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Written Communication 2010 27: 159
DOI: 10.1177/0741088309357846

The online version of this article can be found at:
http://wcx.sagepub.com/content/27/2/159

Published by:
SAGE
http://www.sagepublications.com

On behalf of:

Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism

Written Communication
27(2) 159–188

DOI: 10.1177/0741088309357846
http://wc.sagepub.com
SAGE

Community and Individuality: Performing Identity in Applied Linguistics

Ken Hyland[1]

Abstract

Recent research has emphasized the close connections between writing and the construction of an author's identity. While academic contexts privilege certain ways of making meanings and so restrict what resources participants can bring from their past experiences, we can also see these writing conventions as a repertoire of options that allow writers to actively and publicly accomplish an identity through discourse choices. This article takes a somewhat novel approach to the issue of authorial identity by using the tools of corpus analysis to examine the published works of two leading figures in applied linguistics: John Swales and Debbie Cameron. By comparing high frequency keywords and clusters in their writing with a larger applied linguistics reference corpus, I attempt to show how corpus techniques might inform our study of identity construction and something of the ways identity can be seen as independent creativity shaped by an accountability to shared practices.

Keywords

discourse identity, applied linguistics, academic writing, argument, reader engagement

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The relationship between language and identity has long been a major area of sociolinguistic investigation and has become particularly important over the last decade as identity has come to be seen as something that we actively and publicly accomplish in our interactions with each other (e.g., Benwell & Stokoe, 2006). Identity is a person's relationship to his or her social world, a joint, two-way production and language allows us to create and present a coherent self to others because it ties us into webs of commonsense, interests, and shared meanings. *Who we are* and *who we might be* are built up through participation and linked to situations, to relationships, and to the rhetorical strategies and positions we adopt in engaging with others on a routine basis. This means that it is through our use of community discourses that we claim or resist membership of social groups to define who we are in relation to others. Identity therefore helps characterize both what makes us similar to and different from each other and, for academics, it is how they achieve credibility as insiders and reputations as individuals.

Negotiating a representation of self from the standardizing conventions of disciplinary discourses is clearly a skilled accomplishment for individuals involving both recognizing and exploiting community constraints. However, it is also a challenge for analysts. To take seriously the idea that identity is formed through discourse, we need a means of getting at the ways individuals routinely assemble markers of "who they are" through interaction. In this article I propose a novel method of exploring authorial identity as an aspect of discourse performance using corpus linguistic methods. By interrogating the published works of two leading figures in applied linguistics, John Swales and Deborah Cameron, and comparing these texts with mainstream work in the field, I seek to show how writers manage the tension between shared norms and individual traits. The research suggests how personal proclivities can contribute to an independent creativity shaped by shared practices and advances a methodology for uncovering this.

Identity: Individuality and Disciplinarity in Writing

Research on academic writing has long stressed the connection between writing and the creation of an author's identity (Hatch, Hill, & Hayes, 1993; Ivanic, 1998). Identity is said to be implicated in the texts we engage in and the linguistic choices we make, thus relocating it from the private to the public sphere and from hidden processes of cognition to its social and dynamic construction in discourse. Issues of agency and conformity, stability and change, remain controversial, however. Some writers question whether there is an absolute, unchanging self lurking behind such discourse and suggest that identity is a *performance* (e.g., Butler, 1990), while others see

identity as the product of dominant discourses tied to institutional practices (Foucault, 1972). I want to suggest, however, that regular patterns of language choices help individuals to realize coherent and relatively consistent identities. Almost everything we say or write, in fact, says something about us and the kind of relationship we want to establish with our interactants. Our identities are only successful to the extent that they are recognized by others however, and this means employing, appropriating, and transforming existing discourses (Bakhtin, 1986).

For Bakhtin, all writing is produced in relation to previous texts and as writers draw on these discourses they textually construct social identities in the sense of representing themselves in alignment, or dissonance, with those discourses. In any context, one discourse is likely to be dominant and hence more visible, so that writers often consciously or unconsciously take up the identity options this privileged discourse makes available (Wertsch, 1991). This means that powerful discourses, such as those authorized by academic disciplines, act to restrict the rhetorical resources participants can bring from their past experiences and constrain what they might take from those made available by the context. Such discourses, of course, exhibit a certain stability and power; after all, they are the principal means by which disciplines produce, assess, and authorize knowledge, train neophytes, distinguish members, and legitimate their authority in the world.

Adopting a voice associated with a particular field of study thus involves aligning ourselves with its knowledge-making practices and these tend to exclude the performance of certain identities and favor identities that imply an autonomous, asocial, and impersonal observer (e.g., Ivanic & Simpson, 1992). Foucault (1972) is pessimistic in his emphasis on regulation and denial of agency in this regard, but while actors are positioned in terms of what disciplinary Discourses allow, they also position themselves in terms of personal stance and interpersonal alignments. Essentially, the requirements of academic conventions do not form a closed and determining system but can be seen as a pattern of options that allows writers to actively and publicly accomplish an identity through discourse choices, as Fairclough (1992) observes,

> Subjects are ideologically positioned, but they are also capable of acting creatively to make their own connections between the diverse practices and ideologies to which they are exposed, and to restructure positioning practices and structures. (p. 91)

There is, in other words, always potential for transformation as well as reproduction in academic discourses. Bakhtin (1986), for example, talks of a process of "becoming" as we develop an awareness of our tacit choices and

habits of meaning making to gain control over our projections of self in writing. We draw on a repertoire of voices as we write, bringing to the task our own experiences, purposes, and conceptions of self to recombine the options offered by the genre we are writing in to perform a professional identity. Our diverse experiences and memberships, including those of class, ethnicity, and gender, influence how we understand our disciplinary participation and how we interact with our colleagues in the performance of this academic identity. So while the production of texts is always the production of self, individual agency is not eliminated by the cultural authority of convention and the editing of disciplinary gatekeepers. Precisely how we unpick this tangle of influences remains unclear, however, but corpus methods offer a way forward.

