

# THE REPRESENTATION OF THE CANARIES TO THE ENGLISH-SPEAKING WORLD: AN ANALYSIS OF THE DISCOURSES USED IN TOURIST TEXTS

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## ABSTRACT

Traditionally, English for Specific Purposes has dealt with the study of textual subgenres from a synchronic perspective, with the aim of specifying and analyzing the linguistic and structural characteristics that define them. This is often designed to support pedagogical or teaching objectives. However, the particular nature of tourist texts means it is necessary to look at them from the perspective of different parameters, because, as we are dealing with texts aimed at a very heterogeneous range of consumers, these texts are distinguished more in terms of their communicative function than by purely linguistic or structural features. For this reason, this article offers a diachronic study of a corpus of tourist texts aimed at visitors to the Canary Islands, involving texts produced over a period of time from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the present day. The aim is to consider the evolution that this subgenre has undergone over time, and look at the discursive typology which is predominant in different historical stages.

KEY WORDS: Discourse, genre, function, tourist texts.

## RESUMEN

Tradicionalmente, el Inglés para Fines Específicos ha abordado el estudio de los subgéneros textuales desde una perspectiva sincrónica, con el objeto de concretar y analizar, normalmente con fines pedagógicos o instructivos, los rasgos lingüísticos y estructurales que los definen. Sin embargo, las especificidades inherentes a los textos turísticos plantean la necesidad de investigarlos a partir de otros parámetros, pues, al tratarse de textos dirigidos a un colectivo poco homogéneo, se distinguen mucho más por la función comunicativa que desempeñan que por los rasgos lingüísticos o estructurales que los particularizan. Por ello, en este trabajo se ofrece un estudio diacrónico de un corpus de textos turísticos destinados a visitantes de las Islas Canarias correspondientes a un periodo que comprende desde finales del siglo XIX hasta nuestros días, con el fin de indagar en la evolución que ha experimentado este subgénero a lo largo del tiempo y en la tipología discursiva predominante en cada etapa.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Discurso, género, función, textos turísticos.

The main objective of this article is to offer a diachronic study of the most important themes and discourses found in tourist texts in English about the Canaries, such as tourist brochures, travel books and websites, from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup>. The aim is to offer a description and a discursive analysis of relevant rhetorical strategies, lexical fields and semiotic elements involved in the production of these texts, whether they are originally written in English or are translations from Spanish to English. In this way, we can consider how the product «the Canary Islands» has been constructed for consumption by English-speaking tourists through tourist texts and travel literature, and analyze the main discourses that form part of the presentation of this destination in the imagination of English tourists over a period of time.

In terms of methodology, we have selected four texts as representative of the genre: one is a travel book from 1887, two are printed guide books, from 1964 and 2002 respectively, and the final text is an online website promoting the islands, launched in 2010. A close reading of these texts aims to consider their historical evolution as well as analyse the differences found in recent versions. We identify typical content (such as information about beaches or gastronomy, maps or images), the importance of historical or factual information (dates, important events, currency, time zones etc.), and the linguistic resources involved (including the most common uses of certain tenses, adjectives, adverbs, simple or compound sentences). In addition we look at the rhetorical and semiotic techniques typical of these texts, especially those involving visual presentation, vocabulary, use of the imperative or direct address, and the importance of layout, colour, images, logos, symbols, or bullet points.

## 1. THEORETICAL APPROACHES

Various authors who have dealt with the question of discourse analysis with reference to a range of texts are useful here. Van Dijk (1991) refers to «textual grammar» to talk about merely linguistic characteristics, but not other structures such as rhetoric or narrative. For this reason, a textual grammar includes the study of the sentence and analyzes those characteristics, such as the relationship between sentences, which a sentence grammar-approach cannot deal with. Even so, Van Dijk acknowledges that a thorough classification of the types of discourse must be based on knowledge not only of the structures but also the relevant functions involved. Coseriu (2006: 11) prefers to use the term «textual linguistics» as the analysis focuses on linguistic elements in order to develop an interpretation of the text. He argues that although some theorists prefer to describe it as «discourse analysis», for him this is too polysemic a term. Alcaraz Varó (2007) describes at least six characteristics that specific texts should have: vocabulary, morpho-syntax, discourse, communication, professional texts and cultural frame. They can be an interesting starting point for academic research but in the case we are dealing with, other elements cannot be forgotten as tourist texts include so many sectors such as transportation, travel agencies, theme parks, or spas. The function of any text involving



them may be to inform, suggest, encourage, state, or describe, and the vocabulary includes technical, semi-technical and general language. The difference in the use of one term or another will depend on the reader to whom it is aimed (2007: 235). Coseriu (2006: 2007) distinguishes three characteristics: vocabulary, interpretation of the linguistic signs and the set of procedures typical of a specific discourse, but adds that general and specific features of a text can only explain partially what text is, while textual typology is what establishes distinguishing features that are essential for the constitution of every discourse; that is, the real differences in each genre.

