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Apply now! A contrastive genre analysis of 'why choose us'
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Apply now! A contrastive genre analysis of ‘why choose us’ texts of university websites

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In recent years, there has been a surge of ‘why choose us’ (WCU) texts on university websites. This genre, in particular, has become crucial for academic institutions to promote themselves and attract prospective students. Despite this, however, there is little research focusing on this cybergenre, which has replaced its print counterpart of university prospectuses. In this paper, a contrastive analysis of WCU texts of Anglophone and mainland European university websites is presented. Specifically, this article examines the move structure, the lexico-grammatical patterns and multimodal features of 40 sample texts using Bhatia’s (1993) approach to genre analysis, the software AntConc and Pauwels’ (2012) framework for multimodal analysis. This study shows that WCU texts of Anglophone universities tend to use more promotional strategies (both linguistic as well as extra-linguistic), in that they employ the strategy of comparative advertising, a commonly used marketing tool, a more conversational style realized through direct reader address, personal pronouns, colloquialisms and contractions, as well as pressure tactics (“apply now” buttons). The WCU texts of mainland European university websites, by contrast, tend to employ a slightly more formal and distant style, as they use impersonal phrases such as *the university* and *the students* instead of the personal pronouns *we* and *you*. As the frequent use of pronouns, contractions, colloquialisms and pressure tactics creates a personal tone and thus denotes propinquity, it is argued that the linguistic and extra-linguistic strategies used in WCU texts of Anglophone universities seem to be more persuasive than those of mainland European universities.

Keywords: marketization, higher education, genre analysis, ESP, why choose us

1. Introduction

The past few decades have witnessed a considerable surge in internationalization of higher education. In the age of increasing globalization and competitiveness, universities have been placed under extreme pressure to sell themselves in order to remain internationally competitive. Unsurprisingly, this has resulted in the emergence of a number of academic promotional genres, amongst them being the genre of ‘why choose us’ (WCU) pages, which

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can often be found on university websites. This genre, in particular, has become supremely important for universities to promote themselves and to recruit prospective (fee-paying) students. While previous work has put particular emphasis on academic genres such as university prospectuses (Fairclough 1993, Askehave 2007, Osman 2008), book introductions (Bhatia 1997), journal descriptions (Hyland & Tse 2009) or ‘about us’ sections of university websites (Caiazzo 2009, Zhang 2017), little is known about WCU pages, an online genre which has emerged only recently, and which has replaced its print counterpart of university prospectuses. In fact, in today’s age of instant information, WCU texts have the obvious advantage of being easily and universally accessible, whereas university prospectuses are more difficult to obtain, especially for international students. Given the centrality of attracting prospective students, a university’s online presentation is of supreme importance. Although WCU pages are likely to be among the first pages potential students click on, there is very little research on this genre, and none to the best of my knowledge on European WCU pages. Since “the impact of marketization and promotional culture on HE [higher education] discourse” (Yang 2013b: 46) has proven of great interest to applied linguists, this study seeks to advance our understanding of which promotional strategies are commonly applied to “explicitly provide information but implicitly convey promotional messages” (Yang 2013b: 49) and thereby recruit prospective students. As previous research has only focused on the move structure and lexico-grammatical features of WCU pages of Anglophone universities (Yang 2013b), a contrastive analysis of texts from English and non-English speaking countries is yet to be conducted. This gap in research suggests that a cross-cultural comparison between WCU pages of Anglophone and non-Anglophone universities merits further attention to examine whether “the construction and lexico-grammatical choices differ due to their contextual, socio-cultural or academic divergences” (Yang 2013b: 70). Additionally, previous research has failed to investigate the multimodal features of WCU pages, an issue this paper will address, too. Thus, this article presents a comparative analysis of WCU texts of Anglophone and non-Anglophone universities, with the latter group consisting of mainland European universities. This ESP- (English for Specific Purposes) based study examines the move structure, the lexico-grammatical patterns and multimodal features of 40 sample texts (20 from Anglophone university websites, 20 from mainland European university websites), using Bhatia’s (1993) approach to genre analysis, the software AntConc to identify lexico-grammatical features and Pauwels’ (2012) framework for multimodal analysis¹. By employing this methodology, this study seeks to answer the following research questions:

- Which linguistic and extra-linguistic strategies do WCU pages of Anglophone and mainland European university websites use, and in how far do they differ from one another? How could these differences be explained?
- Which linguistic and extra-linguistic strategies might seem most effective, and why?

¹ This article is an abbreviated version of my diploma thesis (Mikl 2018), written at the Department of English and American Studies at the University of Vienna under the supervision of Prof. Ute Smit.

The article is structured in the following way. Section 2 provides an overview of the marketization of higher education discourse, followed by a review of previous literature in section 3. Section 4 briefly introduces the genre of WCU texts by defining the genre, its communicative purpose as well as its discourse community. Section 5 addresses the study's methodology. In section 6, the results will be presented and discussed according to the three main areas of investigation, namely (1) move structure, (2) lexico-grammatical patterns and (3) multimodal features. This will be followed by a brief discussion of the findings in section 7. The main conclusions are drawn in the final chapter, including also limitations and possible implications.

2. The marketization of higher education

The higher education sector has experienced a massive expansion over the past decades, and global tertiary enrolment is increasing rapidly: between 2000 and 2014, the number of students attending tertiary education institutions more than doubled from 100 million to 207 million (UNESCO 2017: 1). Tertiary enrolment is even forecast to rise up to 600 million by 2040 (Calderon 2018: 6). Thus, higher education is no longer an elite system, but has instead transformed into mass higher education, which Altbach (1999: 109) refers to as “the ‘massification’ of higher education”. The ever-growing number of students attending tertiary education has significantly altered the role of universities (Altbach 1999: 109, Jarvis 2001: 6), and there is already a sizeable body of work on this transformation (e.g. Daniel 1993, Altbach 1999, Trapper & Palfreyman 2005). Higher education institutions no longer follow their “civic mission [...] [of] the teachings of great thinkers, human development and the creation of non-utilitarian knowledge” (Askehave 2007: 724), but they have instead transformed into “ordinary businesses competing to sell their products to consumers” (Fairclough 1993: 143). The relationship between academics and students has consequently developed into “the model of a service provider and customer” (Furedi 2011: 2). This global phenomenon of universities turning into business entities has been referred to as the “marketization of higher education”, a term famously coined by Fairclough (1993: 143). This concept can be defined as “the adoption of free market practices in running schools [...] [including] the business practices of cutting production cost, abandoning goods not in demand, producing only popular products, and advertising products to increase sales and the profit margin” (Kwong 2000: 89).

The fast-paced growth of tertiary enrolment is closely connected with international student mobility, i.e. students enrolled in tertiary education outside their home country. According to a study conducted by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD 2014: 344), the number of international students rose from 0.8 million worldwide in 1975 to 4.5 million in 2012. In view of increasing globalization and competitiveness, these numbers are likely to continue to grow significantly each year. In the 2015 International Trends report, for instance, the University of Oxford (2015: 5) refers to

the OECD that has predicted that international student mobility is expected to reach eight million international students studying outside their home country by 2025.

The constant increase in student mobility has entailed the internationalization of higher education and has consequently required non-Anglophone universities to implement tertiary education programs in English. In fact, with the language of instruction being “a strong determinant of students’ choice of destination” (OECD 2018: 223), English medium instruction (EMI) is on the rise at university level. Study programs in the university’s official language might attract domestic students only and might therefore decrease the possibility for international students to attend the respective university. With English being “the new Latin of [...] academia” (Kaša and Mhamed 2013: 31), EMI has become crucial for non-Anglophone universities in order, firstly, “to attract fee-paying international students”, secondly, “to enhance the university’s international prestige and contacts”, and thirdly, “to develop the English language skills of their staff and students” (Ferguson 2007: 13, quoted in Jenkins 2014: 3). According to a study carried out by Wächter and Maiworm (2015: 42), the diffusion of EMI is noticeable in non-English speaking European countries, especially in the Nordic ones, as can be seen in Table 1:

Table 1: Higher education institutions offering English taught programmes – by country (Screenshot: Wächter & Maiworm 2015: 42)

Country	All Institutions ¹⁾	ETP-offering Institutions ²⁾	Share of ETP-offering institutions of all institutions (%)
AT	73	34	46.6
BE	72	21	29.2
BG	49	8	16.3
CH	39	19	48.7
CY	23	11	47.8
CZ	79	22	27.8
DE	356	154	43.3
DK	50	24	48.0
EE	23	7	30.4
ES	177	36	20.3
FI	42	35	83.3
FR	701	113	16.1
GR	42	8	19.0
HR	29	2	6.9
HU	54	19	35.2
IS	8	4	50.0
IT	207	41	19.8
LT	43	21	48.8
LV	45	15	33.3
NL	60	39	65.0
NO	56	23	41.1
PL	332	59	17.8
PT	98	14	14.3
RO	77	13	16.9
SE	42	34	81.0
SI	70	6	8.6
SK	33	7	21.2
TR	162	28	17.3
Total	3,042	817	26.9

¹⁾ Database of the European Commission on higher education institutions awarded an ERASMUS Charter

²⁾ Identified with the help of the data base of StudyPortals and the Institutional Survey

This table demonstrates the Englishization of higher education, with many universities in non-English speaking countries introducing English study programs. As pointed out by Jenkins (2014: 5), EMI is also on the increase at Chinese universities, with the goal of attracting 500,000 international students by 2020. Considering the overwhelming dominance of English in academia, it is undoubtedly the case that English has become the lingua franca in higher education (Bennett 2016: 169).

