

## **Submission for Journal of English for Academic Purposes**

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## **‘She has received many honours’: Identity in Article Bio Statements.**

### **Abstract**

In contrast to the prescribed anonymity of the research article, the bio which accompanies it is perhaps the most explicit assertion of self-representation in scholarly life. Here is a rhetorical space where, in 50 to 100 words, authors are able to craft a narrative of expertise for themselves. It is a key opening for academics, both novice and experienced, to manage a public image through the careful recounting of achievement. Yet despite the current interest in identity, the bio has largely escaped attention. In this paper we address this neglect through analysis of 600 bios across three disciplines, exploring the importance of discipline, status and gender in mediating the ways writers claim an identity. Our argument is that, despite its brevity, the bio is an important means of representing an academic self through the recognition of collective values and membership.

## 1. Introduction

While every interaction entails projections and attributions of identity, the biographical statement which accompanies a research article is probably the most explicit public assertion of self-representation in scholarly life. It sits in stark contrast to the prescribed anonymity of the article itself, which has been stripped of identifying information for blind peer review. In this context, then, the bio provides writers with an opportunity to construct a disciplinary aligned presence and shape a professionally credible self. The near ubiquity of the genre suggests that readers are interested in knowing more about the person behind the words in an article and that publishers are prepared to indulge them. Here we find a rhetorical space where, in 50 to 100 words, authors are able to reflexively craft a narrative of expertise for themselves, albeit within tight constraints. The bio, then, is a key opening for academics to manage a public image through the careful recounting of achievement. It is an opportunity to make a claim for a particular identity.

Despite the current massive interest in identity, the bio is an unsung and disregarded genre which has largely escaped the notice of discourse analysts. We know little, for example, of its typical structure or the language writers use to present themselves in it. Do established celebrities construct the genre in the same way as novices? Is there a common pattern of self-representation across disciplines? Do male and female academics do things the same way? In this paper we seek to rectify this neglect and address these questions, offering an account of the biographical statement by drawing on 600 bios in three disciplines. This account, we hope, will assist teachers seeking to offer pedagogic support to students and, beyond this consciousness-raising value, contribute to the growing research on academic identity. More specifically, by comparing authors' systematic choices in this genre, we reveal how linguistic resources help to construct both disciplines and individuals.

In what follows we first outline the understanding of identity which underpins the paper before going on to describe and analyse our corpus. Our main claim is that, despite its brevity, the bio is an important means of representing an academic self. Here academics construct themselves as credible researchers, build a relationship with others and signal allegiances.

## 2. Identity and community discourses

Research on academic writing has long stressed the connection between writing and the creation of an author's identity (e.g. Ivanic, 1998). Identity is defined by the actions of the writer in the text: what the writer *does*. It 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. For many, identity is a *performance* (e.g. Butler, 1990) constructed through interaction, while others see it as the product of dominant discourses tied to institutional practices (e.g. Foucault, 1972). What this work stresses, however, is that identity is not something achieved in isolation but is part of a social and collective endeavour: it is not simply a matter of personal choice. We cannot just be whoever we want to be. While questions of agency, and the extent to which individuals are able to carve out an independent and creative self from the constraints of particular contexts and discourses remain controversial, the identities we seek to project need confirmation in the responses and recognition of others (e.g. Jenkins, 2008).

Put more directly, identities are constructed out of the rhetorical options our communities make available, so that we gain credibility as members and approval for our performances by aligning our discursal choices with those of our social groups. We *position* ourselves in relation to others using these discourses and in turn are positioned by these same discourses (e.g. Davies & Harre, 1990). Community Discourses, and their social ideologies, thus assist the performance of identities by providing broad templates for how people see and talk about the world. Constraints and contexts matter, and individual actions and responses are part of a social order that encourages some actions and proscribes others.

This doesn't mean that we are prisoners of our social groups. The idea of 'positioning' offers a way of seeing how language can represent people in particular ways and, at the same time, how it can be used to negotiate new positions. While we become who we are only in relation to others, adopting the modes of talk that others routinely use, identity also means assembling the elements of a

communicative performance which shape our interpretations of these discourses. In sum, both similarity and difference, communality and individuality, are socially constructed.

### **3. Bios and representation of self**

Following the pioneering work by Goffman (1971), there is now considerable interest in how individuals self-consciously manage the impression they give of themselves to valued others. Some of this interest takes the form of analysing the ongoing discourse of interacting participants, using the methods of Critical Discourse Analysis (e.g. Billig, 1999), Conversation Analysis (e.g. Antaki & Widdicombe, 1998) or Corpus Analysis (Hyland, 2010).

