



## Voice & Differentiation

GRS Writing Group – WED 8 AUG 2017

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*I was writing from fear: a fear of needing to back up every claim and argument with the voice of a well-known scholar – or preferably several. If someone had said it before, then it was safe to say it myself. But what I was creating was more like an extensive, impressive research report, rather than a thesis of my own...my thesis is my position, my point of view, my stance on a certain issue. If I am not able to convey what is in my writing, then I am no longer writing my own thesis,*

*I am writing the theses of the giants who have gone before me without adding anything to them.*

- Steer. 2014. The key to a successful PhD thesis? Write in your own voice. The Guardian. 20 Aug 2014.  
[www.theguardian.com/higher-education-network/blog/2014/aug/20/write-in-your-own-voice-key-to-successful-phd-thesis](http://www.theguardian.com/higher-education-network/blog/2014/aug/20/write-in-your-own-voice-key-to-successful-phd-thesis)

*What if starting to write is not a question of being adequate or smart, or of writing the perfect sentence, but it is just about being brave, having a go, taking a risk, of sending the fragile ego off for a little rest? Is this a more helpful way to approach the next academic writing task? Is it easier to be courageous than feel obliged to be clever?*

- Thomson. Academic writing voice...and the voices in your head... Patter  
[patthomson.net/category/academic-writing-voice/](http://patthomson.net/category/academic-writing-voice/)

## Differentiation

How do you differentiate your own research or the research of your group from the research of others?

- 1) Use first person to describe your study

My/our data shows.....I/we found that...

- 2) Refer to own research

This study.....the present study..... the findings of this research....

- 3) Refer to your own research in the present tense and other research in past tense

This study shows a 26% increase which is greater than the 12% increase observed by X&Y.....



Monash- Write the Thesis. Discuss your findings.

<http://www.monash.edu.au/lis/hdr/write/5.9.html>

## Authoritative Voice vs Distinctive Voice

Writing studies suggest the term 'voice' is problematic because it is defined in a number of ways, to the point where it now "means almost anything". Most studies agree there is no voiceless text but voice depend on the specific context - the genre, discipline, topic and intended audience.

Should you be concerned with expression of contribution or style? What you want to say or how you say it? Clear articulation of your scholarly contribution is paramount – over time you will develop your own writing style and combine clear expression of your ideas with writing flair.



Stock & Eik-Nes. 2016. Voice features in academic texts - A review of empirical studies. Journal of English for Academic Purposes. 24:89.

<http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1475158515300400>

Common reasons for authoritative voice (expression of contribution) problems:

- 1) Lack of confidence – clear representation of other's work but little text reflecting your own ideas
- 2) Inexperience – not knowing how to differentiate your own ideas from description of other works
- 3) Over-familiarity – you know what you are saying – the reader may not
- 4) Under-familiarity – you don't know what you want to say yet

Common reasons for distinctive voice (style) problems:

- 5) Desire for unique style – be careful of adopting a range of quirky writing features
- 6) Tensions in collaborative writing – feeling your style is being edited out of your writing



Cayley. 2013. Contribution and voice in academic writing. Explorations of Style

<https://explorationsofstyle.com/2013/05/16/contribution-and-voice-in-academic-writing/>



Kelsky. 2012. How and why to write collaboratively. The Professor is in.

<https://theprofessorisin.com/2012/12/04/how-and-why-to-write-collaboratively-a-guest-post/>

Next session: WED AUG 23 reading Strategies

Further details of the UWA GRS Writing Group, including advice sheets to download, here:

[www.postgraduate.uwa.edu.au/students/resources/communities#writinggroup](http://www.postgraduate.uwa.edu.au/students/resources/communities#writinggroup)