Citizen Tourism: A Cross-Linguistic Pragmatic Analysis of Online Travel Reviews

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Abstract

The web 2.0. has profoundly transformed the way people participate in every aspect of our social, cultural, political and everyday life. One of the most studied aspects of this new participatory style of life is the citizen journalism (also known as public, democratic, participatory or street journalism). Citizen journalism is defined as 'the gathering and reporting of news by ordinary people rather than professional reporters', or 'the act of private citizens playing an active role in the process of collecting, reporting and discussing news and information'. In almost a decade something similar is going to happen in the communication of tourism. The web 2.0 has profoundly changed the tourist industry, and in a special way it has affected the habits of consumers (also called pro-sumers, as they at the same time produce and consume texts, services, and communication). Customer reviews of tourist sites and attractions are going to become a significant part of the communicative micro-system established between customers, tour operators and the owners of hotel, restaurants etcetera. In a previous research (Compagnone and Fiorentino, 2018) we have analyzed a corpus of Italian online reviews posted by customers on the most famous website for tourist reviewing, TripAdvisor. Focusing on Italian online reviews of some Italian hotels we were able to get some relevant results on the linguistic, textual and pragmatic aspects of this area of the language of tourism. In this paper we enlarge our corpus including English and French online reviews in order to approach the topic from a contrastive point of view. Our objective is now to analyze the French and the English reviews of the same hotels we have already considered in order to compare reviews of the same object so that also potential intercultural aspects of citizen tourism can be observed.

Keywords: online discourse, CMC, online travel reviews, language of tourism, pragmatics, web 2.0, intercultural communication

1. Introduction

In our paper we study tourism from the customer point of view, and this explains why we talk about *citizen tourism*. Due to the fact that in the digital age customers can access lots of information and tools in order to organize their travels, the citizen tourism has received a big amount of attention.
The goals of the present study are:

i) to describe online travel reviews on TripAdvisor from a linguistic, textual and pragmatic perspective in order to decide if they are a *new textual genre*;
ii) to verify cross-linguistically which of the previous aspects are culturally driven (if any);
iii) and finally we come to our main goal, that is to determine if online travel reviews are part of a 'tourism discourse', and if reviewers identify themselves as a discourse community (in the sense of Swales 1990).

In this research we adopt a cross-linguistic perspective as we compare three languages (three corpora have been collected for the same hotels). Starting from a previous qualitative investigation (Compagnone and Fiorentino, 2018) we now have added some quantitative data thanks to the use of a tool for the automatic treatment of language (AntConc).

1.1 Some starting points: online reviews as persuasive and evaluative texts

From a strictly textual perspective we are interested in online reviews as part of a larger family of texts that we can define as *persuasive* (or *perlocutionary*) *texts* and persuasive text in turn are/incorporate *evaluative texts*. In fact, persuasive (or perlocutionary) texts incorporate these communicative acts: evaluation, description, recommendation, (narration) (see also Vásquez 2012). As every genre is a result of cultural practices, we expect to find out similarities and differences in the three corpora as an output of different cultural practices.

In our approach we consider that *every (textual) genre* is a *class of cultural objects* that incorporate *a series of communicative acts* in order to perform some *communicative functions*.In particular, we adopt the following definition of evaluation:

> "Evaluation is the broad cover term for the expression of the speaker or writer's attitude or stance towards, a viewpoint on, or feelings about the entities or propositions that he or she is talking about" (Hunston & Thompson 2000: 5).

And we accept that EVALUATION in discourse performs three communicative functions: (i) it expresses the speaker's or writer's opinion, and in doing so it reflects the value system of that person and of his/her community; (ii) it constructs and maintains relations between the speaker or writer and hearer or reader; and (iii) it organizes the discourse. (Hunston & Thompson 2000).To sum up evaluative texts perform three functions that we can refer to as follows:

i) Critical function (rate, evaluate, describe, recommend; Vásquez 2012)
ii) Interpersonal function (triangle: traveler, other customers, hotel owner)
iii) Textual function (several parts, in particular long narratives)

From a linguistic perspective it is relevant to analyze linguistic features associated with the genre, which means that we are investigating lexical richness, word frequencies, morphological processes and syntactic features which realize evaluations.

Regarding the lexical level, evaluative lexical units are adjectives (*splendid, terrible*), adverbs (*happily, unfortunately*), nouns (*success, failure*), and verbs (*succeed, fail*).

Regarding the morphological level, an example of evaluative morphological processes can be the use of diminutive suffixation (*-culus, -ling, -ster: homunculus, duckling, gangster, hypster*).

Regarding the syntactic level, evaluative syntactic units include constructions like: *I like that*, *I appreciate that*, *I am happy that* … (with evaluative verbs); or copulative clauses like X (noun) is Y (adjective); or clauses like *it's good that* (with an adverb introducing the subjective clause).

A special consideration in tourism communication and also in online travel reviews has to be paid to *complaints*, that include *strategies of mitigation* (personal vs. impersonal construction, with the first one being less negative as the negative evaluation is presented as a personal judgment and not as a general assertion). Adverbs which mitigates are *maybe, probably*.

We also distinguish between *pure evaluative acts* vs. *evaluative components* put inside other (descriptive) acts. The first are more often realized as copulative clauses (*The room was clean; Il personale è cortese e disponibile*) or nominal clauses (*la colazione a buffet varia e abbondante*), while in the second case we have adjectives or adverbs incorporated in descriptions (*Nous avons passé 4 nuits dans ce très bel hotel plein de charme donnant sur jardin*).

In the framework that we adopt *suggestions* are evaluative indirect acts insofar that they reveal negative aspects or lack of something that could have been put/said/done.