A great deal of identity research, however, focuses on what people say about themselves in formal interviews with academics (e.g. Block, 2006; Wortham & Gasden, 2006). This approach is essentially an autobiographical reconstruction which allows subjects to reconceptualise their actions as representing a coherently motivated picture of continuity without implying an unchanging essentialism. This reflects Giddens' (1991) view that self and reflexivity are interwoven, so that identity is not the possession of particular character traits, but the ability to construct a reflexive narrative of the self. Clearly this approach is profoundly social and emphasises the subject's continual interpretation and reinterpretation of experience through a cultural lens. But it is also highly contrived. Most of the time we are not performing identity work by narrating stories of ourselves to complete strangers from the local university but presenting ourselves through our understandings and re-workings of available cultural resources.

The kinds of narratives produced for interviewers are self-conscious and reflective assemblings of experience for the purpose of constructing an identity in a relatively formal and low-stakes context. Such interviews preserve anonymity and there is little evidence that they have significance for the participant or consequences beyond the event itself. It would seem preferable, then, to capture the same kinds of deliberately constructed identity claims where the elicitation is not the motive for the telling. This means examining identity claims in contexts which matter to individuals. Generally,

however, identity work is going on while we are engaged in doing something else, in academic environments these are things like giving a presentation, teaching a class, or writing a paper.

A more mundane way of doing autobiographical work is found in the short personal bio statements which accompany research articles. Bios are naturally occurring texts constructed for a genuine purpose; a site where academics stake a claim to a certain version of themselves for their peers and institutions. This is a genre which requires a self-conscious and public recounting of a professional persona that fits both who they want to present themselves as being and the relatively constrained format that is available to them. Authenticity demands that the text is fashioned from the resources that the genre and the discipline make available, using language and aspects of autobiography that are recognisably appropriate and effective for the purpose at hand. Admittedly this is a fashioning of the self accomplished through relatively formulaic means, but it avoids a researcher-produced accounting and offers a conception of identity located in disciplinary realities.

The notion of ‘identity claim’ (e.g. Keily et. al., 2001) is important here as it leaves open the nature of the subjective experience. The bio implies no inner psychological states or unvarying personal commitment and says little about whether the identity presented is deeply held or lightly worn. It simply connects how people want to be seen with concrete instances of language. The aspects of self that writers elect to include in this genre and how they chose to express these offer insights into the dynamic between a conception of what he or she holds to be important *in this context* and points to the kinds of identities which are likely to be recognised and approved by disciplinary peers. It is, then, a way of exploring personal identities and disciplinary values. We turn now to our study and the ways bio authors rhetorically negotiate this dynamic, examining aspects of how they attempt to establish their uniqueness in a context of sharing experiences as a member of an academic community.

#### **4 Corpus and categories**

Our corpus comprises 600 bios, with 200 taken from each of Applied Linguistics, Electrical Engineering, and Philosophy. Bios were selected from articles in six leading international journals in

each discipline (as indicated by Thompson ISI rankings). In addition to selecting bios to represent a cross section of academic practice, the social sciences, applied sciences, and humanities respectively, we also controlled for gender, with 100 bios written by males and females in each discipline, and status, with a random sampling of four categories (senior academic, junior academic, post-graduate, and other (technician, manager, teacher, etc.)). Random sampling was used in this latter category to accurately reflect the distribution of status classes in the corpus. We stratified the sample in these ways to explore how far the key experiential factors of discipline, gender and status mediated writers' self-representation in this genre.

Having collected our corpora we used *WinMax Pro* (Kuckartz, 1998), a qualitative analysis programme, to code text passages according to rhetorical moves and process types. Our goal here was to explore how individuals represent themselves through options at the text and clause level, identifying what they chose to mention and how they chose to express it.

First we looked at the ways the texts were structured as a sequence of rhetorical units or *moves* to illuminate the decisions writers made about what information to include to assemble an academic portrait. We recognised each move as a distinctive communicative act seeking to project a particular aspect of the self and, after several passes through the corpus, we settled on a coding scheme which included all the data. The moves are:

- Employment – past and current positions and places of work
- Education – institutional affiliations and qualifications gained
- Research interests – current and past scholarly projects
- Publications – books, articles and other scholarly outputs
- Community Service – contributions through editorships, committee memberships, etc.
- Achievements – prizes, awards, honours and other recognition gained by the writer
- Personal data – hobbies, place and date of birth, family life, etc.



Most moves were optional, but there were constraints on the sequence in which they occurred. It is clear from these headings that writers projected a predominantly *academic* identity in this genre.