Bringing Corpora to Identity Studies

Identity research is an area largely characterized by autobiographical methods, where discourse helps construct an identity through the ways that people explain and understand their lives (e.g., de Fina, Schiffrin, & Bamberg, 2006). But while this approach is profoundly social and emphasizes the continual interpretation and reinterpretation of experience through a cultural lens, narrative can only ever be a partial representation of who we are. It is a one-sided self-construction that underplays the fact that our interpretations must accord with the narratives of others and with the facts of actual events: we cannot claim to be whatever and whoever we want (Lawler, 2008). More directly, narrative is a self-conscious and reflective assembling of experience for the purpose of constructing an identity, usually for a researcher, in a relatively formal and contrived context. Most of the time, however, we are not performing identity work by narrating stories of ourselves but claiming identities while engaged in doing something else. If identity is really a *performance* and not simply an *interpretive recounting* then we need to find ways of capturing what people routinely do with language that is similar or different from what others do with it. Corpus studies help provide us with this.

The value of a corpus approach is that it provides evidence for how language is used by particular authors and so how individuals construct an identity through consistent patterns of rhetorical choices. Corpus analysis is a method based on the idea that the study of a collection of related texts can illuminate our understanding of the contexts and events those texts help create. In other words, it attempts to reveal interaction in a particular domain as a collection of rhetorical choices rather than as specific acts of writing. Its advantage for identity research is that it goes beyond claims made in interviews or decisions made on particular occasions of writing to explore

the regularity and repetition of what is socially ratified and independently variant and therefore what represents preferred practices by both individuals and collectivities.

Corpus analysis is, however, a method more commonly used to describe genres, rhetorical practices, and form–function relationships (e.g., Hyland, 2004) than to explore issues of identity. Increasingly though, corpora are opening new vistas of research in stylistics and authorship studies, where they have helped to discover what is distinctive about a particular author's work (e.g., Holmes, 1994; Semino & Short, 2004). Recently, corpora have also been used in forensic investigations to settle legal cases of disputed authorship (e.g., Olsson, 2004) or for profiling writers according to sets of sociolinguistic attributes such as gender (Koppel, Argamon, & Shimoni, 2002), language background (Vel, Corney, Anderson, & Mohay, 2002), and education level (Juola & Baayen, 2005).

This work recognizes the plausibility of identifying a "stylistic profile" or "linguistic fingerprint" (Hanlein, 1998) from the consistent patterns of choices authors make, so that if choice is constant then it is seen as an individual style marker. In other words, by "dematerializing texts" away from actual concrete instances a corpus approach has the potential to offer linguistic evidence of consistent rhetorical patterning rather than author impressions. Uncovering the regularities in frequency and patterning of words, senses and phraseology can therefore help identify authorial preferences and how writers seek to position themselves with their readers and so project a possible identity. The following sections explore how this works through the published research of two applied linguists: Deborah Cameron and John Swales.

The Protagonists

I selected these two academics largely because their highly distinctive rhetorical styles offers a good starting point for this kind of analysis. They are also interesting because of their profiles and the fact they are likely to be known to readers of this journal. Both enjoy considerable disciplinary celebrity and are among the foremost researchers in their fields, holding professorships at leading research universities either side of the Atlantic, Cameron at Oxford and Swales at Michigan, with substantial research and writing careers. Deborah Cameron is a sociolinguist known most widely for her work on gender, globalization and language, and discourse in the workplace while John Swales is the doyen of the ESP movement and the most influential champion of *genre* in English language teaching and research. It should be mentioned that both authors encouraged this project and offered their comments on this article.

These writers are very different from each other in terms of experience and philosophy. Cameron is a committed left winger and active feminist from a working class background, while Swales had a conventional middle class upbringing. Both, however, are mavericks and didn't tread the traditional academic career path. Cameron left school at 17 doing low-paid, drudge jobs before going to university and starting her career relatively late, while Swales was a peripatetic English teacher wandering through Europe and Africa before taking a senior lectureship at Aston and finally settling in the United States. Neither went through conventional PhD training and both came to prominence on the basis of an early, highly influential, publication in a new field: *Feminism and Linguistic Theory* (Cameron, 1992) and *Genre Analysis* (Swales, 1990). Unusually in applied linguistics, both have continued to be more heavily cited for their books rather than articles and both experiment with nonacademic genres: Swales with textbooks and autobiography (e.g., Swales, 2009; Swales & Feak, 2004) and Cameron with polemics and popularizations (e.g., Cameron, 2006a) as a high-profile commentator in both print and broadcast media.

Perhaps most importantly, both are intensely self aware rhetoricians who have published on discourse analysis and grammar, and both are known for their accessibility. Cameron's books *Verbal Hygiene (*1995) and *Good To Talk?* (2000), both dealing in different ways with contemporary normative practices of regulating communication, and her collection of articles *On Language and Sexual Politics* (2006b), are very readable and have enjoyed success across a range of fields. Similarly, the popularity of Swales monographs *Other Floors, Other Voices* (1998) and *Research Genres* (2004) is partly due to their reader friendliness. Swales has edited a journal and both have edited important collections of research and regularly review others' writing. It is this rhetorical reflexivity, and the confidence to deploy it, which was decisive in selecting these writers for analysis. This apparent willingness to stray from disciplinary norms to locally manage a discoursal identity makes them ideal case studies for a fruitful analysis of variation.

Texts and Method

The main investigative technique here is comparison. Comparing the features of target writers' texts with a much large reference corpus of work in the same discipline can help to determine what is general in the norms of a community and what represents more personal choices. Stubbs (2005) puts it like this:

> Individual texts can be explained only against a background of what is normal and expected in general language use, and this is precisely the comparative information that quantitative corpus data can provide. An understanding of the background of the usual and everyday—what happens millions of times—is necessary in order to understand the unique.

Extending this principle beyond individual texts, we can see that if a particular word, phrase, or usage is common in a corpus of a particular writer's work, then it might be said to be a consistent preference that reveals something of that individual's routine expression of self: of a relatively unreflective performance of identity.