1.2 State of the art.

Regarding the Italian context, our research can be considered almost pioneering for several reasons: first, because as far as we know, there is not much other research being done on Italian online travel reviews; secondly, because of the specific perspective we adopt (as we pay special attention to linguistic aspects of these texts).

We found two significant exceptions to this picture, one is De Ascaniis, Gretzel, 2012, dealing with linguistic and pragmatic features of online travel reviews' titles, and the other is Fina, 2011, whose aim is to investigate online travel reviews, since they represent the travelers' voice and reflect the traveler's values and culture.

1.3 Why TripAdvisor?

According to Philippe Fabry, a specialist in e-tourism, in the case of tourism communication, the web 2.0 is actualized in a very rich and profound way:

> "Dans les principes véhiculés par le web 2.0, la connaissance est faite pour être partagée, tandis que l'information fournie par un internaute semble a priori beaucoup plus 'digne de confiance' que celle fournie par un marchand. De ce partage et dans les interactions qui en résultent, émerge une nouvelle connaissance, que certains désignent sous le vocable d'intelligence collective." (Fabry, 2008: 13).

According to a Yoo & Gretzel study on the tourism industry (2009), over 80% of travelers consults travel sites before traveling, which means that the power of consumers' opinions posted on the Internet is influential on potential buyers. It should be said, that those who publish online reviews are not only driven by altruistic reasons (i.e., helping other tourists, sharing a positive / negative opinion in order to advise or to prevent others from bad situations), but are also driven by the desire of getting 'highlighted' in a virtual community (Gretzel, Yoo & Purifoy, 2007; Yoo & Gretzel, 2008).

TripAdvisor was founded in 2000, by Steve Kaufer. While each visitor can read whatever review of whatever user, the site collects only reviews written by registered members (registration only requires an email address). Reviewers can choose to be displayed by using a name, name and surname or just a nickname. Staff filters each review before being published, and any review which do not follow the guidelines is removed. Nonetheless, the reviewers are not necessarily 'verified' as 'users', of the reviewed hotel. The identity is verified only and exclusively for the owners of the structures reviewed (the identity is verified by a credit card). If a location (hotel, restaurant, museum, etc.) is not yet listed, registered users can create easily a new entry for it.

2.Methods and data set.

We adopt a Cross-linguistic perspective (comparing English, French, and Italian); we mix qualitative investigation and quantitative data (AntConc: automatic treatment of language). The corpus is made of 1500 hotel reviews (500 for each language) sampled from TripAdvisor (October 2014 to June 2016). Hotels are in 10 different Italian cities (Rome, Venice, Florence, Milan, Naples, Verona, Turin, Palermo, Bari, Cagliari). All hotel categories (from 1-star hotels up to 5-stars) are considered. If some hotel had less than 50 reviews (this happens several times for French online reviews which are less than English reviews) we added some reviews from other hotels outside the 10, till we reached 3 comparable corpora of 500 online hotel reviews each (500 English online hotel reviews, 500 Italian online hotel reviews and 500 French online hotel reviews).[1]While in our past work we tried to balance the presence in the corpus of hotels from each category (from 1-stars to 5-stars hotels), in this case we decided to give precedence to the dimension of the corpus and to collect the same number of reviews for both languages.[2]

The total amount of words for each corpus is summed up in Table 1:

Table 1

	Total amount of words	Medium length (words per review)
500 reviewsin Italian	49,854	100
500 reviews in French	55,406	110
500 reviews in English	72,601	145
1500 Total	177,861	**118**

[1]The hotels are: Verona 1-star hotel Arena; Firenze 1-star hotel Bavaria; Roma, 2-stars hotel Romano; Napoli, 3-stars hotel Belle Arti Resort; Bari, 3-stars hotel Moderno; Palermo, 3-stars hotel Posta; Cagliari, 4-stars hotel Sardegna; Milano, 4-stars hotel degli Arcimboldi; Venezia, 5-stars hotel Sant'Antonin; Torino, 5-stars hotel Golden Palace.

[2] It has been observed, and we can confirm this data, that hotels with more stars receive more reviews than hotels with few stars.

3.Data analysis

Our main results refer to four features, partly interrelated: a) the relationship between the review title and the body of the review; b) the presence of narrative parts, characterized by an emotional involvement by the writer; c) the sentiment analysis and some linguistic peculiarities of the negative reviews, i.e., complaints; and d) the way a specific aspect of customer satisfaction (the behavior of the staff) is treated, within the online reviews.Before discussing these four aspects in detail, we comment a few quantitative results.

3.1 Quantitative analysis

English corpus: word types 5034, word tokens 66,472;
2493 words appear only once;
above 1567 words appear with a frequency starting from 4 tokens up to 4185 (article *the*).
French corpus: word types 5014, word tokens 49,339;
2661 words appear only once;
above 1269 words appear with a frequency starting from 4 tokens up to 1976 (preposition *de*).
Italian corpus: word types 5463, word tokens 44,651;
2964 words appear only once;
above 1326 words appear with a frequency starting from 4 tokens up to 1779 (conjunction *e*).
Here is the top 20 wordlist for each corpus.

