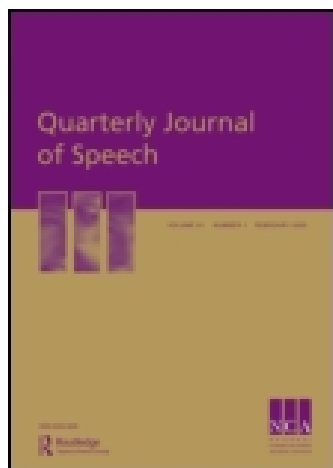


This article was downloaded by: [130.132.123.28]

On: 28 December 2014, At: 08:34

Publisher: Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number:
1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street,
London W1T 3JH, UK



Quarterly Journal of Speech

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rqjs20>

The study of public speaking as mental discipline

Rees Edgar Tulloss Ph.D. (Harvard) ^a

^a President Wittenberg College, Springfield, Ohio

Published online: 05 Jun 2009.

To cite this article: Rees Edgar Tulloss Ph.D. (Harvard) (1921) The study of public speaking as mental discipline, Quarterly Journal of Speech, 7:4, 305-311, DOI: [10.1080/00335632109379347](https://doi.org/10.1080/00335632109379347)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00335632109379347>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Taylor & Francis makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of all the information (the "Content") contained in the publications on our platform. However, Taylor & Francis, our agents, and our licensors make no representations or warranties whatsoever as to the accuracy, completeness, or suitability for any purpose of the Content. Any opinions and views expressed in this publication are the opinions and views of the authors, and are not the views of or endorsed by Taylor & Francis. The accuracy of the Content should not be relied upon and should be independently verified with primary sources of information. Taylor and Francis shall not be liable for any losses, actions, claims, proceedings, demands, costs, expenses, damages, and other liabilities whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with, in relation to or arising out of the use of the Content.

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution,

reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden. Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at <http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions>

THE QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF SPEECH EDUCATION

Volume VII

NOVEMBER, 1921

Number 4

THE STUDY OF PUBLIC SPEAKING AS MENTAL DISCIPLINE*

REES EDGAR TULLOSS, PH.D. (Harvard)
President Wittenberg College, Springfield, Ohio

I AM not at all a teacher of public speech, but I have been for so long a time privileged to be closely acquainted with some persons who are teachers of public speech that I have learned to look at your problems with some sympathy and, I hope, with some little insight. With your permission, therefore, I shall for the present half-hour think of myself as being one among you, and when I speak of your tasks and problems shall count them mine as well as yours.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE SUBJECT

Our subject has certain interesting implications of a somewhat practical nature. There is the matter of the by-products which we can promise our students. All of us who are teachers like to believe that our students gain more from our instruction than the mere acquirement of knowledge and skill which is directly connected with our classroom work. In the teaching of public speaking do such by-products exist? What are they—and how valuable?

There is the question as to the academic credits which should be granted students for work done in our courses. This is, perhaps, not a matter of determining whether credits are to be granted. It is rather a matter of determining the satisfaction with which the credits are granted on the part of those in authority. It is a matter of meeting the criticism often made by heads of other

* A digest of a discussion given before the National Association of Teachers of Speech, Cleveland, December, 1920.

departments that our work is not of equal difficulty or equal value with the work carried on by themselves.

And there is the question as to the general educational satisfactions which may be ours. Teachers like to think of themselves as rendering a definite service to humanity. They believe that they are contributing to the development of character, to the good of mankind, to the progress of civilization. How broadly is this true for us? What true satisfactions of this kind may be ours?

Let us frankly admit that when we, as teachers of public speaking, face these questions some things are rather against us at the start.

SOME CRITICISMS

In many institutions the Public Speaking courses are regarded as "snap courses." The real truth or the falsity of the assertion need not at this moment be discussed. It cannot be denied that in great numbers of institutions the feeling of the students is decidedly in this direction.