The corpora used here represent a considerable proportion of each writer's single authored output over their careers (See appendix). My corpus of Cameron's published writing consists of 21 single authored articles made available by the author. It represents some 20 years of publishing and comprises 125,000 words. The Swales corpus was compiled at the Michigan ELI and provided with his approval. It consists of 14 single-authored articles together with the bulk of his three monographs, representing 18 years of output and comprising 342,000 words. These corpora were individually compared with a larger reference corpus representing a spectrum of current published work in applied linguistics and in the same genres as the target texts. It comprises 75 research articles from 20 leading international journals and 25 chapters from 12 books totaling 750,000 words.

I used Wordsmith Tools Version 4 (Scott, 2004) to generate word lists of the most frequent single words, and three- and four-word strings for each of the target authors and for the reference corpus. These strings, which Biber, Johansson, Leech, Conrad, and Finegan (1999) call *lexical bundles* and Scott (2004) *clusters*, are words that follow each other more frequently than expected by chance and so contribute to our sense of distinctiveness in a register. Particular bundles tend to differ according to discipline and genre (e.g., Hyland, 2008), but it seemed worth exploring ideolect variation.

I then compared each author corpus with the reference corpus using the KeyWords tool. This program identifies words and phrases that occur significantly more frequently in the smaller corpus than the larger one using a log-likelihood statistic. This offers a better characterization of the differences between two corpora than a simple frequency comparison as it identifies items that are "key" differentiators across many files. That is, they are significantly more or less frequent in the author texts rather than simply being the most used. In this way, I could identify which words best distinguish the texts of these authors from those in applied linguistics more generally as

represented in the reference corpus. After reviewing the keyword lists and identifying individual words and multiword clusters, I concordanced the more frequent items of group common devices into broad pragmatic categories to capture central aspects of their writing.

Personal Interests and Professional Niches

I first examined the high frequency content words and keywords in these texts to discover how far the respective research fields of these authors threw up a specific lexis. Academics construct whatever status they manage to achieve by advancing knowledge, and in a field marked by considerable competition for space, this is an imperative that requires precise contributions. As a result, and over time, academics carve a niche of expertise from the mass of disciplinary subject matter, creating a specialization that forms the basis of their career and reputation. High frequency items therefore reflect the key themes of an individual's work and serve as motifs for their contribution to the field.

The most frequent content words in Cameron's writing are *women, language, gender, men, social, linguistic, talk, people, discourse*, and *work*, all of which occur more than 200 times and in 90% of the articles in her corpus. These high frequency items clearly identify the terrain marked out and occupied by Cameron as her own. They indicate her concern with the ways language functions to structure social relations in diverse settings, particularly in work contexts and in the ways gender linked patterns of language use are made significant in social relations. Her studies of gender are acknowledged as pivotal in helping to undermine a binary model of gender to take account of intragender diversity, revealing both the ways gender is enacted locally and the institutional factors that operate to construct inequality. These observations are supported in her preferred multiword clusters, which are *men and women* (76 times), *language and gender* (74), and *women and men* (56).

The top eight content items from the larger Swales corpus are *research*, *genre(s)*, *English*, *discourse*, *language*, *academic*, *writing*, and *students*. All these items occur over 500 times and, like *texts, community*, and *rhetorical*, which appear a little further down the list with over 300 occurrences and appear in 90% or more of the articles and chapters that make up the corpus. The most common multiword clusters are *nonnative speakers of English*, *the concept of discourse community*, *a genre-based approach*, and *English as a second language*. Again, these are the main areas by which we identify Swales as an individual academic, encompassing his work on genre, community, and his concern for international students using English as a foreign language.

More importantly than raw frequencies in this regard, however, is that of *keywords*, those that are most unusually frequent compared to a larger reference corpus. Table 1 summarizes the words and phrases that are far more typical of their work than those in the 725,000 word applied linguistics corpus (at $p < .1$ significance).

Keywords give a reasonably good idea about what a writer's work is about and which best distinguish it within the discourses of the community. The analysis thus returns the nouns and noun phrases which characterize the research interests of these two academics. Some odd forms in the Swales' list like *herbarium*, *species*, *specimen*, and *the North University Building* are attributable to his research into the lives and texts of those inhabiting a university building published as *Other Floors, Other Voices*. There are also some unexpected items in Cameron's list. *The gender genie*, a Web site that supposedly predicts the gender of an author of a supplied text, for instance, is critiqued in several articles. *The call centre* also appears in several papers as an example of the technicization of communication: how the commonplace social activity of talk has been transformed into a technical skill and what this means in the production line contexts of service calls. Unlike the data for Swales, the most frequent 4-grams in her corpus simply added another word to the most common 3-grams, suggesting that she uses a more restricted range of common phrases.

Beyond these items, noncontent words and phrases emerge in the keywords lists as consistent individual choices. Rhetorical conventions obviously reflect the epistemological assumptions of a discipline and applied linguistics tends to be seen as a "soft-applied" field: functional, oriented to the improvement of practice, and employing explicitly interpretive, data-informed methods (Hyland, 2004). But within these broad institutional practices individuals have recourse to different "interpretive repertoires," or ways of constructing their versions of events, and in what follows I illustrate the potential of corpus methods to reveal what these can tell us about the creation of a disciplinary self.

Deborah Cameron—The Radical Linguist

Deborah Cameron has created, through her writing, a reputation as a radical linguist, challenging orthodox conceptions of workplace and gender discourse. Part of this impact is due to what is the most striking feature of her discourse: her willingness to engage in head-on debate with alternative positions, thus projecting a confident, combative identity. She does this, however, while simultaneously aligning herself with her disciplinary colleagues. In this section of the paper, I explore how she accomplishes this rhetorical identity through the ways she establishes claims, challenges others, and establishes solidarity.

