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14. Exploring Existential and Locative Constructions in a Learner and in an Expert Corpus of Promotional Tourist[1] Texts

1. Introduction

This chapter sets out to explore the use of existential and locative constructions in a learner corpus of promotional tourist texts written by university students of English and compares the findings to those obtained from the analysis of a corpus of texts written by tourism industry professionals. Existential and locative constructions are used in all registers, yet they are particularly frequent in fiction where descriptions of settings are very common (Biber *et al.* 1999: 943-956). As most tourist texts include sections in which such referents as tourist resorts, attractions and facilities are located in space and then described, it is only natural for them to contain parts expressing existence and location. In a way, this chapter pursues the research agenda put forward by Dann (1996: 2-4), for instance, who claims that "[no one] has so far systematically examined tourism as a language *per se*", while it is so extensive and pervasive that it "merits thorough investigation by tourism researchers", and also by Lam (2007: 72), who observes that "books related to tourism industry text writing […] fall considerably short of detailed discussions about the use of lexis and grammar in tourism industry texts".

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1   For the purpose of this study the label "tourist" texts refers to texts produced by either tourism professionals or trainees.

As regards the methodology adopted in this study, it is believed that from the contrastive analysis of the promotional tourist materials produced by expert and novice writers respectively, specific aspects of this type of language can stand out and others can emerge which might otherwise go unnoticed. Also, language learners are likely to benefit from the comparison of their own texts to those written by expert (native) writers, in that in so doing they can not only hone their language skills (e.g. Seidlhofer 2002), but also develop the specific lexico-grammatical knowledge and textual skills needed to write effective tourist texts.

2. Research on the language of tourism

The language of tourism has been studied from various perspectives, including the literary, cultural, sociolinguistic and linguistic ones. The most specific and recurrent lexical, morphosyntactic and textual features of tourist publications have been investigated, as well as their potential for the development of linguistic and translation skills.

Dann (1996: 2-4) claims that the language of (promotional) tourism is a "discourse of its own", which "attempts to persuade, lure, woo and seduce" potential tourists, that is, to control their behaviour (Dann 1996: 246) by using a language which furnishes descriptions based on the tourist's expectations rather than on reality (Dann 1996: 85). He also affirms that "for optimal effectiveness the message [conveyed by tourist texts] should be short, clear, current, active and conclude with the identified key words" (Dann 1996: 174).

Gotti (2006) aptly distinguishes tourist communication between experts and tourist communication between specialists and non-specialists, the former representing an instance of highly specialised discourse and the latter tending towards general discourse. He then goes on to describe some lexical, syntactic and textual features which the language of tourism shares with other types of specialised discourse. The lexical features are the monoreferentiality of the terms used in such texts, the conciseness of their lexemes (e.g. *travelodge*)

and the emphasis expressed by, for instance, the use of evaluative adjectives and superlative forms. Their main syntactic features are expressive conciseness, that is, the use of extremely compact syntactic structures (e.g. *self-catering accommodation*), and pre-modification. Finally, the discourse of tourism exhibits distinctive textual characteristics which are due to the "norms governing the construction of its different text genres" (Gotti 2006: 31), the most typical of which are tourist guides, articles in specialised journals and general magazines, brochures and other advertising materials, itineraries, and professional correspondence. To these traditional and 'monologic' text types, Dann (2012) adds such recent 'dialogic' text types as blogs, virtual tourist communities and 'word-of-web overheards', and does so in an attempt to 'remodel' the language of tourism with a view to accounting for the recent changes brought about by the Internet.

As regards the morphosyntactic features of specialised discourse in general, Gotti (2011: 49) points out that:

> the specificity of morphosyntactic phenomena found in specialized languages is not a qualitative but a quantitative one. Certain features may also occur in general language but their frequency in specialized discourse makes them typical only of the latter.

Moya Guijarro and Albentosa Hernándes (2001: 365) investigate the textual phenomenon of thematic sequence (Gotti 2011: 84-87) in tourist brochures, and point out that the persuasive function of these texts:

> frequently leads the writer to move new topical entities away from the thematic slot of the sentence so that the introduction of the topic is postponed and the reader's attention is fully attracted by the area being advertised.

That is, the use of marked themes, a textual phenomenon which is common in general language as well, for 'strategic' reasons occurs more frequently in the specific language of tourism than in other text types.

