Developing your ‘researcher voice’

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• Introductions
• Perspectives on the researcher’s ‘voice’
• Key aspects of your writing
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Now you...
- Your research/professional focus
- Where are you today?
- How many chooks at your place?
speak the truth, even if your voice shakes
What do we mean by the ‘researcher voice’?

- What ideas come to mind, when you think about your ‘voice’ in your research writing?

- When you think about a researcher whose ‘voice’ you respect or admire, what comes to mind?
What do we mean by the ‘researcher voice’?

Some of the perspectives on the researcher voice:

- Geertz (1988) – ‘authorial presence’ in research writing
- The researcher’s voice – epistemology, ontology...
- Hyland (2000) – ‘writer stance’ in academic writing – plausibility, judgements, relationships with the topic and others
- Kamler & Thomson (2006) – ‘persona’ in PhD writing
- Linguistic approaches – e.g. Hood (2010) – ‘evaluative stance’ – dynamically realised throughout the text
What do we mean by the researcher voice?

Different ‘settings’ of language in your writing, which give you options...

- Ways of being more / less visible in your writing
- Ways of being more / less assertive & confident
- Ways of being more / less cautious & modest
- Ways of showing which communities you belong to
- Ways of making positive and negative evaluations
- Ways of claiming / not claiming responsibility & status
- Ways of showing objectivity / subjectivity
- and other aspects of your relationships with your readers, other researchers, research participants & others
“Gorman (2004a, 2004b), for example, is well known for his opinions about LIS education. The findings of both this study and McKinney’s study (2006) indicate that LIS programs are in fact teaching the skills outlined by the Core Competences, including leadership.” 

(Hicks & Given, 2013, p.21)

1. While researchers such as Gorman (2004a) have raised concerns about the adequacy of LIS education for professional practice, our study demonstrates that LIS programs are indeed teaching the skills outlined by the Core Competences, including leadership.

2. Despite the claims by critics such as Gorman (2004a), our study clearly demonstrates that LIS programs are certainly teaching the Core Competences, including leadership.

3. In the face of repeated attack (e.g. Gorman, 2004a), our findings vindicate the effectiveness of LIS programs in preparing tomorrow’s professionals with the Core Competences they will need – including the vital skills for leadership.

4. There has been some discussion of the reach of LIS education (e.g. Gorman, 2004). The findings of the current study suggest that LIS programs include leadership and other skills in the Core Competences.
Menu: Things you can adjust in your writing

1. Being visible or invisible: pronouns, passive vs active
2. Own / disown the claim: nominalisation, ventriloquism
3. Managing risk and reward: modality
4. Subjective vs objective: emotional colour, evaluation
5. Critical voice on the literature: reporting, concession
6. Community, belonging, picking a side: name / blame
7. Fitting in or standing out: metaphors, stories, humour
- Read the abstract (Text 1) in the hand-out.
- Is Jo Reid visible, either as the author, the researcher, or any other roles?
- Circle any relevant words.
- How does this compare with the research writing in your discipline?

1. Being visible or invisible in your research writing
1. Being visible or invisible in your research writing

- Pronouns
- Passive verbs versus active verbs

I will explore the idea of practice in pre-service teacher education.

The idea of practice in pre-service teacher education will be explored.

This study explores the idea of practice in pre-service teacher education.
2. Own / disown the claim

- Which word is closer to a claim? Which is riskier?
  - explore
  - challenge

In this paper, I explore and examine the idea of practice...

This story offers substantial challenge to existing views of literacy.

Anxiety has been shown to interfere with doctoral candidates’ ability to write (Castello, Inesta, & Monereo, 2009).
2. Own / disown the claim

- Nominalisation & grammatical metaphor

Teacher educators could reconceptualise professional practice.

Could teacher educators reconceptualise professional practice?

... to ask whether there are ways to reconceptualise professional practice.