Table 1. Keywords in the Swales and Cameron Corpora

Cameron corpus		Swales corpus		
Singles	3-grams	Singles	3-grams	4-grams
women	language and gender	genre(s)	would seem to	The university of Michigan gender
	Men and women	Dissertation	In terms of	English for Specific Purposes men
	women and men	herbarium	various kinds of	as might be expected
female	top down talk	I	the research world	as far as I
gender is	the female voice	Michigan	the English language	I have tried to
male	in public contexts	have	the fact that	the North University Building
call	the gender genie	species	at this juncture	a genre-based approach
it	female verbal superiority	my	in the herbarium	turns out to be
genie	male female misunderstanding	specimens	The Testing Division	over the last decade
public	the call centre	ELI	the research article	have been able to

Establishing Truths

Classification and identification are commonplace in academic discourse, but in Cameron's writing they take on an assertive and confident quality. Wordsmith identified *is* as the fifth most Keyword in Cameron's corpus, representing a significantly above average use. This is, of course, one of the most common words in English (Sinclair, 1999, p. 176) and in academic prose usually specifies a logical relationship between referents, typically with full noun phrase subjects (Biber et al., 1999, pp. 448-450). In Cameron's work these are *gender* (62 times) and *language* (53), which are variously defined, described, and commented on, as here:

1. The term *gender is used* in this chapter primarily to refer to the social condition of being a man or a woman.
   . . . *gender is regulated* and policed by rather rigid social norms.
   . . . *language is actually* the symbolic arena in which some other ideological contest is being fought out.

More often, however, we find other collocational patterns with *is* in her writing. *It is* co-occurs most frequently (370 times) with a particularly high use of *it is + adj. + to infinitive* (161 times):

2. *It is reasonable to* suppose that a diner wouldn't enquire about the existence of a particular foodstuff out of idle curiosity…
   It is important to distinguish between the ideological representations of gender found in texts like conduct books and the actual practice of real historical gendered subjects.
   It is difficult to think of any human occupation whose performance does not depend on some kind of knowledge.

Thematic *it* introducing an embedded clause as subject helps to shift new or complex information towards the end of a sentence, to the rheme, where it is easier for readers to process. It also, however, functions to assert the writer's opinion and recruit the reader into it. But because it attempts explicitly to take control of readers' thinking, it is a potentially threatening strategy in rhetorical terms and, as a result, carries a high risk of rejection. To pull it off, Cameron has to recognize a diversity of viewpoints and be prepared to engage with these. She therefore creates a sense of solidarity by "writing the reader into the text" through adjective choices which encourage the addressee to share the conviction she has in her views. Essentially,

however, she is willing to win them over to her position through the confident, unambiguous expression of her commitments.

This assertiveness in Cameron's authorial positioning is also realized through other uses of the verb *is*. It also, for instance, occurs frequently in the company of *that* (230 times) which is itself among the most highly listed keywords in Cameron's writing. A common use of this collocation in the corpus is to express what Hyland and Tse (2005) have called "*evaluative that*," a grammatical structure in which a complement clause is embedded in a superordinate clause to project the writer's attitudes or ideas. These examples are typical:

3. *It is my own view that* generalization remains a legitimate goal for social science . . .
   What has not changed is my conviction that theoretical arguments about meaning are not just a side issue in debates on sexism in language.
   In this context *it is problematic that* unmarked or generic occupational terms are also often masculine.

This is a powerful construction for expressing evaluative meanings in academic discourse as it allows the writer to thematize the evaluation, making the attitudinal meaning the starting point of the message and the perspective from which the content of the *that* clause is interpreted. While rarely employing a first person subject, Cameron nevertheless leaves us in no doubt of her attitude in these examples, fronting her statements with a strong personal evaluation.

Challenging Contrary Positions

Another way in which Cameron deploys the linguistic resources of the discipline to construct a distinctive identity is through the use of rebuttal and counterargument, with *not* (904 times), *but* (572), and *though* (144), all in the top 20 keywords. Once again this is a forceful and dialogistic means of engaging with others' views, but instead of proclaiming a position it disputes alternatives.

Cameron employs negation far more than is common in applied linguistics, responding to possible viewpoints through direct challenge. This is a typical example:

4. The idea that access to higher education should be widened, that degree courses should be for the many and not just the few,

> has attained the status of received wisdom, and it is hard to dispute it without appearing snobbish, reactionary or simply out of date. What lies behind it is not, *however*, a desire to democratize the "life of the mind," *but* a set of ideas about the changing nature of work.

Negation is thus a resource for introducing an alternative position into the dialogue in order to reject it. Here Cameron appears to concur with the apparently reasonable policies promoting wider university access for nontraditional groups, agreeing with the implied reader that such policies are positive and democratic. She then steps back to question the assumptions that arise from it, presenting her own position that "knowledge work" is better characterized as a skill acquired for the benefit of employers. The reader is not bludgeoned by her argument but construed as potentially vulnerable to a pervasive ideology, which she then disputes. So once again, Cameron shows she is sensitive to the addressee's assumed beliefs and seeks to adjust these with her own decisive views.

This is also evident in cases where she counters a contrary position rather than negates it, mainly using the conjunctions *but*, *though*, and *however*. Like denials, these are dialogistic in that they acknowledge other voices only to dispute them. Often this is to contest a claim in the prior literature, as in this example where she discusses views on nonsexist language then offers a restrictive modification of this work:

> 5. Apart from their criticisms of it, Shortland and Fauvel seem curiously undecided as to whether nonsexist language makes any political difference. *But* once again, this entire discussion is locked into a framework dictated by false premises, for within the authors' problematic the reformist's rationale can only be determinism (change language and you change the world) or else accurately (change language and you reflect reality better).

Alternatively, the view which is countered does not originate in the disciplinary literature, but is regarded as more widespread and projected onto readers themselves. In (6), for example, Cameron raises the widely held view that norms of verbal effectiveness are now seen to be increasingly influenced by female values and practices. Following the countering conjunction, she observes that "communication skills" is a cultural construct, not a natural phenomenon and that it is unwise to routinely attribute certain verbal skills to women while denying them to men:

6. Another argument that has sometimes been made is that the triumph of a "caring and sharing" interactional ethos reflects the growing feminization of British society. Certainly, new-style experts on communication tend to extol the virtues of women, while reserving their sternest warnings for stiff upper-lipped British men. *But* we should not be misled by the fact that therapeutic norms for interaction somewhat resemble the popular "Mars and Venus" stereotype of the way women interact.

Similarly, in (7) when commenting on an advertisement for hospital cleaners, she first voices the "accepted view" only to dispute it, overturning what she projects as normal expectations:

7. The specification just quoted attracted criticism in the mid-1990s as an instance of the "politically correct" impulse to dignify even the most menial positions by describing them in absurdly elevated terms. In my view, *however*, what it really illustrates is a more general discursive and rhetorical shift in the way experts think and talk about all kinds of work.