The language of tourism shares some lexical and terminological components with the language produced in other professional domains, such as geography, economics, sociology and history, and

performs various rhetorical functions, including the persuasive, argumentative and informative ones (Calvi 2000). At the same time, however, it differs from these other domain-specific languages, given the tourism industry's peculiar communicative needs and the linguistic strategies that tourism professionals adopt to produce successful texts. According to Agorni (2012: 11-12), these strategies can be divided into: strategies meant to identify and address the reader, the appropriate use of specific genres, and the use of cross-cultural references. In a similar vein, Manca (2007: 115) claims that it is the advertising function in combination with the various components of the language of tourism which contributes to the development of standard lexical, morphosyntactic and textual features.

Some corpus-based studies have convincingly demonstrated that the promotional aims of the discourse of tourism account for some of its specific lexico-grammatical features. On the basis of his data, Lam (2007: 87), for instance, observes that:

> the lexical words and clusters used in tourism industry texts are very different from those found in general English in terms of their frequencies and the semantic fields to which they belong. And even if there are commonalities in the two different sources of texts, they still exhibit distinctive semantic prosodies.

As a way of exemplifying this statement, Lam (2007) looks into the collocational and colligational patterns of the words *city* and *islands* and their semantic prosodies in a 2-million-word corpus of online tourism industry texts. He also discusses the colligational patterns derived from the keyword clusters *one of the most* and *one of the more*. Other corpus-informed studies have uncovered further meaningful collocational and phraseological patters of frequently-used words in the field of tourism. Gerbig and Shek (2007), for instance, discuss the diachronic use of the keywords *tourist/s, travel* and *package holiday* in various corpora, including the Lancaster-Oslo-Bergen (LOB), which was compiled in the 1960s, and the British National Corpus, which dates back to the 1990s. Tognini Bonelli and Manca (2002) investigate the use of *welcome* and of its Italian functional equivalents in a comparable corpus of English and Italian

texts promoting farmhouse holidays, while Manca (2007) carries out a contrastive analysis of English and Italian nouns and adjectives belonging to the semantic fields of *beauty* and *tranquillity*.

Most of these studies also examine the implications that their findings can have for teaching and learning how to write tourism industry texts. Further research has been carried out on the features of the special language(s) of tourism and on how to best teach novice writers and trainee translators to respectively write and translate such texts (e.g. Kelly 2000; Palusci/Francesconi 2006; De Stasio/Palusci 2007; Curado Fuentes 2007; Fodde/Denti 2012). To the best of my knowledge, however, no study has so far investigated in detail either the syntactic and textual phenomena of existential and locative constructions in tourism industry texts or the problems that they might cause to novice non-native writers. The following sections will look into and attempt to shed light on these aspects.

3. Existential constructions in English

The lexico-grammatical and textual features explored in this chapter can be ascribed to the phenomena which are generally known in linguistics as existential and locative constructions. Because of their peculiarities, these constructions have attracted the attention of a large number of researchers working within various linguistic traditions and have been studied extensively (e.g. Jespersen 1924; Clark 1978; Lakoff 1987; Givón 1993; Biber *et al.* 1999; Huddleston/Pullum 2002; Martínez Insua/Palacios Martínez 2003; Palacios Martínez/Martínez Insua 2006).

In English, existential constructions take the form of expletive and unstressed *there + be + a noun phrase* (also called the Existent) and are the core of existential clauses. Besides the typical verb *be*, other verbs can be used after *there,* i.e. certain intransitive verbs expressing positional states (e.g. *stand, lie, stretch, remain, exist*) and

a few intransitive dynamic verbs of 'occurring', 'coming into view' or 'arrival on the scene' (e.g. *occur, follow, emerge, appear, loom*) (Downing/Locke 2006: 153). Existential *there* is relatively common in all types of registers: it is frequently used in casual conversation and fiction, and, to a slightly lesser extent, also in academic prose and in news (Biber *et al.* 1999: 948).