In summary, it can be said that tertiary education has changed from an elite to a mass system, education has become a commodity and the student has eventually turned into a consumer (Hultgren 2014: 392). Higher education institutions appear to have turned into corporate businesses that need to apply marketing strategies to remain competitive in the global market.

3. Previous research

Since the mid-1990s, there has been a burgeoning interest in the linguistic impact of marketization on academic genres. As a result of the increasing competitiveness in the global market, a vast number of academic genres has become highly promotional, as was first suggested by Fairclough in 1993. In his seminal study of British university prospectuses, evidence was put forward to show that the primary communicative purpose was in fact promotional, not informative. Fairclough found that these texts comprise a large number of promotional elements, such as the personalization of the institution, the avoidance of explicit obligational meanings, and the shift in authority relations with the customer having authority. Fairclough (1993: 141) therefore concludes that marketization has led to the emergence of “new hybrid partly promotional genres”, which clearly underlines the strong impact of marketization on academic genres.

Since Fairclough’s pioneering analysis, much work has been done on higher education genres. Multiple other studies have addressed the genre of university prospectuses (e.g. Teo 2007, Askehave 2007, Osman 2008) and yielded similar results, in that this genre is characterized by promotional language commonly found in advertising discourse. Thus, university prospectuses appear to “become increasingly more promotional and less informative, as the emphasis shifts from *telling* to *selling*” (Teo 2007: 106; emphasis added). To describe this mixing of multiple communicative purposes in academic genres, Yang (2013b: 46) has introduced the term “academic ‘info-promotion’ genres”. A large body of literature has been devoted to these academic info-promotion genres, including book introductions (Bhatia 1997), journal descriptions (Hyland & Tse 2009), academic textbook blurbs (Yang 2012), or calls for papers for academic conferences (Yang 2013a). These studies are consistent with previous findings, confirming that marketization strategies are in fact commonly used to realize the promotional purpose in academic genres.

In recent years, researchers have turned their attention to online academic info-promotion genres. In a corpus-based study of ‘about us’ sections of British university websites, Caiazzo (2014) found that most linguistic features closely resemble the generic structure of advertisements. Zhang (2017) has recently conducted a similar study of ‘about

us' pages of Chinese university websites, and while his findings support Caiazzo's study, he further found that Chinese universities also promote their location. Indeed, it has been suggested that universities increasingly copy the tourism industry, trying to "[sell] the place [...] and its people and facilities to potential students" (Askehave 2007: 732).

In his groundbreaking study, Yang (2013b) was among the first to take a genre approach to examine the move structure and linguistic features of WCU texts of university websites. He was able to show that WCU pages also echo promotional language, thus corroborating previous findings on different academic text types. Additionally, Yang analyzed reader opinions through questionnaires to investigate the potential impact of marketing strategies employed by universities. By combining genre analysis and reader opinion, Yang made a major contribution to research on academic genre analysis. Despite his innovative methodology, though, his approach has not been adopted by many scholars thus far.

One of the very few studies addressing both linguistic as well as multimodal features was carried out by Zhang and O'Halloran (2013), who analyzed the website of the National University of Singapore (NUS) over a 14-year period, i.e. from 1998 to 2012. It was found that promotional elements were increasingly used, realized through hyperlinks, images, as well as a university vision, mission and identity. Furthermore, the images used on the website had changed from visualizing teaching and research to showing smiling students of different nationalities and ethnicities, thus promoting the university's global orientation. Zhang and O'Halloran (2013: 483) therefore argue that their study reflects the "subtle shifts of marketing strategies from promoting university education as concrete products and services to a type of lifestyle and experience, as the university moves toward a global knowledge enterprise".

Overall, there seems to be evidence to indicate that academic info-promotion texts have become a major field of interest and research. Whereas much attention has been paid to the genre of university prospectuses, comparatively little is known about the more recent genre of WCU pages, an issue which necessitates further research. Also, with mainland European universities aiming to increase international student enrolment (Aguilera-Barchet 2012: 32, Katsarova 2015: 3-4), it would be interesting to examine whether the linguistic and extra-linguistic marketization strategies used by Anglophone and non-Anglophone European universities differ from one another. While the former group boasts the highest international student recruitment (Katsarova 2015: 4), the latter seeks to increase their number of international students. One could therefore expect WCU pages of mainland European universities to use more pressure tactics or different promotional tools to recruit prospective students.

4. 'Why choose us' texts: a genre definition

WCU texts have become an essential element of university websites and can be defined as an overview as to why a specific university might be the best choice. WCU pages usually include fast facts such as history, university ranking, degree programs, location, facilities,

leisure possibilities etc. Similar to ‘about us’ pages², WCU texts are likely to be among the first pages a potential student would click on and hence “constitute the most representative part in the homepage, fully demonstrating [...] the unique identity of each university” (Zhang 2017: 67).

Being a shortened, online version of university prospectuses, WCU texts are part of academic info-promotion genres³ (Yang 2013b: 46), with the primary communicative purpose being promotional as well as informative. According to Bhatia’s (2004: 62) definition, it can be considered a hybrid genre, being “partly promotional, partly information-giving”. In fact, while WCU texts aim to inform the reader about the respective university, they particularly seek to promote the university and recruit potential students. It is also important to note that WCU pages are known by various names and are also referred to as “why study with us”, “why study here”, “why study at * (acronym of university name), “why choose *”, “why *” or “X reasons to choose us/*”.

It can be assumed that WCU texts are written by the university’s public relations office. Although most university websites do not state the author’s name, there are a few exceptions (e.g. the WCU page of the University of Liège was written, or more likely just signed, by its rector Albert Corhay). WCU pages primarily target prospective students, but presumably also their parents, whose opinions and finances are often determinative of which university to attend. However, as websites are publicly accessible, it needs to be considered that the readership becomes unpredictable and is therefore not confined to the intended audience (Crowston 2010: 11).

While WCU pages of Anglophone universities address both local and international students, the English version of WCU pages of non-Anglophone universities are mainly aimed at international students, as local students are usually provided with a WCU text in the university’s official language. International students may even be the primary target group, as many countries, including Austria, charge different tuition fees for national and

² It is not easy to draw a distinction between ‘about us’ and WCU pages. The former can be defined as “an introductory section aimed at *introducing* and *describing* companies, institutions, individuals or groups” (Casañ-Pitarch 2015: 70; emphasis added), implying that its primary promotional purpose is informative. Thus, the purpose of ‘about us’ pages is primarily informative (although the secondary purpose might also be promotional), whereas the primary purpose of WCU pages is promotional, with the informative purpose being only subordinate (Vyshnevsky 2016: 40).

³ Brief mention should be made of how genres are constituted by combinations of features. In fact, every single genre, from research articles to legislative documents, is characterized not only by specific linguistic and structural elements, but also by distinct communicative functions these texts aim to achieve (Bawarshi & Reiff 2010: 42). By analyzing the different discourse elements that each genre involves, ESP seeks to help “learners gain access to ways of communicating that accrued cultural capital in particular professional, academic, and occupational communities” (Hyland 2003: 24). Additionally, by investigating a genre’s linguistic and extra-linguistic features, ESP makes “the genres of power visible and attainable through explicit instruction” and thus helps “demystify the kinds of writing that will enhance learners’ career opportunities” (Hyland 2003: 24).

foreign students⁴. International students are often even perceived as “cash cows” (Peterson et al. 1999: 69, quoted in Andrade 2006: 133) and have become an important source of additional income for universities (Katsarova 2015: 5).

At the same time, ESP analyses have also become deeper in the sense that they not only describe linguistic features of language varieties but also their communicative purposes and effects.

5. Methodology

For this study, a total of 40 samples of WCU texts was collected, with 20 texts each from Anglophone and mainland European university websites. Thus, a corpus of 19,000 words was created. A complete list of the universities selected for this study can be found in the appendix (see A1 and A2).

Regarding the data selection, several aspects need to be taken into account: first, the university samples were randomly selected according to criteria of 1) variety of countries and 2) availability of the genre under analysis. Second, although the corpus includes texts from high-ranking universities, it is interesting to note that some of the world’s top universities, such as Harvard, Stanford or Cambridge, lacked WCU texts on their websites when compiling the corpus for this study. After again checking the universities’ homepages, however, it was found that they now do feature WCU texts (June 2019). A possible reason for this lack might have been that “branding is probably not necessary” for the world’s top ranked universities, while “universities on the cusp of elite status” are more likely to advertise themselves to enhance their academic prestige and attract prospective students (Bunzel 2007: 153).

In addition, WCU texts appeared to be rather uncommon in Canada and the US, which is why only one Canadian and three U.S. universities were included in the corpus. Instead, WCU texts on university websites seemed to be commonplace in the UK, Ireland, Australia, and mainland Europe, where retrieving samples turned out to be much easier.

Moreover, due to practical constraints, hyperlinks are not considered in the analysis. Since hyperlinks are tied to other webpages and hence involve different genres (e.g. FAQs, ‘about us’ texts, course directory), this would have gone beyond the scope of this study. Drop-down boxes, by contrast, are included in the analysis, as they do not lead to other webpages, but only offer additional information on a specific topic covered on the WCU page.

