Constructing complex identities: Semantic sequences typifying academic/economists' discourse in written economics lectures.

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The members of any specialist community produce knowledge by negotiation and persuasion, that is, by claiming, counterclaiming and persuading others of their point of view. Knowledge claims are never presented as simple matters of fact but as argumentations in the attempt to fit the context wherein the communication takes place. In their attempt to achieve such a goal, academics can make themselves visible as a *who* by creating a socially–situated identity - i.e., local, grounded in actual practices and experience - and become recognisable as a *what* by their actions (Gee 2005:27).

Identity, as an emerging and changing construct, has been defined in terms of how people display who they are to each other (Benwell and Stokoe 2006) whilst creating patterns which index characteristic *whos-doing-whats-within-discourses* (Gee 2005). That is, writers design written utterances to have patterns in them in virtue of which interpreters can attribute them situated identities and specific activities. Thus, by analysing such patterns, my attempt is not only to shed light on the identities of academics/economists and organisations communicating to a vast public through their websites, but also on the discourse features such academic and organisational communities might share.

By academic identity I refer to the social positioning of writers as members of their scientific community who represent themselves as experts and display their relevance by discursively construing their academic identity whilst ascribing positive value to their assumptions. In doing so, academics/economists rely on *logos,* or discipline specific arguments; *ethos*, related to the trustworthiness and credibility; and *pathos,* appeals derived from the community's values (Afros and Schryer 2009). By organisational identity I refer to companies discursively representing in highly evaluative terms their products and organisations to a vast public. The latter is approached by primarily basing their persuasive and seductive discourse on *ethos* and *pathos*.

Previous studies have prevalently focussed separately on academic discourse (Bondi and Mauranen 2003; Samson 2004; Fløttum, Dahl and Kinn 2006;), professional/business discourse (Garzone 2002; Bargiela Chiappini 2006; Shaw 2006; Samson 2010, 2009; to mention a few), comparisons within different academic genres (Afros and Schryer 2009; Tse and Hyland 2010), whereas very little has been said about the influences between academic and non-academic genres, as for

instance, published written economics lectures and company websites on the Internet (Samson 2007).

Therefore this paper, drawing on Hunston (2008), analyses quantitatively and qualitatively two small economics and business corpora - Published Written Economics Lectures (PWELs) and Business to Consumer Websites (B2CWs). The study focuses on the groups of semantic sequences typifying identity in academic and business discourse and their reciprocal sharing of discourse features across the two corpora.

Semantic sequences are recurring sequences of words and phrases that may be very diverse in form and which are therefore more usefully characterised as sequences of meaning elements rather than as formal sequences. The sequence will consist of a core word, the pattern associated with that word and a number of phrases occurring before the core word which are, in spite of being diverse in form, consistent in terms of meaning (Hunston 2008). The core item can be a lexical or grammatical word as it is always important to identify the meaning elements which can be considered related to the association between grammar pattern and meaning.

The study investigates the core item *that* and its evaluative semantic sequences in the PWELs and B2CWs with the aim of identifying similarities and/or dissimilarities between the academic and organisational identities in the corpora. This will be demonstrated by grammar patterns and the non-random association between such patterns and the groups of words that occur with them. The qualitative analysis attempts a pragmatic interpretation of the data across the corpora. The findings highlight not only possible variations in the semantic sequences typifying academic and organisational discursive identities, but also the use of strategies associated with promotional organisational discourse which leads to the creation of complex identities and possible genre mixes.


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