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Vocal expression in perspective

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JUDGING IN SOUTH DAKOTA

IN South Dakota there is a Quadrangular Debating League, made up of four colleges, Dakota Wesleyan University, Yankton College, Huron College, and Sioux Falls College. This year a rather unique system of judging was used. For each of the four debates, the debate coach of the college not concerned acted as sole judge, i. e., the coach of Dakota Wesleyan acted in the debate between Yankton and Sioux Falls, the debate coach of Huron in the debate between Yankton and Dakota Wesleyan, and so on around the quadrangle. Each judge in announcing his decision to the audience, explained his reasons for making his decision, thus educating the audience somewhat in the fine points of debating as it is taught. The scheme proved very popular in its first trial and will be continued next year. In the coming debate between Dakota Wesleyan University and the South Dakota State College, a modification of this scheme is used, in that H. B. Gislason, of the University of Minnesota, is to act as sole judge.

At the recent meeting of the South Dakota State Oratorical Association, on account of dissatisfaction with the old method of having five judges selected from the business men and professional men of the state, the constitution was amended so as to provide for a single judge system. This judge is to be an expert from outside the state, a recognized authority on public speaking, a teacher of oratory in one of the larger universities of the country. He is to be paid for his services. In this way it is hoped that an intelligent and impartial decision will be obtained.

E. H. W.

VOCAL EXPRESSION IN PERSPECTIVE

ONE of my greatest difficulties in teaching the elements of vocal expression to beginning classes has been that of getting clearly before their minds a *perspective* of the whole subject. To me perspective is essential. As a student, I have always wanted to know in advance just what general results a course aimed to accomplish, so that as I went along I could have some idea of the general end towards which each day's recitation was tending. And now as a teacher I find that I can do better work if I can get before the class at the beginning some kind of gen-

eral survey of the whole to which they can repeatedly refer throughout the year, and by which they can keep constantly informed as to just where they are from day to day. The practical problem of developing some kind of outline for this purpose is the reason for this article.

In the text-book we are using, for instance, the first thing discussed relates to some purely psychological considerations of man as a psychic being. This is followed by a chapter on the vocal apparatus—a purely physical consideration. Then comes respiration and voice culture, physical considerations still, then pronunciation—partly a physical problem and partly a mental one. And so on to the end. Another book I have used has a brief opening chapter on breathing and tone production, and then immediately takes up vocal expression with reference to the four customary “elements”—melody, quality, rhythm, and dynamics. Now my object here is not to criticize either of these books, or any other book, but merely to point out that in any text-book the difficulty of keeping a clear view of the whole subject is usually present. Sequence has always been a problem in the matter of method, and usually about the only difference one can find in many books on the subject of vocal expression is a difference in sequence. One author will begin with speech quality and end with volume, another will begin with pitch and end with quality. One holds that all is quality, another that all one needs to do is think clearly and feel deeply, then speak as Nature prompts. With the relative merits, then, of any books or of all books, I am not concerned. What I am concerned with is this: assuming that you are using some kind of a text-book on the subject of expression and are trying to teach it to a class of beginners, how best can you get them to comprehend its numerous and varied aspects so that they can at the very beginning and all along understand the purpose of each day’s task? At best the subject is a complicated one. The close relationship between mind and body in all that we undertake to teach necessarily often results in confusion for the student. It is hard for him to keep a clear notion of just what he is doing this for and that for, just what today’s recitation has to do in achieving the final result. The student is not like Tennyson’s soldiers, but rather the very opposite—theirs is to reason why, and to be satisfied in advance

that there is an underlying thread of connection between what they are doing today and what they hope ultimately to achieve.

If, therefore, the following outline is of any help to other teachers it will be simply because they have felt a similar need. The outline is arranged solely with reference to the individual student as a prospective public speaker, assuming that in beginning work that is the student's chief concern. The old divisions, such as "The Man, The Subject, and The Occasion," are really all included in the outline, only they are treated from the viewpoint of the speaker, which, after all, is the way all these problems are finally treated.

This outline is, of course, far from perfect. At best it aims merely to be suggestive—merely to form a sort of panorama of the whole field of requirements necessary for the beginning student ultimately to master if he is to become a truly successful speaker. By it a student may gain a sense of proportion and be brought early in his study to see that "learning to speak" involves a longer process of preparation than is commonly supposed. The "Cultural Fundamentals" alone involve years of preparation, only the barest superficial beginnings of which can be had in a college course.

