formal English is preferable.

Take the text analysis as an example, in Examples (1)-(2), the word “hip” which means “fashionable” according to Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary (2nd edition published 2005) and the verbal phrases “out of the ordinary” and “pick out” are lexical indicators of informal English. Polysyllabic Latinate words such

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2 Retrieved from http://italyheaven.co.uk.
as “accommodation”, “ordinary”, “design”, “recommended”, “contemporary”, “atmosphere”, “unusual”, and “precisely” are also interwoven with non-Latinate words in the paragraph, and many Latinate words in the extract have passed into the basic vocabulary of a native speaker of English. Therefore, the online tourist information texts in English can be regarded as medium-formal.

A Combination of General and Specific Words

In the sense of general linguistic terms, a general word refers to a group of objects or a class of objects or action. According to QIAN (2006), general terms are often too vague to convey any precise meaning. The use of specific words is more informative in detail and can evoke vivid images in the reader’s/hearer’s mind.

Specific keywords can shortly get the readers cross-referenced to the information they are interested in. However, general keywords are oft-used in the website menu or the command line to help the Internet users to locate the information they want before they find the sifted one with the help of navigational drop-down menu. The “Accommodation” page on jnto.org.au is a case in point (see Figure 2).

![Figure 2. Screen-shot from jnto.org.au/plan_your_trip/accommodation.php](image)

In the drop-down menu, the group of words like “Hotels”, “Ryokan”, “Youth Hostels”, “Minshuku”, and “Pension” are more specific than the word “Accommodation”. Linguistically speaking, the relationship between that group of words and the word “Accommodation” is hyponymy. In this case, if the user wants to stay in a minshuku, he/she needs to locate where he/she can find information about accommodation on this website before browsing more detailed information about minshuku. This example suggests that both general and specific keywords are important for the structure of tourist information websites and for the convenience of the users. But as to the proportion of general keywords to specific ones, it is apparent that the proportion of specific keywords is higher than that of general ones, because specific words are usually placed under certain drop-down menus or command lines categorized by general words. Such phenomenon is the indicators of other textual features of
hypertext—fluidity and multidimensionality. Fluidity and multidimensionality here mean that the users cannot only click at a certain specific keyword to browse the detailed information on the page of a website, but he/she can also click at that specific keyword and be cross-referenced to pages on other websites. Therefore, in the online tourist information texts, general words are preferred to different information, while specific words are the keywords of detailed information—the detailed information that the users anticipate to find.

**Frequent Use of Loan Words**

Loan words are noticeable in tourism English. According to DING (2008), the employment of loan words, on one hand, can improve the interaction between the potential tourists who speak the very language to which the loan words belong; and on the other hand, can help readers find the sense of identity and belonging and national pride. In addition, the texts with the use of foreign words can be viewed as exotic by readers of other nations. Here is an example (see Example 3):

Example (3) Camden Town is the London smorgasboard par excellence.

“Par excellence” belongs to French, meaning “the very best of a particular thing” according to the definition in *Longman Contemporary English Dictionary*. Such use of French word is probably intended to attract French people or French speakers and simultaneously appeal to a sense of exoticism.

Loan words, from time to time, can be included in printed reading materials of tourist information such as leaflets, brochures, and even advertisements on newspapers, but they are of higher frequency in the text of tourist information websites than in the text of traditional printed media. It is because the explanation and introduction of the loan words can be instantly found on the Internet, either by displaying the detailed information on the same website or by cross-referencing to other websites.

**Syntactical Analysis of Tourist English Hypertext**

On the syntax features, sentences types and words phrases will be talked about.

**Simple Sentences Are Preferred in the E-discourse**

Online advertisements usually use segmentation or minor sentences for salience (QIAN, 2006), and unlike articles in the newspapers or brochures which contain many multiple sentences consisting of relative clauses, online tourist information texts in English are mainly composed of simple sentences to simultaneously achieve prudence in diction and completeness in information.