Finally we were interested in how writers chose to *express* these choices. Here we drew on the Systemic Functional Linguistic (SFL) categories of process types as these allowed us to model the ways that experience is verbalised. SFL recognises that rhetorical choices are important in signalling a bi-directional connection between language and context. In this view, the clause can be seen as the linguistic expression of experience; it is where actors encode their understandings of their physical and imaginary worlds (Halliday, 1994). Verbs express different processes by recognising a systematic distinction in the grammar between *mental* and *material* processes, or those of *sensing* and *doing*. Verbs relating to perception, affection and cognition fall into the first group and those concerned with action and activity in the world in the second. A third form of representation, what Halliday (1994: 119) calls *relational* processes, expresses *being* or the relationship between sensing and doing. In English this system has three main types:

- i) Intensive: x is a something
- ii) Circumstantial: x is at/in/on/for/with/about/etc. something
- iii) Possessive: x has something

Such choices matter in identity performance. So for example, ‘she is interested in...’ (a mental process), constructs the author as an active, thinking being exercising conscious choice in a research interest, whereas ‘her research interests are...’ (a relational process) is more impersonal, downplaying the author’s role to highlight something that belongs to the her. While it may be disguised by passive constructions in the case of material processes and nominalization in relational ones, we can usually recover human agency from a text, and in these bios the we had little difficulty in identifying the animate sensor, doer, or ‘be-er’. Other process types in Halliday’s scheme, verbal, behavioural and existential, offer bridges between these three types, but are less important in the bios.

Research into academic writing has shown the importance of such options. John (2009), for instance, notes the effect of process types on writer visibility with decreasing agency implied from clauses where a writer is an *actor* in a material process, a *sensor* in a mental process and a *beaver* in a behavioural process. Acting on the world in some way is seen to represent greater visibility than subjectively interpreting it with mental processes or simply behaving. Process types have also been found to differ considerably across disciplines and genres as writers choose to represent themselves and their work in different ways. For example, material processes, discussing what was *done*, dominate methods sections and relational clauses, discussing how things *are*, predominate in discussion sections of research articles (Martinez, 2001). Across disciplines, Babaii and Ansary (2005) noted the predominance of relational and existential types in physics book reviews but found material processes were more common in sociology and literature book reviews.

In what follows we discuss our results by exploring the potential influence of disciplinary membership, gender and status on these two features of expression: what is said about the self and how it is said. In doing so we make comparisons between different groups of writers as a way of highlighting rhetorical practices and understanding the general patterns of preferences in moves and process types. We should point out that we are not attempting to establish definitive differences among these categories, but recognise that they overlap and interact in complex ways. We have, therefore, chosen not to use statistical measures in order to avoid overemphasising the degree of difference and giving the false impression that no other factors influence writer preferences. Linguistic choices are tendencies of the collective rather than the expression of rules. Our study thus simply seeks to reveal something of the ways that language choices reflect different ways of constructing an academic identity in bios and while it draws on the possible strength of differences among groups, it implies no absolute operation of norms.

## 5 Expressions of self: moves and processes

While bios do not occur in every journal, they are nevertheless a ubiquitous aspect of academic publishing. Many journals insist on a bio of each author and some give guidelines as to length or, more rarely, content. Instructions such as these are common:

- (1) Each contributor should provide a brief biodata of about 90 words listing main interests, recent publications, and a contact address. Email address is optional.

(Applied linguistics)

A biographical note of no more than 50 words should be included.

(Journal of Moral Philosophy)

Include in the manuscript a short (maximum 100 words) biography of each author, along with a passport-type photograph accompanying the other figures.

(Computers and Electronic Engineering)

House style varies and offers authors some flexibility in representing themselves as most specify little more than word length, and while this obviously constrains how much can be said, other factors are far more important in influencing what authors actually say.

Word length is, however, one distinguishing feature of bios across disciplines with those in Engineering about twice as long as those in Applied linguistics. The gender of the writer also appears to influence the length of texts with males tending to take more space over themselves than women, although there is a more even distribution in Applied linguistics where texts are under 60 words. Table 1 shows the length of each corpus by gender.

### **Table 1: Corpus length by discipline and gender -- around here**

These frequencies also reveal something of the ways that academics construct their identities in this genre. Table 2 shows raw and normed figures for both moves and process types. As can be seen, the writers overwhelmingly mentioned employment and together with research interests these comprised over half of all move types in the corpus. Employment histories and research interests are available to everyone from the Nobel Professor to the lowly lab rat and so find their

way into most constructions of the self. In representing these experiences, writers used relational and material processes to discuss themselves in 95% of all clauses. The dominance of these process types stresses the importance of what the individuals claimed to *be* and what they *do*.

**Table 2: Overall frequencies of moves and process types - around here**

Relational process types predominantly clustered in what Halliday (1994: 119) calls *intensive* types, where a writer claims to *be* something, such as an assistant professor, a doctoral student or specialist of some kind. These made up two thirds of all relational processes, with possessives, where writers stated they *had* some form of experience or research interest, comprising another 27%. Circumstantial processes, mentioning attributes such as what the writer is *interested in* or an institution he or she is *affiliated with*, were far less common. We now look at our results in more detail, beginning with moves.

**6 “Meiling Zhou was born in Changsha, China”: Moves in bios**

What we are calling *moves* in this genre contain what writers assume will best represent them as credible academics and competent researchers. To this end, they comprise an assemblage of culturally valued attributes of the trade: the set of symbolic resources from which identity is constructed for disciplinary approval. This involves selecting and sequencing content which presents an identity claim, revealing an individual buttressed by institutional associations, professional qualifications, and a network of publications and research interests.

