



THE USE OF ADJECTIVES IN TRAVEL FOOD VLOGS

BY

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyse the linguistic features in travel food vlogs. The focus is on investigating the use of adjectives by the vloggers when describing the food that they eat. The adjectives were separated into its suitable category based on Dixon's (1982) semantic categorization of adjectives. The categories are; Dimension, Color, Value, Age, Physical Property, Human Propensity. The objectives of this study are to investigate the semantic categories of adjectives that are frequently used by the vloggers, and to identify which lexemes out of the adjective group are frequently used by the vloggers. A total of six famous travel food vlogs on YouTube have been chosen. The data was collected by using two computer-based software; AntConc and Nvivo. The results show that the adjectives under Value category is used the most by the vloggers as compared to other categories. This study also shows that the lexeme *good* has the highest frequency in term of its usage by the vloggers in the video.

ملخص البحث

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تحليل الخصائص اللغوية في مدونات الفيديو التي تهتم بالأطعمة السفرية. ويتم التركيز على تحليل كيفية استعمال مدوني الفيديو للصفات عندما يصفون الطعام الذي يأكلونه. تم تصنيف الأوصاف في مجموعات متجانسة، حسب تصنيف ديكسون (1982) الخاص بالتصنيف الدلالي للصفات، والمجموعات هي: البعد، واللون، والقيمة الخاصة الفيزيائية، ومدى الميل البشري إليها. والهدف من هذه الدراسة هو فحص التصنيف الدلالي الذي كثيراً ما يستخدمه المدونون. فضلاً عن التعرف على الوحدة المعنوية الأكثر استعمالاً لدى مدوني الفيديو. تم اختيار (6) ست مدونات فيديو مشهورة بأطعمة السفر. جمعت البيانات باستخدام برنامجي حاسوب أنتكونك وأنفيو (AntConc & Nvivo). تشير النتائج إلى أن الأوصاف المنتمية إلى مجموعة (القيمة) هي الأكثر استعمالاً لدى مدوني الفيديو مقارنةً مع المجموعات الأخرى كما أشارت إلى أن وحدة المعاني بمستوى جيد إذ هي الأعلى تكراراً من ناحية استعمال مدوني الفيديو لها.

APPROVAL PAGE

I certify that I have supervised and read this study and that in my opinion, it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Master of Arts in Teaching English for Specific Purposes

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I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degrees at IIUM or other institutions.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.....	ii
Abstract (Arabic).....	iii
Approval Page.....	iv
Copyright.....	vi
Acknowledgments	vii
List of Tables.....	x
List of Figures.....	xii
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Background of the Study.....	4
1.2 Statement of the Problem.....	5
1.3 Objectives of the Study.....	7
1.4 Significance of the Study.....	8
1.5 Methodology.....	9
1.6 Organization of Chapters.....	9
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	10
2.1 Introduction.....	10
2.2 The Role of Social Media to Potential Travelers.....	10
2.3 Youtube, A Channel to Attract Potential Travelers.....	11
2.4 The Importance of Travel Food Vlogs.....	12
2.5 Tourism Marketing and Language.....	12
2.6 Linguistic Strategies which Involve the Use of Adjectives in Tourism Language.....	13
2.7 Chapter Summary.....	14
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....	15
3.1 Introduction.....	15
3.2 Research Design.....	15
3.3 Data Collection Procedures.....	23
3.4 Data Analysis Procedures.....	26
3.5 Instrument.....	26
3.6 Chapter Summary.....	26
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION.....	28
4.1 Introduction.....	28
4.2 Componential Analysis.....	28
4.3 The Frequency of Adjectives in each Dixon's (1982) Semantic Categories.....	32
4.4 Adjectives in Dixon's (1982) Semantic Categories.....	36
4.5 The Most Frequently Used Adjectives in The Videos.....	55
4.6 Chapter Summary.....	57