Not many books, and perhaps fewer courses, attempt to cover all that is treated in the outline. Some books are devoted solely to "The Vocal Instrument," some solely to "The Rhetoric of Speech Structure," some solely to "The Psychology of Public Speaking," some solely to "Gesture." Others are concerned chiefly with the so-called "Elements of Vocal Expression," while a few attempt to deal with nearly everything included in the outline. But even if a course or a book does not attempt to cover the whole field as a single undertaking, the value of having a comprehensive outline is none the less important. If one is studying a book devoted solely to "Gesture," the outline at once furnishes a true perspective of that particular study with reference to the whole. So with any other subdivision of the subject. The outline claims, then, to do what the title of this article indicates—give a student at the beginning of his work an idea of "Vocal Expression in Perspective."

Outline—Man, as a Public Speaker

I. Mind.

A—Cultural Fundamentals.

1. Character and ideals.
2. Clear thinking.
3. Deep feeling.
4. Wide reading.
5. Sense of art values.
6. Imagination.
7. Love of beauty.
8. Power of interpretation.

“Learning to speak is primarily learning to think and feel.” From “Vocal Expression in Speech,” by Gordon-Lyman.

B—Technical Fundamentals.

1. Good pronunciation (from dictionary standpoint).
  - a. Correct syllabication.
  - b. Correct vowel sound.
  - c. Correct accent.
2. Knowledge of grammar.
3. Knowledge of rhetoric, with reference to structural needs of oral discourse.
  - a. In original speeches.
    - (1)¹ Knowledge of sources of materials.
    - (2) Knowledge of general ends and types of speeches.
    - (3) Knowledge of conversational style.
    - (4) Use of illustrations and other rhetorical devices.
    - (5)¹ Knowledge of sound value of words.
    - (6) Simple words and simple sentence structure.
    - (7) Rhythmic element in sentences.
  - b. In interpretation of another's work.
    - (1) Knowledge of how to cut and adapt selections to particular need.
4. Knowledge of psychology of public speaking.
  - a. Principles of attention and interest.
  - b. Modern theories of emotions.
  - c. Rhythm.
  - d. Suggestion.
  - e. Crowd psychology.
  - f. Memory.
  - g. Reasoning processes.
    - (1) Belief.
    - (2) Persuasion.

II. Body.

- A—The Vocal Instrument—in its largest sense. (Appeals to auditory sense.)

1. Breathing, involving two processes.
    - a. Inspiration—object sought is capacity.
    - b. Expiration—object sought is diaphragmatic control of emission.
      - (1) Breathing—the motive power of voice.
  2. The voice mechanism proper.
    - a. The larynx, which contains:
      - (1) A "Vibrator to originate air waves"—the vocal cords.
      - (2) A "Pitch mechanism to determine rate at which air waves are originated"—the cartilages and muscles of the larynx.
    - b. The resonance chambers—"cavities of the pharynx, mouth and nose."
    - c. Object sought in development of voice mechanism is correct voice production, which is brought about by:
      - (1) "Free vibration of vocal cords."
      - (2) "Free motion of cartilages and muscles of larynx."
      - (3) "Full use of resonance space."

(Quoted parts from "The Natural Method of Voice Production," by Floyd S. Muckey.)
  3. Organs of articulation.
    - a. Lips.   These are the consonant forming organs.
    - b. Tongue.   Object sought is sharpness and distinctness
    - c. Teeth.   of enunciation.
- B—Vocal-Sound**, as a physical sensation (the source of the vowel element in our words), has these characteristics:
1. *Pitch*—"that characteristic of the sensation of sound which depends upon the rate at which the air-waves strike the ear-drum."
    - a. "Pitch of the voice is determined by the length, weight, and tension of the vocal cords."
  2. *Volume*—"that characteristic of the sensation of sound which depends upon the extent of motion of the ear-drum."
    - a. "Volume of voice depends upon the extent of vibration of the vocal cords (which is caused by breath pressure), and upon resonance."
  3. *Quality*—"that characteristic of the sensation of sound which depends upon the manner of motion of the ear-drum."
    - a. "Quality of voice depends upon the vibration of the vocal cords as a whole and in segments, and upon resonance."

(Quoted parts from "The Natural Method of Voice Production," by Floyd S. Muckey.)
- C—Vocal-Sound**, harnessed into words by means of consonant formation, gives rise to an additional characteristic when used in vocal expression, namely, time or rhythm.
- D—Vocal Expression**, then, includes these fundamental factors (using terms in very broad sense):
1. *Speech melody*, or the pitch element in expression.
  2. *Speech-Quality*.

3. *Speech-Rhythm*, or the time element in expression.
  4. *Speech-Dynamics*, or the volume element in expression.
- E—Gesture, in its largest sense. (Appeals to visual sense.)
1. Carriage of body.
  2. Personal appearance.
  3. Facial expression.
  4. Use of hands and arms.
  5. Conversational manner of meeting audience.

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