This kind of concession is a highly productive move in persuasive discourse (e.g., Azar, 1997), but while often labeled "adversative," it is both highly dialogistic, in that it invokes a contrary position, and reader sensitive. Cameron recognizes that persuasion requires the involvement of her readers and so seeks to acknowledge their value positions before leading them to her own. Interestingly, by marking the counter explicitly with "in my view" in (7), for example, Cameron both states her view unequivocally and presents it as just one possible opinion among others; the reader is invited to reserve judgment to follow her critique. I discuss this further below.

Establishing Solidarity

By presenting her own position in the context of another, Cameron is not only able to situate her arguments and so better demonstrate their distinctiveness and superiority but also able to claim solidarity with her readers.

Claiming temporary agreement with a thesis before following up with a counter claim is common in the Cameron texts, a sensitivity to addressees' understandings which helps circumvent an early rejection of her argument. She first implies that it is not unreasonable to hold the countered position—after all, anyone might be deceived into doing so—and then adjusts their thinking to her own. This generally involves correcting rather than confronting readers'

expectations and is typically prefaced with a stance adverbial, often *arguably* (which is proportionately 30 times more frequent in Cameron's texts):

8. It is true that both are most entrenched in the United States and are therefore easily seen as emanating from it. *But arguably* the diffusion of new norms is less a consequence of American cultural influence per se than a consequence of the spread of the same social conditions which have enabled certain practices to flourish in the United States.
   In most cases the styles of speech women are urged to adopt are presented as gender neutral; they are simply the most effective ways of using language in a particular domain, regardless of the speaker's sex. *Arguably however*, this is only a subtler form of androcentrism. *Undoubtedly*, the call centre industry is a hi-tech service industry which deals in symbols (words and bits); but as I will shortly seek to demonstrate by describing their work regime, the suggestion that operators have to deploy high levels of knowledge or skill in order to perform their functions is extremely misleading.

In other words, while she addresses issues head-on, she takes the trouble to avoid doing the same with her audience.

Forging an alignment with readers is also accomplished in Cameron's writing by the considerable use she makes of conditional arguments, which occur proportionately over 200 times more frequently in her corpus than in the reference corpus. By making one circumstance dependent on another, these raise the uncertainty of outcomes and are therefore often considered to be hedging devices, but they also bring the writer and reader closer to agreement. In Cameron's work, the specification of an "open condition" treats the possibility of the condition being fulfilled as dependent on the reader's agreement, as in these examples:

9. *If* we accept that women and men are internally diverse groups, the fact that some women do one thing while others do the opposite need not be considered a paradox at all.
   If the hallmark of a mature academic field is its ability to set its own agenda for research and debate, should we not be addressing the questions we consider interesting rather than spending time debating other people's unquestioned assumptions?

So once again, she acknowledges the multivocal context of her argument, but addresses voices assumed to be shared by both the writer and the addressee.

The way Cameron aligns herself with her readers against an alternative viewpoint is nicely illustrated in the following extract. Here she employs a series of *if* clauses to patiently set out the arguments that support the ideological basis of education for the "knowledge society." Construing the reader as perhaps sharing this apparently reasonable paradigm, she then, using the stance marker *arguably* and the contrasting conjunction *though*, expresses her own view. The final conditional, combined with the writer–reader inclusive *we*, suggests that all readers need to do is consider the nature of "knowledge work" to arrive at the same conclusions she does:

> 10. There is a sense in which the trend to up skilling actually makes this assertion true. If even quite low-level employees are thought to require formal instruction in such matters as how to talk to customers/clients/patients, if this is considered to be a highly skilled form of behavior which needs to be supported by a body of codified knowledge, and if acquiring the knowledge and skills through training becomes an obligation imposed on the workers by their employer, then these employees do, in a sense, become "knowledge workers." Arguably, though, the sense in which they become knowledge workers is a very trivial and superficial one. And if we actually look at what is involved in many kinds of contemporary service work we will soon have cause to ask whether the rhetorical upskilling of these jobs masks a real deskilling of the workers who do them.

In Cameron's discourse then, we see a range of rhetorical features used to confidently and forcefully advocate particular realities, often arguing for a way of seeing the world in contradiction to others. Her preferred argument strategies actively construct a heteroglossic backdrop for the text by explicitly grounding propositions in her individual subjectivity, recognizing that her view is one among others and taking on alternatives through a combative and confident dialogue. One consequence of this is the emergence of a distinctive identity as a steadfast and committed academic, a disciplinary expert confident in her beliefs and determined in her assurance.

John Swales: The Inquiring Colleague

John Swales, while enjoying similar academic celebrity, projects a very different identity to Deborah Cameron. Here is an altogether more self-effacing and conciliatory writer, projecting the identity of a cautious and inquiring

colleague exploring the mysteries of the ways people use language with the same curiosity and eye for classroom practice that his practitioner readers might. His rhetorical choices impart a clear personal attitude and a strong interpersonal connection to his readers, particularly through the use of self mention, hedges, and engagement.

Self Mention and Reflection

Frequent use of the first person is perhaps the most striking feature of Swales' discourse, with both *I* and *my* occurring in the top ten keywords. Self-referential *I*, *me*, and *my*, in fact, occur 9.1 times per 1,000 words in the Swales corpus compared with 5.2 in the applied linguistics reference corpus, imparting a clear authorial presence and a strong sense of personal investment to his writing. As these examples suggest, the reader finds a thoughtful and well-informed colleague in these texts: an impression of a real person thinking through issues:

11. But before *I attempt to* develop my main argument, it may first be helpful to place this aspect of applied linguistic research in a wider context lest *I am thought to* be even more obsessive-compulsive about the importance of genre analysis than is actually the case.
    I have on occasion proposed that students utilize models in their writing. *I have* done so only in those situations where *I feel* that research into the genre has reached a level of credibility to permit some generalization.

