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The research committee
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RESEARCH IN PUBLIC SPEAKING

THE RESEARCH COMMITTEE

THE Research Committee of the National Association of Academic Teachers of Public Speaking submits herewith a report of progress made in formulating ideals and plans for research work in public speaking. Teachers everywhere, who are interested, are invited to co-operate in this work by criticizing this report, by making suggestions as to research work, and by reporting to the Committee information in regard to any pieces of scholarly work now being done. Papers on topics in the field of public speaking being prepared for publication may be sent to the Committee for criticism, and this Committee will seek to protect the rights of the authors in the use of material contained in these papers.

The paper read by the chairman of the Research Committee before the Public-Speaking Section of the National Council of Teachers of English at the fourth annual meeting of this Council in Chicago on November 27, 1914, has been used by the Committee as a source of topics for discussion, and parts of this paper are embodied in this report.

Public speaking is gradually winning a place for itself among the older and better-known academic subjects. While its genealogy has been somewhat uncertain, it looks with confidence to the future for its family tree. It now aspires to become a scholarly subject with a body of verified knowledge and a professional tradition and ethics. It would invite its students to a feast of culture as well as of utility. It seeks admission to the society of the elect in scientific work and it is willing to undergo any reasonable initiation. Knowing that at present the countersign of the society of scholars is "research," it proposes to fit itself for, and engage in, research work. Such an ambition must be built on broad and deep foundations and must be brought to fulfilment by the mastery of a high degree of technical skill.

Some academic subjects have arisen as pure sciences and later been applied to the practical problems of life. Public speaking has come by the other road, having been first a practical or semi-practical subject and then aspiring to become more like a pure science. Whether its mode of development will prove a benefit or a hindrance remains to be shown. One advantage accrues from its late tendency to orient itself in research problems, which is, that considerable research work has already been done in the borders of its territory by several of the natural sciences, such as physiology, psychology, and sociology. Some benefits are sure to arise also from the scholarly work which has been done in literature and in language.

The following is an outline of some of the subjects and problems with which students who are preparing for research work in public speaking must become thoroughly familiar before they begin their technical investigations:

- I. The structure and functions of experience, especially of those experiences which are most valuable for purposes of a liberal education, including these problems among others:
 1. Of what does a valuable educative experience consist?
 2. What place has each of its parts (good English, bodily processes and movements, mental contents, and deeper meanings) in the whole experience?
 3. What are the processes involved in good English when it is (*a*) being heard, (*b*) being read, (*c*) being spoken, (*d*) being written?
 4. How does good English function as a means of securing, recording, and communicating experiences?
 5. In what ways does the bodily organism participate in educative experiences?
 6. How and to what extent do postures, gestures, and vocal modulations influence one's experiences?
 7. What relations exist between the work of the vital organs (heart, lungs, glands, etc.) and the different kinds of experiences?
 8. What are the different kinds of mental contents and processes?
 9. What part do perceptions, images, ideas, thoughts, feelings, and purposes have in determining men's experiences?
 10. What different kinds of perceptions, images, ideas, etc., are there?
 11. What are the deeper meanings which are at the heart of every valuable experience?
 12. In what sense is self-activity fundamental in education?

- II. The processes involved in studying and learning and the order in which they function, including:
 1. Impressions through one or more of the senses.
 2. General, more or less vague central processes.
 3. Corresponding bodily processes and movements of expression.
 4. More complex impressions resulting from 1 and 3.
 5. More vivid and definite central processes (images, ideas, etc.).
 6. More animated and complete movements of expression.
 7. A more systematic group of impressions resulting from 1, 3, 4, and 6.
 8. More fully organized central processes (thoughts, plans, purposes, etc.).
 9. Communication with other persons.
 10. Socialized impressions resulting from 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, and 9.
 11. Socialized and idealized central processes (purposes and ideals).
 12. Self-revelation.
- III. The methods of teaching and learning, including the following:
 1. Trial and error, or the natural method.
 2. Imitation and depiction.
 3. Suggestion, or the ideo-motor method.
 4. Dramatization.
 5. Thought, or the reflective method.
 6. Purpose.
- IV. Methods of studying a book:
 1. Memoriter (verbal method).
 2. Master as you go (part method).
 3. Apperceptive (preparation method).
 4. Read and re-read (whole method).
- V. Interrelations between public speaking and literature, reading, and composition, including:
 1. Definitions of each of these subjects.
 2. The order of their genesis in the development of the child.
 3. An analysis of the processes in each, and the order of these processes.
 4. The processes common to them all.
 5. The purpose and emphasis of each.
- VI. The structure, functions, and development of audiences, including such topics as:
 1. The crowd, the mob, the society, and the army.
 2. The audience.
 3. Fashion and custom.
 4. Methods of social intercourse.
 - a) Suggestion (mass and individual) suggestibility.
 - b) Sympathy and contagion.
 - c) Imitation and tradition.
 - d) Discussion and conflict.