As to the methodology, Bhatia’s (1993) comprehensive framework for genre analysis will serve as the basis for this study. According to Bhatia, one of the leading proponents of ESP, genre analysis comprises seven steps: (1) placing the given genre-text in a situational

⁴ Many European countries have introduced higher tuition fees for non-EU/EEA students, including Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, the Netherlands, Sweden or the UK (OECD 2014: 348). Similar tuition fees for national and foreign students are charged in Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, Portugal, Spain and Switzerland, and there are no tuition fees for both national and foreign students in Finland, Norway, the Slovak Republic and Slovenia (OECD 2018: 296).

context, (2) surveying existing literature, (3) refining the contextual analysis, (4) selecting a corpus, (5) studying the institutional context, (6) levels of linguistic analysis (lexico-grammatical features, textualization, structural interpretation), and (7) the consulting of specialist information in genre analysis. These steps do not have to follow the suggested order, nor do they all have to be considered (Bhatia 1993: 40). Instead, they “should be used selectively in a flexible order depending upon the degree of prior knowledge” (Bhatia 1993: 40) and should be adapted to the purpose of the analysis. This study will draw upon the steps one to six to thoroughly examine the genre under analysis and its institutional context. Step 7 will be omitted due to time constraints.

The sample texts are then first analyzed by manually carrying out a move-structure analysis⁵, which follows Henry and Roseberry’s (2001) method of combining a hand-tagged move analysis with a computer-based analysis of lexical features. In this study, the identification of moves is based on 1) the content of the stretch of text, and 2) certain linguistic features. The questioning technique introduced by Santos (1996) also facilitates move identification. For instance, a part of the text that answers the question “Which non-academic amenities can the university offer” will be coded as “Offer attractive incentives”. Hüttner’s (2010) classification of moves constitutes the basis for the move analysis, as the precise division into percentages proves to be well suited for a close analysis. For reasons of clarity, though, her category of “ambiguous” will be labeled “optional”, and her category “optional” will be referred to as “rare”.

As a second step, with the help of the Software AntConc, important keywords and collocations are identified, both of which are “useful indicators of the characteristic style of a particular text or corpus” (Groom 2010: 59). It is worth mentioning that keywords “are not usually the most frequent words in a text (or in a collection of texts), rather they are the more ‘unusually frequent’” (Walsh 2011: 96) in comparison with a reference corpus. Thus, a keyword analysis seeks to “identify the significance (or keyness) of lexis in a set of texts” (Groom 2009, quoted in Yang 2013b: 51). While positive keywords refer to “an unusually high percentage of occurrence” (Yang 2013b: 52), negative keywords denote “an uncommonly low percentage of appearance” (Yang 2013b: 52). Both types, however, prove to be significant when analyzing texts, as they constitute “the summation of the features of a given text or corpus” (Ishikawa 2011: 10, quoted in Yang 2013b: 52). A comprehensive list of keywords can be found in the appendix (see A5 and A6). Due to the predominantly British English spelling and the prevalence of English universities among the Anglophone sample texts (6 out of 20), the reference wordlist by the British National Corpus (BNC) is

⁵ Swales (2004: 228), “whose research has been seminal in shaping genre theory in ESP” (Hyon 1996: 695), defines moves as “a discoursal or rhetorical unit that performs a coherent communicative function in a written or spoken discourse”. Moves are therefore fixed structural patterns that determine how a text progresses. Each move also consists of steps, which Hyon (2018: 33) defines as “subparts of the moves” and which can be used to render the moves more effective (Bhatia 1993: 20). One should bear in mind, however, that the concept of steps is known by various names, such as “rhetorical strategies” (Bhatia 1993: 30), “stage” (Askehave & Nielsen 2005: 122) or “sub-move” (Hyon 2018: 10).

used as a reference corpus to determine keyness⁶. One downside regarding the keyword analysis used in this study is that it does not accurately account for the different sizes of the two sample corpora, which is why, in hindsight, normalized lexical frequency would have been more suitable. Due to this source of uncertainty, results should be interpreted with caution.

The texts are then investigated for grammatical features characterizing this genre. For the multimodal analysis, Pauwels' (2012) framework for analyzing websites was adapted to the purpose of this study. As a full-scale examination of multimodal aspects is beyond the scope of this study, the multimodal analysis will focus on Pauwel's phase 2 (inventory of salient features and topics) and phase 3 (in-depth analysis of content and formal choices) with a particular focus on the intra-model analysis (i.e. typographic signifiers, visual and representational types and signifiers, layout and design signifiers) as well as to the negative analysis.

6. Results

6.1 Move structure analysis

It is interesting to note that the sample texts from both Anglophone and mainland European university websites make use of the same moves and steps⁷. Despite many similarities, there are also several differences, of which only the most salient ones will be examined in the following⁸. Detailed analytical tables featuring both moves and steps of all sample texts can be found in the appendix (see A3 and A4).

The fact that all sample texts employ the same moves and steps implies that the generic structure of WCU pages is consistent, even across countries. In fact, also Yang (2013b: 57) argues that “a *typical* WCU text would generally follow [a] 6-move structure” [emphasis added], as can also be seen in figure 1 and table 2. While Figure 1 represents a bar chart visualizing the six moves, Table 2 provides a detailed overview of the moves and steps of both sample groups as well as their occurrences and percentages.

⁶ The keyness of a word “provides an indicator of a keyword’s importance as a content descriptor for the appeal” (Biber et al. 2007: 138), i.e. its statistical significance in the corpus.

⁷ The move structure is partially based on Yang’s (2013b: 53) move structure analysis of Anglophone WCU pages.

⁸ For a more detailed analysis see Mikl (2018).

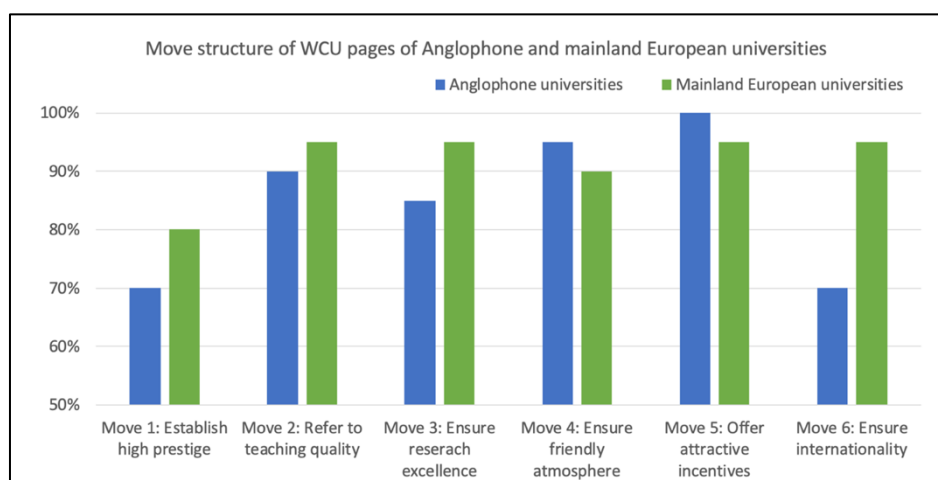


Figure 1: Move structure of WCU pages of Anglophone and mainland European universities

Table 2: Moves and steps of WCU pages of Anglophone and mainland European universities

Moves and steps	<i>Anglophone</i>		<i>Mainland European</i>	
	Occurrence	Percentage	Occurrence	Percentage
Move 1: Establish high prestige	14	70%	16	80%
Step 1.1 Ranking	11	55%	11	55%
Step 1.2 University history	3	15%	11	55%
Step 1.3 Membership of a league/group	1	5%	3	15%
Step 1.4 Famous alumni	3	15%	3	15%
Move 2: Refer to teaching quality	19	95%	19	95%
Step 2.1 Teaching staff	16	80%	12	60%
Step 2.2 Variety of programs	9	45%	15	75%
Step 2.3 Unique programs	1	5%	3	15%
Move 3: Ensure research excellence	17	85%	19	95%
Step 3.1 Leading research	15	75%	17	85%
Step 3.2 Top facilities	9	45%	8	40%
Step 3.3 Investments	4	20%	1	5%
Move 4: Ensure friendly atmosphere	18	90%	18	90%
Step 4.1 Student satisfaction	4	20%	7	35%
Step 4.2 Leisure possibilities	12	60%	10	50%
Step 4.3 Student support	13	65%	6	30%
Step 4.4 Inclusion of testimonials	4	20%	3	15%
Step 4.5 University size	3	15%	13	65%
Move 5: Offer attractive incentives	20	100%	19	95%
Step 5.1 Career prospects / employability	10	15%	10	50%
Step 5.2 Good location	17	85%	17	85%
Step 5.3 Scholarships	5	25%	1	5%
Step 5.4 Accommodation	8	40%	3	15%
Step 5.5 Student Jobs	2	10%	2	10%
Step 5.6 Student exchange	11	55%	10	50%
Step 5.7 Collaboration with other organizations	10	50%	6	30%
Step 5.8 Affordability	4	20%	5	25%
Step 5.9 Courses taught in English	0	0%	9	45%
Move 6: Ensure internationality	14	70%	19	95%

Regarding similarities, it is striking that the same moves and steps could be determined, with the only exception that nine WCU texts from mainland European universities feature an additional step (step 5.9), i.e. the advertising of English degree programs which is primarily directed at international students. Thus, non-English speaking universities might seek “to overcome their linguistic disadvantage” (OECD 2010: 315, quoted in Jenkins 2014: 4) and to be no longer confined to local students only, but instead become international study destinations. It is interesting to note that only 45% of the sample texts of mainland European universities promote their English degree programs, although further online search has revealed that most sample universities actually offer at least some English-taught degree programs. Given that Anglophone countries register the “highest recruitment of international students” (Jenkins 2014: 83) due to English being the lingua franca, one might ask the question why non-English speaking universities, which do offer English study programs and could hence attract international students more easily, do not actively promote them on their WCU pages. To answer this question, I sent e-mails to the respective universities (University of Vienna, University of Uppsala, University of Southern Denmark, University of Jena, Corvinus University of Budapest, University of Tartu), and received one reply only: according to the University of Tartu, reference to EMI is deliberately omitted as this would first, exceed the amount of messages they want to deliver, and second, provide redundant information as “it is quite uncommon that a university advertises itself internationally and has zero programs for international students” (Soo 25. Jan. 2018). Whether non-English speaking universities would recruit more international students if they explicitly promoted EMI on their WCU page would be an interesting issue to resolve in future research. It remains unclear whether the universities which did not reply, also deliberately omitted any reference to their English degree programs, or whether this lack might be ascribed to a limited knowledge in marketing or simply to inattention.