Table 2: Top 20 wordlist

English Freq > Rank	**French Freq > Rank**	**Italian Freq > Rank**
Hotel 1033 > 8	Hôtel (hotel) 872 > 9	Hotel 447 > 14
Room 611 > 15	Chambre 473 > 18	Colazione 325 > 19
Good 401 > 26	**Petit** 448 > 20	Personale 298 > 22
Breakfast 371 > 28	**Bien** 389 > 24	Camera 285 > 25
Staff 360 > 30	Déjeuner 341 > 25	Posizione 226 > 29
Great 315 > 33	Personnel 263 > 30	Centro 212 > 31
Location 302 > 36	**Bon** 208 > 36	Camere 207 > 33
Stay 259 > 40	Chambers 192 > 41	**Ottima/o** 380 > 34 ↑
Nice 251 > 42	**Calme** 167 > 46	Prezzo 184 > 38
Rooms 250 > 43	Accueil 152 > 51	Albergo 168 > 40
Clean 213 > 50	Qualité 150 > 52	Bagno 147 > 44
Friendly 168 > 57	**Agréable** 146 > 53	Qualità 139 > 49
Night 165 > 59	Salle 144 > 55	Struttura 127 > 53
Helpful 151 > 61	Séjour 143 > 56	**Disponibile** 107 > 57
Place 139 > 65	Prix 137 > 57	**Gentile** 103 > 59
Excellent 133 > 69	Service 120 > 61	Notte 101 > 60
City 127 > 74	Place 114 > 64	Città 99 > 61
Service 124 > 77	Centre 113 > 65	**Buona** 96 > 63
Reception 122 > 78	Vue 113 > 66	Servizio 86 > 66
Small 118 > 80	Ville 106 > 68	**Ben 84 > 68**

While Nouns (Hotel, Room, Staff and Breakfast) represent the features of the entity evaluated in the text, adjectives and adverbs reflect the polarity of the evaluation (quality adjectives and adverbs) and the strength of the polarity (quantitative adverbs).

The top 20 wordlists refer to the main topics we expect to hear when someone is reviewing a hotel: how it is <u>the structure</u> (hotel, room(s), bathroom); where is it <u>located</u> (location, place, city, center, sight); which <u>services</u> it offers (staff, breakfast, reception, service, quality, price); what type of <u>travel experience</u> the traveler is making (nights, stay).

In the three top 20 wordlists we observe that the ratio Nouns/Adjectives is 12/8 in English (E) vs. 15/5 in French (F) and Italian (I). Adjectives qualifying nouns will be better discussed in 3.4 (sentiment analysis).

3.2 Titles

The presence of a title is a novelty in online reviews compared to 'traditional' literary reviews. The title summarizes and focuses different functions and different parts of the text. Titles can be of variable length, formed by nominal or verbal clauses, and often contain lots of adjectives. We propose a tentative classification of titles based on the communicative functions that they perform:

a) Evaluative titles: single word titles with an evaluative adjective (*ottimo* 'excellent'*; perfetto* 'perfect'*; comodissimo* 'very comfortable'*; bellissimo* 'very nice'*; buono* 'good'*; pessimo* 'very bad'; fr. *parfait, superbe, magnifique, top, super, décevant, sublime, divin*; less frequent in the English corpus: *excellent, brilliant, perfect, fantastic,exceptional, ordinary*) referred to the hotel or the experience as a whole.

b) Descriptive - evaluative titles: more often the title includes both a description (of the hotel) and an evaluation, as is the case in the following examples (1)-(9):

(1) Ottimo albergo, accogliente, pulito e situato in zona molto centrale
(2) POSTO TRANQUILLO A DUE PASSI DAL CENTRO E DA TUTTO[3]
(3) Albergo scadente e personale sgradevole
(4) Good hotel excellent location
(5) A very bad Place to stay!
(6) Fantastic Kitchenette. Air-conditioning only on for 3 hours per day and did not cope with the heat.
(7) Belle maison privée au bord d'un canal calme
(8) Un joli nid dans un bel écrin de verdure
(9) Très bel endroit, calme et reposant. Personnel agréable, serviable

c) Perlocutionary titles: the title contains a verb, which performs a final recommendation or promise (very common in our English corpus):

(10) consigliatissimo; / da ritornarci; / dovete andarci; / da consigliare; / ci tornerò; / ci torneremo; / ci ritornerò senz'altro;
(11) À recommander; / Parfait .... à ne pas manquer ; / Hôtel à éviter!
(12) Go there; / I do not advise this hotel; / STAY AWAY FROM THIS HOTEL!

d) Multifunction titles: there are also longer and more complex titles, which realize more functions at the same time like evaluation, recommendation and warning.

(13) Ottima posizione! (evaluation) consigliato, (recommendation) ma non aspettatevi la reggia (warning);
(14) pessimo, sporco, rumoroso (evaluation): da evitare assolutamente (recommendation);
(15) Terrible hotel (evaluation) - don't trust the high rating (warning)
(16) Excellent hôtel (evaluation) à recommander (recommendation);
(17) Costoso (evaluation) ma, nel complesso, ne vale la pena (mitigation-recommendation)
(18) Très bel hôtel, (evaluation)dommage pour le service (mitigation-complaining)
(19) Nothing special. (evaluation)But that's a good thing! (mitigation-indirect recommendation)

e) Emotional-personal titles: the personal perspective prevails over the function of reviewing the objective characteristics of the hotel, and they focus more on the nature of the subjective experience:

(20) orribile! Non vedo l'ora di andarmene
(21) comme à la maison;
(22) Thanks Deborah You made our stay @ Hotel Moderno a very pleasant 1 You are the star for this Hotel

f) Narrative titles: titles where a whole story is expressed in a very few words:

(23) Invasione blatte
(24) Apri il vecchio portone e vedi UNO SPETTACOLO
(25) Auschwitz would have been better

g) Descriptive of the travel experience: they can be included in the category b) with the difference that they do not describe the hotel - but the experience of the traveler – reviewer; they are objective – referential descriptions:

(26) vacanza con bambini

[3] Capital letters used by the author.