The common denominator in most tourist texts is their function, the appellative function, as it is focused on the recipients of the text and their world, mind and psychology (Nobs 2006: 63). Language used must be persuasive as the aim is to incite the reader to a positive reaction towards the text. This is done using two strategies: argumentative, giving reasons to accept a product; and emotive, evoking expected attitudes and desired scales of values. Nobs accepts the following functions: to activate attention and interest, guarantee understanding, guarantee acceptance and credibility, and guarantee attractiveness. As we can see, she does not focus on the linguistic elements at all but rather on the effect the text produces on the reader. Biber (2009) also offers an interesting approach when he distinguishes genre from style, as he sees both of them as perspectives on text varieties. The genre perspective focuses «on the conventional structures used to construct a complete text within a variety», for instance, the structure of a formal letter. The style perspective, on the other hand, takes linguistic features as the object of study but within the situational context in which the text is produced. That is, «style features reflect aesthetic preferences, associated with particular authors or historical periods» (p. 2).

## 2. HISTORICAL EVOLUTION FROM THE 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY TO PRESENT DAY

In this section we proceed to the discussion of the four texts mentioned above in terms of these theoretical approaches. We offer a brief overview of some of the main tendencies and characteristics of the discursive nature and functions of these texts, which can serve as representative of the text-type as a whole.

EXAMPLE 1: OLIVIA M. STONE: *TENERIFE AND ITS SIX SATELLITES* (VOL. 1), MARCUS WARD & CO., LONDON, 1887

The most notable thing about this book has to be its length: Volume I alone offers 477 pages of dense text that includes maps, illustrations based on photographs taken by the author and her husband, and a series of pages at the end which are advertisements for various shipping companies, hotels and other products related to the Canary Islands. The text is a cross between travel literature, in the sense that it is a first person account offering details of a real journey, and a guidebook in the modern meaning, in the way that Olivia Stone aims to encourage



other tourists to follow in her footsteps and provides practical advice concerning the best way to travel in the islands. Stone's justification for the trip is set out in the first paragraph where she describes the Canaries as a country so little known and so little written about «that 99 out of every hundred among educated people know little or nothing of the islands either geographically or historically» (p. 1). In this sense she is a pioneer (on page 17 she says «we shall be limning scenes untouched before by pencil or lens»; we remember that photography was a recent art and she finds only two photographers in the whole of the Canary Islands) and this explains her very individualistic approach to her subject; similarly she has no qualms about giving her own personal views at all times, without any sense of the conventions of objectivity or neutrality that are the norm in later texts. For example she does not hesitate to attack Spain which she says has

dwindled into a third-rate power. It is impossible not to believe in a practical kind of Nemesis, and who have so richly deserved it as the ruthless, pitiless conquerors of Mexico and Peru? Wherever Spain and her so-called Christianity have been hurled sword in hand at the peaceful aborigines, their cruelty and bloodshed have followed until the natives have been exterminated, and the conquerors taking possession of the land reeking with carnage, have blasphemously thanked heaven for the progress of Christianity so marvellously advanced by their means (Stone 1887: 2).

There is so much detail in the books that it is impossible to do real justice to the style, but we can point out a few key elements: at the top of each right-hand page of the book there is a phrase or summary in the style of 19th century British novels, which adds to the sense of narrative as well as assisting the reader in finding references. At the beginning of each chapter there is a quotation from poetry or the Bible and this serves to emphasize the literary style of the text. The contents page refers only to place references or the itinerary followed, and the book offers a chronological description of the journey, rather than a series of themes such as gastronomy, culture and beaches as is common in modern guidebooks. There is perhaps a focus on British influence in the Canaries, partly because of the connections with local residents that Stone used to help her move round the islands and partly because of the audience she is aiming at, who would be interested in details about for example Lord Nelson's defeat in Santa Cruz, as well as the general perceived evils of the Catholic Church.

Another important element in the book is the amount of cultural and historical background provided through references to other texts such as that by Glas from the 18th century, or that produced by the Hakluyt society, a translation of a text from the 15th century. The style in general of Stone's text is that of an erudite Victorian who is interested in cataloguing every detail and evaluating the importance of local culture as seen from an English perspective, warts and all: «the sanitary arrangements of the fonda were villainous. Every time we opened our door with such exceedingly foul odour entered that we resolved to leave the town as soon as we have seen the procession» (p. 40). On a more positive note, she offers accurate and detailed information about botanical matters, such as providing the Latin name