Here is a writer making decisions, weighing evidence and drawing conclusions, and engaging the reader in the discussion and investing his argument with personal experience. This self-reflexivity is apparent in this extract, where he comments on his changing teaching practices:

12. *My students* come from every conceivable department, but *I try* to make them a sociorhetorical community, a support group for each other. *I do a lot of* rhetorical consciousness raising and audience analysis . . . . *I take them* behind the scenes into the hidden world of recommendations, applications and evaluations . . . In actual fact, *I am much less sure* than I used to be that *I am* a language teacher. *I have* come to believe that *my classes* are, in the end, exercises in academic socialization.

This kind of writing conveys an openness and honesty that reaches out to readers as someone on the same wavelength and familiar with their own contexts and workplace challenges.

An interesting aspect of Swales' identity is the extent to which self-mention is used in a self-deprecatory way. Swales does not duck the fact that research involves uncertainties and failures, perhaps encouraging novice researchers by admitting that even the field's most illustrious figures have their setbacks:

> 13. Although Huddleston claims that it is comparatively easy to sort examples into the obligation and logical conclusion meanings, *I experienced greater difficulty* and *I have left 10% uncertainly classified*.
> But *I am very unsure* whether I will ever use these particular materials again. As matters stand at the moment, *these materials have been, I believe, an educational failure*.
> Indeed, despite some trying, *I have so far been unable to repeat my earlier success*. Perhaps in the same way that composers only seem able to write one violin concerto, discourse analysts can produce only one successful model.

More generally, a concordance of the first person in Swales' writing shows how far agency is explicitly associated with modality, or at least a deliberative attitude. The most frequent main verbs related to *I* are *think* (86), *believe* (71), *suspect* (35), *hope* (33), *tried* (31), and *guess* (29), all of which point to some degree of tentativeness and care in handling claims and readers. While *I* also appears frequently in Cameron's writing, suggesting that experienced writers may be less cowed by admonishments to author to evacuate their prose, it is the *extent* and the *use* of self-mention in Swales' writing that sets him apart and distinguishes his individual authorial identity.

Conveying, Hedging, and Attitude

A significant aspect of Swales' personal involvement in his writing is the extent to which he infuses his texts with commentary on the accuracy of claims and his stance toward them.

The use of language to express caution and commitment is a key feature of academic writing as it not only conveys the writer's assessments of reliability but also recognizes the heteroglossic character of statements (Hyland, 2004; Martin & White, 2005). Swales employs hedges throughout his work, opening

a discursive space that invites readers into a dialogue where they can consider and perhaps dispute his interpretations. This is, of course, if they are not beguiled by his candor. As these examples suggest, his arguments often accommodate any expectations that his reader have that their views will be acknowledged in the discourse:

14. The upshot of all these figures *would seem to suggest that* the anglophone grip on published research communications is both strong and tightening.
    I was, *I suspect*, *rather* too easily seduced by the concept of discourse community. *Perhaps* all too willingly I made common cause with all those who have their own agendas for viewing discourse communities as real, stable groups of consensus holders.
    I would suggest, therefore, that we need more HRD-type training for ESP instructors and practitioners, as an addition to advanced training in Applied Language Studies.

By marking statements as provisional in this way, Swales is able to both express his views and involve readers in their ratification, conveying respect for colleagues and their positions. This is because hedges help present statements as contingent and subjective, a product of the writer's reasoning and therefore open to challenge. But while offering space for dialogic alternatives suggests doubt and expands possibilities for debate, it is also disarming as it addresses views that are potentially in tension with his own. So in making room for alternatives, Swales presents an identity as a reasonable and open-minded seeker of truth, more interested in reaching a plausible interpretation for events than pushing his own.

The intent behind this readiness to concede and negotiate is perhaps demonstrated by a willingness to present claims with unambiguous robustness where necessary. The restrictive adverbs *indeed*, *doubtless*, *certainly*, and *especially*, for example, all occur proportionately 10 times as frequently in Swales' writing than in the applied linguistics corpus. Expressions that boost his claims and restrict alternatives are evident at key points of his arguments:

15. However, in other ways it is *definitely* nonstandard.
    Such pressures have *undoubtedly* contributed to the exponential growth of research journals and articles in the last few decades.
    The key point I want to make here is that when matters do not go smoothly, we can find opportunities within encounters for conversation management.

But Swales never *demonstrates, proves, or establishes*, and only rarely *finds* or *shows*. Instead, his categorical assertions are more usually accompanied by an evaluative comment of some kind.

The expression of affect is relatively uncommon in academic articles and attitude usually concerns estimations of probability and value rather than ethical evaluations or emotions. Swales' writing, in contrast, is peppered with attitudinal lexis of various kinds, with *scholarly*, *important*, *best*, and *interesting* among a keywords list of around 30 items. These are almost always positive attributes that he largely employs to generously evaluate the research of others or underline strongly felt commitments to a particular viewpoint:

16. Certainly, I find it *remarkable* that even as *proficient* a nonnative user as Yao should have introduced such an *unexpected, subtle, and self-evaluative* question about her writing into the discussion.
However, the *most interesting* feature of the above extract is the way in which the method is described.
Some shift in the reading research area toward a genre perspective would seem *highly desirable*.

Through these acts of personal involvement and professional investment, we are invited to share his understandings and subscribe to his take on the ways that both people and language behave. By scattering expressions of attitude and mitigation through his texts, Swales creates for himself a distinctive discoursal style that allows him to convey ideas in a very personal way, engaging readers as a collegial guide, sharing their interests and creating a sense of participating in an unfolding exploration of issues.

Engaging With Readers

In addition to this extremely personal authorial stance, Swales constructs a collegial identity by taking the trouble to recognize and respond to the potential objections, misunderstandings, and processing difficulties of his readers. As well as softening his arguments, he also draws readers into a collusive web of agreement by assembling a professional context in which they are construed as intelligent colleagues sensible enough to follow what he has to say.

One aspect of this, and extremely unusual in current practice, is a quaint and rather dated reference to "*the reader*." There are 16 mentions of *the reader* in the Swales data compared with just 1 in the reference corpus, and Swales uses it much like the 18th-century novelists to explicitly bring readers into the discourse at certain points, reminding them that they are

Table 2. Main Verbs (Lemmas) Collocated With "We" in the Swales Corpus

see	201	expect	24	go	14
need	61	note	22	want	12
find	60	use	22	seem	12
know	54	take	16	examine	10
recognize	25	look	15	learn	10

linked by a common curiosity and engaged in the same fascinating endeavor. These cases are typical:

17. By now *the reader* may have recognized that all our encounters so far lack what Professor Erickson calls "leakage"—the leaking into the functional frame of social and interpersonal elements.
    Now, I can hear *the reader* thinking "Surely we can solve this problem by having the same teacher teach two matched groups of learners using two different methods."