(27) un weekend a Venezia
(28) concerto Vasco;
(29) primo maggio a torino
(30) natale a roma

h) Complaining titles: emphasizing one (usually) negative aspect:

(31) La colazione?
(32) Manca la tavoletta del water
(33) 2 stelle dove?
(34) Bagno disastrato
(35) Possibile non ci sia niente di meglio? ... anche perché peggio la vedo difficile ...
(36) A bed at most ... hardly value for money

Using interrogatives - as asking for a service ('breakfast' in (31)) - is a way to sue for a lack indirectly but with insistence. Normally statements on lacking features have an immediate complaining value. In some cases, especially with complaint reviews, titles include a kind of an initial preamble which Vásquez (2012: 110) calls '*abstract'*. She quotes Gretzel and De Ascaniis (2012) who:

> "focus on Online Travel Review titles, with the aim of investigating the communicative functions they accomplish, in respect to the review text and, thus, the role they play in forming readers' first impression of tourism related online search results." (2012: 164).

By taking into account the structural and semantics characteristics of the titles the two authors based their investigation on the Grice's theory (1975), according to which every act of communication, and so also the title of a review, is produced with the intention to contact a recipient. Review titles, being para textual elements, thus nearly always anticipate something which is included in the text, allowing the reader to easily guess the meaning of the review. Like an advertising slogan, the title of the online reviews uses linguistic elements to convince or attract the reader's curiosity.

3.3 Narrativity and involvement

As we have already observed, online travel reviews are strongly perlocutionary: they intend to provide recommendations to other potential customers. As a consequence, the textual organization of online reviews is *tripartite*: they usually contain *adescription, an evaluation and a recommendation*. On the tripartite basis just mentioned (description - evaluation - recommendation) sometimes an additional component is intertwined with the descriptive part focusing on the travel experience: this is namely a *narrative component*.

This tendency to incorporate narratives in a descriptive text is defined as 'narrativity'. Our research shows that narrativity is very common in Italian reviews with the frequent passage from an objective to a subjective tone (ex. the passage from the impersonal *si può raggiungere* to the first person *ci sono stata, lo raccomando, lo consiglio* etc.) or with the mixture of the two aspects. According to Vásquez (2012), narrativity in TripAdvisor reviews is favored by the virtual environment, because the digital storytellers, like our Italian reviewers, have to find ways to involve a completely unknown reader. Another possible explanation of narrativity in travel discourse can be seen in the long-lasting experience of a hotel stay, as it is normally spread over several hours, days or even weeks. In our Italian reviews the stay lasts an average of four nights (1 night minimum and maximum 10). This time duration gives the opportunity to be referred to in a chronological sequence of events. Thanks to web 2.0 travel customers are the protagonists of their stay, they can share their personal experiences like in a travel journal in order to decree the reputation or failure of a hotel structure. Like for other products of the Tourism industry, online reviews on TripAdvisor are a discursive expression of the popular culture of the time. The tourist speech, be it a postcard or an online review, is a representation of the ethnographic knowledge which is characterized by stories and personal experiences (Jaworski & Pritchard 2005: 56).

The analyzed texts show that Italian messages include narrative sections which relate directly to the personal experience of the reviewer, besides we can find typical elements of narrative genre as verbal forms of the first person, either singular and plural, often associated with verbs of perception or movement employed in the past tense (*abbiamo sentito, ho notato, ho passato, abbiamo trascorso,* etc) or direct references to the author's personal sphere of the message (*io però sono freddolosa, io sono supercritico,* etc.)

Narrativity is also present in English reviews with a strong use of pronouns like *I* and *we* and a tendency to narrate what happened, rather than to describe and evaluate in an impersonal tone. Although in general English reviews tend to brevity, our corpus reveals some elaborate and complex reviews, which develop descriptive traits combining them with narrative sections. These reviews go into details describing a big amount of elements in order to create an exhaustive image of the hotel, as it is the case in excerpt (37):

(37) We stayed 4 nights at Hotel Trentina, which is about 4km from the Duomo area. […] We walked into and out of the center a few times, and it's a good way to see things, and get some exercise to counter the pastries. […] Our first room was on the first floor, street side. It was very noisy. The next morning, we asked if we could change rooms, as several of the guests at breakfast were leaving that day. After some discussion, it was agreed that we could move to a room at the back of the Hotel […]

In French reviews, instead, we notice a tendency to objective and impersonal form used mostly to describe and evaluate. The personal subject pronouns, if present, are in most cases used to introduce the action or the evaluation (*Je le conseille, je trouve les tarifs très corrèctes*) with a passage from the subjective tone used to introduce the event to a neutral tone, which is a typical aspect of travel reviews. Many French reviews have some of the characteristics of the official language of tourism, first of all the emphatic use of language and adjectives very similar to that of the traditional tourist texts. Most of all we find adjectives with positive value that emphasize the beauty, the wealth, the greatness or the spectacle of the elements to which they refer, facilitating emotional interpretation:

(38) Hotel magnifique, jardin superbe, terrasse très agréable ! Un petit déjeuner très varié avec du pain chaud des crêpes chaudes et toute sorte de fruits frais entre autre ! […]

(39) Nous avons passé 4 nuits dans ce très bel hotel plein de charme donnant sur jardin. Idéalement situé dans un quartier calme à proximité de la place Saint Marc. Personnel agréable et disponible. Très bon Petit déjeuner

Even in the case of personal pleased events, such as a marriage, a French review - after a short personal mention - goes straight to the description and evaluation of the hotel structure, focusing on it while an Italian review, for a similar event, tends to linger more on storytelling without going into details: compare excerpts (40) and (41).