This exploration reveals a possible reconceptualisation of professional practice.
Re-write the following sentences, to shift the responsibility for the claim away from the writer.

- The children are the future, as Houston (1986) has shown.

- Passive smoking is harmful to children. Several studies have found increased respiratory symptoms among children whose parents smoke (e.g. Volkmer et al., 1995; Bener et al., 1991).
3. Managing risk and reward

Compare the following sentences:

- Sugary foods clearly harm our health and should be regulated.
- Sugary foods are likely to be harmful in large quantities, and regulating them could improve public health.
- A sugar-rich diet may be associated with health risks in some cases. Measures such as regulation might be worth considering.

What are the possible risks and rewards of each version?
Which version(s) would be common in your discipline?
3. Managing risk and reward

Modality

- could, would, should, might, must, may
- possibly, probably, definitely, clearly, perhaps
- probable, likely, clear, possible, necessary, important
- likelihood, probability, risk, chance, necessity, obligation, need, requirement, certainty, possibility, importance, responsibility...
3. Managing risk and reward

Other ways of adjusting strength/caution

- to some extent, in a number of cases, often, never, nearly
- somewhat, quite, rather, completely
- merely, partly, partially, only, slightly
- seems to, appears to, tends to
- verb strength:
  - causes >> leads to >> predisposes >> is a factor
  - fails >> omits >> lacks >> does not include
  - solves >> improves >> assists
4. Subjective versus objective

Emotional ‘colour’

- Miraculous >> outstanding >> very positive >> marked impact
- Abusive >> irresponsible >> harmful >> negative
- Annoying >> ??
4. Subjective versus objective

Evaluative criteria

Personal
- annoying, frightening, delightful, peace, whinge

Discipline-specific
- thorough, rigorous, detailed, clear, sound, persuasive, insightful
- cost-effective, environmentally sustainable, innovative, elegant
4. Subjective versus objective

Overlap with informal / formal ...

- Kids >> children >> off-spring >> progeny
- Hang out >> be friends with >> associate >> group membership
- Kids wrote letters >> shared skill sets >> literacy

... and concrete / abstract...
Compare the following sentences:


- Carter (2012) claims that forming academic identity in doctoral writing is ‘troublesome’.

- Carter (2012) seems to believe that forming academic identity in doctoral writing is ‘troublesome’.
5. Critical voice on the literature

Positive, negative or neutral?

- shows, illustrates, demonstrates, clarifies, illuminates, highlights, points out, indicates, finds
- believes, thinks, feels
- states, notes, reports
- claims, suggests, argues, proposes
5. Critical voice on the literature

Compare the following sentences:

- While an explicit focus on language provides specific details that writers can control (Aitchison & Paré, 2012), a broad understanding of the whole context of the doctoral candidature is necessary (Kamler, 2001).

- While a broad understanding of the whole context of the doctoral candidature is necessary (Kamler, 2001), an explicit focus on language provides specific details that writers can control (Aitchison & Paré, 2012).

Which sentence is emphasising the importance of language?
Look at the hand-out: Texts 3, 4 & 5.

Each one is showing a link with a particular school of thought.

Looking particularly at the highlighted text, what strategy is each writer using?

1. Just assuming that she/he ‘belongs’ with that group or approach?
2. Explicitly arguing why she/he endorses that group?
3. Indirectly showing it is good to ‘belong’ to that group/approach?
Sword (2009) argues for ‘stylish’ academic writing e.g. stories, less jargon, illustrations and metaphors, engagement with other disciplines and “creativity, imagination […] humour”.

- Have you read some articles which could fit this description?
- Do you know whether they were written by masters or novices?
- What are the risks and rewards associated with some of these features?
- How common is it to see these features in your discipline?
Applying it to your own writing

What are your next steps? What is your priority?

- Re-reading exemplars to explore types of voice in your field?
- Looking at aspects of voice in your previous writing?
- Adjusting something specific in your current writing?
- Other next steps …
References


