

TECHNIQUES AND STRATEGIES OF ACADEMIC WRITING

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PATRICK'S POINTS

Your writing in relation to:

- **Yourself ('writing' one or more research careers, avoiding 'self-plagiarism')**
- **The participants in your research (one's own subjectivity and otherness)**
- **Other researchers (monological and dialogical texts)**
- **Editors (titles, subtitles, keywords, overall themes and/or framing questions, 'the whole' and 'the parts' of an edited collection, accuracy and completeness of in-text and listed references)**
- **Anonymous referees (when to yield and when to stand firm)**

YOUR WRITING IN RELATION TO YOURSELF

- ‘Writing’ one or more research careers

It is clear that dialogue so conceived involves the constant redefinition of its participants, develops and creates numerous potentials “in” each of them “separately” and between them “interactively” and “dialogically”. It is also clear that no single interaction could exhaust the potential value of future exchanges. Both dialogue and the potentials of dialogue are endless. No word can be taken back, but the final word has not yet been spoken and never will be spoken. (Morson & Emerson, 1990, p. 52)

- **Avoiding ‘self-plagiarism’**

We have interrogated the associations and dissonances between Australian occupational Travellers and rural communities in previous publications. In an article entitled “Showing the way”, Danaher (1997) argued that Australian fairground people invoke discourses of their similarities to, as well as their differences from, rural Australians as a means of subverting strategies of marginalization: in their case, on account of their mobility; in the case of rural people, as a result of their rurality. Danaher, Hallinan, and Moriarty (1999) focused on a similarly positive self-consciousness among Australian circus people as a framework for suggesting ways to reinvigorate Australian rural education, based on a two-fold celebration of the ‘difference’ of rurality and a justification of rural Australians’ calls for equitable access to educational services. Most recently, Danaher, Moriarty, and Hallinan (2001) drew on elements of actor-network theory to highlight the political constructedness of policy categories associated with ‘regional youth’, illustrated through the formal and informal learning of Australian circus people.

In this article we deploy different theoretical resources to support a different argument. Underpinning this approach is the recognition that concepts such as 'urban' and 'rural' are not opposite sides of a coin, nor necessarily discrete, nor even located at different ends of the same continuum. Their relationship is much more complex and, while this understanding could be argued from a range of perspectives, it is borne out in the discussions of the three key processes that are the focus of this article. These processes are:

- ***examining triangular space, ternary relations (Mant, 1999), and Thirdspace (Soja, 1996) as potential navigational aids in mapping new relations between power and educational provision;***
- ***conceptualizing Australian occupational Travelers as 'space invaders' who routinely disrupt the boundaries between 'urban' and 'rural'; and***
- ***understanding how their status as 'space invaders' enables the Travelers to be 'pedagogical innovators'. (Danaher, Danaher & Moriarty, 2003, p. 164)***

THE PARTICIPANTS IN YOUR RESEARCH

- **One's own subjectivity and otherness**

Jane: By coming to STEPS I've answered the call of what can I give back.

Brad: The Call to Adventure is getting past this comfortable feeling world to knowing there is potential in you and not wasting it. I think these steps will help me to unlock that potential. When I've reached my potential I'll know I've conquered something in my life. You're never free until you've reached your potential.

Jonathan: To be an adult learner is putting yourself on a journey of chaotic proportions. The prize is worth the chaos and fear....If students are shown this model and are honest with themselves about the learning journey they are about to undertake, the Hero's Journey will be the sword to remove the fear and let them seize the day. (Cited in Simpson, in press)

Seline: We sometimes speak our own language...when we don't like something about people.

Roseanne: We call them names. We've got our own words, but I'm not telling you, 'cos it's our code. "Shorkers" are shoes, "rackne" means girls, "gille" means boy, "shil" is hair. But you know, I could be makin' up all them words.

Me: Why would you want to do that?

Roseanne: 'cos it's things – for our people, not yours.

Me: What do you think would happen if people who weren't Gypsies got to know it?

Seline: You'd know what we were saying.

Roseanne: You might use it against us.

Me: In what way?

Roseanne: Maybe to find out all about us.

Seline: He's trying to do that now.

Roseanne: I know. That's why I might be making some words up.

(Levinson, in press)

OTHER RESEARCHERS

- **Monological and dialogical texts**

From this it can be inferred that the type of authorial position, rather than the fact of that position, is unique in a polyphonic novel, through its giving expression to a range of additional voices and perspectives absent from a monologic novel. This assertion was supported by Morson and Emerson's (1990) listing of the two primary criteria for identifying a polyphonic novel: ". . .*a dialogic sense of truth and a special position of the author necessary for visualising and conveying that sense of truth*" (p. 234). Similarly, in Pearce's (1994) view, "*Bakhtin's first, and non-negotiable, criterion for a text to be considered polyphonic is the 'freedom' and 'independence' of the characters from authorial control*" (p. 124). In the same vein, Jones (1993) called polyphony "*the position of the author in relation to the voices in the text*" (p. 249). (Not Danaher, 2001)

In order to understand, it is immensely important for the person who understands to be located outside the object of his or her creative understanding—in time, in space, in culture. For one cannot even really see one's own exterior and comprehend it as a whole, and no mirrors or photographs can help; our real exterior can be seen and understood only by other people, because they are located outside us in space and because they are others. (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 7)

Some practical suggestions

- **have a target journal or conference in mind before writing the paper**
- **locate your paper in relation to other papers in the journal's current and/or recent issues**
- **identify points of commonality as well as of divergence between yourself and other researchers**
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EDITORS

- **Titles (can be evocative, metaphorical, powerful)**
- **Subtitles (should be clear and transparent, searchable and helpful in communicating your research to the widest possible audience)**
- **Keywords (can be useful identifiers of your research)**
- **It's probably a good idea to acknowledge and refer extensively to overall themes and/or framing questions!**
- **'The whole' and 'the parts' of an edited collection (cross-referencing a useful technique by book/journal issue editors to highlight the overall coherence of, as well as the internal diversity within, the collection)**
- **Fulfilling – and if necessary asking beforehand to clarify – the expectations regarding length and format of abstract, introduction and conclusion**
- **Accuracy and completeness of in-text and listed references**

ANONYMOUS REFEREES

The good and the bad

*******In preparing my action research project for my Masters degree, I found this book to be very helpful and a good resource. It is not an in-depth book, but it is insightful and helps to narrow your focus and keep you on track in the planning stages of the action research process. It gives good examples of projects that have been done and the insights gained.***

****I teach graduate level research courses and reviewed this book for the publisher. There are so many errors in it that I cannot even begin to list them. I could not in all practicality use this book with my students because of the multiple theoretical and conceptual errors....There are many other texts that do a much better job discussing Action Research that are more practical, precise, make relevant connections to practice, and offer theoretical and conceptual accuracies.***

Retrieved November 23, 2004, from <http://www.science.fiction.web.com/>

When to yield and when to stand firm

- **Separate the content from the emotion (and sometimes the manner)**
- **Identify the common ground between the referees and most likely respond to that**
- **Identify the divergences between the referees and engage with those divergences, based on the editor's/s' feedback and your own reflection on your material**
- **Remember that the referees do not see each other's review of your work; work with the editor/s to negotiate between potentially contradictory and sometimes conflicting feedback from the referees**
- **The process is (usually!) a negotiated one: feel comfortable about contacting the editor/s if you have substantial concerns (eg, in relation to the ethics and politics of representing your research findings)**

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