From a discourse and textual perspective, existential *there* mainly functions as a 'presentative' device in discourse, pointing as it does to the new information conveyed by the upcoming noun phrase. However, a distinction needs to be drawn between 'bare' existential clauses and 'extended' existential clauses. The former are exactly about the existence of an entity and are accompanied by "adjuncts of no syntactic significance for the existential construction" (Huddleston/Pullum 2002: 1393), while the latter contain complements or adjuncts that are less constrained or are followed by clauses that expand the existent. As a consequence, the former type cannot be reworded by means of a corresponding plain non-existential clause, whereas the latter can (Downing/Locke 2006: 257-258), as exemplified by (1), (2) and (3):

(1)   There's no milk (again).   *(Again) is no milk.

(2)   There's one copy *on the table*.   One copy is *on the table*.

(3)   There was a dog *barking outside*.   A dog is *barking outside*.

As can be noticed, the function of the 'extended' existential clauses in (2) and (3) is not primarily that of introducing a new referent into the discourse, but rather to expand on it and to establish coherence with the previous discourse (Downing/Locke 2006: 258-259). Specifically, the main information in (3) resides in the post-modifier of the noun phrase, i.e. *barking outside*. Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 1396-1397) also discuss some pragmatic constraints on the use of referents in the noun phrase. According to them, an existential clause can have an equivalent plain clause if a definite and physical entity is at issue (4). This also holds true when the abstract and indefinite referent in a noun phrase is already clear from the previous discourse (5):

(4)   There was *a furniture van* in the drive.   *A furniture van* was in the drive.

(5)   There's *one performance* at noon.   *One performance* is at noon.

If an adjunct of place or time is used in thematic position and is thus emphasised and foregrounded, existential *there* may be omitted, but is easily retrievable if a tag question is appended to the clause (Halliday 2004: 258). Lakoff (1987: 542) discusses this latter phenomenon by making reference to the cognitive processes underlying existentials and locatives and claims that:

> locatives are concerned with presence – presence in space, in our perception, in discourse, or in our imagination. The less vividly on stage an action is […] the more necessary existential *there* becomes. Abstractions such as absence, probability, and generic activities are not 'vividly on stage' and therefore require existential *there*. […] Existential *there* is necessary when there is no concrete object 'on stage'.

That is, existential *there* can be omitted in clauses such as (6), while it cannot be omitted in (7):

(6)   On the wall (*there*) was a Picasso painting (Halliday 2004: 258).

(7)   In the house *there* was *no* sign of life (Lakoff 1987: 542).

This phenomenon is also known as 'locative inversion', which is more common than existential *there* after an opening place adverbial. It mainly occurs in fiction when the relationships between the entity expressed in the adjunct and that in the locative clause are described in physical terms. In these cases, however, verbs other than *be* tend to be used, such as *hang, lay, run, sit,* and *stoop* (Biber *et al.* 1999: 954-955).

Another issue which concerns existential *there* constructions is the absence of number agreement which at times occurs between the noun phrase and the existential verb. As suggested by Lakoff (1987: 547-549), when the contracted form *there's* is used, some native English speakers tend to interpret existential *there* as the grammatical

subject, and do so irrespective of the number of the head noun, thus ending up using the singular form of the verb. In this respect, Martinez Insua and Palacios Martinez's (2003) investigation of the British National Corpus has revealed that non-concord occurs mainly in British spoken English, even though it is not as frequent as in other varieties of English (e.g. Canadian English). Also, its occurrence is highly correlated with the "presence of lengthy post-verbal sequences or of some adverbial or parenthetical element intervening between the verb and the notional subject" (Martinez Insua/Palacios Martinez 2003: 279), as exemplified by in the following example:

(8)   And, *there's at least* eight *discs* available at the present time, and more could
            be made available. (Martinez Insua/Palacios Martinez 2003: 280)

Finally, Biber *et al.* (1999: 186) observe that in conversation *there's* "tends to behave as a single invariable unit for the purpose of speech processing" and that "the connection is far less close with *there was,* which is not reduced to a single syllable in speech and is not contracted in writing."

4. Methodology and data

The corpus-based investigation described in this chapter is conducted with reference to Hoey's (2005) framework of 'lexical priming', whereby words and structures are viewed as being primed for use in particular ways in specific contexts. To be precise, the focus is on existential and location patterns, and the research hypothesis is that they are primed for specific uses in tourist texts. The patterns investigated can be defined as 'colligational', in that the relationship between their components is 'colligation', a term which Hoey (2005: 43) defines as follows:

> [colligation is] the relation holding between a word and a grammatical pattern
> [and] going beyond traditional grammar relations and embracing such

phenomena as the positioning of a word or word sequence within the sentence or paragraph and even its positioning within the text as a whole.