Again, some of our finished graduates are good speakers but rather shallow thinkers. I do not say the majority of them; I would not attempt to guess how large a percentage of them deserve this accusation. It must be admitted that a certain percentage of our finished examples are better speakers than they are thinkers.

Once again, of some teachers of Public Speech it must be said that they are hardly deserving of being called scholarly. They are clever artists, perhaps; they may be able to teach their art; they are probably useful members of the college faculty; but it must be said that they are hardly scholarly. They do not have the mental power nor the mental poise which comes with definite culture along scholarly lines. We may properly ask ourselves how we can reduce the number of these unscholarly teachers of Public Speaking.

Not forgetting the facts just mentioned, let us now try to find some things on the other side of the question. We shall start back a way with some fundamental concepts of thinking and of the educative process.

WHAT THIS SUBJECT INVOLVES

As we turn definitely to consider the subject, "The Study of Public Speaking as Mental Discipline," we see that the whole ques-

tion of "formal discipline," "transfer of training," etc., comes at once before us.

You are familiar with the general problem. The old theory was that "mental power," however gained, is applicable to any department of human activity—that mental ability gained through the mastery of one subject is usable in the study of many other subjects. We are told, for instance, by certain educational experts (?) that Latin is good for "training the memory." Geography is also "good for training the memory." Mathematics is said to be especially good for "developing the reasoning powers."

Further illustrative quotations need not be given. You are familiar with the theory and with the arguments advanced in its support. Through all the literature discussing this subject the old "faculty idea," connected with psychology, now utterly out of date, is constantly reappearing. The mind is apparently conceived of as being divided off into watertight compartments, with many different "faculties," "abilities," or "powers."

I do not want to weary you with any lengthy discussion of this general subject. Let me state briefly my view as to the gradual development of the problem and my own conviction as to the truth regarding it.

AS TO "FORMAL DISCIPLINE"

The various statements of the problem of "transfer of training" or "formal discipline," in their historical development, indicate a general trend from a very general and vague formulation toward one characterized by greater simplicity and definiteness.

Continuing efforts at a closer examination and analysis of the processes involved have resulted in successive restatements of the theory. Beginning with the vague and general statement that any mental activity "trains the mind," successive restatements have been that activity in a stated direction will effect a development of a certain "faculty"; then, if not the development of a "faculty," at least the development of some particular activity or power of a "faculty" (*e. g.*, the development of a particular "kind" of memory, or the development of the "power" of the memory in dealing with a particular class of facts or experiences); then, if the faculty terminology is to be avoided entirely, the development of some "mental factor" or "process," usable in different directions.

These successive restatements indicate a trend in the right direction—*i. e.*, a gradual recognition of the precise nature of the problem and the bringing to light of the various factors involved. Most of these statements, however, still remain more or less vague and indefinite. Here, as elsewhere, the successful treatment and the solution of the problem will depend upon its being finally *focussed down in definite terms of stimulus and response*.

WHAT ARE THE FACTS?

Here, as elsewhere, a psychological method which bases its conclusions upon observation rather than imagination—upon behavior rather than philosophy—will contribute most. In the language of such psychology, the problem seems to be: To what extent and for what reasons does the acquirement of a habitual, satisfactory response to a stated group or class of stimuli facilitate the acquirement of a habitual, satisfactory response to another stated group or class of stimuli? How much does the learning or doing of one thing aid me in the learning or doing of another thing?

In the writer's judgment, the great mass of experimental evidence is unmistakably in favor of the view that such transfer of training occurs *only in so far as identical elements of the stimulus-response process are to be found in both cases*. And this term "identical element" will probably have to be taken in its strict literal significance as indicating either the activity of a particular neural pathway connecting a definite stimulus with a definite response, or a definite "determining tendency" or "motor attitude."

It is likely that the "determining tendency" or "motor attitude" is the really important thing. It is by the establishment of such tendencies or attitudes that the individual brings most fully to the new situation the sum of his past experiences.