With this knowledge as a background the conscientious student may undertake research work in public speaking with enthusiasm and with confidence. He will find an almost virgin soil and a wealth of problems inviting his best efforts. He must, of course, expect to make false steps and to have to do much of his work over and over again. He may anticipate scorn and reproach, for so persecuted they the prophets before him in every science.

A student who is ready and determined to devote himself to real scholarly work in public speaking finds himself, at the outset, almost bewildered by the great number of problems which urgently present themselves for solution. He must choose the kind of problem with which he will wrestle—whether he will analyze the processes involved in preparing an address, in speaking to an audience, or in listening to a speaker; whether he will investigate the relations between the speaker and his audience, as determined by his preparation, his delivery and the receptivity of his audience; whether he will study genetically the processes which effective speakers use in the preparation and delivery of addresses; or whether he will study in a normative way the means which a speaker may employ to make his utterance fulfil its purposes both in him and in his audiences. He must also select from a very long list of special problems one which is definite, not too difficult, and which seems to be scientifically worth while.

An outline of the field open to investigation by students of public speaking, as the Committee sees it, is suggested in the report which follows.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

That there is a real need of a bibliography of books on public speaking and kindred subjects can hardly be doubted. Under present conditions it is difficult for students in this department to find material which is wanted. The right kind of a bibliography will do much to save the time of those who are working in this field, as well as help them to keep abreast of the times, so far as that can be done by acquaintance with the literature of the subject. Another advantage coming from a bibliography will be in the stimulus given to teachers to read more broadly and to find somewhat readily the more valuable reading material. Before this

bibliography is completed there ought to be made selected lists of books for different parts of the field, with reference both to the subject-matter and to the methods of treatment. The plan is to have the titles of books followed by comments on the contents and point of view of these books. Teachers knowing of rare books, or of books, monographs, or syllabi of special value, are requested to send a bibliography of these to the chairman of the Research Committee. The following classification of titles is suggested as a working basis for making the bibliography:

1. Elocution and expression.
2. Public speaking and oratory.
3. Debate and discussion.
4. Expressive reading and reciting.
5. Reading and literature.
6. Teaching each of the foregoing subjects.
7. Physiology and psychology:
 - (1) Of tone production and phonetics.
 - (2) Of gesture and pantomime.
 - (3) Of spoken language.
 - (4) Of written language.
8. Psychology of social groups.
9. Sociology of communication.
10. History of each of the foregoing subjects.

GATHERING AND DIFFUSING INFORMATION

It seems to the Committee that it would be worth while to get statements from teachers of public speaking as to their aims, methods, principles, and technique, as to the courses offered, and as to the relation of public speaking to other departments in their institutions. When such statements have been secured they should be tabulated and the results reported to the teachers of public speaking. No assignment of this problem has yet been made, but at some future time the Committee hopes to plan for this work more fully.

RESEARCH PROBLEMS

The field of public speaking is rich in problems suitable for research of a high order. It is for the most part an undeveloped field. One who proposes to do research work in this field needs

a general preparation in certain fundamental problems as well as a technical training in the special methods and problems to be investigated. Such a general preparation would include certain problems derived from physiology, psychology, pedagogy, and sociology, an outline of which appears in an earlier part of this report.

The following topics and problems are submitted as suitable for scientific study on the part of those who, having made a thorough general preparation, are ready to begin more technical work in the field of public speaking proper.

- I. A study of the voice.
 1. The nature and function of voice.
 2. The technique of tone production.
 3. Phonetics.
 4. Methods of teaching voice.
 5. Corrective speech work.
 6. The development of speech in the child and in the race.
- II. A study of gesture.
 1. The nature and function of gesture.
 2. The origin and forms of bodily expression.
 4. The technique of gesture.
 4. Pantomime.
 5. Methods of teaching gesture.
 6. The development of gesture.
- III. An analysis of the processes.
 1. Of speaking to an audience.
 2. Of listening in an audience.
 3. Of preparing an address.
- IV. A scientific study of the relations between the processes.
 1. Of speaking and listening.
 2. Of preparing an address and delivering it.
 3. Of preparing an address and listening to one.
- V. An experimental investigation to determine what processes are most valuable in the preparation and delivery of addresses in order to secure certain definite results in the audience.
- VI. A genetic study of the development of the processes used in public speaking.
- VII. A study of the more or less unconscious give-and-take between the speaker and the audience.