The method of analysis adopted is Contrastive Interlanguage Analysis (CIA), which aims to explore "non-native features of learner writing and speech through detailed comparisons of linguistic features in native and non-native corpora" (Granger 2002: 22). It involves the comparison of a corpus of tourist texts written by native or expert writers (NS) to a corpus of texts written by learners of English (NNS). Not only is the investigation conducted with the purpose of highlighting errors in the learner texts, but also (and mainly) to find "instances of under- and overrepresentation of words, phrases and structures" (Granger 2002: 22). The corpus analysis has involved the study of word lists and concordance output retrieved by means of the software package *Wordsmith Tools 5* (Scott 2008). The aim is to gain insights into how a given set of words establishes colligational relations with other words or grammatical patterns, thus contributing to the formation of existential and location patterns in the learner and in the expert corpus respectively.

The learner corpus compiled for this study is an electronic collection of authentic foreign language textual data (Granger 2002: 7) which was assembled in the academic year 2011/2012, with the aim of representing the promotional tourist language produced by a group of second-year university students of *Mediazione Linguistica e Culturale* (Linguistic and Cultural Mediation) at the University of Padua. It consists in 105 tourist texts (39,244 words) promoting the city of Padua and written by the students as part of a task which they completed under assessment conditions with the aid of dictionaries. The texts were written as responses to a prompt written in Italian which specified the three parts of the target text (i.e. introduction, what to see, how to get there) and listed the main points to be developed. The majority of the students had an Italian mother-tongue background or were highly proficient in Italian, and had all been studying at least one other European language. They had passed the first-year English exam, set at B1 level of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Council of Europe 2001) in both receptive and productive skills, and were attending English

classes at B2 level. During the course they had been exposed to tourist texts in English, which were used as source texts for analysis and translation.

The expert tourist corpus is made up of 72 promotional tourist texts (144,291 words) collected between 1998-2008. Most of them are promotional in nature, i.e. 12 magazines, 12 brochures and 25 web pages, while the 28 extracts from tourist guides are mainly informative. All of them are texts concerning tourist attractions and resorts in the South of England and spa hotels in Bath and in the Lake District. In spite of the fact that all the texts were produced by tourism professionals with the aim of promoting those specific areas, there are some statistically significant linguistic and textual differences between the four related genres represented in the corpus, which Castello (2002) explores with reference to a sub-corpus of the expert corpus (92,500 words). While the brochures tend to be lexically dense, he found that the magazines and the tourist guides are grammatically more intricate (e.g. Halliday 2004). Also, the brochures contain the largest number of imperative and minor clauses, while the magazines are characterised by the use of a larger number of interrogative clauses and of modal verbs. Table 1 displays some figures concerning the two corpora:

	Learner c.	*Expert c.*
Texts	105	72
Tokens	39,244	144,291
Average text length (tokens)	373.75	2004
Standardised T/T ratio (basis: 300)	59.57	60.61

Table 1. Number of texts, total number of tokens, average text length and the standardised type/token ratio in the learner and in the expert corpus.

As can be seen, the texts in the expert corpus are longer than those in the learner corpus, but only slightly lexically more varied. As the students were given a specific task to complete under precise time constraints, their texts were expected to be rather repetitive. Also, the students being non-native speakers of English, they were thought to be less 'creative' than the expert writers. In fact, the figures for the standardised type/token ratio suggest that the expert writers do not

necessarily use a wider repertoire of word types in their texts than the learners do.

In order to compare the frequency of pattern occurrence across the two corpora, the linguistic counts of most patterns were normalised to their rate of occurrence per thousand words. For some patterns, however, the linguistic counts are given as percentages of the total number of *there* existential constructions.

5. Results and discussion

This section explores and discusses the features of the colligational patterns which describe existence and location in the learner and in the expert corpus respectively. Some of the patterns produced by the learners had been perceived as peculiar and non-native-like already on first reading them, and were, therefore, deemed worth further investigation. In the following sub-sections, the data being investigated are presented as sets of related patterns or pattern types.