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION.....	58
5.1 Introduction.....	58
5.2 The Semantic Categories of Adjectives that are Frequently Used by The Vloggers.....	58
5.3 The Lexemes That Are Frequently Used by The Vloggers.....	58
5.4 Pedagogical Implications.....	59
5.5 Recommendation for Future Research.....	59
REFERENCES.....	60
APPENDIX A: Transcription of Videos.....	64
APPENDIX B: The Highest Number of Adjectives <i>Good</i> , <i>Little</i> , <i>Amazing</i> , <i>Best</i> , <i>Nice</i> Calculated using AntConc.....	86

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1	Examples of studies that used Componential Analysis	18
Table 2	Travel food vlogs titles and duration	24
Table 3	Dixon's (1982) semantic categorization of adjectives	28
Table 4	The Frequency of Adjectives	32
Table 5	The analysis of adjectives under dimension category and its possible descriptions	36
Table 6	The examples for the adjectives <i>massive, huge, big</i>	36
Table 7	The examples of adjectives <i>small, little, tiny, mini</i>	37
Table 8	The examples of adjective <i>little</i>	38
Table 9	The analysis of adjectives under color category and its possible descriptions	38
Table 10	The examples of adjectives <i>red, orange, green, yellow</i>	39
Table 11	The analysis of adjectives under value category and its possible descriptions	39
Table 12	The examples of adjectives <i>delicious, flavorful, tasty</i>	40
Table 13	The examples of adjectives <i>amazing, great, good, best, awesome, incredible</i>	41
Table 14	The examples of adjectives nice, unbelievable, deluxe	42
Table 15	The analysis of other adjectives under value category and its possible descriptions	43
Table 16	The examples of adjectives <i>popular, important, interesting, fun, famous, special, favorite, better</i>	44
Table 17	The examples of negative adjectives <i>bad, terrible, disgusting, gross</i>	45
Table 18	The analysis of adjectives under age category and its possible descriptions	45
Table 19	The examples of adjectives <i>old, new</i>	46
Table 20	The analysis of adjectives under physical property; texture category and its possible descriptions	46
Table 21	The examples of adjectives <i>sticky, fluffy, tender</i>	47
Table 22	The analysis of adjectives under physical property; sense category and its possible descriptions	47
Table 23	The examples of adjectives <i>fragrant, fresh</i>	48
Table 24	The examples of adjectives <i>burnt, buttery, crispy, sweet, sour, spicy, salty, tartness, cheezy, creamy, smoky, nutty, tomatoey, tangy</i>	49
Table 25	The examples of adjectives <i>cold, firm, hot, warm</i>	50
Table 26	The analysis of adjectives under physical property, wetness category and its possible descriptions	51
Table 27	The examples of adjectives <i>dry, moist, watery</i>	51
Table 28	The analysis of adjectives under physical property; appearance category and its possible descriptions	52
Table 29	The examples of adjectives <i>cute, pretty, beautiful, gorgeous,</i>	

	<i>lovely, stunning</i>	52
Table 30	The analysis of adjectives under human propensity; mental state, physical state, and behavior category and its possible descriptions	53
Table 31	The examples of adjectives <i>hungry, tired, sweaty, excited, crazy, happy</i>	54
Table 32	The analysis of adjective good and its possible descriptions	55
Table 33	The examples of adjective <i>good</i>	56

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1	Componential Analysis of the words used for descriptions	17
Figure 2	Componential Analysis in terms of collocation	18
Figure 3	Dixon's (1982) Semantic categories and subcategories used in semantic coding of adjectives	23

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Technology advancement plays a vital role in changing the pace of today's society. The existence of technology provides opportunities for people to access visual media such as digital media, video games and television in a way that young adults have integrated these media into their daily lives (Glore, 2010). Today, people demand everything to be fast, be it in gathering information, in waiting for the food to be served, in booking flight tickets, and almost in all aspects of individual's life. "They absorb information quickly, in images and video as well as text, from multiple sources simultaneously. They operate at 'twitch speed,' expecting instant responses and feedback," (Duffy, 2008, p.119). Before the internet trend appeared, people consumed more time to obtain information on something. They look up the information on printed materials such as newspapers, books and magazines. However, this is not the trend in today's world, where people can get information with only one click, and most of the information they need is available online. A study by Stabel (2015) has shown a steady increase in electronic communication compared to printed communication. He mentioned that electronic communication grows by 15.9% annually until 2018, while printed communication is only growing by 2.8% each year.

