Chapter 7

The Tuscan Paradise in E-Tourism:
A Contrastive Analysis of Figuration in Italian Tourism Websites and Their English Renditions

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ABSTRACT

This chapter studies figurative language in Italian promotional tourism websites and their translations into English. It analyses figures of speech, such as metaphor, hyperbole, metonymy, and personification, within the framework of Cognitive Linguistics (Lakoff & Johnson 1980; Lakoff & Turner 1989; Lakoff 1993; Ruiz de Mendoza 1997; Ruiz de Mendoza & Pérez 2011). The aims of the analysis are, first, to investigate the relevance of figuration in original e-texts which promote Tuscany, and, second, to inspect whether web translators adopt the same strategies to persuade their readers in the English renditions. Results show the importance of figuration across languages and cultures, both for promoters and for translators. However, they also show how translators of promotional tourist texts can 1) omit to render figuration, 2) activate different conceptual mappings between or within new domains when rendering figuration, or 3) introduce new figurative language to increase the text’s persuasive effects.

INTRODUCTION

E-tourism is a new form of tourism discourse and promotional tourism websites have been the focus of interest of recent studies, which devote special attention to their translation and contrastive analysis (Cappelli 2008; Manca 2008, 2013). As a new (sub-)genre of web pages, tourist websites exhibit their own features, linguistic strategies and a common aim: promoting a tourist destination and persuading visitors to choose and explore it for their holidays (cf. Francesconi 2007; Manca 2013). According to Suau-Jiménez (2016: 203), persuasion is often achieved via “interpersonality”, including the attitude

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The Tuscan Paradise in E-Tourism

markers that an author uses to express his/her authority: e.g., “boosters” (i.e. evaluative adjectives). Dann (1996) and, more recently, Cappelli (2008) remark that the usage of keywords and key phrases are also common strategic techniques of the language of tourism. Another strategy of persuasion in tourist texts is, in line with Francesconi (2008) and Mattiello (2012), the use of figuration, especially metaphor, personification, and hyperbole.

This chapter investigates the language of figuration in Italian promotional tourism websites and their translations into English. In particular, the chapter concentrates on tourist texts that promote Tuscany, its landscape, beaches, monuments, typical foods and wines, and the various places of entertainment by using figures of speech. The chapter adopts a Cognitive Linguistics approach to explore the nature of figurative language in tourism websites, and discusses metaphor and related tropes within the traditional Cognitive Linguistics framework (Lakoff & Johnson 1980; Lakoff & Turner 1989; Lakoff 1993), and its later developments, as in Ruiz de Mendoza (1997), Ruiz de Mendoza & Díez (2002), Herrero Ruiz (2008), and Ruiz de Mendoza & Pérez (2011).

The aim of the chapter is to compare original Italian texts with their translations and inspect whether translators adopt the same strategies as promoters to persuade their readers in terms of metaphorical, hyperbolic, and non-literal language in general. To this aim, the chapter compares two parallel corpora of informational-promotional tourism websites: i.e. a small corpus made up of original Italian e-texts and their translations into English.

A preliminary investigation shows that, in the original corpus, Tuscany is often described through figurative language. Metaphor, hyperbole, and personification dominate online descriptions. For instance, the beaches of the Etruscan coast are described as angoli paradisiaci, the town Castiglione della Pescaia is labelled un vero e proprio gioiello, and titles generally exhibit hyperbolic language (e.g. Toscana. Ovunque Bella, Il fascino unico della Versilia).

When translating this suggestive language into English, translators tend to maintain figurative language (corners of paradise, a bona fide gem, Tuscany. Beautiful Everywhere, The unique appeal of Versilia), but may also decide to introduce some variations or adaptations. These include 1) the omission or 2) the modification/adaptation of figuration, or even 3) the introduction of figurative language where the original version shows literal language.

The results of the analysis show the importance of figuration across languages and cultures, both for promoters and for translators. However, they also show how web translators of promotional tourist texts can choose to use different tropes, which may (or may not) be more attractive for (non-)native English-speaking web users than the original ones.

PROMOTIONAL TOURISM WEBSITES AND THEIR TRANSLATION

Tourism language as a form of specialised discourse has been amply studied in its traditional printed genres, such as guidebooks, brochures, tourist guides, travel articles, newspaper travelogues, etc. (Fodde & Denti 2005; Cappelli 2006; Gotti 2006; Nigro 2006; Thurlow & Jaworski 2010; Calvi & Mapelli 2011). However, tourism promotion often occurs nowadays via the World Wide Web, where tourist professionals can easily advertise their products and tourists can effortlessly book their holiday from every part of the globe (Manca 2008: 34).

E-tourism, therefore, is an innovative area of research in tourism discourse, and the way tourism websites are designed for customers can be of interest to companies, which do business via the Internet,