In addition, 85% of the texts from both sample groups advertise the university’s good location, which makes this step an almost obligatory one. Whilst “[i]t has been a common practice in the tourist industry to brag the geographical location and scenery of a tourist destination”, it is surprising that “these aspects have also been highlighted as promotional elements in higher educational genres” (Zhang 2017: 75). For example, Macquarie University commends “picturesque mountains”, the University of Mainz promotes its location for being famous for its carnival season, and the University of Stockholm advertises the wide choice of museums, theaters and nightclubs. Moreover, some Anglophone universities have been found to promote their location by comparing it to other cities, a common marketing strategy referred to as comparative advertising. For instance, both the University of Hull and the University of Bolton promote their location as small towns by comparing it to London, which is portrayed as overpriced and intimidating. Similarly, the University of Western Australia advertises Perth by describing the “city as more affordable than Adelaide, Brisbane, Melbourne and Sydney”. As comparative advertising proves to be “an effective method of communicating benefits of [...] brands” (Gotlieb & Sarel 1991: 38),

this strategy might contribute to raising the texts' persuasiveness. It is striking, though, that the sample texts of mainland European universities lack this promotional technique entirely.

Apart from the similarities, however, apparent differences could be identified⁹. One of the most remarkable observations to result from the data is that only 15% of sample texts from Anglophone universities refers to its university's history, in marked contrast to 55% of texts from mainland European universities. As “[t]he university is a European institution; [...] the European institution *par excellence*” (Rüegg 1992: xix; original emphasis), it is hardly surprising that European universities also emphasize their long history in their WCU texts. With the oldest universities being in Italy, the UK and Spain, all founded in the 11th and 12th centuries (The Telegraph 2017), European universities boast a long-standing history. In non-European Anglophone countries, however, such as the U.S., Canada, Australia and New Zealand, the establishment of universities only commenced in the 17th century (Ranker 2018). Hence, it is little surprising that two out of three Anglophone universities referring to their history are European, namely the University of Wolverhampton (UK) and Trinity College (IR). By stressing their long-standing history, universities may seek to establish a distinguished status, increase their credibility and set themselves apart from their competitors.

A further difference to result from the data is that Anglophone universities appear to place great importance on student support, as this step occurs in 65% of the respective sample texts. Mainland European universities, however, refer to student support in merely 30% of the sample texts. This discrepancy might most likely be ascribed to cultural reasons; indeed, English-speaking universities are commonly known for offering a wide range of services to students, such as counseling and personal tutors (e.g. University of Brighton), financial aid counseling (e.g. University of Minnesota), career counseling (Sheffield Hallam University), English support services (e.g. University of Brighton), help with accommodation and visa (e.g. University of Brighton, University of Hull) or even on arrival welcome service for international students (e.g. University of South Australia). In her genre analysis of the student prospectus from the University of Sterling in Scotland, Askehave (2007: 739) also addresses the supreme role of support services, suggesting that “the university is cast in the role of a service-minded, supportive, and in many cases, customer-driven organization whose main purpose is to offer an interesting and challenging university ‘experience’ to meet the needs of the picky student who is spoiled for choice”. Hence, student support services aim to “build a student-centred image of a university, where the students can give their potential to full play, explore various possibilities and achieve all-round development, not only in academic performance, but also in extra-curricular activities and personal life” (Zhang 2017: 75). Whilst the above-mentioned support services are commonly found at Anglophone universities, they are rarely offered in mainland Europe. It is hypothesized that this disparity may be attributed to tuition fees and the continuing influence of the Humboldtian educational ideal on mainland European universities, as argued below.

⁹ It needs to be mentioned that the differences might be accidental products of the sampling procedure. The hypotheses presented in the following seek to illustrate where these potential differences might come from.

Indeed, tuition fees are much higher in Anglophone countries than in mainland Europe (Katsarova 2015: 1), with “Europeans [being] generally used to having an affordable education system”, where “taxpayers [...] are the main source of revenue for higher education” (Aguilera-Barchet 2012: 19). In Anglophone countries, though, “students pay for the education they receive” (Katsarova 2015: 6). It is therefore obvious that Anglophone universities have substantially more funds available to offer such services. In light of this, it is not surprising that 25% of the sample texts of Anglophone universities refer to scholarships, as opposed to only 5% of mainland European universities. While this step is rare in both sample groups, it can still be seen that scholarships are more important in Anglophone WCU texts, and some students may even choose their future university based on scholarship availability.

Moreover, there is literature to suggest that tertiary education in mainland Europe is still influenced by the Humboldtian model (Anderson 2004, Nicholaides 2012, Schlaeger 2013). The core idea of Wilhelm Humboldt (1767-1835), founder of the Humboldt University of Berlin and father of the Humboldtian educational ideal, was that

the university (and education in general, as in the Prussian education system) should enable students to become autonomous individuals and world citizens by developing their own reasoning powers in an environment of academic freedom. Humboldt envisaged an ideal of *Bildung*, education in a broad sense, which aimed not merely to provide professional skills through schooling along a fixed path but rather allow students to build individual character by choosing their own way (Anderson 2004, quoted in Rouse 2016: 20; original emphasis).

Humboldt therefore idealizes an autonomous individual who succeeds academically without being extensively supported by the university. According to Anderson (2004), this model might still hold true today, and might hence be the reason why mainland European universities still value autonomy and self-responsibility. Considering that this hypothesis is based on a very limited number of texts, results need to be interpreted cautiously. While it may be hasty to conclude that mainland European universities are still influenced by the Humboldtian model and therefore value autonomy over support, these results might yet indicate differing values in higher education. More research may prove fruitful to further examine this hypothesis.

A final interesting observation was that 95% of the mainland European sample texts promote the university’s internationality, as opposed to only 70% of Anglophone WCU texts. These results support Jenkins’ (2014: 101-107) findings, according to which mainland European universities strongly focus on internationality by referring to English study programs, by listing the number of international students and staff members, and by advertising a diverse and multicultural community. For Anglophone universities, though, internationality seems to be of only minor importance “in their internationalization strategy” (Jenkins 2014: 112). Since Anglophone universities rank foremost in international student recruitment (Katsarova 2015: 4), they might not consider the need for explicitly promoting

their internationality. Mainland European universities, on the other hand, aim to increase international student enrolment (Aguilera-Barchet 2012: 32, Katsarova 2015: 3-4), and may therefore particularly stress their international orientation.

6.2 Lexico-grammatical analysis

6.2.1 Keywords

It is hardly surprising that both sample groups draw upon similar words adhering to the semantic field of higher education such as *university*, *students*, *study*, *research* or *education*. Also, both sample corpora make use of promotional language and feature the same evaluative adjectives such as *diverse*, *leading*, *best*, *friendly*, *top* or *international*. The latter adjective is particularly interesting, as it appears 21 times in the Anglophone corpus, as opposed to 93 times in the mainland European corpus. This suggests that mainland European universities strongly emphasise their internationality, as also reflected in the move structure (see section 6.1).

A further difference relates to the term *university*, which constitutes the most frequently occurring word in both keyword lists, appearing 97 times in the Anglophone sample texts, and 277 times in the mainland European corpus. While this discrepancy may seem striking at first, the answer becomes clear upon further examination: WCU texts of Anglophone universities not only use the university's full name (*university of X*, or *the university*) to refer to themselves, but also make frequent use of the personal pronoun *we* (83 hits). WCU texts of mainland European universities, by contrast, appear to be more hesitant to use the pronoun *we* (which is not even featured in the keyword list), and instead use the impersonal phrase *the university of X* or *the university*. Likewise, the term *students* occurs only 58 times in the Anglophone corpus, whereas it is used 118 times in the mainland European sample texts. Additionally, the personal pronoun *you* appears 171 times in the Anglophone corpus, while it does not even occur in the keyword list of mainland European texts. It can therefore be seen that Anglophone WCU texts prefer a more personal and conversational tone by referring to the respective university as *we*, and by directly addressing the prospective student by using the pronoun *you*. Mainland European texts, on the other hand, tend to employ a more distant voice by using the impersonal phrase *the university* and by referring to prospective students simply as *students*. Consider the following examples:

Table 3: Extracts taken from sample texts

Extracts taken from the WCU texts of	
Anglophone universities (emphasis added)	mainland European universities (emphasis added)
"We're constantly updating and adding the facilities you'll use" (Sheffield Hallam University)	"The University of Bern provides its <i>students</i> with the very latest specialist knowledge in international terms and familiarizes them with academic methods" (University of Bern)
"We even provide a free on-arrival welcome service where we will meet you at the airport" (University of South Australia)	"The University also offers Sports Facilities, which allow the <i>students</i> to practice all kind [sic] of sports easily" (University of Oviedo)
"We offer you far more than just a qualification" (University of Queensland)	"The study programmes at the UvA offer <i>students</i> a high level of autonomy" (University of Amsterdam)
"We'll teach you skills that employers really value – giving you a head start on your career journey" (University of Hull)	" <i>Students</i> accepted into the university can choose from a wide range of study programmes" (Comenius University of Bratislava)
"We offer career support and advice throughout your time with us" (Birmingham City University)	"The University of Bergen offers quality tuition-free education to all <i>students</i> " (University of Bergen)
"At Macquarie, we ensure your studies lead you to a satisfying and prosperous career – one that allows you to dream big" (Macquarie University)	"JGU is a university with about 37,000 <i>students</i> and an international flair due to the high proportion of foreign <i>students</i> from 130 countries" (University of Mainz)

As these examples illustrate, personal pronouns are much more commonly used in WCU texts of Anglophone universities. Similarly, the personal pronoun *our* occurs 114 times in the Anglophone sample texts, as opposed to only 37 times in mainland European texts. Likewise, the pronoun *your* appears 62 times in the former group, as opposed to only 38 times in the latter. Thus, there is convincing evidence to suggest that WCU pages of Anglophone universities are characterized by a preponderance of first and second person pronouns, which convey closeness and might hence create a personal and casual relationship with the reader. While the use of impersonal constructions and the lack of pronouns could "be attributed to insecurity in writing in a second language" (Clyne 1991: 62), it may also relate to differences in academic writing conventions. For instance, in a recent article published by Textworks Translations (2016), it is argued that "the use of personal pronouns [in English academic writing] is increasing – especially in the social sciences and humanities", while in German the "use of personal pronouns is not as common". Although this example refers to German academic texts only, the lack of personal pronouns may also be characteristic for academic writing conventions across mainland Europe. However, further scholarly work would be recommended to examine this hypothesis.

Moreover, the keyword list reveals that the sample corpus of Anglophone universities makes frequent use of contractions. In fact, the contraction *ll* is featured in the Anglophone keyword list with 41 hits, whereas contractions do not occur at all in the keyword list of mainland European sample texts. Apart from the University of Southern Denmark, whose WCU page comprises interviews with students and therefore simulates spoken language, texts from mainland European universities do not use contractions at all. The following examples demonstrate the frequent use of contractions in WCU pages of Anglophone universities (emphasis added):

“It’s the biggest ever investment in our history” (University of Wolverhampton)
 “You’ll receive a first-class education” (Birmingham City University)
 “We’re proud to rank first in Western Australia” (University of Western Australia)
 “Of course, *there’s* so much more to learn” (University of Minnesota)
 “There’s a wide range of scholarships for students from all backgrounds, so be sure to check out *what’s* on offer” (Macquarie university)
 “With a mix of cultures, nationalities and religions, you’ll soon feel at home here no matter what country or background you’re from” (University of Brighton)
 “From day one *we’ll* help you build the real-world knowledge and transferable skills that employers look for in graduate recruits” (University of Brighton)

Due to the high degree of personal pronouns and contractions, WCU pages of Anglophone universities take a conversational tone and hence turn out to be much more informal than their mainland European counterparts.

6.2.2 Style

Regarding style, many similarities have been found between the two sample groups, such as the use of imperatives (“Find your perfect course now”, “Bring your ideas”, “Choose your future”), phrasal verbs (*check out, set up, count on*), superlative forms (*top, best, highest, largest*), adverbs of degree (*fully, very, highly*) or positively connoted language (*unique, exciting, dynamic, treasure, paradise, enjoy*). Also, rhetorical devices were used such as rhyme (“green and clean”, “earn while you learn”), rhetorical questions (“Want to join our student family?”, “Would you like to be one of them?”) or alliterations (“friendly folks”, “big and bold”, “kickstart their career”), all of which add to the texts’ informal and advertising style. Additionally, the sample texts are characterized by active constructions, and primarily employ the present tense as well as the *will*-future; the latter tense appears to be highly convincing as it makes the reader as a prospective student visualize his/her future at the university. Although this strategy may sound trivial, it is still highly effective as it depicts how the reader could benefit if s/he chose to study at the respective university. Moreover, both sample groups make use of the past tense when referring to university rankings, the university’s history or investments. These similarities clearly demonstrate that WCU texts form a conventionalized genre, which is marked by a rather informal, personal but mostly highly promotional style.

Yet, also considerable differences in the use of stylistic features have been found. Apart from the wide discrepancy regarding personal pronouns (see previous section), it was observed that Anglophone WCU texts frequently use colloquialisms (e.g. “grab a bite”, “we’re pretty chuffed”, “heaps of fun”), which contribute to the texts’ informality and colloquiality. As colloquialisms can hardly be found in the sample texts of mainland European universities, there is even further evidence to suggest that mainland European WCU pages tend to prefer a more formal and distant tone. The lack of colloquialisms might point towards formality differences between Anglophone and non-Anglophone academic

info-promotion genres. In fact, some writers might consider the use of colloquialisms as ill-fitting to the genre, since it still belongs to academic genres in general.

Another striking observation was that many spelling mistakes (e.g. *disciplies*, *stragic plan*, *globallay*) and grammar mistakes (“in the entire Europe”, “Convinced that in each student has the potential”) could be found in WCU texts of mainland European universities. While some mistakes are most likely a result of carelessness or a lack of proof-reading, others are typical mistakes made by non-native speakers. For example, the misspelling *successfull*, found in the text of the University of Jena, is a common error made by German native speakers, since German adjectives ending in [fɔl] are spelled with <ll> (e.g. *grauenvoll*, *liebevoll*, *qualvoll*). If and in how far spelling and grammar mistakes affect student recruitment might be an interesting issue for future research. Still, considering that typos and grammar mistakes do alter a reader’s perception of the text and might even depict the author as “less conscientious, intelligent and trustworthy” (Boland & Queen 2016), it is reasonable to assume that mistakes might portray the university as unprofessional and unreliable. Considering genre appropriacy, the reader is likely to expect a well-written, grammatically correct text, especially since it is published by an academic institution.

A final interesting difference to emerge from the data comparison relates to the texts’ lengths. While the texts of Anglophone universities totally comprise 7,533 words (376 words on average), the texts of mainland European universities are considerably longer with 11,805 words (590 words on average). There may be various reasons for this difference: on the one hand, some universities provide all the information on their WCU page, whereas others use less text and instead include hyperlinks for further reference. The WCU texts of Anglophone universities might therefore be shorter, as they may use more hyperlinks for additional information. On the other hand, as Anglophone universities are very popular amongst international students (OECD 2014: 345), they may not deem it necessary to write lengthy texts. Mainland European universities, by contrast, aiming to increase their number of international students, may want to include more arguments to attract prospective students. For instance, many WCU texts of mainland European universities contain an entire paragraph on the university’s internationality, which is often only briefly mentioned in Anglophone texts. It is also worth mentioning that the discrepancy in overall text length might be linked to the complexity of sentence structures, an issue this study was not able to address and which could be resolved in future studies.

6.3 Multimodal analysis

When analyzing the multimodal features of Anglophone and mainland European university websites, multiple similarities could be found: the websites share a similar layout, with a horizontal top menu and the text being vertically aligned in the center, with the university’s logo being usually located in the top left corner and with hyperlinks in or around the written text. In addition, most WCU pages feature links to the universities’ social media accounts, which encourages communication between the institution and current and prospective students, staff members, and the wider public in general.

It is also interesting to note that most WCU pages use a white background, which creates a friendly and welcoming atmosphere. Given that in Western cultures the color white symbolizes purity, trust and softness (Cousins 2014), the bright background is likely to serve as a persuasive tool, since it depicts the university as thoroughly positive. It was also found that the white background is usually combined with dark-colored and bold fonts, which facilitates reading, as can be seen in the following two examples:

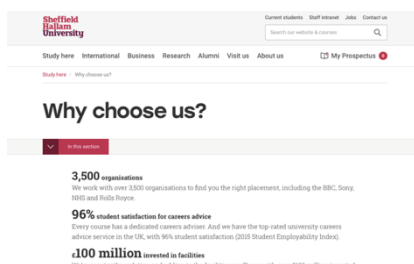


Figure 2: White background (Screenshot: Sheffield Hallam University)

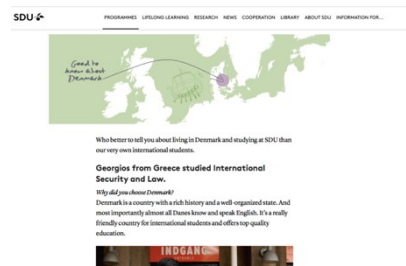


Figure 3: White background (Screenshot: University of Southern Denmark)

Also, with images being “ever more important in meaning-making” (Hyland 2013: 108), the majority of WCU pages include pictures, which commonly show smiling students from diverse backgrounds having a good time: most of them diligently and enthusiastically engage in group activities, with no sign of stress or any other negative emotions. These images may be intended to be highly persuasive, since happy faces elicit target person joy and greater product appeal (Berg, Söderlund & Lundström 2015: 460). Furthermore, these pictures suggest a friendly atmosphere for learning and living at the university (see move 4: Ensure friendly atmosphere – student satisfaction), and emphasize the university’s international student community (see move 6: Ensure internationality).