**6.1 Status and moves**

Table 2 shows considerable mention of current, and often past, positions in these bios. For junior faculty with limited achievements and a thin publications list, this was often the only option available, as in these two samples, where this move comprises the entire bio:

- (2) Jan Meyer is a junior professor with the Institute of Information Systems at Humboldt-University zu Berlin. He spent a year as a post-doc in Brisbane,

Australia, and several research visits at Technical University Eindhoven, The Netherlands. (EE)

Qadri Ahmadi teaches Postcolonial Studies at the University of Minnesota. (Phil)

The fact that senior figures also typically employed this move, however, underlines the importance of locating oneself firmly in the academic milieu through association with a particular institution:

(3) Lindy Bradford is Interim Associate Dean and Chair of the Department of Special Education at the University of Colorado at Colorado Spring (AL)

From 1985 to 1989, Zou was a Research Scientist with the University of Maryland, College Park, researching magnetically confined hot ion plasmas and sheet-electron-beam free electron lasers. Since 1990, he has been with the faculty of the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering, University of Wisconsin Madison, where he currently holds the title of Professor of Engineering. (EE)

Senior scholars, however, have a greater repertoire of experiences to draw on in constructing a biographical identity and our data show an unsurprising upward curve in the use of research, employment, publication and achievement moves in traversing across the status cline. Male senior scholars, in particular, were more likely to discuss both their research interests and publication outputs:

(4) His research focuses on characterization and modeling of both high-frequency devices, in particular Si/SiGe heterojunction bipolar transistors and future emerging technologies like carbon nanotube field effect transistors. He has published more than 100 technical papers. (EE)

Pål Arstan is PhD and professor in the sociology of religion at the University of Agder, Norway. He has written extensively on Norwegian religiosity and qualitative methods. His latest book in English is 'An Introduction to the Sociology of Religion: Classical and Contemporary Perspectives', Ashgate, Aldershot 2006. (Phil)

At the other end of the scale, setting out an educational background was important for research students. In the absence of other academic credentials, they sought to create a credible disciplinary identity associated with taking a higher degree at a prestigious university. This information is often supplemented, particularly by females, by a specification of the writer's research interests, as here:

(5) Liz Staggins is a Research student at the University of Manchester. She is currently working on a project about Aesthetic Psychology, the main theme of her PhD thesis. (Phil)

Wendy Chua is currently a Ph.D. student in Wuhan University, China. Her research interests include first and second language acquisition. (EE)

Junior academics and teaching and technical staff also tended to fill in gaps in their professional identity with a move presenting a more personal self. Occasionally, however, some senior academics also added a few lines of personal profile. This helps reach behind the façade of a bland scholarly persona to reclaim parts of their identities often lost in these bios:

(6) He lives in Jerusalem with his wife and three sons. (EE)

Vidhya Madhavan was born in Coimbatore, India, on October 21, 1985. He is a Baha'i. (EE)

When not doing philosophy he writes poems and climbs mountains, sometimes simultaneously. (Phil)

So while the bios in our corpus were largely a medium of professional self-presentation, a few scholars also provided a more intimate side of themselves.

## **6.2 Gender and moves**

Gender seems relatively unimportant in influencing how writers represent themselves in this genre. Table 3 indicates that what men and women tend to say about themselves is broadly similar, although there were some differences. Men gave greater emphasis to their publications (55% of these moves), achievements (58%) and service (58%), for example, and women to their research

interests (55%), and education (53%). Many women, in fact, simply offered a list of their educational experiences and professional qualifications:

(7) She graduated with a BSc (Hons) in Speech and Language Therapy from the University of Ulster in 1993 and received a D.Phil from the same institution in 2000.

(AL)

Xiaoling Huang received the B.S. degree in nuclear physics from Beijing University, China, in 1982, the M.S. degree in engineering from the Beijing Institute of Nuclear Energy, China, in 1985, and the M.S. and Ph.D. degrees in physics from the University of California, Irvine, in 1986 and 1991, respectively. (EE)

More usually, they additionally included their research interests without mention of publications:

(8) Her research interests in linguistic anthropology are broad and include language socialization, language ideologies, ethnography of communication, discourse analysis, language documentation and language endangerment. (AL)

Her current research is focused on investigating state-of-the-art CMOS devices, alternative high-mobility substrates, nanoscale magnetics, energy-harvesting devices, and power MOSFETs. (EE)

However, even senior females often sidestepped the ‘institutional factfile’ kind of identity claims and avoided the badges of professional expertise. There are, for example, no cases of males offering such a bare-bones bio as these full representations:

(9) Ann Blake is Professor and Head of the School of Early Childhood at Queensland University of Technology. (AL)

Lisbeth Leogaard is professor of the History of Religions at the University of Bergen, Norway. (Phil)

There seems little obvious explanation for these differences, but by taking these figures for gender together with those for discipline we find that seniority may play an important part in these decisions. Philosophy and electronic engineering continue to be largely male-dominated fields where men are more likely to be heads of labs and gain posts of greater responsibility such

as holding chairs and editorships (Tse & Hyland, 2008). They therefore have a greater range of accomplishments to include.