5.1. Pattern type 1: there is/'s/are + *noun phrase*

The first set of patterns contains the existential constructions *there is/are/'s*. A glance at Table 2 suggests that the students use more existential clauses than the experts do (if the normalised values are considered). Both of them, however, use the pattern *there's* with about the same frequency.

	Learner c.	*‰ of tokens*	*Expert c.*	*‰ of tokens*
there is	141	3.59	127	0.88
there's	18	0.46	74	0.51
there are	138	3.52	157	1.09
Total	297	7.57	358	2.48

Table 2. Occurrences and standardised frequency counts per thousand words (out of the number of tokens) of *there is, there's* and *there are* in the learner corpus and in the expert corpus.

The learners' remarkably frequent use of existential patterns is definitely mainly due to the instructions which they had to abide by when writing their texts. To be precise, they had been explicitly asked to describe the city of Padua in general and some of its main monuments in particular: the *Cappella degli Scrovegni, Palazzo del Bo'* and *Palazzo della Ragione.* In their texts they do indeed employ *there* constructions to introduce these attractions, and to do so they either use the original Italian names in inverted commas or provide an English translation (*the Scrovegni Chapel*). Also, a look at the concordance lines for *there are* reveals that the students do at times make use of 'non-native-like' temporal adjuncts before the pattern, such as *in every moment of the year (there are), during the year (there are), during all the year (there are)*, which the expert corpus does not contain. It presents, instead, such expressions as *throughout the year* and *all year round*, which proved to be useful phraseology for the students to memorise.

A closer look at these patterns (see Table 3) reveals that the learners do quite often employ them to introduce definite referents into the text or to locate them in space, while the experts nearly always use them to present or locate indefinite referents, as exemplified by (9) and (10) respectively:

(9)   Then there is the suggestive [sic] Palazzo della Ragione, built in 1218.

(10)   There is also a Heritage Centre in Carlisle Road […].

	Learner c.	*% there ex.*	*Expert c.*	*% there ex.*
there's/are/is + *definite ref.*	124	41.75	10	2.79
there *extended existentials*	152	51.18	79	22.07

Table 3. Occurrences and percentages of use (out of the total number of *there* existential constructions) of *there's/are/is* + definite referent and of *there* extended existentials.

Furthermore, the majority of the clauses containing these patterns in the learner corpus are extended ones, that is they not only express the referents' existence or location, but also provide further information about them (mainly with an embedded clause, as can be seen in 11). In the expert corpus, by contrast, bare existentials are more recurrent, as illustrated by (12):

(11)   There are many facilities which allow you to practice your favourite sports.

(12)   There are good views from the Gun Garden - a nice picnic spot.

These findings are in line with the results of Palacios Martínez and Martínez Insua's (2006: 222-223) investigation of two Spanish learner corpora. Their learners "tend to use non-minimal, extended *there* constructions more frequently than the native speakers do," and the authors suggest that in their data *there* constructions are used "as devices for drawing long and heavy subjects towards final position […] rather than as signalling a number of other pragmatic functions." As regards the data discussed in the present study, however, this difference may well be also due to the Italian students' attempts to write concise texts, and specifically to the fact that to do so they often pack information inside the post-modifier slot of noun phrases or in subsequent clauses. On the other hand, the experts' texts seem to be informed by a different pragmatic strategy, which involves the introduction of the referents first and the gradual addition of separate information units afterwards.

5.2. Pattern type 2: there is/'s + *plural head noun*

A noteworthy aspect of the experts' existential patterns which emerged from the analysis of the concordance output is the absence of number agreement between the noun phrase and the verb in some of the clauses. As can be seen from Table 4, 3.07% of the occurrences of *there is* and 3.07% of *there's* are indeed characterised by non-agreement, as exemplified by (13) and (14):

(13)   There is also much interesting graffiti and two pillars brought here from
        Reculver Towers.

(14)   There's beach space galore, delightful gardens and parks, a traditional pier and
        a host of excellent pubs and restaurants.

	Learner c.	*% there ex.*	*Expert c.*	*% there ex.*
there is + *plural ref.*	0	0	11	3.07
there's + *plural ref.*	0	0	11	3.07
there are + *singular ref.*	0	0	2	0.56

Table 4. Occurrences and percentages of use (out of the total number of *there* existential constructions) of *there is/'s* + plural referent and of *there are* + singular referent.

