
POINT OF VIEW

For coherence a given piece of writing is generally grounded in a particular point of view. That point of view can be first person, second person, or third person. The following demonstrates the same idea from each of these three points of view:

FIRST PERSON: I (my, me) / we (our, us)

I have trouble applying Tannen's work to generalized audiences because I do not think the research represents all of us. Tannen's limited sample of participants should make us wary of making generalizations from those research findings.

Common in: personal narratives, newspaper editorials and columns, academic writing (in disciplines that prefer to have writers claim responsibility for their own ideas and interpretations), professional writing (usually the collective first person)

SECOND PERSON: you (your, you) / you (your, you)

You will have trouble applying Tannen's work to generalized audiences because you cannot be sure the research findings represent you. Tannen's limited sample of participants should make you wary of making generalizations from those research findings.

Common in: newspaper editorials and columns, personal writing

Note: 'You' does not always address the reader; it is often used in a more general sense, with a meaning more like that of the third person. That is it means 'one' or 'a person' rather than 'you the reader.'

THIRD PERSON: she (her, her), he (his, him), it (its, it) / they (their, them)

A person would have trouble applying Tannen's work to generalized audiences because the research findings do not represent all individuals. Tannen's limited sample of participants should make a reader wary of making generalizations from those research findings.

Common in: news reports, academic writing (in disciplines that prefer to have authors present their writing as objective)