Males, on the other hand, tended to foreground what they had formally accomplished by way of publications (10), service to the academic community (11), and achievements (12):

(10) He is the author of 60 journal papers and one book, has edited one book. His most recent books are .... (Phil)

(11) He serves as an editorial board member for IJDATS, and a program committee member for ACM SIGKDD, ACM CIKM, IEEE ICDM, and SDM. (EE)

(12)..and his 'Everyone Can Write: Essays Toward a Hopeful Theory of Writing and Teaching Writing' (2000), was given the James Britton Award by the Conference on English Education. NCTE recently gave him the James Squire Award "for his transforming influence and lasting intellectual contribution." (AL)

Here there is a clear attempt to construct a credible disciplinary identity through the presentation of valued academic accomplishments.

It is little surprise to find publications forming a key aspect of academic identity claims.

Publication is 'the life blood of academia' (Becher & Trowler, 2001) and both the promotion of knowledge and the establishment of reputation depend on it. Books and articles are the currency of academic credibility and mentioning publications is a badge of disciplinary membership.

Reference to service through editorial and committee work and achievements such as prizes, awards and honorary degrees are the icing on the cake, further demonstrating the success and status of the published writer.

### ***6.3 Discipline and moves***

While status and gender influence the decisions authors make in assembling their bios, the decisive factor appears to be discipline. Table 3 shows that gender distributions of self-representation are



relatively balanced within each discipline compared with their differences across fields. Electrical engineers present fewer moves overall and show some interesting variations.

**Table 3: Moves by Disciplines & Gender - around here**

Perhaps the most striking difference is the relative weight engineers give to education compared with the other two disciplines. Unlike the other disciplines, an educational background was normally associated with the area of study in engineering, both demonstrating a specific expertise and promoting a scholarly insider-competence in esoteric skills and knowledge:

(13) Hyouk Ryeol Choi received the B.S. degree from Seoul National University, Seoul Korea, in 1984, the M.S. degree from Korea Advanced Technology of Science and Technology (KAIST), in 1986, and the Ph.D. degree from Pohang University of Science and Technology (POSTECH), Pohang, Korea, in 1994. (EE)

These results also reflect a more apprenticeship-based system of research training in the hard sciences where inexperienced academics play a fuller role in the research and publishing process as part of a lab-based team while pursuing their studies. In engineering, for example, the focus of a PhD is often part of a wider collaboratively conducted study and so more likely to warrant early publishing and count as an original contribution. Research is typically less individually conceived and independently conducted than in the soft knowledge fields and so for many engineers educational training is a substantial aspect of their career profile. It therefore tends to be given more attention in their bios.

It is also interesting that engineers were more likely to create a more personal profile than writers in the other disciplines. Almost all bios mentioned the subject's birthplace, for example, and often the year of birth:

(14) Meiling Zhou was born in Changsha, China, (EE)

E. Ruiz-Velázquez was born in México D.F. in 1974. (EE)

In addition, engineering bios are often accompanied by a passport-style photograph, offering a *visual version* (Hess, 2002) of the author's identity. But typically comprising a head and shoulders view with the subject centred in the frame, there is no context to present a more nuanced view of the individual.

In contrast, the author's research interests figure prominently in the institutional identities of applied linguists, comprising about a third of all moves in their bios:

(15) Her research interests include human motivation and affect in a variety of applied contexts. (AL)

Jennifer Whistler's scholarship unpacks traditional and new media convergence within global markets. She is particularly interested in .... (AL)

Here writers claim academic credibility through their unpublished scholarly endeavours, signalling both an insider expertise in areas of current interest to the field and seeking recognition of disciplinary membership. More than this, however, these research specialisms provide insights into the tribal affiliations of the writer by aligning him or her with a particular 'invisible college' of like-minded individuals.

Philosophers, on the other hand, prefer to display their publications to readers. These are overwhelmingly single-authored and explicitly interpretive; they are based on research which spreads over topics with long range solutions, slow publication times and with books as preferred modes of dissemination (Becher and Trowler, 2001). Because of this, perhaps, publications take on a significance which is very different from the crowded fields of the hard sciences where a relatively small number of problems is pursued by a substantial number of scientists and publication is frenetic and multiply authored.

## 7 "He publishes widely": Process types in bios

Identity is expressed not only in terms of *what* we talk about but *how* we talk about it. As mentioned above, the ways that writers represent both outer and inner experience, are coded as

process choices. As we noted above, writers mainly used relational and material processes in these bios, either showing a *relationship* between something, usually the writer, and an attribute of some kind, or reporting the writer *doing* something or having *done* something. As with moves, we will explore the use of processes looking in turn at status, gender and discipline.

### 7.1 *Status and processes*

Beginning with the influence of status, the analyses suggest that the proportion of relational forms increased and material forms decreased with rank (Table 4).

