

Finding Your Voice

@Morling w/Wendy

your writerly voice

Christian theology as faithful persuasion



Even if it is not your goal to be an academic theologian, if you clear a logical path in every paper you write, and make clear which path you are on, your writing will be persuasive to your audience.

(Yaghjian, 2015:15)

Join the conversation

amazing morling students



types of writing

Descriptive, analytical
and persuasive.



take a stand

The process of theological
argumentation



Using evidence

Direct and indirect voices.
Labeling and citing other
voices.



language of opinion

Boost or moderate
your claims. Express an
attitude. Be critical

types of academic writing



All 3 are useful in helping to build an argument

Descriptive Writing	Analytical Writing	Persuasive Writing
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ lists information, states facts▪ tells the way things are or what happened▪ often uses simple conjunctions <i>such as and, so, but</i>▪ bases structure on the order of events or a number of points without a particular order or grouping	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ shows relationship between pieces of information▪ compares and contrasts information▪ bases structure on grouping, ordering and relating ideas using conceptual categories e.g. factors, strategies, or processes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ takes a position (thesis) based on research supported with arguments and evidence▪ bases structure on relationship between arguments and develops conceptual categories to organise information▪ uses evaluative language to signal attitudes and judgements▪ indicates author's approval or criticism of opinions presented by others

types of academic writing

xxx



Let's work through an example

In this paragraph, which sentences are descriptive, analytical or persuasive?

- 1) Evangelists are defined as those who announce good news.
- 2) Philip, one of the seven chosen deacons in Acts 6, was called the evangelist in Acts 21:8.
- 3) Timothy was urged to do the work of an evangelist (2 Timothy 4:5).
- 4) Little was known about why evangelist is named separately from pastors and teachers.
- 5) On one hand, Merkle contends that "the function of the evangelist may be distinguished from that of pastor-teacher (Eph 4:1-11), but being an evangelist is also a mark of those who, like Timothy, are called to preach the Word (2 Tim 4:1-5)." ¹⁸
- 6) On the other, Knight suggests that evangelists should be regarded as a specialised category of elders as they played a similar role as elders but with an emphasis on saving the lost rather than shepherding the saved ones.¹⁹
- 7) It seems that today evangelist are not well anchored in the church as in the Early Church.

See how these three work together to build an argument.

types of academic writing

xxx



Let's work through an example

Notice language features which help to guide the discussion

Evangelists are defined as those who announce good news. Philip, one of the seven chosen deacons in Acts 6, was called the evangelist in Acts 21:8. Timothy was urged to do the work of an evangelist (2 Timothy 4:5). Little was known about why evangelist is named separately from pastors and teachers. On one hand, Merkle contends that "the function of the evangelist may be distinguished from that of pastor-teacher (Eph 4:1-11), but being an evangelist is also a mark of those who, like Timothy, are called to preach the Word (2 Tim 4:1-5)." ¹⁹ On the other hand, Knight suggests that evangelists should be regarded as a specialised category of elders as they played a similar role as elders but with an emphasis on saving the lost rather than shepherding the saved ones. ¹⁸ It seems that today evangelist are not as well anchored in the church as in the past.

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Taking a stand

A major difference between descriptive, analytical and persuasive writing is the presence or absence of a thesis (your stance). To find a thesis on a topic, a simple test is to ask yourself “Where do I stand?”



It is important for students to learn to be confidently uncertain (Sheldon, 1988).

Your stance is important because it allows you to reveal not only what you know but what you think you know (Swales and Feak, 2012:156).

The essay is a tool for correlating present day questions with the traditional ‘answers’ of Christian faith (Tillich in Yaghjian, 2015:69).

