Wardle, Indentity, Authority, and Learning to Write in New Workplaces

Things to keep in mind
Wardle's essay is very useful for examining the potential consequences of failing to adhere to the conventions of workplace genres — reduced authority, negative impact on work, etc. These consequences were real (and likely resulted in Alan's leaving the job), whether or not Alan's linguistic choices reflect active resistance to his being used as a 'tool' (as Wardle suggests) or accidental/subconscious resistance due to the misalignment of his imagined identity and authority with the reality of his identity and authority as perceived by the rest of the department.

- Resistance to genre conventions must be "will only be 'recognized and valued as resistance and not misinterpretation, or worse, ignorance' if it is 'predicated on one's knowledge of a genre'" (Bawarshi 92, as qtd. in Wardle 293)

Certainly you don't want to necessarily become an "Alan," but this connects us back to the idea that a genre "invites an uptake commensurate with it's ideology" (Bawarshi).

- If writing and other linguistic choices "leak" information about a person's social identity, what are the implications? You might think of the ways that jobs, colleges, and other institutions can discriminate against people with certain social identities.

If you've heard the recent debate about "vocal fry" and the speaking voices of young women, then you've seen people talk about how linguistic choices (written and spoken) can affect or undermine authority (in some listeners). You can also see the wider implications of making assumptions or judging people based on their linguistic choices (i.e. it privileges a certain way of speaking or writing that favors white, educated men).

- This is a great radio story on vocal fry from NPR's *Fresh Air*: http://www.npr.org/2015/07/23/425608745/from-upspeak-to-vocal-fry-are-we-policing-young-womens-voices

key words and definitions
activity theory — A way of studying the interaction(s) within groups (of people and objects), how they communicate, and how they interact to operationalize shared motivations. We got a glimpse of this in the Spinuzzi reading with the 'genre ecology' framework, which relies on activity theory

community of practice — In activity theory, "a set of relations among persons, activity, and world, over time, and in relation with other tangential and overlapping communities of practice" (Lave and Wenger 98). Similar to the idea of a discourse community, except that there is more emphasis on how the community of practice relates to and overlaps with other communities of practice.