for local species (e.g. the dragon tree is explained in a footnote on p. 68 as *Dracoena draco*). She also shows a great familiarity with Spanish, and again uses footnotes to clarify meaning (e.g. «*Finca*, a country house with garden and cultivated land» p. 69). Similarly important to her scientific approach is the emphasis on accurate measurements of temperatures, heights, distances, times and facts about the geography of the area (e.g. on Mount Teide, she measures angles: «The slope may be best described as being an angle of 44°, though Mr. Piazzzi Smyth puts it at 33°, and the Rev. E. Alison at 42°» (p. 143), and later she describes a cave: «The opening of the cave measured about thirteen and a half feet by seven and a half», and comments in a footnote: «Mr. Alison gives it as forty inches, so that either he must have measured inaccurately, or the opening must have been concealed by snow, or it must have altered considerably since his visit» (p. 151). She is clearly well-read when it comes to other travellers, as she quotes from the experiences of Mr. Piazzzi Smyth, and corrects the version of Lady Brassey (who had sailed to the Canaries), who «must have been misinformed as to the nature of the Ice Cave, or she would not have written that in it «there is a stream of water constantly running!»» (p. 149).

She considers her reading public in giving practical advice about the ascent of Teide, in particular aimed at women and is not averse to building up the difficulty to dramatic effect before giving her own opinion:

Humboldt said it was one of the most difficult ascents he had ever made, only to be exceeded by the Jorullo, in Mexico. Mr. Piazzzi Smyth says «the ascent ought not to be spoken of as difficult.» I should be inclined to say both are wrong [...] if a woman has been accustomed from her youth to outdoor exercise, comprising scrambles over rocks, rowing, bathing, riding, and running, [...] and if she'd be in fair health, with a certain amount of nerve, there is nothing to prevent her ascending the Peak of Tenerife. But if she has all her life seldom gone beyond at walking pace [...], has confined herself and her limbs within the limits that fashion prescribes in Bond Street, she will never be able to see Teide's culminating crater (p. 159).

A final aspect of interest in the book is the critical voice used by Stone in relation to some aspects of Canarian culture, for example when she writes about the problems caused by ill-planned constructions in the riverbeds or *barrancos*: «The islanders are very foolish about these barrancos. Because there may have been no water in one year for a year or two, they take for granted there will never be any, and sometimes build in the very bed of the river» (p. 184), or with reference to the bad relations between Gran Canaria and Tenerife, and even within a single island:

The miserable jealousy between the two large islands is contemptible. Contact with the outer world will, it is hoped, remove this. The envy, hatred, and malice between Santa Cruz and Orotava is, however, paralyzing and if it be not thrown off, and broader, nobler views of life acted upon, will end in the destruction of both. The Archipelago ought to stand upon one principle, taking for its motto «United, we stand; divided, we fall.» The unwholesome jealousy which characterises the islanders is not productive of good works, but only of bad words (p. 369).



Stone has no qualms about intervening in local issues where she sees fit, and has the British Victorian attitude to «abroad»: that however interesting or charming it may be, it could benefit from a dose of British commonsense.

EXAMPLE 2: ELIZABETH HODKINSON: *TOURIST GUIDE OF GRAND CANARY, LAS PALMAS DE GRAN CANARIA*, 1964. PUBLISHED BY THE «CENTRO DE INICIATIVAS Y TURISMO LAS PALMAS GRAN CANARIA»

This guide book, written when the Canaries were becoming well-known to the English tourist market, adopts the standard structure of the text type: a neutral, impersonal style not focused on a particular journey, organization by theme, suggestions for trips and activities, and a brief overview of local culture and history. It is short (182 pages of main text with some extra maps and factual information about hotels, distances and climate), designed to be carried in the pocket of the tourist. Chapter 1 offers a brief history of Las Palmas and the island of Gran Canaria. The fact that the book was written in the 1960s is reflected in one of the paragraphs near the end describing «the last historical event of importance», which «took place on 18 July 1936, the date on which General Franco flew from Gran Canaria to Morocco to set his troops in action against the Republican government. The national fiesta of 18 July is celebrated with particular fervour in Las Palmas, since it was here that the Spanish Civil War may be said to have begun» (19), as well as in certain names such as the «Generalissimo Dock».

Chapter 2 is entitled *A Tour of Las Palmas* and offers an initial description of the city and an explanation as to how to use the guide. The tone involves a direct, informal style of address, such as «we shall» and «you can». For example: «Let's get the arrival formalities over before we stop to look at the fine ports and the town beyond. Customs, we find to our relief, do not exist at all for the ordinary traveller» (p. 25). On p. 70, we have «I have attempted to cover most of the possible routes». Another technique used is the tendency to pose rhetorical questions such as «How can a huge port be so clean?» (p. 26), which sounds conversational, or «What could have been the reason which had induced an unknown painter to conceal such a beautiful picture with another figure of the Virgin?» (p. 176) which comes at the end of the chapter and serves as a dramatic and mysterious climax to a description of the discovery of an older Flemish painting of the Virgin that had been painted over by a later artist.