*To write theological argument is to assert a theological claim to which you are committed.
To write in an academic voice is to make a claim that you argue formally (Yaghjian, 2015:69).*

This conversation always unfolds as an attempt... because we are all in this mystery together; and we need to question one another; criticise one another; make suggestions to one another, help one another (from Kaufman, 64)

Taking a stand



The process of forming a theological argument

1. Engage the **question** as it engages you
2. Re-engage the assigned readings in light of the **question**
3. Answer the **question**
4. Elucidate your **claim** (*clarify explain, expound, illuminate, interpret, reveal*)
5. Structure your **argument**

How does Matthew's use of the Old Testament contribute to his purposes in writing? (NT008/9-6)

What is the relationship between Christians and the 'law' (Torah)? Discuss with particular reference to the role of the Sabbath in Christian ethics. (PE023-7)

The Rev. A. A. Rees objected to female teaching on the grounds that it was unnatural and unscriptural. What arguments does Catherine Booth present in 'Female Teaching' in its defence? How valid are both sides of the argument today?(CH002-7)

Using evidence



Many voices

Once you have an argument, you will want to make claims to build a case.

Your argument appears most directly in three places: *Introduction*, *Conclusion* and in the Body via *topic sentences* of your paragraphs. The placement is crucial in establishing your voice and authority as the writer.

Use evidence from your readings to help you to discuss your claims. Notice the evidence does not drive the direction of your essay, you do! Stay in the driver's seat.

1. Your voice as writer
2. Direct voices – the actual words used by another writer
3. Indirect voices – a summary of another writer's ideas

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¹⁸ Merkle, *40 questions about elders and deacons*, 51

¹⁹ George W. Knight, “Two offices (elders or bishops and deacons) and two orders of elders (preaching or teaching elders and ruling elders): a New Testament study,” *Presbyterion* 11, no. 1 (1985), 9

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Plagiarism is where you fail to label voices in your writing using citations. If a sentence is un-labeled, your readers will assume it is your voice.

language of opinion



First, second and third person

- Some disciplines encourage the first person 'I', others do not. Check with your lecturer and observe the usage of scholars in your field.
- 'I' is often used in **reflection papers**, when you have been asked for your personal experience or thoughts.
- 'I' can also be used in **formal academic writing** when writing about something you **did in the research process** or will do in the paper e.g. '*I conducted 3 interviews...*', '*In this essay, I will argue that...*'
- 'We' can be used **to include the audience** of *academics, believers, or Australian*, or may refer to the writer and reader, as in '*We can see in table 2...*' (But do not over use it!)
- Likewise 'you' can work in the same way **to guide or direct the reader** around the paper, drawing their attention to something you wish to highlight.

language of opinion



Passive voice and Abstract (vs Concrete)

- Use **the passive** to highlight the action over the actor, e.g. *A further exploration follows of both Gestalt and EFT concepts, definitions of client change as well as key strengths and limitations of both theories.*
- However, in most academic writing **the focus is on ideas, and theories**, not simply on people. Use abstract words such as: *aspects, factors, issues, reasons, features, perspectives, considerations, views, and standpoints* to group and organise the entity or 'thing' under discussion

Hedges

The verb 'to be' is very strong. God says 'I am' and there is no doubt! When posing your own proposition, you use modifiers to soften or limit the claim. Here are a few:

Modal verbs – *might, may, possibly, probably*

Hedging verbs - *appears, seems, tends*

Other devices – *in general, often, usually, almost, mostly, perhaps*

*E.g. It is **possible** that persecution **may** cause believers to flee their countries, leaving behind a faith vacuum.*

language of opinion



Boosters

Just as hedges indicate limits, boosters show confidence, certainty and even authority. Use boosters when your readers are likely to agree with you. Over use can make you sound arrogant.

We know, certainly, of course, no doubt, it is well know that, indeed, in fact, certainly, definitely, doubtless, clearly, always, never, essential, must

Attitude markers

When you express how you feel about a position or bit of information it is tempting to write 'I like...' because that is what we do in spoken conversation. In academic writing it is most common to use these markers to indicate importance. Beware, overuse can make you sound flakey.