Another two cases of non-agreement involve the use of *there are* followed by the quantifiers *a wealth of* / *a wide variety of* and a plural head noun, as can be seen in (15). Furthermore, in seven instances a pattern can be noticed which consists in the use of *there is / there's* followed by such quantifiers as *a wide / extensive range of*, *a host of*, *an abundance of* and by plural head nouns. Even though in these cases there is indeed concord between the verbs and the head nouns, the fact that the post-modifiers consist of plural nouns might at first give the impression that there is no agreement, as (16) illustrates:

(15)   There are a wealth of Leisure and Relaxation activities at Lucknam Park - you
        don't really need to leave the estate!

(16)   There is an extensive range of excellent home made bar snacks and light
        meals served.

The majority of the occurrences of non-agreement were retrieved from the most persuasive genres represented in the expert corpus, that is the magazines and the web pages. This might suggest that non-agreement is used as part of a promotional strategy whereby a feature which is typical of spoken and possibly also of childlike English is used in writing with the aim of "communicating between often anonymous parental senders and readily identifiable childlike receivers" (Dann 1996: 249). Yet, some occurrences were also found in the tourist guides, which partly contradicts this speculation and leaves room for further investigation.

5.3. Pattern type 3: Adjunct of space + there is/'s/are *+ noun phrase*

As can be noticed from the data displayed in Table 5, another prominent feature of the learner corpus is the students' preference for the existential construction *there is/'s/are* after a thematised adjunct of space, while in similar cases the expert writers seldom choose this option and favour other patterns instead.

Adjunct of space +	*Learner c.*	*% there ex.*	*Expert c.*	*% there ex.*
there is	112	37.71	11	3.07
there's	13	4.38	5	1.40
there are	80	26.94	4	1.12
Total	205	69.02	21	5.87
where there is/'s/are	35	11.78	5	1.40
in which there is/'s/are	6	2.02	1	0.28

Table 5. Occurrences and percentages of use (out of the total number of *there* existential constructions) of adjuncts of space + *there is/there's/there are* and of two specific location patterns.

In other words, when the students introduce new referents into the discourse and locate them in space with reference to the position of other known referents, they nearly always make use of such patterns as those exemplified by the following extracts:

(17)   Next to the chapel there are the Eremitani museums.

(18)   Near the palace there are the two main market squares […].

(19)   Downstairs there are historical Paduan shops […].

Two specific realisations of this pattern which are over-represented in the learner data are *where there is/'s/are* and *in which there is/'s/are*, as illustrated by (20) and (21):

(20)   Here you can visit the Quaranta's Room, where there is the podium of Galileo
       Galilei […].

(21)   The Scrovegni Chapel, in which there's a complete cycle of frescos painted by
       the Tuscan artist Giotto.

As we see, the students favour the use of the relative pronouns *where* and *which* whose antecedents are already known referents.

5.4. Pattern type 4: Adjunct of space + is/are *+ noun phrase*

In contexts similar to those described in sub-section 5.3, the expert writers mainly opt for constructions with locative inversion, which entails the omission of *there* and the thematisation of an adjunct of space and aims at better focusing on and describing the position of a given attraction or facility, as illustrated by the examples below:

(22)   Near the Palace Pier is the Sea-Life Centre […].

(23)   Further up Dyke Road is the 'Booth Museum' […].

(24)   Downstairs is a cosy bar/venue open late for music […].

The learner data contains no instance of locative inversion, which suggests that the learners are not familiar with this construction. Locative inversion is relatively common in fiction, which often includes descriptions of settings (Biber *et al.* 1999: 954-955). In a way, therefore, its frequent use in the expert corpus stresses the

descriptive function of professional tourist publications. The omission of *there* after such adjuncts is also reminiscent of the language of literary travel writing, memoirs and travelogues, as illustrated by the following extracts from *Pictures from Italy* by Charles Dickens ([1846] 1913):

(25)   On the first floor also, is a whole house, and a good large residence too.

(26)   In the old refectory of the dilapidated Convent of Santa Maria delle Grazie, is the work of art, perhaps, better known than any other in the world: the Last Supper, by Leonardo da Vinci.