There are historical references, such as mention of Sir Francis Drake or Christopher Columbus, and explanations of local names such as the Puerto de la Luz, Juan Rejón Avenue, or Princess Guayarmina (p. 28), as well as account of local history such as references to the Guanches, who once occupied the caves and the cemetery on the hills behind the port. The present tense is used to describe the city, as if we are physically walking down the streets: «Now we joined the bustling Calle Albareda, with its colourful market open every day till noon», or «cutting up the short Calle Tenerife, in a few steps we join the sea on the other side of the Isleta» (32). There are deictic references such as «on our right» or «at this time of the year».

There is a use of positive adjectives such as *splendid*, *attractive*, *gay*, *bustling* and *excellent*. Also notable is the use of modal auxiliary verbs such as *should*, for example, on p. 41, where it says «The Hotel Santa Catalina, which is the most luxurious in the island should at least be visited for tea on the terrace» and «The gardens in front of the hotel should be seen as they have many interesting plants, and no one should miss the fishponds». On p. 66, we find «this museum must not be viewed hastily as it deserves a thorough visit». Similarly, there are examples of the imperative. For example, «a delightful place to spend an hour or two but come back again on Sunday to see the exhibition of dancing», or «look carefully for attractive knives, go into the market itself and try some of the exotic fruit» (p. 59). We can also see a use of metaphorical language, such as in the following sentence: «The old houses of the first colonisers are crowded one against the other, as if trying to shoulder out the modern world, which they neither like nor understand» (p. 68). The subject of time is very important both in the emphasis on the modernity of the city, as well as references to the timelessness of Las Palmas, for example: «In the little shops, life goes on as it has done for hundreds of years. A few more tinned goods perhaps than a few years back, but abundant stocks of spices, olives, salted fish, rich oil, Canary smoked hams and local sausages fill the streets with pungent odours» (p. 68).

Although the text is written in good English, there are certain sections which are translated from the Spanish and at times, the syntax betrays this. For example on p. 69, we find the following:

The Corporation of Gran Canary Island holds forth the most ambitious scheme of development fulfilled in the Archipelago. It is impossible to gather in a photograph the millions of square metres gained over the sea. In this immense (*sic*) district will raise, very soon, the city of the sea. A few years ago, the Park of St Elmo was only a breakwater... the row of buildings, which is now called Francisco Gourie Street, was beaten by the sea now looking to be so far away ... but it is still known by the popular name of Maritime Street. This wide avenue of several kilometres long built over the sea, will connect Las Palmas with the port (p. 69).

Other errors in the text involve the punctuation of numbers, which follow the Spanish style: «2000 years old» is written «2.000» on p. 124, and the «kilometers» in the quotation above are given as «miles» in the rest of the text.

Another example of the way the complete text is a badly edited mixture of two different sources comes on p. 165, where there is the image of an advert for the short lived «Universidad Internacional de Canarias», below which the text reads: «Several years ago was created in Las Palmas, the Canarian International University, a new allurements for foreign people who visit the Island (*sic*). In this university there are courses of languages, literature, science, art and many other highly interesting matters». This is immediately followed by a description of the Pérez Galdós Museum, involving the distorted syntax and spelling mistakes common to a bad translation: «In the house where was born the illustrious (*sic*) Canarian writer Benito Pérez Galdós» (p. 166). (In fact, the pages quoted here with mistakes are not numbered in the text).



However, to give an example of the syntax of the original text, this is a quotation of three paragraphs:

If you take the road to Santa Lucía, you will be rewarded with beautiful scenery—green valleys, little white hamlets and rugged mountains. Make a stop at the tiny tile factory on the left, just outside San Bartolomé: here are made the red tiles which are seen on all the cottage roofs in the south of the island. Craftsmen carry on the ancient art, just as their forefathers did before them. It is a most picturesque little place in the open air, surrounded by orchards, the old kiln coloured a deep red from centuries of baking clay (p. 120).

The road is rather bad approaching Santa Lucía, as here there was a landslide not long ago, and a couple of cottages were carried off in the night and neatly deposited on the other side of the road. But as it winds up the hill, the road improves again. Santa Lucía is a pretty little place, and as in almost any village in the island, it is worth leaving the main road and exploring the streets on foot. You will see many interesting scenes of village life that otherwise would be missed. Outside Santa Lucía an old abandoned road turns off to the right, going through a deep valley with towering crags on either side. If you like wild scenery and lonely unsurfaced roads, you will enjoy this longer route to Agüimes. It passes near the Fortaleza—huge outcrops of rocks riddled with caves from where the Guanches fought desperately for their liberty just before their final capitulation. They were besieged in the rocks that resemble a natural fortress and were starved into submission (p. 122).

The lonely road from Fataga to Maspalomas was built during the Spanish Civil War for troop replacements to the coast. It is little used, and although you are more likely to encounter donkeys on it than anything else, horns should be sounded on every bend, as the few vehicles that use the road make a point of always driving on the inside, away from the side that drops down to form a sheer precipice. There is an interesting Guanche cemetery at Arteara, a tiny hamlet 3 miles from Fataga, and also a Guanche house that the owners will let you visit. The cemetery extends right up the mountain on the other side of the *barranco* and literally thousands of Guanches were buried here, at one time or another. It is estimated that the burial ground is over 2.000 (*sic*) years old, and one can see white fragments of bones in some of the graves, which are strangely shaped, stones being piled up to form cones like beehives (p. 124).