Linguistically speaking, according to QIAN (2006): “A simple sentence consists of a single independent clause in which each of its elements is realized by a sub-clausal unit—phrase”, while “a multiple sentence consists of more than one clause” (p. 60). But this does not mean that simple sentences are less informative than multiple sentences. In fact, a simple sentence can also be loaded with plenty of information and be intensively complex as a result of its complex phrase constituents. A case in point shown below (see Example 4):

Example (4) Puerto Rico is a modern progressive and civilized vacation spot that maintains the charm and hospitality of days gone by.

The sentence is extracted from the second paragraph of the “Tourist Information” on topuertorico.org/tinfo.shtml. The sentence is analyzed as simple, because the relative clause “that maintains the charm and hospitality of days gone by” is a post-modifier within the noun phrase. The complexity is therefore at
the phrase level, not at the clause level. In sentences like the example above, the subordinate clause positioned at the end of its superordinate clause is called right-branching.

According to QIAN (2006): “Right-branching reduces the burden on the reader’s immediate syntactic memory and makes it easy for his processing of information. Right branch subordinate clauses usually comment on the main clauses or supplement it with more details” (p. 72). In the example sentence, the superordinate clause is “Puerto Rico is a modern progressive and civilized vacation spot”. It suggests that Puerto Rico is a modern place still advancing in social conditions and also a civilized place of interest for tourists. The subordinate clause “that maintains the charm and hospitality of days gone by” suggests that Puerto Rico has been renowned for its charm and hospitality of its residents for a long time.

“Right-branching is common in speech, in relaxed and informal presentation of ideas” (p. 73), QIAN (2006) further stated: “A writer may favor right-branching and the use of short, simple sentences to represent a narrative style of simplicity, directness and intensity” (p. 73). Tourist information websites are built to provide potential tourists with useful travel information and e-discourse is the form of communication for hypertexts on those websites, so the information is presented narrative or expository in style and the diction is not formal or serious. In other words, simple sentences with right-branching are common in online tourist information texts in English because those online texts are not of serious writing. This syntactic feature also correlates with the textual feature of hypertext—medium-formality.

High Frequency of Noun Phrases

In terms of tourism discourse, according to DING (2008), one of the features of tourism English is the high percentage of nouns: A large number of nouns and nominal phrases contribute to a well-built, concise, clear but not complicated structure, which is easy to hold the attentions of tourists.

In terms of the genre of online tourist information texts in English, nouns and nominal phrases are usually the keywords for information. Besides, the key nouns and nominal phrases also play the role of linking different websites for cross-referencing.

As a result of the two aspects above, noun phrases are of high frequency in online tourist information texts in English. This means noun phrases in a clause can be the subject, the object, the complement, predicative, and even the attribute for conciseness in expression to achieve effective tourism communication. As nouns and nominal phrases are oft-used to modify other nouns and nominal phrases in the online texts, which leads to the common appearance of nouns and nominal phrases as pre-modifiers, myriads of new noun phrases are created in the tourism English.

The phrase “design hotel” on the page italyheaven.co.uk/veneto/venice/hip-weekend.html is a noun phrase, the noun “design” is used as an attribute to modify the head “hotel”. Such phrase can be also rephrased as “boutique hotel” and “lifestyle hotel”. The three terms, according to definition in wikipedia, serve to describe intimate, usually luxurious or quirky hotel environments where personalized accommodation and services/facilities are provided, different from larger chain/branded hotels and motels.

Sometimes, the high frequency of noun phrases can even lead to the creation of new words. According to Cappelli (2006): “If the combination is very frequent, sometimes two nouns come to be interpreted as one word, through an early stage during which the two original lexical items are divided by a hyphen” (p. 237).
Conclusions

With the features mentioned above this paper just arouses more attention to the stylistic study of tourism English, especially the tourism English in online texts, and be helpful for the development of stylistic writing and framework. But the hypertexts on the tourist information websites are and will be continually edited and updated, which means the major stylistic features of English in the online tourist information texts may not cover the new ones in the updated versions.

References