**Table 4: Process types by status - around here**

Relational processes dominate writers' choices in this genre, comprising about half of all expressions in these two sub-corpora. Bios are stretches of text which have something to say about the author, and what they mainly have to say is *who he or she is*, or rather, how he or she wants the reader to see who he or she is. In effect, Halliday's category of relational clauses generalises the traditional conceptions of 'copula' constructions and helps to construe 'being', so conveying an identity claim. It is interesting, moreover, that this identity claim is strengthened by the choice of *identifying* over *attributive* choices, particularly among senior academics, where they are over twice as frequent:

(16) Ruth Terry is Professor of Linguistics at UCL ... (AL)

She is the co-author of over 40 technical papers and is the holder of two patents.

(EE)

Ms Morris has been the recipient of numerous grants, ... (Phil)

The examples show that these identifying choices impart a definiteness and uniqueness to the relationship expressed between the author and what is being claimed as part of the writer's identity. Such choices say something about 'the broader concerns and the values of the writer' (Thompson, 2004: 98) by signalling that this is an important part of who they see themselves to

be. They *identify* the writer. This is less obvious in the bios of students and non-professorial faculty members where attributive options signal class membership rather than a unique identity:

(17) She is an independent scholar. (AL)

David Selvey is a PhD candidate in Cognition, Learning, and Development at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. (AL)

Richard is a member of the Institute of Industrial Engineers. (EE)

Here writers' choices indicate that they should be seen as one of many; so their status is part of a wider group and not an exclusive position.

It is also interesting to mention another aspect of the status distributions: the frequency of verbal processes among the bios of teaching and technical writers. While the raw numbers are not huge, the fact that these authors used verbal clauses far more heavily than others is suggestive. These signal the presence of the writer in the text as an active *sayer*, a person who informs, updates, elaborates, or whatever, although in these texts the saying was principally concerned with lecturing and public speaking of various kinds:

(18) He has presented at many conferences (Eng)

She regularly speaks at workshops and teacher education forums. (AL)

While all writers refer to themselves in the third person, verbal processes make the participant the source of the action, so imparting an active and *visible* presence in the text. Here are authors trying to establish a credible academic identity through choices which foreground valued discursal activities.

## 7.2 *Gender and processes*

As with moves, gender does not have a major impact on how writers' represent themselves at clause level. Table 5 shows a broadly similar use of process types between males and females, with material processes used equally and only a slight difference in the use of relational types.

**Table 5: Process types by Gender - around here**

Within the relational processes, males used slightly more ‘intensive’ types, employing more attributive and identifying clauses, to express who they are through a relationship to a particular title or status (see examples 16 & 17). But it is also possible for relational clauses to involve an additional meaning feature in that they may be either possessive or circumstantial, conveying a relationship of ownership or custody (19) or one of time, place, manner, cause, etc. (20), these are constructions which seem to appeal particularly to female authors:

(19) Her research interests include politeness and intercultural issues of face. (AL)

Her awards include the Significant Technical Achievement Award (2000). (EE)

(20) At the moment she is with Costa College. (AL)

She is currently on the editorial board of several international journals. (Phil)  
These claims to an academic identity are less forthright than those expressed through intensive process types. Instead of making a statement that the writer has a status of x or is a member of a class of x, these make more subtle appeals for a scholarly identity. There is an indirectness which asks the reader to accept the writer’s credibility in terms of an association with a particular research group, university or set of interests.

Material clauses are symmetrical across genders. These are processes of *action*, expressing the notion that some entity *does* something and so emphasising both the actor and the act itself. The ‘material’ category covers both concrete and abstract processes, but here tend to represent experience as work. *Teaching, coordinating* and *publishing* figure prominently, particularly in the texts written by male academics, but mainly the mental activity of research and reflection is transformed into the physical acts of writing and publishing:

(21) He is presently completing a book on English emotive communication. (AL)

He is working on a translation of Michal Serres’ *Les Cinq Sens*. (Phil)

The use of such active, material processes help to project a more vigorous presence in the text and so create a sense of dynamism in the identity of the writer.

One interesting difference in the use of material processes was that females often used forms which displayed the writer as a deserving beneficiary of disciplinary recognition. The verb ‘*received*’ tends to be a very frequent form in the female texts together with other forms which emphasize the earning of honours and qualifications:

(22) She has made great achievements on refractory metals and superconducting materials and has received many honours. (EE)

Sabina Morosso earned her Ph.D. in linguistic and sociocultural anthropology at the University of Pennsylvania in December 2006. (AL)

By stressing earned recognition and achievement, authors are able to underline both their contribution to valued academic goals and to the construction of an academic identity.

### ***7.3 Discipline and processes***

Once again, as with moves, discipline appears to be a major influence on linguistic choice in self representation. Table 6 shows that the fewer moves per 1000 words in engineers’ texts produced fewer clauses than those of applied linguists and philosophers, and that while material processes were spread roughly equally across the three fields, verbal types were more common in engineering bios while relational and mental types were far less frequent.