Among the sites that are increasingly popular among the Internet users are the video blogs (vlogs). Frobenius (2011; 816) defines a vlog as "a video sequence similar to a blog that a user shoots of him/herself talking into a camera and, after optional editing, uploads to the Internet, where viewers can rate and leave comments in written

or video form". Vlog is a popular platform to express oneself, and there are millions of vlogs available on YouTube. Famous vloggers have millions of followers subscribing to their channels on YouTube. According to Luers (2007), some vlog genres are diary, experimental, documentary, and mash-up. There are vlogs that exist purely for entertainment reasons such as *Ask a Ninja* (askaninja.com), and *the Carol and Steve at show* (Clayfield, 2007).

According to mediakix.com (2016), vlogs increased in popularity around 2005 after the launch of YouTube. At this time, majority of the Internet users followed a YouTuber named Bree, a teenage girl who posted videos about her personal life. Although at that time, the videos were of low quality featuring few edits, the response was still enormous. Today, 44% of all Internet users watch a vlog each month.

Many travelers prefer to use travel vlogs because they find it more engaging on a per-view basis. This is proven by looking at the data collected by YouTube, in which, "travel vlogs receive four times social engagement than other types of travel content on YouTube." (YouTube data, 2014). Vlog has become one of the famous platforms for potential travelers to obtain information on the places that they plan to visit. According to Strangelove (2010), vlogs are perceived to be more authentic than other forms of mainstream media. The original videos that the travelers published are one of the reasons for the popularity of vlogs. The production of vlogs has grown in the year 2016. Young (2016) stated 44 percent of Internet users watch vlogs every month. This is also because vloggers create feelings of reality as well as trust for their audiences (Sheffield, 2014). Vlogs serves as a medium to post videos which could be on their life experiences, their perspectives on certain issues, their makeup tutorials, and in this study, the focus will be on their review of the places that they have visited. People tend to watch famous

travel vlogs to get ideas on where to go for their holiday destinations. The contributions are from vloggers who have been to the places and shared their videos of authentic images and views of the destinations with the Internet users. The language used in the vlogs also acts as a persuasive tool in attracting potential travelers to visit the destinations.

One of the most frequently used channels for people to watch vlogs is via YouTube. YouTube is one of the popular channels among vloggers to post their videos. Each month, more than a billion individual users visit YouTube and over 6 billion hours of video are watched (YouTube Statistics, n.d.). It is a medium for Internet users to watch their favorite videos or subscribe to videos that interest them. There are millions of videos posted by personal vloggers on YouTube, and many of them portray their experiences and reviews on places they have visited. Some of the famous travel vlog channels on YouTube are *Fun for Louis*, *Simon and Martina*, and *Mark Wiens*.

When describing places, adjectives are used to inform the readers on things that might be of interest to the vloggers, such as food, cultures, or services. According to American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language (2006), adjectives are words that play the main syntactic role to qualify a noun or noun phrase, giving information about the object signified. According to Pierini (2009, p. 98), when it comes to the use of adjectives, the language of tourism often makes use of two distinguishable strategies: description and evaluation. Description highlights the factual features of the product or destination in a positive light, while evaluation aims to appeal to the reader's emotions and persuade them into making a purchase (ibid.). In this study, the adjectives identified in the chosen travel vlogs are analyzed and examined.