It is clear from these passages that the syntax of the original text is standard, simple and varied, and well suited to the subject matter and reading public.

Chapter 5 deals with spectator sports, and several pages are devoted to do the description of *Lucha Canaria* or Canary Wrestling. These pages include photographs, and a detailed description of the scoring system and techniques involved. Other sports described include dog racing, football, cockfighting, boxing, etc. The following chapters consider active sports, including tennis, golf, swimming and sailing; and local museums and churches, offering information about opening times, locations and descriptions of particular works to be found. The section that deals with the Canary Museum goes into some detail about the Guanches, including



descriptions that are critical of the Spanish invasion and flattering to the indigenous population:

the stories of Guanche bravery and nobility are legion, and even though the first Spaniards were determined at all cost to convert this «pagan» people to Christianity, they could not help but admire their sincerity and their total lack of guile. The Guanche laws dealt fairly with the people and behaviour was of a high standard. It was mainly the early Spanish who were guilty of un-Christian acts (p.157).

The question of race is also mentioned in a slightly defensive tone, for example: «the small group of anthropologists and archaeologists at the museum are doing a great deal to make the racial origins of the Canary Islanders (often subject to so much confusion) more fully understood, and their culture more widely appreciated» (p. 159). The text contains many examples which emphasize the importance of the Canaries in world culture; for example in the description of Columbus House we are told how one of the Canarian governors went with Columbus on his second journey to America, and that:

It is quite true to say that he [Columbus] would have had little success in his voyages to America without using the Canary Islands as a steppingstone. In Gran Canaria, he was able to replenish his supplies of food and water, and take on board plants and livestock for the New World. It is a little-known fact that much of the livestock of South America today is descended from the goats, cows and sheep that Columbus took with him from Gran Canaria, and that much of South American fruit originally came from the Canary Islands in the form of seeds (p. 164).

Also of interest in the text are those elements which relate to English culture, given the fact that the book is aimed at an English public, and which highlight the connection between the Canaries and Britain. An example comes in the description of the cathedral: «during the 17th century when the Roundheads sacked the English cathedrals, many of the religious objects were sold to other countries, and this is the case with some of the gold religious ornaments in the cathedral. They were taken from St Paul's in London, under Oliver Cromwell and shipped on a galleon bound for Gran Canaria» (p. 170).

Chapter 8 (printed on cheaper paper) is called, rather strangely, «Dining and Wining in Las Palmas», and this is the last full chapter in the book. It offers a kind of glossary to the main gastronomic specialities of the Canaries, including *gofio*, *mojo*, and *potaje*. There is another reference to English culture in the description of Canarian wine: «In the 17th century there was hardly an English gentleman who did not wash down his meal with a «pint of Canary» and English merchants had secured a practical monopoly of the islands wine trade» (p. 180). Similarly the tastes of the British tourists are highlighted in the last sentence of the chapter, where the author points out that although all kinds of drinks may be bought in the Canaries, «you are liable to find that even the smallest grocer can offer several brands of Scotch whiskey...» (p. 182).

The final sections of the book include a list of the distances in kilometres from Las Palmas to the principal tourist centres, a table of the climatology of the

island for each month, a list of the hotels and boarding houses available, a map of the city, and a series of detailed maps of each district of the city which is introduced by a bilingual page, of which the English part is again clearly a translation. Finally, there is a map of the pictures of Gran Canaria again introduced by a translation: «short advises to those which are fond of beaches» (*sic*), and a contents page, which corresponds to the Spanish tradition in coming at the end of the book instead of at the beginning.

EXAMPLE 3: *GRAN CANARIA TOURIST GUIDE*: CABILDO DE GRAN CANARIA (2002?)

In terms of the initial impression given by this text, we can point out the importance of simplification and the use of images to make the guide attractive to a wide range of tourists. Whereas the cover to the previous guide included three images of indigenous plants against a simple white background, the more recent guide uses a yellow background on which we can see some postcards showing typical tourist images of Gran Canaria, including golf, the dunes and the traditional house, as well as an image of a woman in traditional Canary costume. There is also a list of the main areas covered by the guide, including nature, culture, sports, cuisine, etc. On opening the guide, we find a map of the world with an insert highlighting the position of the Canaries, and a series of symbols that will be used throughout the book. There is also a simplified pull-out map of Gran Canaria, in which all these symbols are employed. The impression is somewhat childlike, though evidently aimed to be practical and easy to follow. This is followed by a contents page, although it is described as an «index», which lists the main sections with page references. Following this we see a full colour photo of the dunes of Maspalomas with the sea and the *Faro* or lighthouse in the background. This predominance of photographs is very important in the text as every page includes at least one image, and some pages are entirely dedicated to full colour photographs.

