

## EDDC 701—Week 4

[First Person Reserved PowerPoint tutorial](#) (Morasch, 2014)

Today we're going to talk about why we are requesting that our graduate students use first-person voice in their coursework. We will discuss what first person reserved voice is and why it's beneficial to use. When you're ready to move to the next slide, use the space bar or the arrows at the bottom left corner of the slide.

First-person reserved voice, also known as scholarly first-person voice, is balanced between the personal "I" at one end and the impersonal "the author" at the other end of the voice spectrum. It is a way of presenting the educated authority of an author without denying the author's person or identity within the text.

This style of scholarly writing is active, it's clear, and it's precise. It acknowledges the actions, agency, and ideas of people instead of texts or objects. And it also is used to emphasize an author's educated beliefs.

On the other hand, unlike other uses of first-person pronouns, first-person reserved voice is not personal, conversational, or chatty. And it's not used to promote the unfounded opinions or feelings of the author within the text. So why do we want our graduate students to use this type of voice in their coursework, including doctoral dissertations?

Helen Sword researched articles from 10 different academic fields. She looked at over one thousand articles from a variety of major publications in each field, and she found that overwhelmingly scholars use first-person voice or the word "I" when they are writing. In fact in 8 of the 10 fields more than 68 percent of authors used the word "I" in their writings. These fields included medicine, evolutionary biology, computer science, psychology, anthropology, law, philosophy, and literary studies. And even in higher education and history, the last two fields she looked at, around 50 percent of the authors used the first-person pronoun in the articles that they wrote.

Considering Sword's research findings on how scholars use personal pronouns, what are the arguments against using "I"? As we all probably heard in our composition classes, we should never use "I" in academic writing. Academic oral history promotes the idea that true scientists never used the word "I" in writing the research in order to maintain their objectivity. And therefore social scientists also refrain from using personal pronouns. The rationale for this is that first-person pronouns are unprofessional or non-academic and proponents of third-person also believe that it is more objective and persuasive. Raymond provides a disclaimer for this assertion however. He states that while using 3rd person pronouns can give the text a sense of being more objective and persuasive, it doesn't change an opinion into a revelation.

The arguments for using "I" are numerous. Even the American Psychological Association recommends using first-person in scholarly writing. According to the APA Publication Manual, using first-person when describing or discussing the actions taken by an author is a method of reducing confusion for readers. Readers needn't decipher whether the author is talking about him or herself using the terms "the researcher" or "the author" or talking about the creators of the other works that the author is discussing within that text. Using the first-person perspective can also increase the effectiveness of a text since authors are less likely to use passive sentences or nominalizations (turning actions into nouns) with first person voice. It creates

clarity in the text by allowing authors to more clearly describe what they did as researchers, help them make clear claims about their research, and guide the reader through the text. And finally, according to Sword, using “I” creates sentences that are more energetic, more persuasive, and easier to understand.

Please read and consider the quote on this slide. It is followed by three slides that provide examples to help you better understand first person reserved. If you have questions about first person reserved, contact Maureen Morasch, librarian and professional writing expert for Concordia University’s doctorate in Education. Her contact information is included on the last slide.

## **Reference**

Morasch, M. (2014). *First person reserved PowerPoint tutorial* [Narrated PPT]. Portland, OR: Concordia University Portland.