This projects a sympathetic and almost avuncular, tone to the discourse while, at the same time, leading readers to the writer's view by putting thoughts, and even words, into their minds.

A more conventional way of engaging readers is the use of inclusive *we*. While binding the writer to the reader in this way is common in persuasive prose (Hyland, 2005), it is particularly salient in the Swales' corpus where it is among the top 50 keywords. Unsurprisingly, most of these collocate with primary auxiliaries and modals, but we also see the considerable interactivity of this pronoun in Swales' writing by noting the most frequent main verbs it combines with. Table 2 lists these together with their frequencies for up to three words to the right of *we*.

The fact that cognition verbs (*see*, *find*, *know*) head the list suggest something of how Swales uses inclusive *we* to recruit the reader into the interpretation process by assigning them a researcher role, guiding them toward a preferred reading of the evidence. Examples, however, show how this shades into explicit positioning of the reader:

18. In retrospect, *we can see* that the great attractiveness of this approach lay in the fact that it seemed eminently manageable to early LSP practitioners.
    I think *we know* in our hearts that the real issues are about how ESP operations are perceived in the wider administrative and operational environment.

> Don't *we all* find that our scholarly drafting is slower than *we* had hoped, and don't *we* often feel that other scholars of comparable interests and experience must surely be writing faster than *we* do?

There is an attempt to build a relationship through an implicit claiming of solidarity with readers here, soliciting agreement by dialogue with equals. But there is also a more direct attempt to position readers and lead them along with the argument. The use of obligation modals with *we* signals a more assertive author seeking to focus readers' attention and navigate them through his exposition to a particular understanding:

19. *We can salvage* something of our hopes. First, *we need to* go back and review what we mean by discoursal competence. Here *we need to* recognize both the difference and the relationship between conversation management and oral genre skills.
    I now believe that *we should see* our attempts to characterize genres as being essentially a metaphorical endeavor.

More usually, however, he dilutes the imperative force of such *directives* (Hyland, 2002) by framing them with a modal to mitigate the imposition and transform an instruction into an invitation:

20. *We might conclude*, then, that the role of the subject specialist informant in RA genre analysis remains, given the current levels of evaluated experience, somewhat controversial.
    However, *it could be noted that* in the research world there may be more occasions when we have (at least ostensibly) "a distinct communicative situation."

Once again, these linguistic resources allow him to present his arguments with consideration for the reader, while not compromising the strength of his convictions.

Finally, in addition to the devices Swales uses to impart a particular interpersonal tenor, he engages readers through an array of *interactive* metadiscourse options: resources that set out an argument for readers (Hyland, 2005). There are numerous expressions among the keywords that indicate the attention Swales gives to monitoring his evolving text to make it coherent for readers, and particularly assessing what needs to be made explicit by frequently comparing and summarizing material as he goes along. An interesting, and

quirky, variation on this regular gisting of material is his use of introductory prefaces like *it turns out that* (14 occurrences) and *as it happens* (20), which cataphorically alert the reader to findings that might be considered somehow unexpected or counterintuitive:

21. Thus *it turns out that* certain legal, academic and literary texts all point to another kind of contract that can exist between writer and reader.
    The Advanced Learners Dictionary (ALD) lists 21 meanings for *point*, the last of these consisting of a large grab bag of widely different idiomatic uses. *As it happens*, not all of these are represented in the current MICASE database, including the very first use given in the ALD.

These expressions help readers to navigate the discussion, but they do so by lending a strong interpersonal element to it, injecting an attitude of conviviality as Swales shares a certain surprise with readers at the unfailingly interesting nature of rhetorical and human behavior.

Conclusions: Thoughts on the Discursive Production of Identity

In this article I have presented the view that identity is, at least in part, constituted through our consistent language choices. The ways we talk and write are not simply a mimicry of community patterns but complicated means of constructing who we are, or rather, how we would like others to see us. They are the most obvious and unselfconscious displays of our routine engagement with the world, highlighting the ways identity is embedded in interaction and sociality. I have also argued that corpus linguistics is not only a viable means of uncovering such routinized choices but perhaps an indispensible way of operationalizing the concept of *identity formation*.

Corpus analysis can help illuminate the ways individuals construct fairly consistent authorial orientations by using the disciplinary resources available to them. I hope to have shown that while normative and constraining, the rhetorical conventions of our communities are also the raw materials from which we fashion our professional selves, creating, through recurring selection of a rhetorical repertoire, the people we want to be. Clearly this identity work does not preclude other identity choices in the writing of these authors, and on particular occasions they may well adopt different subject positions.

But the analyses suggest that these two experienced writers project *who they are* to readers over time in very different ways through the rhetorical choices they make to argue their ideas and engage with their readers.

It has to be said that I have taken a relatively easy route into the corpus analysis of identity by selecting two of the most rhetorically aware individuals writing in applied linguistics today. Both writers are professional discourse analysts and so are highly attentive to the effects of their choices. In his recently published memoir, for example, Swales (2009) observes,

> Tim Johns used to say in our Birmingham days in the 1980s: "A good writer is one who makes a friend of his or her reader" and that, as much as anything, that is what I am still trying to do. (p. 206)

Similarly, Cameron's own response to this article underlines the importance she attaches to the "aesthetics" of language and to "avoiding verbal clutter." She points out,

> I would say I am a pretty deliberate and self-aware writer of prose, I think about what I'm doing and am conscious of at least some of the recurrent features that make my style what it is. I'd rather come across as crude or even arrogant than leave the reader struggling to parse my sentences, or wondering at the end of them "what the hell is she actually saying?"