(40) Fêter un anniversaire de mariage sans taper la flambe donc choisir un très bon hôtel et le Sant'Antonin a répondu à cette attente. A proximité de l'arrêt "Arsenal", dès l'arrivée, la propreté et l'amabilité de l'accueil nous ont ravis. Une petite attente dans le jardin a fini de nous convaincre que c'était le bon choix, magnifique espace de calme et de verdure à deux pas de San Marco ... La chambre 14 ... une chambre standard idéalement cachée au 1er étage (pas de numéro sur la porte dissimulée dans le grand salon de lecture) et donnant sur le jardin. Là aussi, la propreté est irréprochable et la vue très romantique […]

(41) Io ho fatto il matrimonio in questo bellissimo Hotel, tutti all'altezza della situazione, non rimani mai deluso di nulla, per un 5 stelle lux veramente meritate. Il bar è molto lussuoso, come tutto del resto, come disse Oscar Wilde toglietemi tutto, ma non il superfluo

Negative reviews (complaints) are generally canonical in their narrative structure. In other words, the majority of negative reviews are clearly recognizable as narrative. Below, according to a partition provided by Vásquez (2012: 110-111), but which was first proposed in Labov & Waletzky 1967, we give an example (42) of a negative hotel review from our English data set in order to illustrate what a canonical narrative of personal experience looks like in this genre.

(42) **Orientation:** We arrived into Naples at 10:30pm driving from Rome.

Complicating Action: We did not realize this hotel was a BnB even though it had high ratings. No entrance whatsoever, just a small sign on the side of giant wooden doors that were locked. Luckily we got a local cell phone and had the number of the BnB handy. On a late evening along the darkened streets with sketchy people walking by, we were a bit rattled, especially with a car full of our wedding presents from Rome.

Resolution: We had to call twice and waited about 10-15 mins before a young girl let us in to a small courtyard and up the stairs to the lobby. The first room so dark with hardly any light, we asked to switch rooms which was accomodated. This is a very 1-2 star establishment in a very difficult neighborhood.

Coda: Nice breakfast but I must admit we were a bit shocked after staying in a very nice hotel in Rome. Location not close to the docks/harbor area would stay there next time. Right down the street from the archeological museum but definitely not easy to find. Our second room was very quiet though.

The majority of Italian negative reviews too tend to be structured in this way. The orientation section, which is optional, is very interesting because it provides background information about the story's who, when, and where. In this context, orientation takes on a special relevance. Thanks to orientation sections we can know reasons for travelling as well as reference to travel companions.

(43) **Orientation** Siamo stati al Sardegna Hotel per una notte in una bellissima suite, arredata con cura e molto spaziosa.

Complicating Action: Il pezzo forte della camera sarebbe dovuta essere la vasca idromassaggio, ma purtroppo non abbiamo potuto utilizzarla perché, una volta accesa, dalle bocchette venivano fuori pezzetti neri di sporcizia. Abbiamo tentato di metterla in funzione due volte, dopo aver svuotato la vasca, ma non è cambiato niente e abbiamo preferito evitare di fare il bagno. Per la cena ci siamo concessi di rimanere in camera, dato che era dotata di un carinissimo divano, ma col senno di poi avremmo preferito andare a mangiare un panino dal "caddozzone" (cosi si chiamano le paninoteche ambulanti di Cagliari) parcheggiato a pochi metri dall'ingresso dell'albergo. Pagando un supplemento di 8 euro (costo totale 75 euro) ci è stato portato in camera un unico vassoio troppo piccolo (in cui i piatti erano uno sull'altro) per 2 antipasti, un primo, un secondo e due dolci (pasta e trancio di tonno immangiabili) e soprattutto due bicchieri, di cui uno sporco di rossetto.

Resolution: La mattina dopo siamo stati più furbi e abbiamo fatto colazione nella sala apposita, abbiamo così almeno potuto scegliere tazze e posate pulite... ma vi assicuro che trovare un coltello che non avesse residui di cibo è stata un'impresa. Siamo andati via sicuri di non tornare mai più, anche se sappiamo bene che basterebbe un minimo di attenzione alla pulizia per dare un servizio diverso e molto migliore alla clientela.

Coda: Obiettivamente il prezzo della suite era inferiore al prezzo medio delle suite degli altri alberghi, nonostante la camera non avesse niente da invidiare ad altre, ma siamo sicuri che le mancanze riscontrate valgano più di quella cifra "risparmiata".

So, while for Italian and English analysis we noticed a greater involvement in narrating personal events, French reviews resize the narrative aspect focusing on negativity elements and warnings. Even when the review is very long, descriptive tone prevail on narrative tone:

(44) **Orientation**: Le B&B est bien situé dans Naples mais malheureusement c'est tout ce qu'il y a de bon.

Negative descriptions: Les chambres sont humides et pour bien camoufler l'humidité, ils ont disposé des déodorants tout au long du couloir d'entrée... L'odeur est, par contre, très fort dans certaines chambres. La propreté est inexistante , la personne qui s'occupait de la chambre, a fait le ménage en moins d'un quart d'heure. Les plafonds sont jolies mais le décor intérieur remonte aux années 80...La chambre est mal aménagé, sombre, sans aucun confort...Heureusement qu'on était dans une chambre superior car je n'ose même pas imaginer la médiocrité des autres chambres. Le personnel est désagréable (à exception de la personne qui nous a accueilli la première fois)et suite à nos reproches, au lieu de s'excuser ou de proposer un arrangement,nous a mal parlé, quasi insulté. Le wifi marche très mal ainsi que la ligne téléphonique. Le coffre était cassé et personne l'a réparé. Le chauffage était extrêmement bruyant. Ne parlons pas du petit déjeuner, une vraie honte: peu copieux, basique, cher ...De plus le café était dégoutant, les brioches étaient industrielles ...alors que juste à deux pas de l'hôtel,y a un café très sympa qui vous offre un délicieux petit déjeuner à 2 euros... Si vous arrivez quelque chose, personne répondra à votre demande car personne décroche le téléphone...Personne parle français, ni anglais et surtout personne passera vous voir. L'hôtel est vide...et on a bien compris pourquoi!!!