5.5. Pattern type 5: (Adjunct of space) + intransitive verbs expressing a positional state or dynamic verbs + *noun phrase*

Other verbs which are frequently used by the expert writers are *stand, lie, stretch, hang,* and *loom*. As can be seen in Table 6, the most recurrent ones (including their infinitive, third-person singular, past, past participle and *ing*-forms) in the expert data are *stand* and *lie*, which are mainly used without locative inversion (i.e. without an adjunct of space preceding them).

Various verb forms of	*Learner c.*	*‰ tokens*	*Expert c.*	*‰ tokens*
stand	2	0.05	52	0.36
lie	1	0.03	38	0.26
stretch	0	0	11	0.08
hang	0	0	6	0.04
loom	0	0	1	0.01
Adj. of space + lie/hang/ stand/stretch	1	0.03	19	0.13

Table 6. Raw frequency counts and standardised frequency counts per thousand words of verbs expressing a positional state or dynamic verbs.

Extracts (27) to (30), taken from the expert corpus, exemplify this pattern:

(27)   At the highest point of Rye stands St Mary's Church, […].

(28)   Eastward lies Southsea, an Edwardian seaside resort.

(29)   Beyond the green belt spreads a sizeable stretch of suburbia.

(30)   Above his tomb hang copies of his funeral achievements, […].

The students, by contrast, hardly use verbs other than *be* in such contexts, which not only indicates that the deployment of such alternative verbs is a native-like feature, but also suggests that it might represent a characteristic of professional tourist writing.

5.6. Pattern type 6: (is/are) + (adverb) + situated/placed/located/set

The last set of location patterns consists in the optional use of *is/are* and an adverb followed by the past participles of either one of the transitive verbs *situate, locate, place* or *set.* These and other past participles can indeed be used to locate a given referent in space in combination with 'location elements' consisting in either complements or adjuncts (Huddleston/Pullum 2002: 680). Table 7 offers a closer look at this pattern type and shows that *is/are + situated/ placed/located* is over-represented in the learner corpus, while *is/are set* is only used by the expert writers. Also, the experts favour the use of the plain past participles, with a preference for *set*.

According to Manca (2012), dictionaries often describe these verbs as synonymous and interchangeable, while she argues that, at least in the corpus of British farmhouse holiday websites that she analysed, they tend to display different collocational profiles. That is, as they are used to locate different kinds of items in space, they are not always interchangeable. Following Manca's classification, it can be said, for instance, that in the expert corpus *situated* is used to alternatively express 'general' location (e.g. "*the town is situated on the Atlantic Heritage Coast*"), 'measured' location (e.g. "*situated 4 miles north of Littlehampton*") or 'specific' location (e.g. "*situated underneath the Grafton multi-storey car park*"), while in the learner corpus it only expresses general and specific location (e.g. "*situated*

between Venice and Treviso", *"situated near Piazza delle Erbe e della Frutta"*).

	Learner c.	*‰ tokens*	*Expert c.*	*‰ tokens*
- is/are situated	32	0.82	19	0.13
- is/are + adv. + situated	0	0	2	0.01
- situated	14	0.36	18	0.12
- is/are placed	9	0.2	0	0
- is/are + adv. + placed	0	0	6	0.04
- placed	3	0.08	0	0
- is/are located	8	0.20	9	0.06
- located	8	0.20	11	0.08
- is/are set	0	0	6	0.04
- is/are + adv. + set	0	0	2	0.01
- set	2	0.05	42	0.29

Table 7: Raw frequency counts and standardised frequency counts per thousand words of the pattern (Adj. of space) + *is/are* + *(adv.)* + *situated/located/placed/set.*

At times the learners also use the erroneous pattern 'Adjunct of space + *is/are* + *situated/placed* + noun phrase', thus producing clauses such as (31) and (32):

(31)   *Near the Chapel is situated the civic museum of the Eremitani;

(32)   *the 'Sala dei Quaranta' hall where is placed Galileo Galilei's podium.

Both these clauses contain an apparent syntactic mistake, which is likely due to the influence of the Italian language. That is, the learners use the adjunct of space at the beginning of the clause and postpone the noun phrase acting as subject after the verb, which the English syntax does not allow for. The students could have opted instead for locative inversion, which, as already said, in professional writing is mainly associated with the choice of verbs under-represented in the learner corpus, such as *stand* and *lie*.