In terms of the text, the style is sophisticated, relatively complex and well written; it doesn't sound like a translation. Here is an example from the introduction:

Gran Canaria is circular in shape with an appendage to the north-east, known as the peninsula of La Isleta, which serves as a panoramic background to the capital of the island, Las Palmas de Gran Canaria. The island's 1532 km<sup>2</sup>, combined with its circular shape and the location of its highest peak in its geographical centre (Pico de las Nieves, at 1949 m high), gives it the shape of a huge, deeply eroded, conical mountain, whose many extinct volcanic craters and deep ravines radiate down to the sea.

The central mountain range, which runs from the north-west to the south-east, separates two vast areas differentiated by their climate and landscape. These two regions are referred to, by the inhabitants of the island, as north and south. Each respective area offers a great number of different microclimates and a wide variety of landscape, this being one of Gran Canaria's most attractive features and hence the reason why it is known as a «miniature continent». With mild temperatures all



year round, it is possible to go, in just one day, from warm coastal areas to temperate midlands, or through valleys and subtropical forests to reach the peaks, where the snow falls sometimes without interfering with the sun, which shines in the coastal areas. It is the Trade Winds, the sea currents and the combination of mountains which make this island so unique, especially if we consider the fact that it is situated only a few miles from the harsh Sahara Desert.

The average temperature of Gran Canaria is 22°C. The temperature of the sea water ranges from 18°C. (p. 5) [text does not continue to finish the sentence].

Some typical features of this text type that we can spot here are the use of positive adjectives such as: *panoramic, vast, wide variety, attractive, mild, unique*, etc. Another rhetorical feature typical to the text is the use of contrasts, such as that described between the north and the south of the island, the difference in temperature between the peaks and the coast or the difference between the mild climate of the island and the harsh Sahara desert. Similarly, we have the use of superlatives such as: *highest, huge, most attractive features, all year round, unique*. There is also an example of direct address with the use of *we*.

The texts describing the different areas of the city of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria continue this informative and relatively formal style, and offer a combination of the original Spanish name with a simple translation in English, where necessary, for example «Puerto de la Luz (the port area)». The emphasis is always on the positive aspects. For example,

Las Canteras is one of Spain's most attractive urban beaches, and is regarded as a blessing by Canarian people. The beach has nearly 4 km of golden sand, while a reef known as La Barra protects the waters of the beach and breaks the waves ensuring that the water of the inner lagoon is calm, without being cut off from the open sea. The promenade, which runs along the length of the beach, offers the visitor a large number of pavement cafes to while away the time peacefully (p. 8).

Other adjectives and positive language include: *splendid, highly original, cosmopolitan, cultural universality*. For example in the section on Maspalomas, we find «an 18 hole golf course and a fascinating *Mundo Aborigen* (Aboriginal World Theme Park) are two more outstanding features of the wealth of leisure opportunities available in this city devoted to relaxation» (p. 35).

There are also historical references such as a description of pirates and attacks on the city, with references to Drake and Morgan and dates such as 1599 when the city was sacked by the Dutch. Other references include geographical descriptions of the way volcanic activity formed part of the island, and ecological references to the fact that areas are protected; for example, in the section describing Maspalomas, we find:

an area of palm trees fringing a saltwater lagoon which has recently been awarded the status of a natural protected area. The whole area of sand dunes covers some 400 hectares and provides habitat for a number of plant species, some of which are only to be found in the Canary Islands, and which have managed to adapt to this harsh environment (p. 35).

Historical references are kept to the minimum, and the origin of the city, for example, is dealt with in a single paragraph. Simple maps are provided for each section of the guide, which is less personalized and more neutral than the 1964 guide. For example, there is less use of the imperative, or direct address with «you», to give instructions, and more frequent use of phrases such as

a short distance from Santa Ana, behind the cathedral, is the Casa Museo de Colón (Columbus House/Museum)... a cobbled street... leads off... and runs parallel to the sea... nearby... stands the Church of the old Augustinian convent... a stone's throw from... the peaceful church and square of Santo Domingo, host every Sunday to a popular flower market, complete our evocative tool of Vegueta, old quarter of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria.» (p. 12).

The text does use the first person plural, for example, when it is describing tours in the island, for example, «this tour will take us through the municipality of Guía» (p. 28), «we would recommend the visitor to make several detours» (p. 33), or «Let us return to La Aldea... Eventually, we come to the lush pine forest...» (p. 40). In general impersonal structures are employed such as «it is worthwhile, stopping off in this township» or «where the visitor can observe...» (p. 30), or the use of the passive, such as «a visit to its Museum of Stone is recommended» or «the town is named after an old sugarcane pressing machine, the ruins of which can still be seen today» (p. 33).