Coda: Je vous le déconseille vivement!!!!

If reports of actions and events are very common for Italian and English reviews, there is another, more genre-specific, type of "complicating action" that appears more frequently in French reviews and that differs from canonical narrative. As Vásquez (2012) already observed, the complicating action is built up in several cases through negative descriptions. In other words, a simple listing of unpleasant or negative aspects can constitute the complicating action: these characteristics are in conflict with what the reviewer expected to find. To put it another way, in this particular context and genre *the place prevails on the person.*

Another way in which narrators make their stories come alive to their audiences is the use of represented speech as well as represented mental states. The use of such "constructed dialogue" (Tannen, 1989) when narrators perform or illustrate what happened rather than merely tell or describe is present in Italian, English and French reviews but it is more frequent in English and Italian than in French.

(45) ho discusso il primo giorno che sono arrivata... mi hanno aumentato il prezzo rispetto al preventivo. il personale che ho visto non è molto educato e non si capisce quello che dice. ho chiesto se mi davano un secondo cuscino mi hanno detto di no […]

(46) […] I asked for decaff tea both mornings and it never arrived.

(47) […] J'ai donc demandé le prix à la réception et ils m'ont dit :5 par personne. Nous avons trouvé ça très raisonnable et donc nous nous sommes installés devant la fenêtre, profitant du buffet qui n'était pas extraordinaire mais à ce prix là c'était donné. Je me suis quand même demandé pourquoi tant de personnes mangeaient dans la partie obscure et c'est là que j'ai compris la différence […]

3.4 Sentiment analysis and complaints

Sentiment is the speaker's / writer's attitude (positive or negative) with respect to some topic (or product). *Sentiment* is also the overall contextual polarity of a document. The overall sentiment of the review is positive or negative, accordingly to the positive or negative evaluation of the hotel. Consumers on TripAdvisor realize the evaluation in two ways. First, they are asked to rate the hotel they want to review, by a single-word evaluation, choosing among 5 possible values: *excellent, very good, average, poor, terrible.* For each hotel there is a quantitative summary, indicating how many reviewers have rated the hotel for each value. Secondly, consumers evaluate the hotel by writing an online text (not mandatory, of course).

Regarding the rating, the whole corpus of 4.249 online travel reviews appears as follow (see Table 3). Rating and polarity not necessarily are consistent.

Table 3

Evaluation	**%**
Excellent	40%
very good	37%
Average	14%
Poor	5%
Terrible	4%
	100%

So the majority of people do evaluate the hotel positively. Evaluative adjectives and adverbs in the top 20 wordlists are positive in each corpus. English corpus has 8 evaluative adjectives among the top 20 wordlist[4]: good (401), great (315), nice (251), clean (213), friendly (168), helpful (151), excellent (133), small (118).

As can be imagined, *good, great, excellent* and *nice* refer to 'concrete' aspects (*breakfast, bathroom, coffee, hotel, restaurant, room, size, price, food*); to the linguistic competence of the staff (*good/excellent English*); but they can also refer and evaluate less concrete aspects like *service, quality, location, place, staff.* The hotel is often defined a *good base,* orsimply *good/great for* something. It is also defined as a *good/great choice, option value. Clean* is specialized for the *rooms* or the *hotel*. *Friendly* and *helpful*, which frequently recur together, essentially evaluate the staff behavior (above 45 occurrences). *Small*, which can be apparently a negative adjective, is used for concrete things (*balcony, room, bed, room, hotel, patio*), but it is mitigated in various ways: *lovely small, pretty small, small but comfortable*. In one case the author of the review connects this bad evaluation with an inter-cultural thought:

(48) Room has amortization singes, clean room with good soundproof, **Std room Size are small but this is ok for Europe**.

In the French corpus we have 5 evaluative adjectives and adverbs among the top 20 wordlist: petit (448 but 368 are the occurrences of *petit + déjeuner*, and it remains 80 real uses as free adjective), bien (389), bon (208), calme (168), agréable (146).

[4] The number after each word corresponds to the number of raw occurrences in the corpus.

Petit, like English *small*, refers to concrete nouns (*jardin, chambre*), the whole hotel or metaphoric nouns (*paradis*). It also recurs with the noun 'bémol' meaning 'a slightly sour note', so it mitigates a negative evaluation by belittling it. *Bien* and *bon* positively evaluate both concrete and less concrete stuff: in the case of the adverb it is followed by a past participle which refers to services or qualities of the hotel/room (*accueilli, desservi, décoré, entretenu, insonorisé, isolé, restauré, renové*). *Bien* also evaluate the location (*bien placé, bien positionné, bien situé* cover 150 occurrences of the word 'bien'). We also found two grammatical clusters involving *bien*, the first is *bien pour…* (similar to the English construction *good for …*) and the second is *bien que* introducing a negative evaluation which mitigates a positive one (49)-(50) or despite which the positive evaluation is true (51)-(52).