Key, crucial, importantly, centrally, surprisingly, interesting(ly), curiously, appropriately

E.g. *Strengths of Gestalt Therapy are the **extremely powerful** techniques that are activated through simply noticing what is happening for the client in the room, working with that awareness to bring new information.*

How to be critical

Critique

Evaluation of other's arguments, approaches and theories is necessary to see if there is evidence to support your own propositions. Through comparing and contrasting parts of the whole, you can comment on their strengths and weaknesses, whether they are useful or suitable for your topic, and to state which you find most convincing and why.



A weakness that is sometimes levelled at Emotionally-Focused Therapy (EFT) is that it is simply, and nothing more than a cathartic experience of the release of emotions with no real change ensuing. However, this will not be the case if a therapist assists the client to complete the cognitive and behaviour follow-up that transfers their new learning into their life situations (Corey, 2009). A flip-side of this limitation may be that unless a therapist is congruent and accepting of their own emotions, they may find that they are reluctant to allow the deep processing that clients experience in EFT (Corey, 2009). A limitation that Crawley and Grant have found with EFT (2005) is that they believe it does not draw as fully as it might on attachment theory. They posit that a stronger incorporation of attachment theory will enhance therapy with couples, as it informs the therapist regarding the way a couple interacts, and that a client will receive a greater benefit from the relationship with the therapist. I do not think I necessarily agree with their point, as attachment theory can be viewed as a lens through which a therapist looks at a situation, and would be able to dial the intensity of that attachment up or down according to their need and focus. In addition, in my reading of Johnson's work (2005 & 2008), I have found a very strong emphasis on the powerful nature of attachment theory and its influence on individuals and couples, as well as within the therapeutic relationship.

Can you identify 3 voices? What language indicated critique?

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A **weakness** that is sometimes levelled at Emotionally-Focused Therapy (EFT) is that it is **simply**, and **nothing more** than a cathartic experience of the release of emotions with **no real change** ensuing. **However**, this will not be the case **if** a therapist assists the client to complete the cognitive and behaviour follow-up that transfers their new learning into their life situations (Corey, 2009). A flip-side of this **limitation** **may be that** **unless a therapist** is congruent and accepting of their own emotions, they **may find that** **they are reluctant** to allow the deep processing that clients experience in EFT (Corey, 2009). A **limitation** that **Crawley and Grant** have found with EFT (2005) is that **they believe it** **does not draw** as fully as it might on attachment theory. **They posit** that a stronger incorporation of attachment theory will enhance therapy with couples, as it informs the therapist regarding the way a couple interacts, and that a client will receive a greater benefit from the relationship with the therapist. **I do not think I necessarily agree** with **their point**, as attachment theory **can be viewed** as a lens through which a therapist looks at a situation, and **would be able** to dial the intensity of that attachment up or down according to their need and focus. In addition, **in my reading of Johnson's work** (2005 & 2008), **I have found a very strong emphasis** on the powerful nature of attachment theory and its influence on individuals and couples, as well as within the therapeutic relationship.

Thanks for coming!

Questions?



Please feel free to email Wendy with academic writing queries: academictutor@morling.edu.au

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Thanks to Liz Crocombe for her essay on EFT

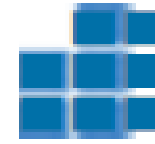
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Marking Rubrics



AQF Level 6

What are you aiming for?

Criterion	HD	Criterion	HD
Abstract	Abstract present & accurately summarises the content of the essay, including the key findings, written in the present tense	Relevance	All of the key points relating to the question are covered
Writing Style	Excellent. Typical features: one idea per paragraph; free from spelling and grammatical errors; complete sentences; appropriate academic tone.	Argumentation	Ideas are backed up with supporting evidence, as well as references to primary and secondary literature
Introduction	Introduces the topic and outlines the proposed method of answering the question	Use of primary	Analyse and critique
Conclusion	Summarises the main findings of the essay	Use of secondary sources	Evaluate a range of views, note strengths/weaknesses
Arrangement	Material organised in a clear, logical manner,	Number & Quality of sources	Academic, both recent and classic works