      The students use *placed* to express any type of location with the exception of measured location (e.g. "*placed in the north-east of Italy"*; "*placed in the Sala dei Quaranta room"*), whereas the experts

never choose it. Furthermore, while the experts employ *is/are +
adverb + placed/situated/set* to indicate "convenient" location (Manca
2012: 389), such as "*Dover is ideally placed to*", "*Youth hostels are
well placed along the coast for stops*", "*Hastings is ideally situated
for the ports of Dover*", the students never do so.

A look at the most recurrent content words which collocate with
the patterns *is/are + situated/located/placed* in the British National
Corpus[2] (see Table 8) indicates that *is/are placed* is not used as a
location pattern in this large reference corpus either, while
collocations with *located* and *situated* are instead often used to this
end.

is/are located		*is/are situated*		*is/are placed*	
centre	21	area	36	emphasis	65
hotel	19	hotel	35	context	26
village	16	centre	31	box	10
site	11	village	30	reliance	9
cells	9	miles	26	stress	9
sites	8	town	21	foot	9
housing	8	road	21	layer	8
chromosome	7	city	19	orders	8
residential	7	south	19	magnetic	7
island	7	park	17	tank	7

Table 8. The most recurrent collocates of *is/are + situated/located/placed* in the BNC
(all registers; span = 8).

As can be seen, in the British National Corpus *placed* often co-occurs
with words such as *emphasis, context* and *reliance*, which suggests
that it is mainly used metaphorically and not to describe physical
spaces.

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2   <http://corpus.byu.edu/bnc/x.asp>, last visited on 25th June 2013.

6. Conclusions

This chapter has explored some existential and location patterns in a corpus of promotional tourist texts written by learners and has compared them to those found in a control corpus made up of texts written by experts. The methodology has, therefore, involved the compilation of the two corpora and their contrastive analysis. Not only has the study aimed at investigating this specific type of learner language *per se*, but has also sought to take advantage of the learner data to identify some salient aspects of the expert data and to bring them into focus.

The analyses conducted have revealed that some existential and location patterns are used in one corpus and not in the other, yet the majority of them are represented in both but with different frequencies. Firstly, the learners favour extended existentials to locate definite referents, while the strategy adopted by the experts entails using bare existentials with indefinite referents. Secondly, only the experts produce clauses with non-concord between *there is/'s/are* and the head noun, and are likely to do so to give a flavour of informality to their texts. Thirdly, the learner dataset presents a large number of instances in which the pattern *there is/'s/are* is used with locative inversion, whereas the expert data reveals that in such cases the professional writers preferably opt to either omit existential *there* or to use such verbs as *stand* and *lie*. Fourthly, the pattern *is situated/placed/located* is very recurrent in the learner corpus, while in the expert corpus it is the bare forms of the verbs *set, situated, located* that are preferred. Also, the patterns *placed* and *is placed* are not present in this latter corpus, which suggests that these verb forms should not be used to describe physical location in space. Fifthly, the experts employ *is/are + adverb + placed/situated/set* to express "convenient" location, while the learners never do so. Finally, the analysis of the learner corpus has revealed the presence of some non-native-like and some erroneous patterns, such as the use of unusual temporal adjuncts or the wrong pattern 'Adjunct of space + *is/are + situated/placed* + noun phrase'.

We believe that this study has some implications for language teaching. The "learning-driven data" (Seidlhofer 2002: 231) and the findings discussed here could indeed be used to prepare 'data-driven' and 'quick and dirty' activities (e.g. Tribble/Jones 1990; Seidlhofer 2002), which would make it easy for the students to notice and critically look at the differences between their own texts and the professional ones. It would also give them the opportunity to improve their skills in writing promotional tourist texts. All this, however, would require caution and appropriate teacher guidance, as students' direct access to learner data might confuse learners "by showing incorrect and inappropriate usage and encouraging wrong generalizations" (Zagrebelsky 2004: 58). This study does also have methodological implications for further investigations into the specific lexico-grammatical and textual features of professional tourist publications and possibly also into those of other specialised languages. To be precise, this study supports the claim made in section 1: if compared to an expert corpus, even a small yet well designed learner corpus has the potential to reveal not only learner deficiencies but also some of the peculiar features of the text type it represents. This holds especially true for such blended text types as promotional tourist texts, whose linguistic features are difficult to pin down.

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