(49) Le petit déjeuner est correct (positive) bien que standardisé (negative), sans produit de grande qualité (negative).
(50) Le parking souterrain (très pratique (positive) bien que un peu cher (negative)),
(51) L'hôtel bien que grand (negative) a su garder un caractère intimiste (positive).
(52) La chambre bien que pas très grande (negative) était propre (positive) ainsi que la salle de bain

Bon evaluates concrete nouns (*buffet, petit-déjeuner, restaurant, hôtel*), the language (*bon Français*), or less concrete aspects (*choix, séjour, rapport qualité-prix*). *Calme* and *agréable* are more specialized: the first evaluates concrete nouns (*rue, jardin, chambre, hôtel, quartier, famille*), or more generic- abstract entities (*place, endroit, ambiance*). *Agréable* especially refers to staff, services or the whole travel experience (*accueil, séjour, personnel, service*).

In the Italian corpus we register 4 evaluative adjectives and an adverb in the top 20 wordlist. Ottimo/a (380), disponibile (107), gentile (103), buona (96), ben (84).
Ottimo, buono, as the English correspondent words, recur in evaluating concrete aspects (*colazione, biancheria, hotel, albergo, cena*), but they especially refer to less concrete aspects (*posizione, pulizia, qualità, rapporto qualità-prezzo, sistemazione, soluzione, scelta, esperienza, accoglienza*). We also found the same grammatical cluster *ottimo per …* (good for …). *Gentile* and *disponibile* are specialized for evaluating the staff (*personale, staff*) and they often go together; see for example the excerpt (53):

(53) Personale accogliente, gentile e disponibile, sa consigliare bene.

The adverb *bene* (as its French correspondent *bien*) refers to concrete characteristics of the room or the hotel (*arredato, pulito, insonorizzato, curato, tenuto*) or to its position and connection (*servito, collegato*).
As we have already said, we distinguished among pure evaluative acts and evaluations which are incorporated into other descriptive acts. Pure evaluative acts very often result in copulative clauses where the adjectives appear after the copula or in nominal clauses. In the excerpt (54) we can notice three evaluative acts realized both as a copulative clause and as a nominal clause:

(54) Il personale **è** cortese e disponibile (copulative clause), presente 24h su 24, *la colazione a buffet varia e abbondante* (nominal clause). La posizione **è** a dir poco ottima (copulative clause), a pochissimi minuti a piedi dall'Arena,

The same is true in English and French.
Negative polarity, that can be considered an indirect way of complaining, has been investigated by analyzing the distribution and collocation of negative adverbs (English *not*, Italian *non*, French *pas*).

English *not* (429 occurrences) recurs with concrete nouns referring to different features of the entity evaluated in the text. It can negatively evaluate the level of the hotel (*not a 5 star hotel, not a luxury hotel, not as good as …*), specific services (*not a 24h reception, the room was not clean*). But it can also recur in the litotes as a strategy for weakening both a positive evaluation (*not bad* = good, *not a problem*) and a negative one (*not good cleaning* = bad); or a strategy to realize a weak statement or hope (*you will not be disappointed*). Finally, negative adverbs recur in recommendations in order to persuade other customers not to stay in the hotel: *Would not recommend this hotel*.

Italian *non* (523) has many similarities with English *not*. It recurs in the construction *non c'è/ non c'era* as a way to introduce a complaint (it highlights the 'lack' of something expected):

(55) In camera non *c'è possibilità di aprire le finestre*

(56) Suggerirei giusto una mensola un po' più grande in bagno perché *non c'è spazio per posare un beauty case*.

(57) Però nonostante avessi avvisato dell'orario del mio arrivo *non c'era nessuno ad attendermi* e normalmente *la reception non c'è mai nessuno*.

Suggestions as in (56) are a mitigated way of expressing a negative evaluation (De Roberto, forthcoming).
The analysis of French *pas* (449) occurrences gives the same results as English and Italian. It appears inside the evaluative description of different aspects of the hotel, and it can alternate with positive evaluations, as in excerpt

(58) where we observe a double alternation positive / *negative* / positive of the sentiment:

(59) Très bien accueilli à la réception. Personnel très chaleureux et gentil. La chambre jolie et très propre. Salle de bain impeccable. // La *climatisation* ***ne*** *chauffait* ***pas*** *assez* et *les fenêtres* ***mal*** *isolé, rentrait froid* depuis la fenêtre, j'ai du demander une 2ème couverture car en fin d'année fait quand meme froid. *T.V* ***archi-nulle***, dès fois on arrivait même pas à allumer et on devrait payer le service supplémentaire pour chaînes étrangers. // Wi-Fi impeccable, rapide. Chambre bien isolé. Tranquille. Petit déjeuner en buffet simple mais agréable.

Even if online reviews show an overwhelming positive sentiment, there exist some reviews characterized by an overall strong negative polarity which emerges as complaining.
Complaints, as we have already seen (previous paragraph and previous research, Compagnone and Fiorentino, 2018) are longer than positive reviews, and they are characterized by (long) narrative parts. They are categorized as 'face attacks' and can be mitigated by adding some positive element.
Complaints are not so frequent in our three corpus. Excerpt (60) illustrates a typical example of a complaint, with the negative evaluation realized as a list of negative features. It ends with recommending not to stay in that hotel. Sometimes, as in example (61), the description consists of so a strong negative evaluation that it is not necessary to explicitly recommend not to book the hotel:

(60) Absolutely worst customer service. No wifi on top level, which is only rooms if you don't want to share a bathroom. Very cold and didn't advertise next to busy dog park (all hours of night). No sound proofing between rooms at all. Only descent thing was breakfast included which was average at best. Wouldn't advise staying.