There are different types of travel vlogs. They can be on portraying delicious local dishes, interesting sceneries of specific destination, or unique services available at certain places. The travel vlogs chosen in this study focus mainly on food, particularly eateries that the vloggers had visited and tried. The main reason for choosing vlogs that focus on food is because it is one of the important tourism products. According to Jones & Jenkins (2002), “food fulfils a functional need of tourists; hence it consists of a considerable part of tourism expenditure in both individual and organized travel” (p. 115). This is supported by Hajalager and Corigliano (2000), who mention that “food, like other groups of factors such as transport, accommodation, attractions and activities, is a basic and crucial element of the tourism product” (p. 2).

This study will focus on the adjectives used in the popular travel food vlogs. The adjectives gathered in this study will be divided into Dixon’s (1982) major semantic categorization of adjectives: Dimension (D), Color (C), Value (V), Age (A), Physical Property (PP) (Subcategories; Texture, Configuration, Substantiality, Sense, Consistency, Matter, Form, Speed, Wetness, Cleanliness, Appearance, Edibility), and Human Propensity (HP) (Subcategories; Mental state, Physical state, Behavior).

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Several studies have been conducted on vlogs. One was conducted by Warmbrodt (2007), who studied the community’s structure and the vloggers’ motivations in using videoblogs. Another study was conducted by Ku Leuven (2015) on vloggers’ discourse, in order to understand what it means to express oneself in an online environment.

Travel vlogs portray the experiences shared by the vloggers on the destinations they have visited. They gave their review on the places, be it the food, services, and

cultures. People love to watch these vlogs in order to get an idea on places to visit, or just information on a certain place or tourism product. The discourse used in the travel vlogs as compared to the printed tourism materials (such as brochures and tour guide book) might be different, in terms of its formality, and the presence of body language. Tolson (2010) states that the vlog allows the users “to negotiate the paradox of informing while still being ordinary, vlogging allows the forms of speech to change between formal and informal all within the same broadcast.”

Dan (1996) also highlights the features of tourism language. According to him, the language of tourism “tends to speak only in positive and glowing terms of the services and attractions it seeks to promote”. The positive words used by the vloggers in describing food and places may attract the viewers to those places. Although it cannot be denied that the presence of semiotic and visual contents in the videos contribute to the marketability of the vlogs, the use of a certain adjectives can also influence viewers’ opinion of the tourism product. This study focuses on investigating the use of adjectives by the vloggers in the videos. The adjectives were mainly used for the description of food that they have tasted at the places they visit.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

From the year 2014, the subscriptions to top travel channels on YouTube have increased by up to 106% (Crowel, Gribben & Loo, 2014). Travel vlogs receive four times more social engagement (likes, comments, shares, favorites and subscriptions) than other types of travel content on YouTube (*YouTube Data*, 2014). One of the reasons behind its popularity is because the viewers are more interested to watch real-life stories and the site is also more engaged on a per-view basis (Crowel, Gribben & Loo, 2014).

However, it is still unclear whether the linguistic features that exist in the travel videos influence viewers' interest to watch the videos. Lam (2007) stated that "despite the fact that tourism is one of the largest and most popular industries in the world, the language used in it has barely been linguistically and pedagogically researched" (ibid.) In addition to that, there has yet to be found any studies conducted on linguistic analysis of travel vlogs, thus, leading to this research, that is, to analyze the use of adjectives in the videos.

A number of analyses on the use of adjectives has been conducted on different types of documents; academic texts, websites, slogans, and brochures. Although there were studies conducted on adjectives used in tourism language such as in travel brochures and tourism websites, there is hardly any studies done on the same topic related to travel videos or vlogs. For instance, Pierini (2009) conducted a corpus-based study on adjectives used in English tourism web. The study found that the use of adjectives is characterized by collocational restrictions and 'semantic restrictions'. Three types of adjectives have also been found that were used to describe accommodation; descriptive adjectives, experiential adjectives, and evaluative adjectives. Apart from Pierini's study, another researcher, Marza (2011), studied the use of evaluative adjectives on promotional hotel websites. Marza found that the subjective judgements or appraisals portrayed by the adjectives in the websites were always positive.