#### **Table 6: Processes by Disciplines – around here**

Mental and verbal processes represent ‘inner’ experiences, what the subject senses or says, and while the frequencies are not high, there are some interesting differences across disciplines in their use.

Applied linguists made considerably greater use of mental types, consistently representing research as an act of discovery and cognition rather than of work and writing. These examples are typical:

(23) Her recent work examines the intersections of civic rhetoric and digital spaces. (AL)

His fascination with both historical and contemporary computers leads him to continually wonder why some technologies are taken up while others are abandoned. (AL)

This represents the writer as a reflective, thinking academic rather than as an intellectual worker grinding out a quota of papers and presentations. It depicts academic work as intellectual quest and projects a distinctively scholarly identity to the writer.

Engineers, in contrast, and particularly male engineers, almost never opted to show this side but used more verbal forms to present themselves as arguers and discussers:

(24) She is now lecturing at Sanjesh College of Computing and Statistics, Tehran, Iran. (EE)

He proposes the use of selectively grown epitaxial layers ... (EE)

Like mental processes, verbal choices highlight human agency, foregrounding the role of the writer, lecturer or presenter and so helping to construe him or her explicitly in a scholarly role.

Table 6 shows, however, that the greatest disciplinary variations were in the ways writers employed relational processes, and in particular identifying relational clauses. Explicitly naming oneself as something or other is a key aspect of identification and philosophers did this twice as frequently as applied linguists and nearly four times more than engineers. Principally, this was to state their position in terms of status and institutional affiliation (25), although publications (26) and detailing of service to the community (27) also figured:

(25) Joan Eastly is Senior Lecturer in Philosophy at the University of Sussex. (Phil)

Isaac Neusner is Distinguished Service Professor .... (Phil)

(26) Among her books are *Uninsured in America: Life and Death in the Language of Opportunities*..... (Phil)

He is the author of *Ownership, Authority, and Self-Determination* (Penn State University Press, 2008). (Phil)

(27) She is the co-editor of Philosophy of film

(Phil)

He has been President of the International Association for Aesthetics, Secretary

Treasurer of the American Society for Aesthetics, and...

(Phil)

It is unclear why this pattern was so prevalent in Philosophy, although there is a more individualistic ethos in this discipline which encourages writers to put their personal stamp on what they write. Research practices which stress interpretations and arguments as the creative insights of the author offers a way of positioning oneself in relation to colleagues which is very different to the self-effacing ideology which sees results as the collective endeavours of a team simply reporting experimental outcomes. Here knowledge is personally owned and contributes to an individual ethos rather than shared as part of a cooperative context.

## **8 Conclusions**

This paper has sought to illuminate the rhetorical character of a familiar but neglected genre. The brevity and familiarity of the article bio has rendered it almost invisible to analysts, while its tight word limits seem to restrict writers to a formulaic range of options. In a large corpus of 600 texts, however, variations appear in the ways these texts are shaped to construct an academic identity for their authors, both in terms of the experiences selected for inclusion and how these experiences are expressed grammatically.

We find, for example, that senior academics present a much fuller academic identity by drawing on a wider repertoire of experiences which includes research, publication, employment and achievement. It was also clear that they use far more relational processes, and particularly identifying clauses, to rhetorically establish their unique status. Junior academics and students, on the other hand, present themselves as members of groups using attributive clauses. They also seek to establish identity claims which are more closely associated with their qualifications and institutional affiliations, often fleshed out with more personal data. Gender appears to make relatively little impact on identity projection although males highlighted their publications, service and achievements rather more and women focused on their research interests and education.



Most importantly, our findings reveal the significance of discipline. Not only do Electrical Engineers submit bios which are twice as long as the other fields, but these are also often accompanied by a passport portrait. More centrally, they also gave greater weight to education and personal details and used verbal processes more often. In contrast, research interests and publications form a more central part of a scholarly identity for applied linguists and philosophers. Applied linguists are more likely to represent their work as an act of discovery and cognition through mental processes than others and philosophers favour identifying relational clauses, stressing a unique position and emphasising individual contributions and achievements. Reference to lives outside the academy are eliminated, so that families, religion, personal experiences and social lives are airbrushed from the individual's representation in favour of an explicitly scholarly *version* of themselves constructed through a depiction of academic credibility.

While the policy of journals may play some small part in this, we need to bear in mind that that journals often specify little more than word length and that, more importantly, these policies are determined by editors and so represent decisions by disciplinary members, not publishers. This helps to account for the consistencies we find within disciplines and the variations between them, supporting our claim that the practices of individual journals are less important than the realms of discourse in which they operate.