Interestingly, these orientations do not stand outside broad social models but draw on recognizable cultural traditions. Cameron's energetically and intelligently combative style, which explicitly pits her ideas against others, seems to be informed by British traditions of open debate. The fact that she positions herself as a very public intellectual, at home in the media and in popular genres, and with a variety of high profile issues, brings a wider significance to her writing. Swales' style, on the other hand, seems to represent a different kind of intellectual in public discourse—quieter, more urbane, and gently self-deprecating. This is not to say of course that they have not given these styles an individual stamp influenced by their own backgrounds and experiences, or perhaps added innovations to the repertoire, but simply that the identity options provided by academic disciplines do not exist in isolation from wider social and cultural practices.

Like all corpus work, the method is informed by numbers, largely frequency counts of keywords and collocations but constructed on interpretation. While these repeated uses represent each writer's more or less conscious choices to

project themselves and their work in particular ways, my take on them is necessarily subjective. I have, however, tried to work as closely as possible with the data and this clearly points to consistently distinctive rhetorical choices within broad disciplinary boundaries. The analysis suggests that the performance of an identity is always shaped by our goals and by the demands of the context as we walk a tightrope between projecting an individual persona and taking on social roles and qualities valued by community members. As Gee (1999, p. 23) points out, discourses are "ways of being in the world," so that language choices are always made from available resources and involve interactions between the conventions of the literacy event and the values and prior cultural experiences of the participants.

In summary, this article has sought to reveal something of how authorial positioning is consistently accomplished through repeated rhetorical acts. At the same time, I have also tried to make a small contribution to the methodologies we might use to explore identity construction and to shed some light on the social processes at work in academic discourse communities. It might be argued, however, that this kind of discourse analysis fails to provide sufficient context to understand identity performance. After all, I've conducted no interviews, explored no detailed biographies, and unpacked no narratives. Instead I have looked at texts and what, over and over again, is on the page. What this shows, above all else perhaps, is that academic communities are human institutions where actions and understandings are influenced by the personal and biographical as well as the institutional and sociocultural. They are sites where differences in worldview or language usage intersect as a result of the myriad backgrounds and overlapping memberships of participants.

This methodology therefore points to new ways of understanding and exploring identity that takes us beyond what individuals say about themselves to what they do in interaction on repeated occasions and how they build a consistent persona through discourse. In this view, identity can only be understood through close analysis of the ways writers routinely draw on the rhetorical repertoires of their communities to position themselves in recognizable ways as both individuals and as members of collectivities. It is a methodology, moreover, that offers a way of exploring other unanswered questions about disciplinary constraints. Do all academic writers have a relatively consistent stylistic "signature," for example, or is this something that only develops over time? Are novice writers more tightly constrained by conventions? What changes in their repertoire with greater experience and confidence? What variations exist across disciplines and between individuals in other fields? Not least it makes sense to address the wider political operation of discourse communities and to ask, with Bizzell (1989), "who gets to

learn and use complex kinds of writing" (p. 225) and who has rights to manipulate or resist the conventions of a discipline rather than merely accommodate to them?

Appendix: Corpus Texts

Deborah Cameron Corpus

Cameron, D. (1984). Sexism and semantics. *Radical Philosophy, 36*, 14-16.

Cameron, D. (1992). Naming of parts gender, culture and terms for the penis among American college students. *American Speech, 67*, 364-379.

Cameron, D. (1994). Verbal hygiene for women: Linguistics misapplied? *Applied Linguistics, 15*, 382-398.

Cameron, D. (1997). Performing gender identity: Young men's talk and the construction of heterosexual masculinity. In S. Johnson & U. Meinhof (Eds.), *Language and masculinity* (pp. 86-107). Oxford, UK: Blackwell.

Cameron, D. (1998). Is there any ketchup, Vera? Gender, power and pragmatics. *Discourse & Society, 9*, 437-455.

Cameron, D. (2000). Styling the worker. *Journal of Sociolinguistics, 4*, 323-347.

Cameron, D. (2003). Gender as an issue in language change. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics, 23*, 187-201

Cameron, D. (2005). Relativity and its discontents: Language, gender and pragmatics. *Intercultural Pragmatics, 2*, 321-334.

Cameron, D. (2006a). Unanswered questions and unquestioned assumptions in the study of language and gender. Female verbal superiority. *Gender and Language, 1*(1), 15-25.

Cameron, D. (2006b). Theorizing the female voice in public contexts. In J. Baxter (Ed.), *Speaking out: The female voice in public contexts* (pp 3-20). NewYork: Palgrave.

Cameron, D. (2006c). Language and gender. In B. Aarts & A. MacMahon (Eds.), *Handbook of English linguistics*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell.

Cameron, D. (2007a). Dreaming of Genie. In S. Johnson & S. A. Ensslin (Eds.), *Language and the media* (pp. 234-249). London: Continuum.

Cameron, D. (2007b). Ideology and language. *Journal of Political Ideologies, 11*, 141-152.

Cameron, D. (2007c). Redefining rudeness. In M. Gorji (Ed.), *Rude Britannia* (pp. 61-73). London: Routledge.

Cameron, D. (2007d). Language endangerment and verbal hygiene. In A. Duchene & M. Heller (Eds.), *Discourses of endangerment* (pp. 268-285). London: Continuum.

John Swales Corpus

Swales, J. (1993). More discourse analysis in communicative language teaching: more felicity and less breakdown? Proceedings of the XIIIth MATE Annual Conference, Ouarzazate, March 29th-April 2nd, 1993. (pp 35-46). Proceedings of the MATE Conference, Morocco.

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Swales, J. (1995). The role of the textbook in EAP writing research. *English for Specific Purposes, 14*, 3-18.

Swales, J. (1996a). Occluded genres in the academy: The case of the submission letter. In E. Ventola & A. Mauranen (Eds.), *Academic writing: Intercultural and textual issues* (pp. 45-58). Amsterdam: Benjamins.

Swales, J. (1996b). Teaching the conference abstract. In E. Ventola & A. Mauranen (Eds.), *Academic writing today and tomorrow* (pp. 45-59). Helsinki, Finland: University of Helsinki Press.

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Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author declared that he had no conflicts of interests with respect to his authorship or the publication of this article.

Funding

The author declared that he received no financial support for his research and/or authorship of this article.

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Bio

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