(61) Situé en bordure du Naples historique cet ancien palais est un havre de paix dans ce quartier populaire. Mais lorsque vous regagnez votre chambre, *quelle déception*: Le ménage dans les dégagements *laisse à désirer, poussières remarquables* le long des plinthes, plafonds *sales, débris de verre encore présents 3 jours plus tard* malgré un signalement à la réception . Le personnel *n'en avait cure*. Literie correcte ... mais connexion Wifi *limitée*, insonorisation des chambres *insuffisante*, climatisation *bruyante*. En résumé hôtel non conforme aux attentes pour cette catégorie d'établissement.

3.5 Thematic analysis

The Hotel Service and the Room Comfort are mostly invoked in recommending the hotels (Stringam, Gerdes and Vanleeuwen 2010). Both in our previous research (Compagnone and Fiorentino 2018) and in the present one, we confirmed that online travel reviews put a strong focus on the staff behavior. This finding corresponds to what has been said about the strong orientation towards subjectivity.

Due to the personal experience that customers lived during their stay in the hotel, they want to share and to communicate to other readers their feelings towards the service staff. Our previous analysis of reviews in Italian showed that customers go even so far as to express staff physical characterizations.

A considerable part of the manifestation of personal opinions typically refers to the hotel staff. More than half of Italian reviews (339/500), English reviews (360/500) and French reviews (263/500) refer to the staff (which also includes concierge, housekeepers, waiters, etc.) We find that tourists are keen on good service staff. What emerges from the examples is that the description of services is quite detailed in opinions and appears to be one of the most important elements that make a pleasant stay.

Staff is the common term used in French, English and Italian reviews. In French and in Italian we find also *personnel* and *personale.* Table 4 summarizes a detailed diagram of most frequent adjectives used to describe the staff:

	Italian	**English**	**French**
Generic	ottimo | eccellente | formidabile	ok | nice | excellent | great | wonderful | amazing	super | insufficient
Specific	cortese | cordiale | gentile | discreto | disponibile | molto cortese | simpatico | gentilissimo | non scrupoloso | sgradevole | non molto educato | un po' "scarrupato" | socievole | troppo giovane e inesperto | non qualificato | veloce | scortese | parla malissimo l'inglese | sereno | maleducato | molto sorridente | freddo come l'interno | professionale | celere | molto preparato | efficiente | impeccabile | ospitale | estremamente disponibile | attento | squisito.	helpful | all had reasonable english | polite | kind | friendly | professional | courteous | lovely | attentive | amazing | brilliant | all multi-lingual and highly skilled young people | unfriendly | not particularly friendly | staff seemed over whelmed | lack of synagy | were beyond rude | poorly prepared and with an attitude all wrong | had no clue what they were doing | pleasant | basic | accommodating | extremely polite and welcoming always | slightly hit and miss | efficient | attentive | warm | young | speaking different foreign languages | poorly prepared and with an attitude all wrong | understanding | efficient | hospitable | charming |indifferent	accueillant et polyglotte| agréable et arrangeant | très sympa | serviable | à l'écoute | à la hauteur | charmant | prévenant | parle plusieurs langues | parle le français | attentionné | adorable | irréprochable | aimable | professionnel | efficace | souriant | très sympathique | très discret et disponible | chaleureux et dévoué| pro | professionnel | compétant | familier | méprisant | discret mais très efficace | trilingue | très avenant | désagréable | super sympa | manquant un peu d'aménité | exécrable | globalement désagréable |

In French, Italian and English reviews the number of positive qualifications about staff is much higher than negative ones. The French write more extensively in this subject in comparison with the English and the Italian. They use a lot of specific terms, while the English and Italian are limited to rather generic terms. The French reviewers use a lot of adjectives to characterize the staff. Their descriptions are very detailed and precise.

The mention of the staff names that we have already found in many Italian reviews, is - according to us - indicative of the confidentiality and familiarity relationship that the users established during the stay and is a way to engage the reader and to testify satisfaction and interaction towards the staff. We found a mention to the staff names in some English and French reviews; see excerpts (62)-(64):

(62) The staffs are incredibly attentive and polite; Tash and Robert in the restaurant gave us excellent service at all times […]

(63) […] Fabio kindly arranged for my room to be cleaned quickly […]

(64) […] Antonio, le maître d'hôtel, est attentionné et compétent et ses deux seconds, Salvatore et Carlo, le sont tout autant.

The evidence of these personal experiences lived in terms of hospitality and friendship intend to influence the decision-making process of potential customers for the structure.

4.Conclusion

Considering the three goals (research questions, see paragraph 1), we can summarize our conclusions as follows.
Online travel reviews show their own linguistic (richness in adjectives, pronouns, and statements with copulative clauses or nominal clauses), textual (no fixed structure, unless there is a narrative content; title working as an abstract) and pragmatic (personal involvement, presence of recommendations and warnings, not only description and evaluation but strong perlocutionary strength) peculiarities. There are some differences from a cross-linguistic perspective: French reviewers show less tendency to narrativity, a preference for neutral objective impersonal tone and appear more detailed and analytic; English titles are more focused on the evaluation assignment. Online travel reviews are part of a discourse community (in the sense of Swales 1990: 24-27), whose members can be precisely profiled (see the report in Gretzel 2007). They narrate to friends and relatives or unknown customers, they show involvement, they feel as being part of a community. Online travel reviews as a specific textual genre (persuasive – evaluative) do belong to the language of tourism (see also De As caniis 2012 where online travel reviews are considered an emergent textual genre).

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