

ABSTRACT

Education is indicated as a Malaysian Government priority based on extensive development of academic infrastructure. Incorporating internationalization is a primary goal through benchmarking against leading institutions worldwide. Ranking popularity has increased, influences national policies, shapes institutional identity, and directs academic decisions (Hazelkorn, 2009; Marginson and van der Wende, 2007; Holmes, 2006). Utilizing a discourse analysis approach suggested by Brown and Yule (1983) and Yule (2006), this study examines 40 newspaper articles from the New Straits Times involving ranking over seven years from 2004 until 2010. Little past research has been conducted involving text analysis within and above the sentence structure of printed newspapers to investigate how continued emphasis of the significance of ranking appeared to be maintained throughout a corpus. In addition to identified linguistic realizations, intertextuality and communicative purposes are explored to provide some contextual analytical reference. Recognizing organizational structures of a discourse enables more effective means of understanding involved subject matter through access to greater comprehensive depths of the relevant issue.

ABSTRAK

Pendidikan dijadikan keutamaan Kerajaan Malaysia berdasarkan pembangunan luas infrastruktur akademik. Pengantarabangsaan adalah matlamat utama kerajaan melalui penandaarasan terhadap institusi terkemuka di seluruh dunia. Populariti ranking universiti telah meningkat, mempengaruhi dasar-dasar negara, membentuk identiti institusi, dan menjadi ara tuju keputusan akademik (Hazelkorn, 2009; Marginson dan van der Wende, 2007; Holmes, 2006). Dengan menggunakan pendekatan analisis wacana yang dicadangkan oleh Brown dan Yule (1983) dan Yule (2006), kajian ini menganalisa 40 artikel dari akhbar New Straits Times yang melibatkan ranking universiti bagi tempoh tujuh tahun dari 2004 hingga 2010. Kewujudan penyelidikan yang melibatkan analisis teks di dalam dan di luar struktur ayat bahan pencetakan akhbar untuk mengenal pasti bagaimana penekanan terhadap kepentingan ranking universiti dikekalkan sepanjang tempoh penerbitan adalah terhad. Dalam masa yang sama, selain mengenal pasti unsur-unsur linguistik, aplikasi ‘intertextuality’ dan tujuan komunikasi turut diterokai untuk memberikan rujukan kepada analisis konteks. Pengenalpastian terhadap struktur organisasi wacana boleh meluaskan pemahaman terhadap fenomena ranking melalui akses kepada isu yang berkaitan secara menyeluruh.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank God for allowing this thesis to be completed. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank my supervisor, Associate Professor Dr. Kamila Ghazali and my family for the continual support, guidance and inspirations.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ORIGINAL LITERARY WORK DECLARATION	ii
ABSTRACT	iii
ABSTRAK	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vi
LIST OF TABLES	ix
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	
1.0 Introduction	1
1.1 Background of study	1
1.1.1 Malaysian Government Education Plans	1
1.1.2 New Straits Times	5
1.1.3 World Ranking	6
1.2 Purpose of study	9
1.3 Significance of study	9
1.4 Research questions	10
1.5 Conclusion	10
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW	
2.0 Introduction	11
2.1 Discourse analysis	11
2.1.1 Modality	17
2.1.2 Pronoun	19
2.1.3 Metaphor	20
2.2 Rankings	22
2.3 Intertextuality and Interdiscursivity	27
2.4 News discourse	33
2.5 Conclusion	37

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.0	Introduction	38
3.1	Collection of data	38
3.1.1	Selection of text type	38
3.1.2	Specialist informant	40
3.1.3	Rationale and limitation for data collection	40
3.2	Discourse members	42
3.3	Analytical framework	43
3.3.1	Data analysis	45
3.3.2	Six structural stages	48
3.4	Conclusion	50

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

4.0	Introduction	51
4.1	Phases in reporting of the ranking issue	51
4.1.1	Phase 1	54
4.1.1.1	Emphasis on the need for ranking	54
4.1.1.2	Incentives related to positive performance	59
4.1.1.3	Competition among local public universities	61
4.1.1.4	Optimistic expression	63
4.1.2	Phase 2	64
4.1.2.1	Validity and reliability of rankings	64
4.1.2.2	Limitations in the ranking process	72
4.1.2.3	Cautionary approaches	75
4.1.2.4	Dissatisfaction with rankings	85

4.1.3	Phase 3	89
4.1.3.1	Ranking is a good measurement	89
4.1.3.2	Continued support for the ranking system	94
4.1.3.3	Descriptions of university plans	102
4.1.3.4	Disaffection or disregard for rankings	107
4.1.3.5	Continual evaluation of rankings	111
4.2	Communicative purpose	120
4.2.1	Presenting	127
4.2.2	Attending	128
4.2.3	Comprehending	129
4.2.4	Yielding	130
4.2.5	Retaining the New Position	130
4.2.6	Acting	131
4.3	Intertextuality	132
4.3.1	Direct and indirect quotations	133
4.3.2	Incorporation of MOHE's strategic documents	135
4.4	Conclusion	137
 CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION		
5.0	Introduction	138
5.1	Overview	138
5.2	Significant findings	139
5.3	Implications	141
5.4	Suggestions for future work	141
REFERENCES		142
APPENDICES		153

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1	: Overview of the phases in reporting of the ranking issue	53
Table 2	: Emphasis on the need for ranking.	54
Table 3	: Detailing of incentives related to positive performance in ranking.	59
Table 4	: Highlights concerning competition among local public universities.	61
Table 5	: Optimistic expressions in connection with ranking.	63
Table 6	: Questioning the validity and reliability of rankings	65
Table 7	: Limitations in the ranking process	72
Table 8	: Cautionary approaches concerning participation in rankings	76
Table 9	: Dissatisfaction with rankings	85
Table 10	: Ranking is a good measurement despite its flaws	89
Table 11	: Continued support for the ranking system	94
Table 12	: Descriptions of university plans for incorporating rankings	102
Table 13	: Disaffection or disregard for rankings	107
Table 14	: Emphasizing continual evaluation of rankings	112
Table 15	: Relationship between the three phases and communicative purposes	127
Table 16	: Direct quotations	133
Table 17	: Indirect quotations	134
Table 18	: MOHE Strategic Plan/Action Plan 2007-2010	136