There were also studies conducted on travel blogs, but studies on travel vlogs are yet to be found. One of the studies conducted on travel blogs entitled *travel blogs and the implications for destination marketing* was done by Bing and McLaurin (2006). They found that the most frequently used keywords or phrases demonstrated by the travelers to express the various aspects of their travel experience in their travel blogs,

include; attractions (e.g. “*plantation*”, “*city*”, and “*Fort Sumter*”), accommodations (e.g. “*hotel*” and “*inn*”), dining (e.g. “*restaurant*”, “*dinner*”, “*menu*”, and “*lobster*”), and transportation (e.g. “*car*”, “*drive*”, and “*road*”). According to a study on travel blogs carried out by Ngu Anh (2014), a blogger’s writing style and the knowledge that he or she possesses also plays a crucial role in attracting readers to visit their blogs.

By exploring the adjectives used in various travel food vlogs, it may help to identify the uniqueness of each vloggers in describing the travel contents. In addition, the language of tourism that is used in the vlogs can be identified. The vloggers posted videos which include their reviews on the places that they have visited. Their review can either be positive or negative, as it is based on opinion and experience of the individuals. This study investigates the adjectives used by the vloggers. The research questions of this study are;

- i. Which semantic categories of adjectives are frequently used by the vloggers?
- ii. Out of the adjective group which of the lexemes are frequently used by the vloggers?

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study aims to analyze the linguistic features used by the vloggers when visiting eateries and restaurants of a particular country. The investigation is mainly focusing on the linguistic features used by the vloggers when describing about food that they have tasted. The specific objectives of this study are to determine the vloggers used of adjectives. The study is conducted;

- i. to investigate the semantic categories of adjectives that are frequently used by the vloggers

- ii. to analyze which lexemes out of the adjective group are frequently used by the vloggers

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

As the popularity of travel vlogs published by individuals or famous vloggers increased, there is a need to study the reason behind this, including how it can attract potential travelers to make the travel vlogs a channel to seek information on their holiday destination. The adjective qualifies a noun or a noun phrase and it helps to give more information on the object that is signified. Its usage can turn a travel vlog into an interesting and informative site for travelers to search for information on a certain tourism product.

There are many studies conducted on the use of adjectives in travel brochures and travel websites, yet studies on the use of adjectives in travel vlogs are hardly found. The findings of this study highlight mainly on the adjectives used by the vloggers when describing the taste of food of a particular country that they visited. The study may contribute to the body of knowledge on tourism education, and it may be used by language practitioners when teaching English to Tourism students. The results found in this study may assist language practitioners to teach common and suitable adjectives used in the tourism context to Tourism students, in order for them to apply the lesson that they learnt at their workplace in the future. This study also highlights the current trend of seeking information on travel destination. Apart from that, the use of adjectives by the vloggers in describing the travel contents may become one of the persuasive elements to attract viewers.

1.5 METHODOLOGY

This corpus-based content analysis is the method employed to identify the adjectives used by the vloggers in the videos. The analysis is based on Dixon's (1982) semantic categories. The two software that are used to gather all the data in this study are AntConc and NVivo.

1.6 ORGANIZATION OF CHAPTERS

The aim of the study was explained in the introduction chapter of this study. What is a vlog, and studies related to it are discussed. The problem statement, research objectives, significance of the research, and methods used to conduct the analysis are also presented in Chapter One. In the second chapter, which is the Literature Review, scholarly materials on the use adjectives and also on tourism products are analyzed. In the Research Methodology Chapter, the methods that are used to carry out the study are explained. The Analysis of Data is discussed in the fourth chapter. The fifth chapter gives the conclusion and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In this section, related literature and past studies are reviewed and discussed. The purpose of this section is to properly understand the concept presented in this study, that is, the use of adjectives in travel food vlogs and how they are used as a tool to attract potential travelers.