Another discourse is architecture, and there are references to Modernist facades and «Mudejar- style coffered ceilings and gilded altarpieces» (p. 13); also relevant is the discourse of archaeology:

[...] rich in archaeological sites, demonstrating how densely populated the area was in pre-Hispanic times. The best known of these sites is the Cueva Pintada (Painted Cave), which was discovered in the 19th century. Little by little in the surroundings of the cave, the original settlement has emerged close to the site of what used to be the palace of the *guanartermes*, in the square just in front of the present church. It is known that the stones used to build the palace —which were later used in the construction of the church— were perfectly cut and assembled without the aid of mortar (p. 29).

After the sections describing tours of the island, there are also subsections on beaches, local festivals, cultural events, museums, conferences (all of which provide detailed information about opening times, addresses, telephone numbers and dates etc.), cuisine, shopping, markets, leisure facilities, sports and consular information. Here we note the use of bullet points, symbols, and maps. The language style becomes rather more informal in this section dealing with children, such as the following:

If you are enjoying holidays which will be unforgettable for the beauty of the scenery, why not also try out a visit to an exotic zoological park, a water park, a camel ride, a mini golf course or a theme park?... You will be the envy of your friends when you get home and describe your holiday. Although to be honest,



there are probably too many activities on offer for a single visit, and you will have to come back next year to be able to see everything... (p. 80).

Here we find the use of the second person and rhetorical questions, as well as phrases that sound more like speech; the impression is of a friendly conversation between the potential tourist and someone «in the know», but not an expert or distant professional.

EXAMPLE 4: *WEBSITE* TOURIST BOARD OF CANARIAN LOCAL GOVERNMENT (PROMOTUR, WWW.CANARIAS.ES) 2010

It is clear that nowadays, the Internet has revolutionized the way people deal with holidays and travel, and the fact that many people now search for information online rather than looking at printed books has changed the way texts are written and presented. If we consider the website that the Canarian Government has produced to promote the Canaries internationally, we can see how these changes are inscribed in the text. On one level, texts are now short, broken up and easily digested to make them as appealing as possible to the consumer, whose attention span is assumed to be limited. However, on another level the fact that texts no longer have to be printed and are not designed to be carried around physically means that in fact they have an unlimited length. A website can contain virtually any amount of text, images, maps, diagrams, links and other information, as well as adopting other kinds of material designed to attract people's attention such as videos, photographs, blogs, and other more interactive techniques. The sheer quality of colour and image can outdo anything offered by a book or brochure, and the fact that the material can be constantly updated and renewed is also an advantage for websites over more traditional material. In theory at least, modern travellers can access this information while on the move through mobile phones, laptop computers, and other handheld devices. However, it would be interesting to find out how often tourists to the Canaries actually consult this information while in the islands, or whether in fact the website is used more in advance of the trip, maintaining the need for printed material such as a guidebook, while the tourist is actually walking the streets.

Another aspect that involves changes in the way tourist material is presented once it is online concerns the way material is profiled to a particular audience. In printed texts, it is clear that the aim is to reach as wide an audience as possible and consequently the text is inclusive and generic, with relatively short references to all aspects that are seen to be of interest to the general tourist. If this were not the case the text would become far too long to be practical, in terms of cost and as a book designed to be carried around physically. For online texts, there is no limit to the detail and the market profiling that may be involved, so tourists can be divided up and targeted in terms of age, gender, economic spending power, special interests, and so on. Consequently the type of text written can be far more specialized and devoted to more esoteric interests than is the case with printed texts.





For some examples of these differences in the texts, we will consider some pages from the *Promotur* website. This text is a translation from the Spanish. In terms of profiling, the first thing we note is that the holidays on offer have been divided into four categories: «Family Welcome», «Volcanic Experience», «Watersports Experience» and «Wellness Delight». These different focuses mean that means tourists are targeted in terms of their interests (whether in watersports, nature or health, for example), in terms of their age and social grouping (parents with children, young people, older people etc.), and perhaps even in terms of their spending patterns, in the sense that these categories suggest possibilities for the holiday which go well beyond the typical scenario of sitting on the beach during the day and going to the disco in the evening, traditionally associated with holidays in the Canaries. The four categories on offer make it easier for the tourist industry to promote a wider range of activities and even to stimulate desire through association: someone who would have been interested simply in the beach is now encouraged to try out a range of watersports and to visit different islands, while someone who would have been interested only in a stay in a country house is now encouraged to learn about volcanoes, indigenous nature and traditional cuisine.

The «Family Welcome» page offers a list of bullet points with related links, a direct question-and-answer section explaining what «Family Welcome» is about, images of children playing in the sea and looking at camels, a vibrant use of colour and layout to get across a semiotic message of modernity and fun, and a list of headings that can be opened for more information. In terms of the style of the text we note the use of direct questions («What is *Islas Canarias Family Welcome?*», «Where are we going today?»), the use of adjectives (unique, endless, select, safe, modern, unforgettable), an informal choice of vocabulary («kids»), emphasis and the repetition of key points («close, comfortable and safe»). We also note the use of direct address («you, your»), as well as references to activities that are deemed suitable for upmarket family holidays, such as reading holidays and entertainment through culture.