- VIII. An interpretative study in the light of modern methods of great orators and orations of the past.
- IX. A first-hand study of the methods and technique of living orators.
- X. A study of the history of public speaking and of methods of teaching it.

For those whose preparation has included a thorough training in the technique of research work the following more specific problems are suggested:

- 1. To determine the effects in the audience of having the speaker stand at different distances from his audience and to determine the best distance.
- 2. To determine the size (real or partly real and partly imaginary) of the audience which makes the utterance most effective.
- 3. To determine the effects in the audience of using one's usual voice and of using an assumed voice.
- 4. To determine the effects on the audience of increasing or decreasing:
 - a) The number of Latin words.
 - b) The amount of predication.
 - c) The number of figures of speech.
 - d) The number of certain kinds of words such as abstract or concrete terms.
 - e) The length of the sentences.
 - f) The use of analogies.
- 5. To determine the effects in the audience of the speaker's using different kinds of images, ideas, thoughts, and purposes.
- 6. To determine the effects in the audience of directness, repetition, emphasis, clearness, etc.
- 7. To determine the amount and kind of bodily movement which is most valuable in order to secure certain results in the audience and to secure the best growth in the speaker.
- 8. To vary the methods of teaching and to note the corresponding results in the students.

PRINCIPLES AND TECHNIQUE OF RESEARCH WORK

The road to reliable results in research is a long one and he who undertakes to travel it must be guided by sound principles and he must be technically trained for his work. The Committee has as yet done little to open up this problem and would be glad to have suggestions from those who have made a study of the principles and technique of research work. Some type studies are needed as examples of the way in which research work should be done. We are fortunate in having examples of good research work in the boundaries of our territory done by those who are inter-

ested in physiology, psychology, and sociology, and some of these studies may be wisely adapted to investigations in public speaking.

PROFESSIONAL ETHICS

Each department of life in which there are many workers gradually develops a professional code of ethics, including traditions and customs, which binds the body of workers together in an important way and gives an *esprit de corps* to the members of the group. Some of the values to be secured by teachers of public speaking having a professional attitude and spirit are a more rapid growth, a clearer consciousness of the difference between quackery and real service, and a more generous distribution of important ideas and discoveries. Teachers in this field must be careful to respect the rights of others in the matter of problems being investigated and of papers being prepared for publication. One way in which mutual help may be secured is by an interchange of criticism on work being done and papers being prepared. The time may come when it will seem wise to propose a standard by which to judge the work of teachers of public speaking.

TERMINOLOGY

The need of a terminology is as obvious, perhaps, as any other need in the work of public speaking. The difficulty different teachers have of understanding each other is very noticeable and in some ways seems to be greater in the field of public speaking than in some other departments of work. The first thing for us to do seems to be to suggest a professional terminology, which need not be accepted by all nor *in toto*, but to which teachers may refer to help make their terms intelligible to others. Terminologies have been made for other departments and found very helpful. It will, of course, be a slow process and one requiring years to complete, but this is no objection to it as a worthy undertaking.

STANDARDIZATION

No definite plans have yet been made for the study of standardization, but it is believed that in the near future some very valuable results might be secured by an investigation of the courses

and methods now used in teaching public speaking, and of the preparation of teachers in this department. Such a study should also include a statement of standards and ideals as well as a report upon present facts and practice.

A SUMMER CONFERENCE

An informal summer conference is suggested to meet at some convenient place for, say, one week, to discuss in an informal way some of the more important problems which are of special interest to teachers of public speaking. It is not intended that the program shall be a hard-and-fast one, yet our aim is to make the work significant for all who may be able to attend the conference. Those who are interested in such a conference and could attend at any time during the summer are invited to send word to the chairman of the Research Committee, telling on what dates between June 6 and September 19 they could attend such a conference, which dates they would prefer, how far they would be willing to travel to reach the place of meeting, and what topics and places they would suggest for the meeting.

Co-operation on the part of teachers and students of public speaking is invited, and the Research Committee plans to have ready in the near future some quite definite plans to submit to those who are willing to undertake pieces of research work.