2.2 THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA TO POTENTIAL TRAVELERS

Apart from making a significant contribution to users' daily activities, social media has become an indispensable aspect of the tourism industry (Zeng, 2013; Yazdanifard and Yee, 2014; Gohil, 2015). In today's era, people use social media to seek travel information and review with regards to their targeted holiday destinations. Although there are many types of social media available, TripAdvisor, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Myspace, and Flickr are the most frequently used social media to seek information related to tourism and hospitality (McCarthy *et al.*, 2010; Ayeh *et al.*, 2012; Sigala *et al.*, 2012). There are various travel reviews published and posted in the social media by individuals who have visited the places. While several scholars agree that for online information, travelers use different social media depending on each travel stage (Verma *et al.*, 2012), it has been argued that the most critical role of social media is in the pre-travel stage, that is, when tourists consult social media for travel planning, information search and decision-making (Cox *et al.*, 2009; Zeng, 2013). This is when

they surf the sites or places that offer cheap and affordable prices, but still manage to provide good services and strategic places for them to visit. In the production of the recent travel-related social media work, it is clear that social media plays a key role before, during and after the trip (Fotis *et al.*, 2012). In fact, Cox *et al.* (2009) highlighted that for travel-related purposes, almost 80 per cent of social media users search information regarding travel destinations and accommodation, with the majority of users consulting online hotel and travel reviews (Murphy and Chen, 2014).

2.3 YOUTUBE, A CHANNEL TO ATTRACT POTENTIAL TRAVELERS

According to Zhao *et al.*, (2013), among the social networking sites, the main ones include blogs, online chat, and other famous social sites such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Flickr, Instagram, YouTube, and Vimeo. YouTube is one of the famous video sharing social networks. It is proven by looking at the research made by Defy Media (2015), in which the regular users of YouTube consist of 96% of the youngsters aged between 13 and 24. This makes YouTube their most popular website as they consume online videos via social networking sites for an average of 11 hours a week. YouTube was established in 2005, and since then, many Internet users used it as a medium to post and watch videos. The rapid increase in its popularity is due to the flexible functions that YouTube has, as everyone can upload videos whenever they want. The users can give comments on the videos they like, and they can share the videos via other social media as well, such as Facebook and Twitter. Apart from vlogs, YouTube comprises various kinds of videos such as home video, music videos, remix videos, television and film properties transferred from offline media, news coverage, and professionally commissioned videos, among many others (Mark C. Lashley, 2013). With views of

travel-related content up to 118% year by year, travelers are spending more time watching online videos than ever before (YouTube data, n.d). According to the data, in 2013, the use of mobile devices to consume travel-related videos anytime and anywhere by travelers has increased, with roughly 30% of all travel video views using mobile devices, in which, 97% mobile views are on smartphones, and 205% on tablets.

2.4 THE IMPORTANCE OF TRAVEL FOOD VLOGS

Vlog is a medium for individuals to post and share any videos that they like. Apart from its flexible function, vlogging is cheap and allows everyday people to create new media. Anyone can vlog and become a producer (Clayfield, 2007). According to YouTube data, nearly half of the travel subscriptions are to vlogs that feature personal travel experiences. Travel vlogs, in fact, receive four times more social engagement (likes, comments, shares, favorites and subscriptions) than other types of travel content on YouTube. In this study, the focus is on travel food vlogs. Food is an important aspect that potential travelers look at for their holiday destinations. The report “An Analysis of the Travel Motivation of Tourists from the People’s Republic of China” stated that Asian people are fond of food and food is something that is crucial to them, and one of the main reasons to attract the Chinese tourists is because of the food. Ignatov and Smith (2006) stated that what is so special about food is the fact that it conveys the identity, people, or tradition of another culture which may be a unique aspect to the destination or region visited by the travelers.

2.5 TOURISM MARKETING AND LANGUAGE

In tourism industry, marketing is an essential factor to promote certain destinations to the public. Kotler et al., (2008, p.7) describe marketing as “the process by which