Figure 4: Diverse student community (Screenshot: University of Wolverhampton)



Figure 5: Diverse student community (Screenshot: University of Vienna)

Additionally, the pictures promoting the university’s location or its surroundings appear to be particularly powerful and persuasive, as they portray the university as a holiday destination rather than as a place of intense study. In fact, many pictures appear as if they were taken out of a travel guide, and hence the university seems to sell a holiday experience, as can be seen from Figures 6-9:



Figure 6: University location (Screenshot: University of Western Australia)



Figure 7: University location (Screenshot: Victoria University of Wellington)



Figure 8: University location (Screenshot: University of Bergen)



Figure 9: University location (Screenshot: Stockholm University)

These pictures clearly imply a fun, adventurous and relaxing experience instead of rigorous university life. They also suggest that a university's location has become supremely important, not only for career opportunities, but also for exciting leisure activities.

Several differences between the two sample groups could be revealed, though. The single most striking observation to emerge from the data comparison was that WCU pages of Anglophone universities adopt pressure tactics by urging the reader to apply and take action immediately. In fact, 40% of Anglophone universities feature flashy “apply now”, “apply here” or “find your perfect course now” buttons, a subtle yet effective tool for pressuring the reader. The prospective student can barely finish reading the WCU page before being prompted to hand in their application. Interestingly, this strategy was completely absent on mainland European WCU pages.

Additionally, the results show that the use of audiovisual material appears to be more common among WCU pages of Anglophone universities (30%) than among mainland European universities (10%). The videos constitute a summary of the written WCU text, and in a few cases, they also incorporate moves that are absent in the written part (see appendix A3 and A4). The use of audiovisual aids is likely to be more effective than just written text alone, since video marketing engages the viewer, presents fast and rich content and incites action, thus “[boosting] a user's likelihood of taking action on what they see” (Brenna 2016). Given its ever-growing popularity, video marketing will probably soon be used by many universities on their WCU pages. A thorough analysis of the video content was, unfortunately, beyond the scope of this paper, and could be resolved in future studies.

7. Discussion

In the first part of the analysis, a six-move structure could be identified, which supports Yang's (2013b) findings. While both sample groups are characterized by almost the same moves and steps, substantial differences could be found. First, the texts of mainland European universities feature an additional step, i.e. courses taught in English, "to overcome their linguistic disadvantage" (OECD 2010: 315, quoted in Jenkins 2014: 4) and thus to attract more international students and not be confined to domestic students only. Second, it could be noted that Anglophone universities frequently refer to a range of different student support services (e.g. help with accommodation and visas, student counselling, on arrival welcome service for international students), something the WCU texts of mainland European universities lack completely. This might be due to two reasons: first, universities in Anglophone countries commonly charge high tuition fees and therefore have more funds available to offer such services; second, universities in continental Europe might still be influenced by the Humboldtian educational ideal, which is believed to still shape higher education in Europe (Anderson 2004), and which values student autonomy and independence. Since the present study is based on a limited number of texts, though, further scholarly work would be required to examine differing values in higher education. A further observation emerging from the data comparison is that mainland European universities place greater stress on their long-standing history as well as on the university's internationality. Regarding similarities, both sample groups have been found to promote the university's location and its surroundings, copying the tourism industry.

Also, evidence was put forward to show that WCU pages of university websites are generally characterized by a rather informal style, realized through the use of evaluative language, imperatives, active constructions and rhetorical devices. WCU pages of Anglophone universities, however, appear to use more promotional strategies (both linguistic as well as extra-linguistic): on the one hand, they use the strategy of comparative advertising, a commonly found tool in the discourse of advertising, which is assumed to be particularly powerful, as it helps the university set itself apart from its competitors. On the other hand, the Anglophone sample texts also make use of a more colloquial and conversational style realized through contractions, colloquialisms and direct reader address. Since these informal language features, and specifically the use of personal pronouns, aim to establish rapport and enhance engagement and familiarity, they are likely to raise a text's persuasiveness. Additionally, the WCU texts of Anglophone universities have been found to feature pressure tactics, i.e. flashy "apply now" buttons, which urge the reader to take action immediately.

The WCU pages of mainland European universities, though, seem to prefer a more formal and distant tone, as they use impersonal phrases such as *the university* and *the students* instead of the personal pronouns *we* and *you*, and as they also lack contractions and colloquialisms. Since the frequent use of personal pronouns, colloquialisms, contractions and pressure tactics add to the texts' conversational style and therefore create a close relationship between writer and reader, it might be argued that the promotional strategies

used by Anglophone universities are more persuasive than those of mainland European universities. In addition, several typos and grammar mistakes could be detected in the sample texts of mainland European universities, which are likely to reduce a text's persuasiveness and the university's credibility. After all, when reading something published by a prestigious academic institution, the reader will probably expect a well-written, grammatically correct piece of text without typos.

8. Conclusion

While multiple studies have focused on the genre of university prospectuses (see Fairclough 1993, Askehave 2007, Osman 2008), far too little attention has been paid to 'why choose us' pages of university websites, an online "academic info-promotion genre" (Yang 2013b: 46), which is about to substitute its outdated print counterpart of university prospectuses. Despite previous studies focusing on the move structure and lexico-grammatical features of WCU pages of Anglophone universities (Yang 2013b), a comparative analysis between texts from English speaking and non-English speaking countries was yet to be conducted. As stated in the introduction, the main purpose of this ESP-based study was to examine the move structure, the lexico-grammatical patterns and multimodal features of WCU texts of Anglophone and mainland European university websites, and to what extent they differ from one another.

This study has shown that WCU texts of university websites are characterized by a rather informal style which is realized through the use of evaluative language, imperatives, active constructions and rhetorical devices. WCU texts of Anglophone universities have been found to use more promotional strategies, as they employ the strategy of comparative advertising, direct reader address, contractions, colloquialisms as well as pressure tactics ("apply now" buttons). The WCU texts of mainland European universities use a more distant voice, as they use impersonal phrases such as *the university* and *the students* instead of personal pronouns.

Although the results are promising, they should be validated by a larger sample size and should then be analyzed using normalized lexical frequency. It is also recommended that future studies conduct comparative analyses of WCU texts from non-English speaking universities, e.g. Asian and European universities. Considering that Chinese universities, in particular, aim to significantly increase their number of international students (Jenkins 2014: 82), it would be interesting to examine which promotional strategies and pressure tactics they employ for recruitment. Also, further work needs to be done to establish whether the Humboldtian educational ideal really has an impact on student services. Finally, the present study could be complemented with a reception study investigating the reader's opinion on the effectiveness of different promotional strategies.

This paper has gone some way towards enhancing our understanding of 'why choose us' texts of university websites, as well as academic info-promotion genres in general. This study could be particularly useful for website content writers and authors of similar genres.

Given that strategic use of language is needed to catch readers' attention and recruit prospective students/customers, writers should be aware about the possible impact of different linguistic and extra-linguistic strategies, and which ones might be most effective.

In addition, this study might also benefit the ESP classroom, where effective promotional strategies could be analyzed and applied to the students' own needs. Thus, ESP teachers might use the findings in their classes or select other authentic texts to examine the move structure and the lexico-grammatical features, providing scaffolding for students to produce their own promotional texts. As pointed out by Yang (2013b: 69), "EFL students can then produce a more authentic, motivating and purpose-embedded text if they learn the conventional structure and linguistic elements expected by the reading community".

Moreover, this paper may also lay the foundation for future research into contrastive analyses of academic info-promotion genres, an interesting field of research which has thus far been neglected.

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Appendix

The data regarding the WCU pages was retrieved on November 25, 2017.

A.1 Data of the study – Anglophone universities

Anglophone universities		
Number	University	Country
1	University of Hull	United Kingdom
2	University of Wolverhampton	United Kingdom
3	University of Brighton	United Kingdom
4	Birmingham City University	United Kingdom
5	University of Bolton	United Kingdom
6	Sheffield Hallam University	United Kingdom
7	University of Queensland	Australia
8	Macquarie University	Australia
9	University of South Australia	Australia
10	Victoria University	Australia
11	University of Western Australia	Australia
12	Trinity College	Ireland
13	Dublin City University	Ireland
14	University of Minnesota	United States
15	University of Oregon	United States
16	Rice University	United States
17	University of Auckland	New Zealand
18	Victoria University of Wellington	New Zealand
19	University of Canterbury	New Zealand
20	Western University	Canada

A.2 Data of the study – Mainland European universities

Non-Anglophone European universities		
Number	University	Country
21	University of Helsinki	Finland
22	Stockholm University	Sweden
23	University of Uppsala	Sweden
24	University of Southern Denmark	Denmark
25	University of Amsterdam	Netherlands
26	University of Luxembourg	Luxembourg
27	University of Warsaw	Poland
28	University of Vienna	Austria
29	University of Jena	Germany
30	University of Mainz	Germany
31	Corvinus University of Budapest	Hungary
32	University of Bern	Switzerland
33	University of Trento	Italy
34	University of Tartu	Estonia
35	University of Porto	Portugal
36	University of Bordeaux	France
37	University of Oviedo	Spain
38	Comenius University of Bratislava	Slovakia
39	University of Bergen	Norway
40	University of Liège	Belgium

A.3 Detailed analysis of moves and steps (WCU pages of Anglophone universities):

