



**Claudia Elena Stoian**  
***The Discourse of Tourism and National  
Heritage: A Contrastive Study from a Cultural  
Perspective***

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Review by

**Daniel DEJICA**

Politehnica University of Timișoara, Romania

Department of Communication and Foreign Languages, daniel.dejica@upt.ro

Using a modern, structural, and functional approach, Claudia Elena Stoian puts forward a contrastive study of the discourse of tourism and national heritage from a cultural perspective. The author successfully combines semiotics, text linguistics, semantics, intercultural communication, cultural studies, and, of course, discourse analysis to offer some very useful tools and models for the analysis of websites.

It is worthwhile mentioning that unlike other research conducted in the field, which is mainly based on the Systemic Functional Theory (see, for instance, Djonov 2005), Claudia Elena Stoian takes the analysis to a further dimension, that of culture, and attempts to show the differences in the communicative acts, which may be rooted in the culture of a country, namely in the way language and image are used to depict people, places, and circumstances, to present social interactions or to compose a meaningful multimodal act.

The aims of the research – as presented by Claudia Elena Stoian in her book – are multiple. First, the author plans to study the way Great Britain, Spain, and Romania present their national landmarks via websites (in English). To perform this study, she uses a Systemic Functional Perspective and applies the tools provided by Halliday's theory (1985, 1994; Halliday–Matthiessen 2004) in the case of the linguistic text and by Kress and van Leeuwen's model (1996, 2006) in the case of the visual message since, as she claims, such an analysis can indicate the main linguistic and visual strategies used to present and promote the landmarks of a country. The working hypothesis in this case is that the overall meanings built by the organization of the websites and their webpages as well as the lexicogrammatical and visual features of the promotional messages may share some

similarities but also reveal some differences. Their identification has a twofold aim: to relate similarities and differences a) to the source of the message, i.e. institutional vs. commercial, and so to the different types of websites, and b) to the culture of the different countries, i.e. British, Spanish vs. Romanian. Second, Claudia Elena Stoian aims to interpret or to consider the results of the study from a cultural perspective: since websites are produced in different countries, they can be considered representative of those cultures. Last but not least, she intends to show the way different messages are encoded in the language and image of online communication in international tourism.

Claudia Elena Stoian structures her book into four main parts. The book also includes a foreword signed by Arsenio Jesús Moya Guijarro, a list of figures, a list of tables, an appendix with the detailed linguistic and visual analyses of the webpages, a bibliography, and an index.

The first volume is divided into four parts. It also includes a very rich chapter of about 300 titles, where Claudia Elena Stoian lists the titles she consulted, which are representative of both fundamental and current works written by specialists in the field.

In Part I, the author introduces the thesis, its motivation, the previous studies in the field, the research questions the study aims to answer, and the organization of the book.

Part II sets the theoretical framework of the research in four chapters. Chapter 2 addresses the field of tourism and focuses on a single type: cultural tourism. It also shows the importance destination branding and Internet have on tourism, paying special attention to the features websites need to be successful. Chapter 3 is more specific and presents the particularities of promotional tourism discourse in relation with two of its most frequent modes: language and image. Chapter 4 introduces the theoretical framework for the multimodal analysis of the websites collected in the study: Systemic Functional Theory (Halliday 1985, 1994; Matthiessen 2004; Kress–van Leeuwen 1996, 2006). Finally, Chapter 5 adds a new field to the study: cultural variability. It describes studies on the relation between discourse and culture and argues for the appropriateness of the cultural dimension of context dependency (Hall 1976, 2000; Hall–Hall 1990) for the study of online promotional tourism discourse. Research questions deriving from the presented studies close Part II.

Part III presents the study. The methodology followed in the research is described in Chapter 6, including the design of the study, the collection and presentation of the data, and the method of analysis of its linguistic and visual components. The following chapters present the results of the analyses and the comparison between types of promotion and between countries. Chapters 7 and 8 present and discuss the results of the analyses from two perspectives: the type of websites (institutional and commercial) and countries (British vs. Spanish vs.

Romanian). In Chapter 9, the author compares and interprets the results obtained from the cultural dimension of context.

Part IV is dedicated to the conclusion of the research study. It summarizes the main findings, highlighting their practical implication for the field of online tourism. It also considers limitations of the study and possible further lines of investigation.

From my perspective, an important result of the research conducted by Claudia Elena Stoian is that she managed to place the analysis of discourse of tourism and national heritage in an adequate conceptual framework, which, as seen on the analysed corpus, proved to be extremely fertile. It is a framework offered by semiotics, text linguistics, semantics, intercultural communication, cultural studies, and discourse analysis, which offers elements for an integrated, multimodal analysis of websites. Seen from a Romanian perspective, the applied method, the analysis, and the results of the research make this thesis a valuable and needed contribution.

As I see it, another result is the selection, systematization, and processing of concepts in view of integrating them into a model able to offer a sound basis for the analysis of the discourse of tourism. Moreover, the existing models, theories, approaches, or methods are clearly presented and incorporated into a coherent whole. In this way, Claudia Elena Stoian builds a construction which has the merit of displaying a variety of existing points of views integrated into a unified work. I would like to underline that in order to complete such work successfully, it is not enough to be familiar with and coherently systematize such concepts but also to meditate in depth on them and express a personal point of view, in which, I believe, Claudia Elena Stoian has brightly succeeded.

The book has multiple qualities: both scholars and professionals can use the analysis and its results. The success of the study is given by fine and insightful analyses, conceptual clarifications, an integrating perspective, a comprehensive vision, and an original contribution of a researcher able to come up with viable and useful results.

## References

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