

# Developing your 'researcher voice'

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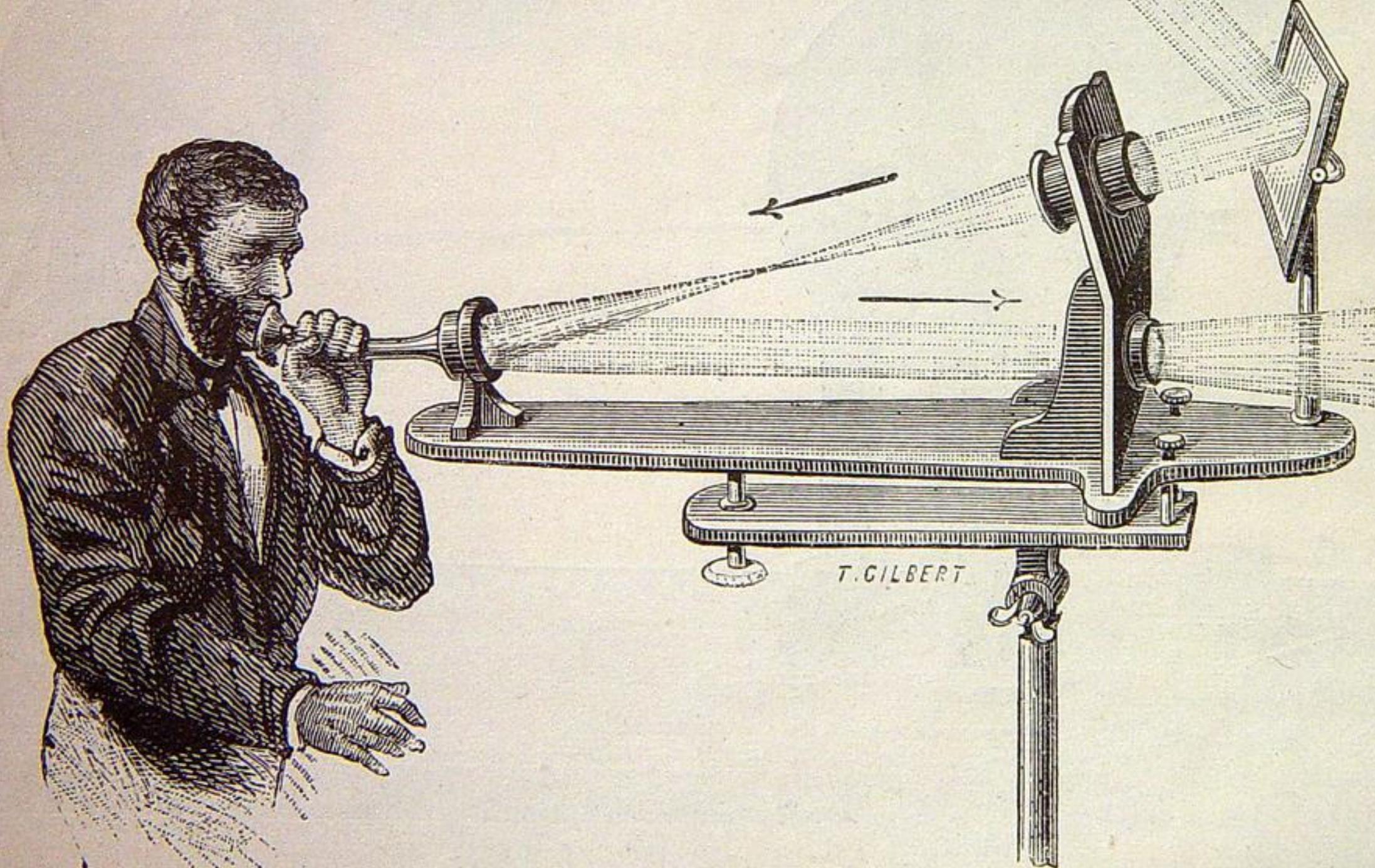
Outline

- **Introductions**
- **Perspectives on the researcher's 'voice'**
- **Key aspects of your writing**

# Introductions

- **Cassily Charles**
- **Now you...**
  - Your research/professional focus
  - Where are you today?
  - How many chooks at your place?

I WAS BORN  
IN A SMALL TOWN OUTSIDE  
OF CHICAGO. I ALWAYS LIKED THE  
TOWN. I ENDED UP PURSUING  
FINANCE AS A CAREER IN MY SENIOR YEAR  
AT COLLEGE. I TRANSFERRED TO A SCHOOL  
ON THE WEST COAST. I WORKED HARD AND  
EARNED EVERY BIT OF MY DEGREE IN ACTUARIAL SCIENCES.  
IT FEELS LIKE YESTERDAY BUT IT'S BEEN NEARLY 14 YEARS  
SINCE I JOINED MY FIRST JOB AS AN ADVISOR. I TOOK MY FIRST  
IT WAS JUST A FEW CLIENTS. I TOOK MY FIRST  
AND PUT IN A LOT OF HARD WORK BUT LITTLE BY LITTLE  
I BUILT MY BOOK. A FEW GOOD REFERRALS REALLY HELPER  
EXPAND MY BUSINESS AND SOLIDIFY MY REPUTATION AS A TOP PROD-  
UCER. I'VE ALWAYS BEEN INDEPENDENT AND I'VE ALWAYS USED THE  
OF WORKING AT THE KIND OF PLACE WHERE YOU CAN GET  
THINGS DONE THE WAY YOU LIKE THEM DONE. I'VE ALWAYS USED THE  
FEELING OF A SMALL COMPANY, BUT YOU CAN'T GET A LOT OF GREAT IDEAS  
SOURCES OF A LARGER COMPANY. I'VE ALWAYS USED THE  
WHY BUT WHERE I AM NOW, I DON'T WANT TO GET A LOT OF GREAT IDEAS  
NOW I'M LOOKING FOR SOMETHING A LITTLE DIFFERENT. I WANT TO GET A LOT OF GREAT IDEAS  
LITTLE MORE FREEDOM AND A LITTLE MORE RESPONSIBILITY. I WANT TO GET A LOT OF GREAT IDEAS  
FOR A PLACE WHERE I CAN REALLY MAKE A DIFFERENCE. I WANT TO GET A LOT OF GREAT IDEAS  
THE PLACE I'M LOOKING FOR IS A PLACE WHERE I CAN REALLY MAKE A DIFFERENCE. I WANT TO GET A LOT OF GREAT IDEAS





SPEAK THE

TRUTH, EVEN IF

YOUR VOICE SHAKES

Fun

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 (2001) – voice >> situated
- Kamler & Thomson (2006) – 'persona' in PhD writing
- Carter (2012) – 'troublesomeness' of doctoral voice – complexity of constructing academic identity in the PhD
- **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

- 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 ed.

1. Being visible or invisible in your research writing

## 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.

## 2. Own / disown the claim

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

## Emotional 'colour'

### 4. Subjective versus objective

- Miraculous >> outstanding >> very positive >> marked impact
- Abusive >> irresponsible >> harmful >> negative
- Annoying >> ???

## Evaluative criteria

### 4. Subjective versus objective

#### 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

... and concrete / abstract...

- Kids wrote letters >> shared skill sets >> literacy

Compare the following sentences:

- Carter (2012) reveals the 'troublesome' nature of forming academic identity in doctoral writing.
- 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*?

## 5. Critical voice on the literature

Look at the hand-out: Texts 3, 4 & 5.

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

6. Community, belonging, picking a side

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?

## 7. Fitting in or standing out

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

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