Moves and steps	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
1. Establish high prestige		x	x	x			x	x	x	x	x	x	x			x	x	x	x	
Step 1.1 Ranking			x				x	x	x	x	x	x	x				x	x	x	
Step 1.2 University history		x									x	x								
Step 1.3 Membership of a league/group										x										
Step 1.4 Famous alumni				x								x				x				
Move 2: Refer to teaching quality		x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Step 2.1 Teaching staff		x	x	x		x	x		x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Step 2.2 Variety of programs		x			x		x			x			x	x			x	x		x
Step 2.3 Unique programs																				x
3. Ensure research excellence	x	x		x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Step 3.1 Leading research		x		x		x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Step 3.2 Top facilities	x	x				x		x	x		x	x	x				x			
Step 3.3 Investments	x	x		x		x														
Move 4: Ensure friendly atmosphere	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x
Step 4.1 Student satisfaction	x					x							x							x
Step 4.2 Leisure possibilities	x		x			x	x	x			x	x	x	x		x		x	x	
Step 4.3 Student support		x	x	x	x	x			x	x	x		x	x			x		x	x
Step 4.4 Inclusion of testimonials	x			x									x					x		
Step 4.5 University size					x	x							x							
Move 5: Offer attractive incentives	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Step 5.1 Career prospects / employability	x	x		x				x	x	x	x	x	x		x					
Step 5.2 Good location	x		x	x	x	x	x	x			x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Step 5.3 Scholarships	x	x						x									x			x
Step 5.4 Accommodation	x		x		x	x							x			x	x			x
Step 5.5 Student Jobs				x	x															
Step 5.6 Student exchange				x				x	x		x	x	x	x	x		x		x	x
Step 5.7 Collaboration with other organizations			x	x		x		x		x		x	x	x				x	x	
Step 5.8 Affordability (tuition fees/living costs)	x				x	x					x									
Move 6: Ensure internationality			x	x	x			x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x
Video	x			x						x			x					x	x	

**the red x refers to moves and steps realized through video*

A.4 Detailed analysis of moves and steps (WCU pages of mainland European universities):

Moves and steps	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40
1. Establish high prestige	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x		x		x	x	x	x	x	x		x
Step 1.1 Ranking	x	x	x		x		x				x		x	x	x	x		x		
Step 1.2 University history			x		x	x	x	x	x					x	x		x	x		x
Step 1.3 Membership of a league/group	x				x									x						
Step 1.4 Famous alumni			x						x					x						
Move 2: Refer to teaching quality	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Step 2.1 Teaching staff	x	x		x			x	x	x		x	x			x	x	x	x		
Step 2.2 Variety of programs	x	x			x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x		x	x	x
Step 2.3 Unique programs					x						x							x		
3. Ensure research excellence	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x
Step 3.1 Leading research	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x		x
Step 3.2 Top facilities	x			x		x	x		x				x		x	x				
Step 3.3 Investments																x				
Move 4: Ensure friendly atmosphere	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x		x	x	x	x	x
Step 4.1 Student satisfaction			x	x	x		x				x			x					x	
Step 4.2 Leisure possibilities		x	x		x				x	x			x	x		x	x		x	
Step 4.3 Student support				x	x	x			x								x			x
Step 4.4 Inclusion of testimonials				x									x						x	
Step 4.5 University size	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x			x	x		x		x		
Move 5: Offer attractive incentives	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Step 5.1 Career prospects / employability	x	x	x		x	x	x							x	x	x		x		
Step 5.2 Good location	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x		x	
Step 5.3 Scholarships													x							
Step 5.4 Accommodation					x								x				x			
Step 5.5 Student Jobs				x						x										
Step 5.6 Student exchange						x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x		x				x
Step 5.7 Collaboration with other organizations						x				x			x		x	x				x
Step 5.8 Affordability (tuition fees/living costs)				x		x	x		x										x	
Step 5.9 Courses taught in English	x	x			x	x	x						x			x	x		x	
Move 6: Ensure internationality	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Video							x									x				

**the red x refers to moves and steps realized through video*

A.5 Keyword list (Anglophone sample texts):

black – positive keywords
 red – negative keywords
 bold – semantic field of higher education
 blue – promotional language
 orange – university refers to itself or its location
 green – personal pronouns
 grey – negative evaluation keywords

#Keyword Types: 180

#Keyword Tokens: 2853

1	97	+	650.11	0.0084	university
2	25	+	262	0.0062	campus
3	45	+	297.38	0.006	student
4	58	+	341.6	0.0054	students
5	24	+	180	0.0048	universities
6	18	+	179.88	0.0045	ranked
7	26	+	152.17	0.0038	choose
8	15	+	134.81	0.0037	trinity
9	15	+	124.63	0.0035	graduates
10	15	+	116.53	0.0034	hull
11	14	+	123.8	0.0034	postgraduate
12	12	+	134.74	0.0031	rankings
13	13	+	101.31	0.003	graduate
14	12	+	89.86	0.0028	diverse
15	20	+	100.31	0.0027	career
16	39	+	167.55	0.0027	study
17	19	+	94.83	0.0026	facilities
18	17	+	89.76	0.0026	opportunities
19	114	+	422.79	0.0025	our
20	18	+	86.53	0.0024	learn
21	41	+	164.47	0.0024	research
22	9	+	78.05	0.0023	bolton
23	9	+	86.5	0.0023	vibrant
24	75	+	276.07	0.0023	world
25	31	+	116.64	0.0021	city
26	17	+	74.45	0.0021	learning
27	8	+	118.4	0.0021	qs
28	8	+	83.43	0.0021	scholarships
29	8	+	102.01	0.0021	uc
30	8	+	135.22	0.0021	uo
31	11	+	57.73	0.002	abroad
32	12	+	58.65	0.002	academic
33	15	+	66.01	0.002	courses
34	11	+	58.78	0.002	global
35	8	+	62.95	0.002	internationally
36	8	+	62.31	0.002	ranking
37	7	+	105.78	0.0019	macquarie
38	31	+	110.46	0.0019	top
39	23	+	85.61	0.0019	uk

40	8	+	50.39	0.0018	careers
41	8	+	50.23	0.0018	rice
42	15	+	62.43	0.0018	skills
43	10	+	47.97	0.0017	accommodation
44	7	+	51.63	0.0017	excellence
45	7	+	48.38	0.0017	sydney
46	7	+	44.11	0.0016	brighton
47	22	+	72.58	0.0016	experience
48	6	+	65.24	0.0016	globally
49	8	+	43.35	0.0016	located
50	13	+	51.32	0.0016	teaching
51	9	+	39.22	0.0015	australia
52	9	+	41.22	0.0015	cities
53	13	+	48.27	0.0015	degree
54	8	+	39.91	0.0015	discover
55	41	+	119.84	0.0015	ll
56	6	+	44.18	0.0015	renowned
57	7	+	37.47	0.0015	studying
58	6	+	35.97	0.0014	diversity
59	7	+	37.16	0.0014	dublin
60	22	+	64.45	0.0014	education
61	21	+	65.45	0.0014	international
62	8	+	35.49	0.0014	sports
63	19	+	58.73	0.0014	th
64	7	+	36.17	0.0014	victoria
65	7	+	32.24	0.0013	birmingham
66	6	+	30.69	0.0013	classroom
67	5	+	42.38	0.0013	placements
68	7	+	31.06	0.0013	reputation
69	5	+	53.49	0.0013	vu
70	5	+	29.04	0.0012	faculty
71	6	+	29.84	0.0012	flexible
72	16	+	45.24	0.0012	industry
73	13	+	37.67	0.0012	offer
74	8	+	30.45	0.0012	offers
75	5	+	36.45	0.0012	undergraduate
76	12	+	32.51	0.0011	art
77	17	+	45.31	0.0011	community
78	4	+	75.24	0.0011	dcu
79	5	+	25.11	0.0011	dedicated
80	4	+	51.69	0.0011	employability
81	9	+	29.35	0.0011	exchange
82	6	+	25.42	0.0011	experiences
83	4	+	37.51	0.0011	graduation
84	10	+	30.06	0.0011	leading
85	6	+	24.55	0.0011	options
86	6	+	24.81	0.0011	overseas
87	15	+	39.12	0.0011	range
88	10	+	31	0.0011	science
89	5	+	26.71	0.0011	transformed
90	4	+	75.24	0.0011	uwa
91	5	+	22.32	0.001	australian
92	5	+	22.75	0.001	awarded
93	5	+	21.02	0.001	degrees
94	6	+	23.42	0.001	employers
95	4	+	29.5	0.001	entrepreneurs
96	22	+	48.81	0.001	find