Any experience can be generalized. No experience, of course, is generalized automatically or inevitably. The habit of generalization of experience and the extension of its possible application is *the aim of education*.

THE CULTURAL VALUE OF SPEECH TRAINING

And now let us direct our attention to this particular matter of speech training.

There is no need to discuss the question as it concerns that part

of our work which has to do with training in the preparation of material and marshaling of arguments, such as is involved in essay-writing, debating, etc. That is of direct practical value, ultimately of unquestionable service to the individual, and distinctly cultural. No one doubts the disciplinary value of this kind of mental activity.

The possibility of argument arises when we turn to consider the more definite teaching of "expression," particularly as it relates to the public reproduction of the written thought of others.

It is quite like "carrying coals to Newcastle" for me to attempt to say anything to you about the elements that are involved in the work with which you are so familiar. All that I can say in this direction has doubtless been much better said by many others before me.

Permit me, however, to state briefly my own ideas as to the elements involved, by saying that they are—

- (1) *Discovery*,
- (2) *Realization*,
- (3) *Communication*.

Discovery is surely the first thing. Unless we have discovered meaning we surely shall not be able to express it. Discovery comes about through *analysis*.

In analysis we try to get behind the written words to the thoughts which were vital in the mind of the writer; we separate the whole into its unitary ideas, to each of which we react as a separate bit of meaning; we study the relationships into which these ideas have been placed by the writer; we perceive their logical sequence and connection. Thus, we build up for ourselves an apprehension of the thought content. By analysis we arrive at the Discovery of the meaning.

But when we face the printed page we must not only go upon a voyage of discovery: we must enter into a *Realization*.

Here two things are involved: First, there is *insight*. We must be able to look into the mind of the writer and know the attitude in which he wrote; we must see the thing intellectually from his viewpoint. But not only that. We must do more than look into the mind of the writer, we must look into the writer's heart. So I think not only of insight, but also of *sympathy*. Both insight and

sympathy are essential to Realization. These two steps, Discovery and Realization, are vital.

Then comes Communication. With regard to this I refrain from saying anything. There is no one here who is not much better able to discuss it than I.

Now let us view these facts in their relationship to our own particular problem. Is it not apparent that in the last and final analysis all these elements of discovery by analysis, of realization through insight and sympathy, and of communication deal with one and the same essential thing? *From first to last the process deals with meaning.* All our work deals with *meaning*. Our task is to teach the student to *find the meaning*, to *realize* it, and to *express* it.

When now I remember how large a part of all our education is made possible to us through the printed page, the consideration of the facts just stated leads me inevitably to the conclusion that the teacher of Public Speaking, who has before him the task of teaching a student to discover, to realize, and to communicate the *meaning* behind the *printed page*, has an opportunity which is distinctly and notably his own.

Here is an "identical element" which *is* "capable of transfer." Here *is* the possibility of the development of an "attitude" which is worth everything to the individual. I do not wonder at the statement sometimes heard that the student who has been finely taught in Public Speaking courses has abilities as a student which are beyond those of students not so taught.

CONCLUSION

The proper study of speech is finally and fundamentally the study of meaning—a training and practice in finding and realizing it, and the development of the ability to express it. *Meaning* is fundamental to our teaching problem.

Finding, realizing, and expressing meaning is the task of the student of Public Speaking. In working it out he acquires the habit of making a satisfactory response to the stimulus of the printed page and the stimulus of the listening group. Such a habit is one of the marks of the cultured man. It is an important element in the scholarly attitude. To have developed it in the life of a student is to have done him a great service.

I conclude, therefore, that the study of Public Speaking is inevitably a discipline. It is a discipline which serves the student in all studies and in all relationships of life, because it tends to develop in him an attitude of searching for meaning, and of giving to that meaning when found a clear and forceful expression.

Properly taught, by scholarly teachers, who make stern demand for earnest work on the part of every pupil, Public Speaking has the possibility of becoming one of the most vital studies in the college curriculum.