Readers may ask why this should be of any interest. After all, a small piece of text appended to a research article and carrying no serious risks for a paper's acceptance is not immediately remarkable. It does however, have considerable significance as a self-representational genre. Here the individual can construct a credible persona, intimate membership of disciplinary groups, and stake an identity claim. It is a space for the creation of a self-consciously crafted identity in a professional context. Identity results from the command of an 'idiom', or mastery of a community repertoire, which we appropriate and shape to our own needs and personal preferences to best present ourselves to valued others. For teachers, the genre is perhaps a useful means of introducing students to the options that are available for identity construction in

academic contexts. Most significantly, the bio tells us a great deal about how status, gender and discipline mediate individual and collective identities. It points to hegemonic academic ideologies which position writers' representations of themselves while at the same time suggesting the cross-cutting impact of more personal and individual factors in identity negotiation. This preliminary study has begun to unpack some of these impacts but it has only scratched the surface of a fascinating genre. There is fertile ground here for further study.

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Table 1: Corpus length by discipline and gender

	Philosophy	Applied Linguistics	Electrical Engineering	Total
Female	6,471	5,849	10,472	22,792
Male	6,828	5,792	12,185	24,805
Total	13,299	11,641	22,657	47,597

Table 2: Overall frequencies of moves and process types

<b>Moves</b>	<b>Totals</b>	<b>Per 1000 words</b>	<b>Process Types</b>	<b>Totals</b>	<b>Per 1000 words</b>
Employment	577	12.1	Relational	1330	27.9
Research	475	10.0	Circum	138	2.9
Education	296	6.2	Intensive	856	18.0
Publications	283	5.9	Possessive	365	7.7
Achievement	88	1.8	Material	1103	23.2
Comm services	84	1.8	Mental	58	1.2
Personal profile	50	1.1	Verbal	54	1.1
			Behavioural	2	0.0
			Existential	1	0.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>1853</b>	<b>38.9</b>		<b>2548</b>	<b>53.5</b>

Table 3: Moves by Disciplines & Gender (Per 1000 words)

	App Ling		Elec Eng		Philosophy		<b>Total</b>
	F	M	F	M	F	M	
Employment	16.6	16.4	8.7	8.0	15.3	14.4	<b>12.1</b>
Research	14.2	11.9	9.7	8.7	10.4	7.0	<b>10.0</b>
Education	5.6	4.7	9.1	7.3	4.5	3.4	<b>6.2</b>
Publications	5.6	7.8	2.1	2.1	11.1	12.6	<b>5.9</b>
Achievement	1.5	1.4	2.2	3.3	0.8	0.4	<b>1.8</b>
Com Services	1.0	1.2	1.9	2.6	1.4	1.5	<b>1.8</b>
Personal Profile	0.7	0.5	1.4	1.5	0.6	0.9	<b>1.1</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>45.3</b>	<b>43.9</b>	<b>35.1</b>	<b>33.4</b>	<b>44.0</b>	<b>40.1</b>	<b>38.9</b>

Table 4: Percentage of process types by status

	Senior	Junior	Students	Admin/Tech	Unstated	<b>Totals</b>
Relational	57.2	55.1	53.6	29.3	40.4	<b>52.2</b>
Material	39.9	40.8	43.4	50.8	56.8	<b>43.3</b>
Mental	1.7	3.0	3.1	3.3	1.6	<b>2.3</b>
Verbal	1.0	1.1	0.9	16.6	0.9	<b>2.1</b>
Behaviourial	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	<b>0.1</b>
Existential	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.3	<b>0.0</b>
<b>Total</b>	100	100	100	100	100	<b>100</b>

Table 5: Process types by Gender (Per 1000 words)

	Females	Males	Total
Relational	26.5	29.3	<b>27.9</b>
Circumstantial	3.2	2.7	<b>2.9</b>
Attributive	7.5	8.3	<b>7.9</b>
Identifying	8.9	11.2	<b>10.1</b>
Possessive	8.2	7.2	<b>7.7</b>
Material	23.2	23.2	<b>23.2</b>
Mental	1.5	1.0	<b>1.2</b>
Verbal	1.8	0.5	<b>1.1</b>
Behaviourial	0.0	0.1	<b>0.0</b>
Existential	0.0	0.0	<b>0.0</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>53.0</b>	<b>54.1</b>	<b>53.5</b>

Table 6: Processes by Disciplines (Per 1000 words)

	AL	EE	Phil	Total
Relational	30.8	23.7	32.6	<b>27.9</b>
Circumstantial	2.3	3.5	2.4	<b>2.9</b>
Attributive	10.6	8.5	4.6	<b>7.9</b>
Identifying	9.2	5.4	18.7	<b>10.1</b>
Possessive	8.8	7.5	6.9	<b>7.7</b>
Material	23.6	23.6	22.0	<b>23.2</b>
Mental	2.1	0.7	1.4	<b>1.2</b>
Verbal	1.1	1.4	0.7	<b>1.1</b>
Behaviourial	0.1	0.0	0.1	<b>0.0</b>
Existential	0.0	0.0	0.1	<b>0.0</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>57.7</b>	<b>49.4</b>	<b>56.8</b>	<b>53.5</b>