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97	6	+	21.13	0.001	gain
98	8	+	23.07	0.001	ireland
99	4	+	28.4	0.001	perth
100	7	+	23.83	0.001	programmes
101	6	+	23.03	0.001	societies
102	23	+	49.72	0.001	why
103	6	+	22.52	0.001	winning
104	62	+	128.38	0.001	your
105	13	+	28.82	0.0009	class
106	5	+	18.8	0.0009	clubs
107	4	+	19.35	0.0009	cultures
108	4	+	22.9	0.0009	curiosity
109	4	+	19.18	0.0009	exceptional
110	5	+	20.27	0.0009	experts
111	5	+	17.52	0.0009	friendly
112	13	+	29.56	0.0009	future
113	11	+	27.53	0.0009	higher
114	4	+	20.46	0.0009	spaces
115	3	+	27.33	0.0008	alumni
116	11	+	22.07	0.0008	big
117	6	+	17.71	0.0008	cultural
118	3	+	20.17	0.0008	festivals
119	3	+	23.19	0.0008	hub
120	6	+	17.59	0.0008	join
121	9	+	19.92	0.0008	living
122	7	+	18.05	0.0008	opportunity
123	3	+	23.83	0.0008	passions
124	30	+	53.76	0.0008	re
125	8	+	18.01	0.0008	studies
126	4	+	17.73	0.0008	succeed
127	15	+	29.39	0.0008	support
128	3	+	20.32	0.0008	thriving
129	3	+	20.97	0.0008	transforming
130	3	+	48.12	0.0008	uq
131	3	+	56.43	0.0008	wifi
132	3	+	17.87	0.0007	auckland
133	15	+	26.04	0.0007	best
134	3	+	18.04	0.0007	globe
135	3	+	17.43	0.0007	investing
136	3	+	18.81	0.0007	online
137	3	+	17.97	0.0007	prestigious
138	171	+	232.02	0.0007	you
139	14	+	21.6	0.0006	every
140	83	+	88.14	0.0006	we
141	2	+	18.03	0.0005	aqua
142	2	+	28.09	0.0005	embeds
143	2	+	18.5	0.0005	erasmus
144	2	+	20.3	0.0005	eu
145	2	+	19.3	0.0005	intakes
146	2	+	29.25	0.0005	internship
147	2	+	33.8	0.0005	internships
148	2	+	37.62	0.0005	qaa
149	2	+	22.79	0.0005	sessional

Negative keywords

170	9	-	18.8	0.0001	which
171	4	-	19.18	0	been
172	6	-	33.62	0	but
173	1	-	55.84	0	his
174	4	-	81.21	0	i
175	22	-	48.93	0	it
176	8	-	26.78	0	not
177	8	-	21.86	0	they
178	9	-	26.53	0	this
179	3	-	108.15	0	was
180	4	-	25.31	0	were

A.6 Keyword list (mainland European sample texts):

black – positive keywords
red – negative keywords
bold – semantic field of higher education
blue – promotional language
orange – university refers to itself or its location
green – personal pronouns
grey – negative evaluation keywords

#Keyword Types: 287

#Keyword Tokens: 5147

#Search Hits: 0

1	277	+	2189.67	0.0203	university
2	118	+	757.03	0.0092	students
3	59	+	393.11	0.0066	programmes
4	47	+	373.61	0.0066	universities
5	93	+	474.46	0.0056	international
6	50	+	297.21	0.0052	student
7	30	+	345.49	0.0051	helsinki
8	95	+	453.62	0.005	research
9	66	+	294.16	0.004	study
10	31	+	182.05	0.0038	academic
11	21	+	351.05	0.0036	trento
12	22	+	170.72	0.0034	denmark
13	20	+	205.57	0.0034	stockholm
14	19	+	213.36	0.0032	rankings
15	21	+	142.65	0.0031	sciences
16	18	+	293.07	0.0031	tartu
17	26	+	135.67	0.003	offers
18	39	+	157.41	0.0029	quality
19	18	+	153.16	0.0029	ranking
20	17	+	150.31	0.0028	campus
21	25	+	122.83	0.0028	master
22	26	+	119.79	0.0027	courses
23	16	+	173.77	0.0027	porto

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24	27	+	121.44	0.0027	teaching
25	22	+	102.7	0.0025	choose
26	45	+	154.48	0.0025	education
27	15	+	125.59	0.0025	warsaw
28	18	+	96.22	0.0024	abroad
29	19	+	98.21	0.0024	cities
30	41	+	141.79	0.0024	city
31	25	+	102.84	0.0024	degree
32	17	+	102.05	0.0024	researchers
33	15	+	102.02	0.0023	norway
34	15	+	98.81	0.0023	sweden
35	13	+	176.38	0.0022	uppsala
36	12	+	174.76	0.0021	jena
37	12	+	146.57	0.0021	uva
38	12	+	99.78	0.002	ranked
39	14	+	81.78	0.002	studying
40	13	+	87.59	0.002	vienna
41	11	+	101.87	0.0019	bordeaux
42	11	+	128.4	0.0019	erasmus
43	11	+	153.64	0.0019	liège
44	11	+	94.69	0.0018	bachelor
45	15	+	66.92	0.0018	institution
46	24	+	77.04	0.0018	offer
47	12	+	72.47	0.0018	programs
48	14	+	65.27	0.0018	sports
49	22	+	71.97	0.0018	studies
50	62	+	156.39	0.0018	world
51	12	+	60.43	0.0017	degrees
52	10	+	89.55	0.0017	estonia
53	10	+	85.6	0.0017	faculties
54	13	+	62.53	0.0017	global
55	15	+	57.44	0.0016	cultural
56	10	+	62.56	0.0016	diverse
57	11	+	56.95	0.0016	located
58	14	+	56.78	0.0016	opportunities
59	14	+	55.71	0.0016	scientific
60	20	+	61.51	0.0016	wide
61	9	+	98.74	0.0015	doctoral
62	22	+	61.12	0.0015	europe
63	9	+	62.97	0.0015	excellence
64	13	+	48.15	0.0015	excellent
65	9	+	72.06	0.0015	humanities
66	19	+	54.72	0.0015	knowledge
67	9	+	80.4	0.0015	phd
68	28	+	71.97	0.0015	top
69	12	+	49	0.0015	u
70	23	+	55.74	0.0014	english
71	8	+	143.42	0.0014	jgu
72	11	+	44.93	0.0014	sport
73	11	+	45.54	0.0014	unique
74	29	+	60.86	0.0013	best
75	12	+	38.5	0.0013	career
76	12	+	42.54	0.0013	institutions
77	43	+	83.57	0.0013	life
78	8	+	56.37	0.0013	prestigious
79	10	+	42.25	0.0013	taught
80	7	+	79.18	0.0012	bergen

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81	7	+	80.21	0.0012	bern
82	21	+	47.06	0.0012	centre
83	7	+	113.28	0.0012	corvinus
84	8	+	44.35	0.0012	equality
85	10	+	34.04	0.0012	fields
86	10	+	37.18	0.0012	highest
87	8	+	42.56	0.0012	innovation
88	14	+	39.42	0.0012	leading
89	7	+	74.5	0.0012	mainz
90	15	+	37.7	0.0012	natural
91	12	+	34.06	0.0012	region
92	13	+	36.06	0.0012	science
93	18	+	36.62	0.0011	among
94	17	+	34.91	0.0011	experience
95	7	+	41.54	0.0011	graduates
96	15	+	34.09	0.0011	higher
97	11	+	30.2	0.0011	learning
98	8	+	32.81	0.0011	numerous
99	12	+	30.48	0.0011	professional
100	18	+	38.78	0.0011	range
101	8	+	30.8	0.0011	reputation
102	6	+	36.37	0.001	amsterdam
103	10	+	26.37	0.001	culture
104	6	+	68.36	0.001	eu
105	9	+	28.72	0.001	largest
106	10	+	28.72	0.001	learn
107	7	+	29.2	0.001	medicine
108	8	+	28.98	0.001	nations
109	6	+	46.62	0.001	nobel
110	6	+	79.48	0.001	oviedo
111	14	+	28.19	0.001	programme
112	6	+	80.58	0.001	qs
113	11	+	27.36	0.001	reasons
114	6	+	53.42	0.001	shanghai
115	8	+	29.82	0.001	studied
116	6	+	107.57	0.001	uib
117	26	+	42.41	0.001	why
118	7	+	32.03	0.001	worldwide
119	10	+	21.83	0.0009	activities
120	11	+	22.61	0.0009	capital
121	5	+	79.05	0.0009	comenius
122	12	+	22.64	0.0009	countries
123	6	+	30.8	0.0009	diversity
124	11	+	23.39	0.0009	environment
125	14	+	24.76	0.0009	european
126	5	+	46.9	0.0009	friedrich
127	8	+	20.88	0.0009	network
128	9	+	24.24	0.0009	subjects
129	5	+	89.64	0.0009	unitrento
130	6	+	18.01	0.0008	accommodation
131	11	+	20.06	0.0008	according
132	6	+	22.56	0.0008	architecture
133	5	+	22.62	0.0008	careers
134	16	+	21.08	0.0008	country
135	5	+	25.75	0.0008	disciplines
136	6	+	22.54	0.0008	economics
137	8	+	18.07	0.0008	exchange

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138	6	+	18.15	0.0008	friendly
139	13	+	20.02	0.0008	future
140	22	+	28.65	0.0008	high
141	5	+	27.09	0.0008	innovative
142	5	+	26.83	0.0008	laboratories
143	12	+	19.7	0.0008	language
144	37	+	39.03	0.0008	many
145	37	+	38.15	0.0008	our
146	5	+	38.65	0.0008	rhine
147	5	+	36.49	0.0008	slovak
148	6	+	20.06	0.0008	spanish
149	4	+	26.4	0.0007	attracts
150	5	+	18.55	0.0007	awarded

Negative keywords

27033	-	42.29	0.0001	i
27117	-	30.32	0.0001	not
27238	-	34.6	0.0001	on
27369	-	30.87	0.0001	that
27413	-	32.57	0.0001	they
27510	-	50.05	0	but
2763	-	19.15	0	do
2773	-	76.88	0	had
2785	-	30.14	0	if
2791	-	21.15	0	me
2803	-	29.32	0	no

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