



Policy on Voice

At *Frontiers*, we acknowledge the significance of voice in academic researchⁱ. Our [Peer Review Policy](#) provides that authors' identifying information be masked, allowing for more objective assessment of their manuscripts by their scholarly peers. Reviewers (and readers) may though attend to textual features that contribute to their own construction of author voice and may do so in ways that influence appreciation of authors' scholarly workⁱⁱ.

We view voice as praxis. We focus within this view specifically on the different degrees, forms, and demonstratable rationales of authors' presence, or absence, in the text of their manuscripts (textual visibility) as well as the degrees and forms of (in)visibilizing their research participants or subjects.

We acknowledge that through voice, authors may establish different degrees and pursue diverse purposes of their textual (in)visibility. Consider, for example, shifting description of quantitative analysis steps from the passive voice to first-person pronoun in the active voice. Such a shift may be done to underscore an author's (original) approach to an analysis step—or even to reflect their (implicit) subscription to an epistemological assumption about how knowledge is produced. Also, consider how indirect speech may be well-suited to represent patterns in research participants' views, while direct speech may be better in illustrating heterogeneity in these patterns and establishing their interpretive validity.

We also acknowledge that voice is a cultural praxis. Consider, for instance, how extents of clarity/ambiguity and of using active/passive voice, first-person pronouns (whether singular or plural), direct/indirect speech may vary along the spectrum between cultural orientations tending more or less towards directness, individualism, and low-context communication or indirectness, collectivism, and high-context communication (and how these qualities of voice may be impacted by translation into English).

We are launching this policy on voice as a broad guide for our authors, reviewers, and editorial team. Our premise is that careful decisions regarding how voice is exercised, or mobilized, in research can contribute to illuminating its ontological stance, epistemological assumptions, methodological process, empirical findings, and/or overall argument and conclusions. The overarching goal of this policy is that voice at *Frontiers* will be approached more critically and inclusively, including more intentionally by authors and more reflexively by reviewers and editorial staff. We act on the preceding premise and goal by:



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1. Welcoming manuscripts written with various degrees and forms of textual visibility of authors and, where applicable, of their research participants and subjects.
2. Encouraging authors to be conscious of their authorial identity (and the “politics of writing”ⁱⁱⁱ underpinning it).
3. Recommending that authors be consistent and intentional in their narrative practice^{iv}, that is, being consistent in using active/passive voice and first-person pronouns, unless there is a reason not to; and making deliberate choices of whether, why, how much, and in what ways of description and (self-)expression to establish their textual visibility and, if applicable, that of their research participants and subjects.

Example of consistent use of the singular/plural first-person pronoun in the active voice: “Following *my/our* literature review, *I/we* have come to understand narrative identity to comprise these conceptual tenets..., which *I/we* use to guide *my/our* analysis of *my/our* collected data.”

Example of consistent use of the passive voice: “Collected data *was analyzed* against a theoretical framework of narrative identity, which is *defined/operationalized* as... ”

4. Recommending that authors critically consider the coherence of their narrative practice and overall textual (in)visibility vis-à-vis the nature of their research, purpose of their manuscript, and relevant policies of *Frontiers*.
5. Asking reviewers to please remember that *Frontiers* does not prescribe one style of authorial voice. All reviewers, editorial staff, and guest editors at *Frontiers* should be reflexive if/when critiquing voice and should consider whether their critique is directed toward enhancing coherence between narrative practice and research purpose in a manuscript.

The Editorial Board of *Frontiers* voted to adopt this policy during its annual meeting on March 20th, 2024.

ⁱ See Mhilli, O. (2023). Authorial Voice in Writing: A Literature Review. *Social Sciences & Humanities Open*, 8(1), 100550. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssaho.2023.100550>

ⁱⁱ Tardy, C. M., & Matsuda, P. K. (2009). The Construction of Author Voice by Editorial Board Members. *Written Communication*, 26(1), 32-52. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0741088308327269>

ⁱⁱⁱ Clark, R., & Ivanič, R. (1997). *The Politics of Writing*. Routledge.

^{iv} Gubrium, J. F., & Holstein, J. A. (1997). *The New Language of Qualitative Method*. Oxford University Press.