The language sounds much more like the style of an advertising text than an informative text: it is purely appellative, with a strident use of bold to emphasize points:

Located in the blue and refreshing waters of the Atlantic Ocean, the *Canary Islands* display all of the magic of an archipelago that is *unique throughout the world* for its *diversity* and subtropical richness; there is an entire universe to be enjoyed in a *spring-like climate* that lasts *twelve months of the year*.

Probably the key word in the text is «you»; the voice is no longer that of a friendly person in the know giving advice, but of a slick professional company bombarding the tourist with extreme claims and unquestioning enthusiasm:

The Canary Islands boast *immense white dunes and crystal-clear water*, lunar landscapes, jungle-like forests, deep coves with shiny black sand, *volcanoes*, *extensive golden beaches*... coupled with all of the flavor of neighborhoods that have conserved their historical and cultural heritage with popular, deep-rooted festivals and food that is as simple as it is exquisite.

But the Canary Islands are also *a perfect place* to get closer to nature in a more active way: hiking, paragliding, water sports, golf... *365 days a year* to enjoy anything you want, as often as you want, anytime. In the Canary Islands, you will experience the most enjoyable vacation in the world and discover an exotic place that is also close and safe, with all of the comforts of a *European destination*.

Here we see rhetorical devices such as false comparatives («closer to nature... more active») or triple emphasis («anything you want, as often as you want, anytime»). There is no room here for a critical perspective or an outsider's view: the focus is on selling the islands, not describing them.

### 3. CONCLUSIONS

Tourist texts offer a challenge to the theoretical approaches of discourse analysis, as they are complex and wide-ranging texts that change both over time and according to the medium in which they are transmitted (printed or online). What they do have in common is their appellative function, and this focus enables us to consider what different texts from different periods dealing with the same material have in common.

In this overview of some typical texts we have also seen how descriptive texts tend to overuse positive adjectives, and especially clichéd formulas, to the extent that they sound hardly credible. Added to this, in the later texts, historical references are reduced to the bare minimum, while the style adopted when giving advice and suggestions about what to do sounds increasingly impersonal. The first person voice is used when talking about actual tours that can be taken, while on the subject of cultural events, for instance, the style becomes rather more formal. These shifts may be produced because the earlier texts were written by a single author, so the style remains the same throughout the whole text, regardless of its length; while the most recent texts appear to have been written (and translated) by various specialists. Different chapters or sections have different styles as if they were aimed at different readers, while the appellative function can change to the informative function when using narrative passages (e.g. historical events) or description (how to get somewhere).

Objectivity is perhaps the quality that disappears most noticeably over time, despite the fact that the individual travel writer of the 19<sup>th</sup> century made few claims to offer anything other than a personal, subjective account of an individual journey. It is notable that the most recent texts functioning as «guides» are really promotional material, serving the interest of the supplier more than that of the intended consumer. In contrast, what has clearly increased most over time is the importance of the use of quality images and the semiotic presentation of the material designed to focus on the most attractive aspects of the destination.

All in all, certain features are typical of these texts, such as the use of a user-friendly format, a colloquial style, an attempt to bridge two cultures in terms of language and practical details, a focus on those aspects that are of most interest to





the perceived target audience, and the importance of visual support to the written text. In terms of the application of theoretical approaches to specific texts, we have focused on the case of tourist texts produced in or about the Canary Islands, though the approach could be valid for other cultures that depend on an international tourist market. Local Canarian public institutions such as the Canarian government, the island *Cabildos* and the local town councils are all fighting to gain the interest of potential tourists who speak English. The texts, both written and audiovisual, created by these organisms to achieve this aim include discourses involving fields which are both increasingly wide-ranging and more specialized, since the objective is to promote a product which is more complex than the traditional package of sun and beach. In addition to this, the range of texts needed by the public institutions includes a wide variety of text types, among which we can find audiovisual texts, adverts, promotional stands in professional international tourist fairs, brochures, press releases, maps, guides, etc. Similarly, the target public is divided into increasingly narrowly defined groups which require texts that are adapted to their specific needs: nowadays there are many reasons to make holidays in the Canaries as specialized as possible, and thus attract tourists who are prepared to spend more money and who know exactly what they want from their trip. All these tourists form a market which generates written textual material specially designed for them, and this has to take into account their previous knowledge, their interests, their education and culture, as well as their preconceptions about the Canary Islands. If the archipelago aims to survive as a tourist destination which can compete in the international market in the 21st century, it is essential for it to diversify and widen its offer, while at the same time send the message to present tourists and potential visitors, through the texts that they consume, that the product they are going to buy is of the highest quality.

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